

NASA astronauts Menon, Meir undertake spacewalk to upgrade space station

WASHINGTON, AUG 8: NASA astronauts Anil Menon and Jessica Meir on Friday concluded their spacewalk outside the International Space Station to assemble a modification kit for its power channel, which would allow the addition of solar arrays.

The spacewalk – the 281st in support of the space station – sixth for Meir and first for Menon began at 8:33 am EDT (6:03 pm IST) on Thursday and concluded at 3:00 pm EDT (12:30 am IST Friday).

Menon and Meir exited the Quest airlock and carried out structural upgrades on the exterior of the orbital laboratory during the six-hour, 27-minute spacewalk.

Their primary objective centred on installing mounting hardware on the station's 3B power channel, located on the Starboard 6 truss segment.

"This work will enable the future installation of roll-out solar arrays, called IROSAs, to



provide additional power for the orbiting laboratory, supporting critical systems and the safe, controlled deorbit of the space station," NASA said in a statement.

Since 2021, astronauts on prior spacewalks have deployed six of the International Space Station Roll-Out Solar Array (IROSAs) assemblies, leaving now just two awaiting delivery to the station later this year.

Menon was positioned on an articulating portable foot restraint atop a worksite in-

terface, providing a stable angle to work from the truss. South Asians & Diaspora

The two astronauts later routed cabling that will carry electricity from the future iROSA into the 3B power channel and then covered the struts with multi-layer insulation.

"Anil, you can see the moon to the - well, I am not sure what way you're facing, but....," said Meir, taking a short break during the spacewalk.

"To my right. Yeah, I see it - thanks for the heads-up. I can see a future moon base there," Menon said.

This was the first of the three spacewalks for the space station's Expedition 75 crew this month.

During the second spacewalk on August 13, two astronauts will replace a Space-to-Ground antenna on the orbital complex. The antenna is a critical communication system NASA uses to transmit data and high-speed communication between the Mission Control Centre in Houston and the space station.

During the spacewalk on August 25, the crew members will connect power channel cables and data relay systems as part of ongoing maintenance, including preparations for the space station's future deorbit. The astronauts also will replace a navigational aid used for spacecraft docking on the Harmony module's forward port, NASA said.

Voting for most seats for Aug 10 polls postponed in PoK due to law & order concerns

ISLAMABAD, AUG 8: Voting for seven of the 11 seats in the third phase of polls in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir that were scheduled for August 10 have been postponed for an indefinite period due to "concerns over the law-and-order situation," it was announced on Friday. Jammu Kashmir Travel

After the first and second phases of the polls, which were marred by violent protests, were held on July 27 and August 2 respectively, voting was scheduled on Monday for 11 constituencies of Poonch Division in the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

There are a total of 45 seats on which polls are being held for the so-called Kashmir Legislative Assembly. "The electoral process in seven constituencies of Poonch district and Sudhnoti's Pallandri will not be held on August 10," the PoK's Election Commission said in a statement.

However, polling for three constituencies of Bagh district and one in Haveli will be held on August 10 as per schedule, it said.

"We have received a report from the home secretary there that shows concerns over the law-and-order situation in some areas of Poonch district and Pallandri district. The next date for the polls on these constituencies will be announced later," the statement said.

The Election Commission (EC) further said that it received requests from some political personalities and candidates hailing from these districts requesting to postpone the elections in Poonch district and Pallandri district.



dri district considering the current situation.

"We will announce the new polling dates and a revised election schedule for Poonch and Pallandri after reviewing the situation and considering all relevant matters," the EC statement said.

India maintains that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are its integral and inalienable parts. New Delhi also asserts that Pakistan has been in "illegal and forcible occupation" of parts of these Union Territories. Politics

India on Tuesday described the so-called local body elections in PoK a "complete farce," asserting that such "hollow" exercises cannot hide the ground reality in the region.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) strongly criticised Pakistan's crackdown on protesters in PoK and said the international community should see through the "flimsy veneer" of Islamabad's "hypocritical lecturing" on human rights.

"This so-called local elec-

tion in PoK is a complete farce. The real happening is that of public protests and wanton killings by Pakistani forces. Such hollow exercises cannot hide reality," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a regular media briefing.

There are 53 seats in the so-called PoK legislative assembly - 45 are directly elected, while eight are reserved for women, technocrats and clerics.

The ruling party at the federal level, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won both the first two phases, emerging as the single largest party to form the next government in PoK.

