



Vol .No. XXIII Issue No. 89 Regd. NGG-709 RNI-ASSEN/2000/12862

THE HILLS TIMES
www.thehillstimes.in

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022

PAGES 12 PRICE ₹ 8

Voice of the hills people

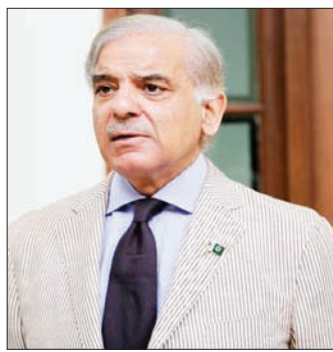
PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif files nomination for Pak PM's post

Khan's party threatens to withdraw lawmakers

ISLAMABAD, April 10 (PTI): Pakistan's Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday nominated himself for the post of Prime Minister after the ouster of Imran Khan, whose party threatened to withdraw its lawmakers from Parliament if the former Punjab chief minister was allowed to contest the election for the top post on Monday.

The process of electing the new leader of the house began on Sunday after Khan was removed from office through a no-confidence vote, becoming the first premier in the country's history to be sent home after losing the trust of the House.

The joint Opposition - a rainbow of socialist, liberal and radically religious parties - has nominated 70-year-old Sharif for the premier's post while ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was named by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf



(PTI) as its candidate.

The nomination papers of Sharif, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president have been accepted by the National Assembly Secretariat after objections raised by the PTI were rejected.

Qureshi's nomination papers were also accepted. Senior PTI leader Babar Awan

challenged Sharif's candidature, saying that the PML-N chief faced several court cases.

Meanwhile, the PTI has decided to withdraw its lawmakers from the National Assembly and launch a movement against the new upcoming government, which is likely to be headed by Sharif, who has served as the chief minister of Punjab three times.

"The core committee has recommended to Imran Khan that we should resign from the assemblies. We are starting from the National Assembly. If our objections against Shehbaz Sharif's nomination papers are not [entertained], we will submit the resignations tomorrow," PTI leader and former minister Fawad Chaudhry told reporters after the party held a core committee meeting at the residence of Khan, Khan's successor (CONTD. ON PG 9)

'One-stop centres in NE to receive active support from Centre'

Improving nutrition value among women, children now a Jan Andolan: Irani

GUWAHATI, April 10: Union minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani chaired the Zonal Conference of state governments and stakeholders of North-East region at Guwahati on Sunday.

Participants from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Nagaland attended the conference.

The minister in her address highlighted the details of Poshan Abhiyan and other initiatives of the ministry. She said that all the Anganwadis and one stop centres across the North East region will receive active support to ensure that geographical and logistical challenges are met expeditiously



by Government of India interventions.

She said that improving nutrition value among women and children has transformed into a Jan Andolan

today. Praising the efforts of the stakeholders for their contribution, the minister said that addressing the issues of female health and nutrition of children has been possible

because of their cooperation and support.

Talking about one-stop centres she said that the one stop crisis centre saw a collaborative effort where various branches of government came together to ensure that police, psycho-social counsellor, legal counsellor and all get together under one roof. In collaboration with women helplines across the country in the past 3 years, 70 lakh women have received support from government in the state and the Centre, she informed.

The minister also informed that 300 more such centres will be opened. Talking about other initiatives by government Irani said that there are around 25 crore women benefiting from Jan-Dhan Yojana who have (CONTD. ON PG 9)

NIA conducts searches in Assam in case linked to AQIS



GUWAHATI, April 10 (PTI): The NIA on Sunday conducted searches at 11 locations in Barpeta and Bongaigaon districts of Assam in a case linked to a module of the Al-Qaeda in the Indian Sub-Continent which was being led by a

Bangladeshi national in India.

The case pertains to an active module of the Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), affiliated to the Al-Qaeda in the Indian Sub-Continent (AQIS) terrorist organisation, operating in Barpeta which was being led by Saiful Islam of Bangladesh, a spokesperson of the NIA said.

Saiful had entered India illegally and was working as an Arabic teacher at the Dhakaliapara Masjid, the spokesperson said. He was actively motivating impressionable youths to join jihadi outfits and work in 'ansars' (sleeper cells) for carrying out subversive activities and for establishment of a base for the AQIS in eastern India, the NIA official said.

During searches at the premises of the accused, incriminating documents and other materials have been seized, the spokesperson said, adding that further investigation in the case was underway.

US official: Russia appoints new Ukraine war commander

WASHINGTON, April 10 (AP): After its striking post-invasion setbacks, Russia has appointed a new Ukraine war commander, a U.S. official said on Sunday.

Russia has turned to Gen. Alexander Dvornikov, 60, one of Russia's most experienced military officers and — according to U.S. officials — a general with a record of brutality against civilians in Syria and other war theatres.

The senior official who identified the new commander was not authorised to be identified and spoke on condition of anonymity.

But the White House national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said "no appointment of any general can erase the fact that Russia has already faced a strategic failure in Ukraine."

"This general will just be another author of crimes and brutality against Ukrainian civilians," Sullivan told CNN's "State of the



Union."

"And the United States, as I said before, is determined to do all that we can to support Ukrainians as they resist him and they resist the forces that he commands."

The decision to establish new battlefield leadership comes as Russia gears up for what is expected to be a large and more focused push to expand Russian control in the Don-

bas and follows a failed opening bid to conquer Kyiv, the capital.

Dvornikov gained prominence while leading the Russian group of forces in Syria, where Moscow has waged a military campaign since 2015 to shore up President Bashar Assad's regime during a devastating civil war. Dvornikov is a career military officer and has steadily risen through the (CONTD. ON PG 9)

Covid-19 has not gone, is changing forms and resurfacing: PM

HMEDABAD, April 10 (PTI): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the coronavirus has not gone away and keeps resurfacing, and cautioned people not to let their guard down in the battle against the pandemic.

Nobody knows when the 'bahurupiya' (one that changes form) Covid-19 will resurface, Modi said, adding that administering nearly 185 crore doses of vaccines to control its spread was made possible due to public support.

He was addressing via video conferencing the Mahapatotsav programme of Maa Umiya Dham at Vanthali in Gujarat's Junagadh district, as part of the 14th foundation day celebration of the temple of Maa Umiya, considered as the deity of Kadva Patidar community.

The PM urged devotees of Maa Umiya to turn to natural farming with the aim to save Mother Earth from the scourge of chemical fertilisers.



He also asked people to a pledge to participate in creating 75 'Amrit Sarovars' (lakes) in each district as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, being organised to mark 75 years of India's Independence.

"Corona (Covid-19 pandemic) was a big crisis, and we are not saying that the crisis is over. It may have taken a pause, but we never know when it will resurface. It is a 'bahurupiya' disease. To stop this, nearly (CONTD. ON PG 9)

College principal faces sexual harassment slur

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, April 10: Two contractual teachers of ADP College here have levelled humiliation and sexual harassment charge against the principal of the college Dr Surajit Bhagawati and filed a case in this connection. Dr Mousumi Saikia and Monika Biswas of Botany and Biotechnology departments also intimated the issue to the teaching council of the college in writing besides filing an FIR in Nagaon PS in this regard. Significantly, Dr Bhagawati also filed an FIR at Haiborgaon TOP alleging that Dr Saikia blackmailed him for not allowing her to appear in an interview scheduled on April 9 at college premise for filling up a post of lecturer in Botany department.

Meanwhile Nagaon Sadar police as well as Haiborgaon TOP police registered two separate cases in this regard and (CONTD. ON PG 9)

Two-day 'Sahitya Sanskriti Aru Sampriti - 2022' ends

DIPHU, April 10: A two-day cultural and literary meet 'Sahitya Sanskriti Aru Sampriti - 2022' has concluded here at Joying Dolo Auditorium on Sunday with dances by different ethnic groups and communities. The two days cultural and literary meet was jointly organised by Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) and Karbi Cultural Society (KCS).

The concluding day witnessed the hosting of multi-language poem recitation, where 21 persons recited their poems. The poems were recited in Assamese, Karbi, Dimas, Bodo, Tiwa and Bengali.

Among them were Juli Boruah - 'Ghoror Hondhanot', Kadam Bini Terangpi - 'Longri Apharman',



Longbir Terang - 'Ne Karbi Alam si Kaningje', Helvelyn Timungpi - 'Thengso Keman a sengve', Anita Maibangsha - 'Graujisla', Budhesor Sagra - 'Nowo Projanno' and others.

Inaugurating the poet's meet Padmashree Dhaneswar Engti said Karbis are sons of Hemphu

Mukrang. Kala guru Bishnu Prasad Rabha has rightly called Karbis the Columbus of Assam as they have first stepped foot in Assam. He said the Karbis have rich culture and tradition and one of them is Chomangkan, a ritual for the deaths. There is also nimso kerung performed (CONTD. ON PG 9)

Birla interacts with tea garden workers in Assam



KAZIRANGA, April 10 (PTI): Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla on Sunday interacted with tea garden workers in Assam and assured them of taking up with the state government the problems faced by them. Birla, who is in Assam for a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting, visited Kaziranga National Park on Sunday, during which he chatted with the tea garden workers, an official release said. He visited the tea production units located in Hathikul area of Kaziranga, which is nearly 125 years old. The diligence with which the workers select each leaf and then process it with modern techniques has given Indian tea its global recognition, Birla said. The Lok Sabha speaker said issues related to tea garden workers have come up for discussion in Parliament, and he would also talk to the state government about the problems faced by them. Earlier, on reaching Kaziranga, Assam Agriculture minister Atul Bora and the locals accorded a traditional welcome to Birla.

Christians celebrate Palm Sunday in KA

DIPHU, April 10: Along with the rest of the world, the Christian community here in Diphu also observed the day with Palm Sunday service. The United Christian Federation (UCF) organised a procession from Believer's Church to Taralango Clock Tower. Later a fest was held in respective churches under UCF.

In West Karbi Anglong, Christians commemorate the entry of Lord Jesus into Jerusalem. Holi Mass was held at Sojong, Dongkamukam where Fr John, the Parish Priest held mass in front of hundreds of believers.