The second phase was held on August 2 amid violence and rigging allegations. One person was killed, and several were injured in the violence. The August 2 voting included among others, the 12 refugee seats that are at the centre of a controversy. The PML-N swept the second phase, winning 16 seats while the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won the remaining five seats.

In the first phase on July 27, the PML-N won nine out of 13 seats, while the PPP won four.

The two phases taken together, PML-N has already won 24 seats.

The banned Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) has been holding a series of protests in PoK since June over the contentious 12 refugee seats. It has alleged that the establishment manoeuvres these seats to install a prime minister, to lead the so-called government in PoK, of its choosing.

According to the JAAC, over 40 people were killed during the first phase of polls held on July 27. Besides, it claims that some 400 protesters have been killed since the first week of June.

The Shehbaz Sharif government dismissed the JAAC claim saying the figure is "overly exaggerated."

"The number of the people killed in protests is in two digits. Moreover, security personnel have also lost their lives," PM's adviser Rana Sanaullah said in a TV statement recently. (PTI)

Student kills at least 7 people at high school, home outside Bangkok, officials say



NONTHABURI (THAILAND), AUG 8: A student opened fire at a high school outside Bangkok on Friday, killing at least five people and wounding more than 20, according to authorities, who said he also appeared to have killed his two grandparents at the family home earlier in the morning.

The 14-year-old shooter took his own life at the school, officials said.

Five school staff members, including teachers and administrators, died in the shooting around 10 am at Debsirin Nonthaburi School in Nonthaburi province northwest of Bangkok, Deputy Interior Minister Polapee Suwunchwee said at the scene.

The boy also killed his grandparents at the home he shared with them prior to the school shooting, Polapee said.

Bangyai Hospital, about 5 kilometres from the school, said 23 people were

wounded, of whom 10 were in critical condition, with most suffering gunshot wounds. Earlier reports gave conflicting casualty numbers.

A witness said students hid inside a classroom while they heard gunshots from another building before police officers knocked on the door and cleared a way for them to leave the building.

The mporn Niamfuang, who owns a restaurant 50 metres from the school, said there was the sound of a single gunshot and then a pause.

"And then there were multiple continuous shots," Amporn said, recalling the narrow road outside the restaurant filling with fleeing students. "Students were running scared and pouring onto the street. Young girls were holding each other's hands and crying. I went inside to hide."

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, speaking after

touring the school, confirmed reports that the shooter was 14 and had killed himself. He said the student had shown signs of stress connected to school.

The gun, described by police as small and compact, was legally registered to his grandfather, he said.

About an hour after the shooting, people stood outside comforting one another as police and first responders walked around the co-educational state school, which has an enrolment of about 3,000 students ranging from 12 to 18 years old.

All classes will be suspended between August 10 and 14 and school staff have been instructed to work from home during that time, the school said.

Police find grandparents dead at family home

After the shooting, police went to his home and found both grandparents dead of apparent gunshot wounds, regional police Commander

Wattana Yeejeen said.

The student appeared to have shot them before attending school as normal. He waited until classes started and began shooting inside his classroom before walking out and firing more shots, Police spokesperson Trairong Piwpan said.

The boy fired more than 20 shots and police found he still had 30 rounds after shooting himself, he said. Several family members, including his uncle and sisters of the grandfather who were at the family home while police investigated, said he usually kept to himself and was a good student.

The family members said they were unaware of any troubles he faced at home or school.

Thailand has high rate of gun owners

Thailand has one of the highest rates of gun ownership in Asia, second only to Pakistan and far surpassing its Southeast Asian neighbours.

Data collected in 2017 by the groups Small Arms Survey and GunPolicy.org in their last extensive international study found civilian gun ownership in Thailand was about 15.1 guns per 100 people, compared with less than one per 100 in neighbouring Malaysia.

Thailand had 3.49 deaths by firearms per 100,000 people, according to 2023 statistics published by World Population Review. That puts it well behind parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, but relatively high in Asia. Only the Philippines is higher in Southeast Asia.