At Satgaon, Catholics held mass at Mary Help of Christian Church led by Fr CA John. Later a procession was taken out with hymns while holding palm leaves from Satgaon Assamese ME School to the Church.

The Church of North India congregation held their mass at Taralango Church and at Satgaon St Mary's Church while Baptist Believer's Church held prayer services at Bordongka, Ghilani and at Rongkuoroi. The Christians in Bokajan Sub-division, (CONTD. ON PG 9)

From next year Rongali is likely to be 7-day affair Sixth edition of Assam's biggest cultural festival comes to an end

GUWAHATI, April 10: Curtains were brought down on the sixth edition of Assam's biggest cultural and colourful festival, Rongali, with a promise to return next year for 7-days.

The week-long festival will provide a robust market to the home-grown entrepreneurs for becoming self-sustained. This year, around 200 home-grown entrepreneurs, agri-entrepreneurs, self-help groups among others bagged a lucrative platform to showcase their product and witnessed a footfall of almost 1.5 lakh people relishing the Assamese cuisine, music, fashion, weaves, bhaoana, sports, cinema and art under one roof.

The 'Vocal for Local' exhibition created a local market for these budding entrepreneurs along with some well-known entrepreneurs such as Gahori of Manoj Basumatary, Bahoboli of Akash Gogoi, Repose, Bhogali Jalpan, Kanyaka and Gorukhuti. All the entrepreneurs bagged lucrative opportunities and made new connections across India. Food was the major component of Rongali



and various cuisines from the entire North East were on display.

To showcase the food in a much elaborate way,

NGO Priyobandhu organised a three-day food competition on Assamese sweet dish, Assamese vegetarian dish and Assamese non-vegetarian dish. Even food researcher Dr Geeta Dutta organised a food exhibition, which saw the tribal food spread of various tribes of Assam including Tiwa cuisine, Sonowal Kachari cuisine, Rabha cuisine and Karbis cuisine.

"Rongali has become a brand, which is connecting the people across North Eastern states. This has been possible because of the incessant support from public, government and media. This exhibition for vocal for local was organised so business opportunities can be created for young entrepreneurs. So, in accordance with their demand, we are planning to go for seven days from next year. The culmination of every edition is an emotional as well as a proud moment for all of us. This festival can never be possible without the support of our audience, government and the immense hardwork of our team, who ensure that everything goes fine. (CONTD. ON PG 9)

Cattle smuggler killed in gunfight with police in Dhubri district

GUWAHATI, April 10 (PTI): A suspected cattle smuggler was killed in a gunfight with the police in Assam's Dhubri district, officials said on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, police tried to intercept a vehicle in Sapatgram area on Saturday night, they said.

"The car was signalled to stop, but it sped away. Our team started chasing it," a police officer said.

Those inside the car fired at the police vehicle, which was retaliated in self-defence, he said.

"There were three people in the vehicle. One of them died on the way to a hospital, while the other one is undergoing treatment now," he said.

One of the suspects managed to escape, the officer added. In another incident, a suspected dacoit was injured in police firing in Doboka in Nagaon district, officials said.

The suspect was arrested on Saturday, after which he was taken to recover hidden arms at night, they said.



"He pushed away a constable and tried to run. We had to fire to ensure that he doesn't escape. He was wounded on the right leg," a police officer said.

Altogether 43 people have been killed and at least 107 injured in police action since chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma assumed office in May 2021.

Museum on Neelpawan Baruah's artwork inaugurated at Tezpur University

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 10: A museum showcasing the modern art of Padma Shri Neelpawan Baruah, considered as one of the most remarkable modernist artists of our times was inaugurated at Tezpur University by Assam chief secretary Jishnu Barua. The museum is housed in the Humanities and Social Sciences building of the University.

With the collection of Baruah's 56 artworks in different artistic medium, from oil paintings on canvas to sketches in ink and acrylic, the museum is set up under the aegis of the Centre with Potential for Excellence in Particular Area (CPEPA), a special scheme awarded by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to Tezpur University in 2016 with the Department of Cultural Studies as the lead department and department of English and the Centre for Assamese studies, now Dept of Assamese as collaborative departments. The museum is visualised as a permanent display of his most significant artworks. Speaking at the inaugural function, Jishnu Barua emphasised the rich history of Tezpur and the cultural relevance it holds. "Tezpur is a culturally and historically rich town in Assam. The history of Tezpur and Sonitpur is worth telling everyone. A modern museum on Neelpawan Baruah is a welcome step by the university," said Barua.

Barua also dwelt on the role of a univer-



sity in enriching the social and cultural fabrics and lauded the initiative taken by Tezpur University in preserving the artworks of Neelpawan Baruah in a befitting manner for its preservation and accessibility to all.

Addressing the occasion, Neelpawan Baruah's brother, Dr. Sunil Pawan Baruah, noted columnist and retired principal, B. Borooah College, Guwahati said that Neelpawan has spent more than 50 years in uplifting the Assamese art. "The opening of

this museum is an honour for the entire artists' community not only for Assam but for the entire country," he said.

"I'm thankful to the Cultural Studies department for the initiative they undertook to preserve the works of Neelpawan Baruah. I assure all cooperation from our family in the smooth functioning of this museum," he further added.

Representing the arts and craft society, noted artist Munindra Narayan Bhattacharya

said he is happy to see the efforts of Tezpur University in preserving the artworks of Neelpawan Baruah. "This is great news for all art lovers. This museum is a mark of respect to all artists," said Bhattacharya.

"Everyone must have an aesthetic outlook in seeing things around us and appreciate it. Neelpawan Baruah has this aesthetic appreciation as evident from the artefacts made available to the public through the museum," he said.

Deba Kumar Mishra, deputy commissioner of Sonitpur, who was present at the inaugural function, said, "Every aspect of nature in Tezpur speaks for itself. Tezpur and Tezpur University in particular are apt places for recognising the work of artists. This museum is a tribute to Neelpawan Baruah's work and his commitment towards society."

Prof Vinod Kumar Jain, Vice-Chancellor, Tezpur University appreciated the noble gesture of Neelpawan Baruah in giving his artworks to the university. "It is indeed a noble and generous gesture of Neelpawan Baruah for sharing his work with us," he said. He requested the Government of Assam through its chief secretary in adding the museum and the university campus to the Assam Tourism brochure as a must-visit place in Assam and hope that this inclusion will give the tourist a scope to see the creativity of an artist, which can't be realised without seeing it.

Executive meeting of BJYM held



HT Bureau

DIPHU, April 10: The first district executive meeting of Bharatiya Janata Morcha (BJYM) of Karbi Anglong district (East) was held here at Karbi Anglong district BJP office near ARTC 1st Gate on Saturday. While briefing media persons, the president, BJYM of Karbi Anglong District (East), Jiten Bey said the BJYM, Karbi Anglong District has convened its first district executive meeting to discuss organisational matters and to prepare for the coming Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) election. "In this district executive meeting, we discussed ways to start preparing for the KAAC elections. We want to inform you that in all 26 Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituencies the BJP will capture power again in the KAAC. We also discussed how to get the BJYM workers to assist the party in the campaigning during the election." Vice president of Assam BJYM and also Probhari for Karbi Anglong, Jun Jyoti Keshap, president of BJP East Karbi Anglong District Committee, Dhansing Teron; Bevastha Pramukh, BJYM, Karbi Anglong district; executive member (EM), Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Khansing Rongpi and other leaders of the party were also present, Bey informed. Apart from district committee leaders, five representatives from each Mandal Committee were invited in the meeting, he said.

National Tiger Conservation meet held at Seijosa



HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, April 10: The 20th conference of National Tiger Conservation began at Seijosa on Saturday. Bhupendra Yadav, Union minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Jun Jyoti Keshap, president of Assam BJYM and also Probhari for Karbi Anglong, Jun Jyoti Keshap, president of BJP East Karbi Anglong District Committee, Dhansing Teron; Bevastha Pramukh, BJYM, Karbi Anglong district; executive member (EM), Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Khansing Rongpi and other leaders of the party were also present, Bey informed. Apart from district committee leaders, five representatives from each Mandal Committee were invited in the meeting, he said.

One held with several lakhs of fake Indian currencies at Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, April 10: Nagaon police arrested one Atikul Islam of No 2 Islampur under Bihpuria PS on charges of trading with fake Indian currency from Nagaon Dhang gate area on Friday night. Subsequently, based on his statement, police conducted a raid at the rented house of one Ajjur Rahman at Nagaon Katimari area where the police team recovered printed bundles of 500 denomination fake notes of worth several lakhs, printing machine, printing materials, plain papers, 4 numbers of original ₹ 500 notes, a pulsar bike, one Bolero and one alto car from the house, sources added. Sources claimed that the house dwellers were found absconding when police personnel carried out the raid. Police registered a case in this regard, sources said further.

Rongali Bihu Sanmilian set to be organised in Demow

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, April 10: Under the patronage of Demow Regional Students Union in association with the people of the area, the 28th Demow Kendriya Rongali Bihu Sanmilian will be organised in Demow Public Playground on April 23 and April 24. The Lai Khuta of the programme was erected in Demow Public Playground recently. As per the schedule, on April 23, the programme will start with flag hoisting of the organising committee which will be followed by flag hoisting of AASU. After that flag hoisting of different organisations, establishments will also be done. The Swahid Tarpan will also be offered. Further, the Bihu dance and Bihuwati competitions will also be organised. On April 24, the programme will start with a drawing competition. An inter college quiz competition is also scheduled to be organised on April 24. The Dhol Badan and Jeng Bihu competitions are also scheduled for the day.

Noted litterateur Nahendra Padun presented with 'Sivasagar Ratna' award



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, April 10: Noted litterateur, poet, lexicologist, compiler of Assamese Mising dictionary, former professor, and former principal secretary of Asom Sahitya Sabha Nahendra Padun was conferred the 'Sivasagar Ratna' award by Sivasagar Jila Sahitya Sabha in association with its primary units. In a meeting held for the purpose in Juva Dal auditorium, Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami conferred the award and spoke in length on the singular contributions of Prof Padun in many genres of literature, primarily in Mising study and understanding theoretical aspects of constructivism and Deconstructivism. Goswami said that Padun began his literary career from his primary school in remote Rig Bi Mising village in Murkongselek where most people did not know Assamese, Padun had to strive hard to learn the Assamese language and after a long struggle for recognition as a writer, Padun became a colossal figure in Assamese language and literature by dint of exemplary dedication and hard work, he added.