Jamaat-led eleven-party oppn alliance mounts nationwide protests in Dhaka against Bangladesh govt

DHAKA, AUG 7: A Jamaat-e-Islami-led eleven-party opposition alliance has announced a series of nationwide marches and a grand rally in Dhaka, in a bid to pressure the BNP-led government to implement the July National Charter and referendum verdict, reduce fuel, gas and electricity prices, and address the cost-of-living crisis currently plaguing Bangladesh. Travel Guides & Travelogues

The programmes were announced on Thursday by alliance chief and Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman during a sit-in at Muktangan in Dhaka's Paltan area and were focused on what the alliance described as a fuel and gas crisis, "ghost bills" for electricity, deteriorating law and order and spiralling prices of essential commodities. According to Shafiqur, the movement would also demand the immediate trial



of those responsible for mass killings, improved public security, and an end to what he described as narrow partisan control over state institutions. Under the announced schedule, the alliance will organise road marches from Dhaka to Chattogram on

September 5, Rangpur on September 19 and Khulna on October 10. A rail march to Sylhet is planned for October 24, followed by a grand rally in Dhaka on November 14.

"The newly announced long marches are aimed at realising the people's de-

mands. They should not be obstructed as in the past. If obstacles are created, the marches will reach their destinations with twice the momentum," Shafiqur said, adding that the campaign would continue until its demands were met.

SMVD Narayana Hospital, CGPWA Organise Orthopaedic Health Camp for Senior Citizens

JAMMU AUGUST 8: Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, in collaboration with the Central Government Pensioners' Welfare Association (CGPWA), Jammu, today organised a special Orthopaedic Health Camp for senior citizens at the hospital's Day Care Centre, Gandhi Nagar, as part of the ongoing Bone & Joint Week. The focus of the Camp was early detection, prevention and management of age-related bone and joint problems.

The Camp was jointly inaugurated by Kuldeep Khoda, President, CGPWA and Dr. Ashok Bhan, Member, SMVDS Board. Present on the occasion were B R Sharma, K.B. Jandial, General Secretary, CGPWA, Dr M M Mathavan, Facility Director, SMVDS Narayana Hospital, Dr Sudarshan Kumar, Vice President, & O P Sharma, Treasurer CGPWA and other senior members of the Association and other senior citizens.

More than 60 pensioners attended the Camp and benefited from the free consultation. They were screened by Dr. Vikas Padha, Senior Consultant - Orthopaedics & Joint Replacement Surgeon, SMVDS Narayana Hospital, for common age-related orthopaedic conditions including knee and hip pain, arthritis, backache, reduced mobility and degenerative joint disorders.

Bone Mineral Density (BMD) assessment was also conducted during the camp to identify individuals at risk of osteoporosis and age-related weakening of bones, which can significantly increase the risk of fractures among senior citizens.

A significant aspect of the camp was that several participating pensioners had undergone treatment from Dr. Vikas Padha for various orthopaedic conditions, including joint replacement surgeries. They were satisfied with the surgery, leading active lives



and received follow-up advice and preventive care.

After inaugurating the Camp, Khoda appreciated Narayana Hospital's initiative and said that maintaining health and mobility assumes even greater importance with advancing age. He acknowledged the continued

association of SMVD Narayana Superspeciality Hospital with CGPWA in organising meaningful healthcare programmes for pensioners and senior citizens.

Dr. Ashok Bhan, Member talked about the importance of preventive healthcare for the elderly and said

that regular screening and timely specialist consultation can play an important role in preserving mobility, independence and overall quality of life. He assured the hospital's continued efforts to make specialised healthcare more accessible to pensioners and senior citizens through such initiatives in the future as well.

Jandial said that the CGPWA remains committed not only to the welfare of pensioners but also to creating greater awareness about healthy ageing, preventive healthcare and timely medical consultation. He expressed profound gratitude to Shrine Board and Narayana hospital for organising the Health Camp and facilitating specialist consultation and bone health screening for members of the Association.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Vikas Padha said, "It is always encouraging to see patients whom we have treated, including those who

have undergone joint replacement, continuing to remain active and independent. Growing older does not necessarily mean living with pain or restricted mobility. Timely diagnosis, appropriate treatment, regular exercise and attention to bone health can help senior citizens maintain an active lifestyle and good quality of life."

He also stressed that persistent joint pain and difficulty in movement should not simply be accepted as a normal part of ageing. Regular physical activity, maintaining muscle strength, adequate nutrition and periodic assessment of bone health can help reduce the risk of falls, fractures and loss of mobility.

The Narayana Hospital's Day Care Centre at Gandhinagar extends the hospital's specialised healthcare services closer to residents of Jammu and provides dialysis, chemotherapy and specialist consultations in a convenient day-care setting.