Over 150 shops gutted in Lanka



HT Correspondent

HOJAI, April 10: A devastating fire gutted more than 150 shops at Pyoli market and Vegetable market in Lanka under Hojai district on Friday night. As per the information, it is suspected that the incident may have taken place due to a short circuit. Nearly all fire tenders from around the Hojai district reached the spot to douse the fire which has ravaged properties worth several crores. Local MLA Ramkrishna Ghosh also reached the spot on Saturday afternoon in order to take stock of the situation.

Seven new vehicles stolen from showroom

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 10: Sensation prevailed here following the theft of seven Bolero Pick-Up Vans from Tezpur-Dekargaon stock of the Ashok Motor's, a car dealer of Mahindra Car Company located at Mission Chariali area in Tezpur on Friday.

Police sources said that investigation is on and of the total seven stolen vehicles one has already been recovered from Naltali area near Kaliabhomora Bridge.

For interrogation a few suspects have been picked up, sources added.

The actor was bowled over by Assamese culture, food, and the weather

Shruti Haasan attends Rongali

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 10: Popular actor Shruti Haasan, who is on her maiden visit to Assam to attend the sixth edition of Rongali, was felicitated at the cultural extravaganza for her outstanding contribution to Indian cinema for over a decade. The 'Bestseller' actor is all excited to explore the rich Assamese culture, heritage and food in the festival.

As a child actor, Shruti appeared in a guest role in her father Kamal Haasan's directorial 'Hey Ram' in 2000 before making her adult acting debut in the 2009 Bollywood film 'Luck'. She also achieved recognition with leading roles in Telugu and Tamil films. She recently made her web-series debut with 'Bestseller', where she received accolades for her brilliant performance.

"It's so wonderful to be here in Rongali and being felicitated here. This is my first ever trip to Assam and I am super excited to be here especially in the festive occasion of Rongali, which is celebrating Assamese culture. I am honoured to be here. I have been looking forward to coming here and it's really special," said a thrilled Shruti.

Shruti is in Guwahati, Assam with her boyfriend and popular



doodle artiste Santanu Hazarika. They connected over social media in 2017 and have been a great admirer of each other's work. Shruti was sporting a black Muga Silk saree gifted by Santanu's mother.

"It was really interesting to know that Assam has a rich culture, heritage and history. There are so many tribes and their emergence has a great history. The state has undergone so many religious movements here. Everything is so interesting here. People here are really humble, friendly and it has been such a great pleasure to get to know Assamese people on a personal level. There is so much to explore. And, food is something which tops my list," she said.

Jorhat dist admin imposes Sec 144 CrPC

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, April 10: In order to maintain peace and harmony among the public, the Jorhat district administration has imposed certain restrictions under Section 144 CrPC in the district. An order passed by the Jorhat District Magistrate stated that assembly of five or more persons at public place, taking out processions, burning of effigies, construction of any structure as Swahid Bedis in Government or public places, training in public places by way of drills, training in using weapons and lathis, collection of subscription,

donation, etc., by any person, group of persons or organisations, bursting of crackers in moving vehicles or throwing crackers at vehicles have been prohibited.

The order further said that throwing of coloured powder or any other objectionable substances on people, especially on women and children at public places, use of loudspeakers near hospitals, judicial courts, educational institutes at high decibels, making communal or anti-national speeches and slogans, pasting posters and writing on Government or private buildings,

use of tinted glass in vehicles, blowing of vacuum horns, use of coloured and bright lights, wearing dresses similar to military forces, have been prohibited. The order mentioned that the prohibitions will not be applicable to military personnel, security personnel in uniform, policemen and Government employees on duty.

The order comes into immediate effect and will remain in force until further order, the DM said. Non-compliance of the restrictions imposed by the DM will be dealt with Section 188 of IPC, the order cautioned.

am going to come back soon and explore the food, culture and the wildlife. I really want to visit Kamakhya Mandir. I want to experience how the everyday life of Assam feels like. Looking forward to a longer trip here."

Her rumoured beau Santanu had showcased his creations in previous editions of Rongali. Santanu is mentoring the budding artists in the sixth edition of the festival.

A nostalgic Santanu said, "It's a homecoming for me. Visiting Rongali is a special feeling. I have been quite a constant in Rongali and I am fortunate that my talent has always been recognized in the previous editions of Rongali. I am really thankful to the organisers of the festival, where budding artists get a platform to showcase their work."

Welcoming Santanu and Shruti to the festival, chief organiser of Rongali Shyamkanu Mohanta said, "We are privileged to have these two rockstars amongst us in our festival. They are the real youth sensations. Santanu has been a constant in Rongali and his arts have motivated so many youngsters to take up art as a career option. Shruti is not just an ordinary film personality but she is also into music and philanthropy."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Those who are at war with others are not at peace with themselves. - William Hazlitt

Fuel prices continue to rise

The prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas are soaring ever higher with every passing day. This rise has had a cascading effect not just on transport but on sectors of the economy too. Consequently, with rising prices, inflation too is rising alarmingly. Finally, the tax burden is falling on the workers and middle class while the super-rich are gifted with tax breaks. Citing reasons for the hike, predictably, the Union minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman blamed the oil bonds issued during the previous government. Meanwhile, Union minister of Petroleum Hardeep Singh Puri claimed that the price of fuel is high due to the taxes imposed by the states. Similarly, defending the price hike, the erstwhile petroleum minister, Dharmendra Pradhan had claimed that the fuel tax is being used to finance India's vaccination program and other welfare schemes. While the present NDA government is justifying the price rise, it is important to unravel the truth behind these claims. For instance, contrary to the claims of the finance minister, during the last eight years, the Modi government has only repaid Rs 3,500 crore worth of oil bonds, while the total excise collection from petroleum products was over 3 lakh crore in 2020-21 alone.

In the year 2020-21, when the entire nation was reeling under the Covid-induced economic distress, the prices of petrol, diesel, and LPG underwent massive hikes. Within just one year, the prices of petrol and diesel increased by over 35 percent crossing Rs 100 per liter, while the price of LPG increased by over 50 percent reaching close to Rs 1,000 per cylinder in many states. The increase in fuel prices not only adds to private transportation like cars and motorcycles but also has a cascading effect on inflation by rising prices in several other sectors of the economy at every step in the production and supply chain. It affects farm food production manufacturing industrial goods services to prices of daily essentials. The increase in fuel prices affects every person, however, it hurts the poor the most, who have to spend a larger portion of their incomes to cover this inflation. The fuel tax is part of indirect taxes that are a form of regressive taxes, collected from excise, GST on various goods and services. Ironically, the fall in tax collection from the rich was made up by increasing the taxes on the poor.

The Modi government has significantly reduced the direct taxes and increased the indirect taxes. Modi's government abolished the wealth tax. In 2019, the corporate tax was reduced from 30 percent to 22 percent. The fall in tax collection from the rich was made up by increasing the taxes on the poor. While the share of direct taxes in the government's receipts has decreased, the share of indirect taxes, including the excise duty from petroleum products and the GST, has increased significantly. Alternatively, a fiscal policy that relies on increasing direct taxes on the super-rich needs to be adopted to fill the revenue deficit in the prevailing volatile crude oil prices in world markets arising from the Russia-Ukraine war. Government should resort to control on the retail prices of petro-products and quantitative rationing in the distribution of petro-products to keep the total crude imports restricted rather than relying on a price-rise in these products for doing so.

The art of motherhood is to teach children the art of living

National Safe Motherhood Day Special

By: Priyanka 'Saurabh'

It is a well-known fact that the best age for a child under five is because he learns the most at this age. A child under the age of five spends most of his time at home and so he learns a lot from what he sees and does at home. Chhatrapati Shivaji was told many stories of heroes by his mother in his childhood and when he grew up he became a hero to many people.

At home, a child first learns socialization. A child first learns a lot at home. But today, since most parents are earners, they cannot spend quality time with their children. Children are sent to play schools and are often raised by their grandparents. These children are at a disadvantage compared to those who can spend quality time with their parents.

This is because a child learns what is accepted and what is not accepted, what is right and what is not. He can spend enough time with his family which strengthens their bonding. He grows up to be a confident person.

One of our relative's children has been raised by his grandparents as his parents are busy with their jobs in America. He grew up to be a stubborn, inferior child. Even today, home is the first school and the mother is the first teacher. Even a small amount of time spent by a child with his family and especially the mother has a great impact on his influential mind.

Someone has rightly said that "God cannot be everywhere so he made a mother" so, the person who affects the child the most is always a mother. The mother has the greatest affection for the child. She is not only the mother but also the first teacher of the child. She makes a lasting impression by teaching the child from birth. A mother's education is divine. Many mothers have made their childhood heroes with their unique love for their children. There was news recently that a mother taught her daughter at home and she never went to school and now she has been called for admission to IIT.

Mother's education started from the first day and continues till the mother's blessing in life, it is not

necessary, the mother should be highly educated to provide education. The value of education provided by mothers cannot be compared anywhere. Now the question arises if every mother is providing value-based education to her children then why there are so many issues in society, the answer is that there are many more factors that affect one's life and a mother's education never misleads a child.

I would like to say here that a mother sees the first smile on her child's face and makes it permanent with her education and blessings. "The art of motherhood is to teach children the art of living. The house is the first building block for the overall development of the child and the mother is truly the most wonderful teacher."

At home, apart from academics, the child learns moral values like love, care, compassion, empathy, etc. from his mother, which is itself the embodiment of selfless love and sacrifice. Through daily observation of the child by interacting with his parents, he develops an attitude/behaviour that helps him in thinking, living, understanding, and decision making at important stages of life.

Today, both parents are working outside the home to keep pace with the fast life. Mothers are not able to give their children the right time. At first, it seems to ignore the interest of the children but at the same time, it teaches discipline, generates self-motivation, and helps the children to build their character in the long run. The child learns to adapt to the changing environment from the first step. As a result, children are also getting involved in innovative activities while living alone at home.

The child values the mother's education and shapes his character building, respect, love, and care at home. The mother is the best teacher in comforting the child in sorrow, hope in sorrow, and strength in weakness and shaping his life. So, even today, it is true that at home the mother is in the first place and also the first teacher in child-rearing.

(The author is a Research Scholar in Political Science, poet, independent journalist, and columnist.)

KGBV: A Gurukul to nurture the girls' future

Education is the one and most powerful instrument of social change and social development. Particularly Women's Education in India is one of the major pre-occupations of the government as well as the civil society. This is because educated women are able to play a vital role in developing India. There is saying that "to educate a girl child means to educate a family". Education is the mile stone of empowerment of women as it helps them to change their lives, respond to their challenges and question their traditional roles.

Criteria for KGBV

Gender inequality reinforces itself in education as it is factually proved that the rate of literacy for women is much lower than men in all censuses. To cope up the challenges "Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)" scheme was launched by Government of India (GOI) in July 2004 for setting up residential schools at upper primary level for girls belonging predominantly to the SC, ST, OBC and Minorities communities in difficult areas. The scheme ensures access and quality education to girls from disadvantaged communities. Initially it ran as a separate scheme and was merged with SSA with effect from 1st April, 2007. KGBV has to be opened in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB), previously defined on a composite criteria of blocks with a rural female literacy rate below the national average (46.13%: Census 2001) and gender gap in literacy higher than the national average (21.59%: Census 2001). The criteria of eligible blocks was revised with effect from 1st April, 2008 to include

(i) EBBs with rural female literacy below 30%, and

(ii) Towns/cities having minority concentration (as per the list identified by Ministry of Minority Affairs, GOI) with female rate below the national average (53.67%: Census 2001).

In 2010-11, opening of KGBVs was extended to all EBBs with female literacy below the national average as per Census 2001. The scheme helped to mainstream the drop out girls in elementary education system. The KGBV addressed the educational needs of girls from marginalised and disadvantaged communities of the society. In India, a total 3609 KGBVs for class VI to VIII have been sanctioned in 27 States and 3 UTs.

In 2009-10, "Girls Hostel" scheme was launched by GOI, under Rashtriya Mad-

hyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), to make secondary education (Class-IX to XII) of good quality accessible and affordable residential facilities to Girls in the age group of 14-18 years. Criteria for eligibility of Girls Hostels were also EB Blocks. This scheme has opened the door for class-VIII pass out girls from KGBV for their higher study with residential facility. All these Hostels have capacity of 100 girls.

Types of KGBV

As three existing centrally sponsored educational programmes, namely Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE) have been unified under one umbrella "Samagra Shiksha" in FY 2018-19, all sanctioned Girls Hostels become part and parcel of KGBV of concerned Educationally Backward Blocks and girls got opportunity to continue their study upto class-XII without any transition loss. The guidelines of Samagra Shiksha reveals that all KGBVs (upto class VIII) will be upgraded up to secondary level i.e. class-XII in phased manner upto FY 2025-26. Provision of four types of KGBVs has been done in Samagra Shiksha and States have the option to choose them as per their convenience and need. These are KGBV Type-I (Class VI to VIII, capacity-100, budget- Rs 60 lakh), Type-II (Class VI to X, capacity 150, budget- Rs 80 lakh), Type-III (Class VI to XII, capacity-200, budget- Rs 100 lakh) and Type-IV (Class IX to XII, capacity-100, budget- Rs 25 Lakh).

The Girls Hostels (constructed under RMSA), close to the existing KGBV buildings have been kept under Type-III, whereas Girls Hostels, which are far away from KGBV buildings, have been kept under Type-IV.

Facilities in Girls

In the country, some KGBVs are full fledged schools, whereas some are only hostels attached to nearby existing middle/high schools. The girls enrolled in KGBV got all residential & educational facilities such as food, uniform, winter dress, books, stationery, daily use materials, sanitary napkins etc. They are being taught by subject teachers appointed/deputed in KGBVs. Capacity building of the wardens & account personals are done at State or District level for managerial & account work, whereas the teachers are oriented in the subjects concerned.

In addition to good quality subject teaching, extracurricular, skill development and other initiatives for personal, moral, physical

development are undertaken to enhance the confidence level of the girls. Vocational training such as dress making, computer education, life skill, painting, music, vermicompost preparation etc. enrich girls' capacity and provide scope for being "Atmanirbhar" after graduation from the Vidyalaya. Incursion tour for girls of KGBV is also organized for visiting historical, religious and important places of the states. All KGBVs will be saturated with ICT/Smart Classrooms, Integrated science labs and vocational education.

Safety & Security

Safety and Security of Girls, residing in the KGBVs, is of the prime concern and detailed guideline have been issued to KGBV management. CCTV cameras & Biometrics Attendance system have been installed and are being connected to monitoring offices through Internet networking. Group insurance coverage for the girls have been provided. No male member can access inside the KGBV hostels after 5.00 PM; and in the living area even during day time. Wardens and teachers are sensitized towards safety and security of girls and they stay with girls during night.

Movement registers are being maintained in all KGBVs, when girls are taken away by their guardians. Monitoring of KGBVs are done by State, district & block levels educational functionaries and remedial measures are taken up.

Self defence training programme for girls of KGBV is organized through trained personnel so that they can build up in themselves certain self defence skills and become psychologically, intellectually and physically strong to protect themselves in time of distress. They are trained to leverage daily articles like keychains, dupattas etc. for their protection.

In State/district level orientations of wardens, cyber safety and psycho-social aspects & other such subjects are discussed. The wardens are instructed to orient teachers and students on cyber safety and psycho-social aspects etc. As a part of safety and security for ensuring child safety, audit of KGBV is to be done. Senior girl students will also be involved in safety & security audit work.

Health Issues

Regular health check-up of the girls is ensured in KGBV through health centres and the health records of the girls are maintained. General insurance of inmates is also done through insurance agencies. Convergence with Health department has been ensured for implementation of Weekly Iron

and Folic Acid Supplement (WIFS) programme to reduce the prevalence and severity of anaemia in adolescent population (10-19 years). In addition to weekly availability of IFA supplements, Albendazole tablets for de-worming are to be administered twice a year to the learners.

Centre of Social Change

In state like Bihar, KGBVs have also proved to be a centre of social change. Its inmates have engaged themselves in campaign against social evils like child marriage, dowry system and alcoholism. They also actively participated in Swachhata Abhiyan. Under "Clean KGBV Green KGBV" programmes KGBVs have been covered with plants to conserve environment.

Guardians, particularly mothers of enrolled girls are involved in decision making of day to day functioning of the KGBVs.

Some Bottlenecks

There are some bottlenecks in the smooth implementation of the scheme, which needs to be resolved by Education Ministry, Government of India.

(1) Provision of lumpsum budget, within the ceiling, should be done for KGBV. The break-up of the activities & their unit costs should be planned by the concerned KGBVs and not at national level, as each KGBV has its own requirements.

(2) Cost for Furniture & equipment are part of estimate of building construction as a component, for which there should clearcut provision of 10 - 15% of the estimate.

(3) There are financial constraints in the operation of KGBV Type-IV (class IX to XII), as it has unit cost of just Rs 40 lakh as compared to Rs 60 lakh for Type-I (class VI to VIII), having same capacity (100 girls) and lower age group.

(4) For KGBVs, where sufficient land is not available for its upgradation, there should be provision of budget for acquisition of land on the pattern of other central infrastructure schemes.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas have proved to be great boon as well as chance for out of school girls predominantly belonging to depressed sections of the society and whose paths for education have come to an abrupt halt. This ambitious scheme helps all-round and conducive growth of these girls and makes them responsible, self dependent, decision maker too. KGBV will open the door for success in various walk of life to girls, which ultimately will nurture their future to new horizons. (The author is a technocrat and academician. He can be reached at prabhathkishore65@gmail.com)

Bangladesh defies all pressures from USA to take a position against Russia

By: Ashis Biswas

A section of Bangladeshi media analysts, unlike their more diplomatic Indian counterparts, has taken a distinctively acerbic view of the role played by Ukraine in Europe and elsewhere in recent years. The mainstream Dhaka-based media however is broadly supportive of their country's present neutral positioning on the war in Ukraine.

For the record, Bangladesh like India has called for moderation, seeking an immediate end of the Ukraine conflict and an early negotiated settlement. It has neither condemned Russia as the aggressor, nor imposed any sanctions against it following the call of the Western bloc. Dhaka regards both Russia and Ukraine as 'friendly' countries.

No wonder the censorious stand taken by some Dhaka-based observers on Ukraine comes as a surprise. They also endorse the official decision not to disrupt in any way all existing trade/business arrangements with Russia, regardless of mounting Western pressure to the contrary.

Some writers have also scathingly attacked the alleged double standards on part of the US/EU allies explicit in their contrasting reactions towards the endless Rohingya Muslim exodus to Bangladesh from Myanmar and to the situation now evolving in East Europe.

Despite Myanmar's established record of carrying out an anti-Muslim genocide for years, the West has

not felt it necessary to impose crippling sanctions on the Naypitaw-based Army rulers. Analysts ascribe such western restraint to its policy of not offending the ruling army junta in view of the rich natural/mineral resource base of Myanmar, which it may need accessing for future development of manufacturing industries in the US or EU. As of now, far too many resource-rich countries like Russia, Iran or Venezuela have become political untouchables for the West.

Again, it is not a question of securing long term Western economic interests only. The 'tread softly in Myanmar' policy is also useful in not letting China have a free hand in South Asia.

By not declaring stringent Russia-like sanctions against the army Junta headed by Gen Min Aung Hlaing, it has been alleged, the West is securing its own long term economic interests. Assets worth only \$1 billion were 'frozen' by way of 'punishment' in addition to 'restrictions' imposed on a few people. No wonder followers of Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the pro democracy movement in Myanmar felt short-changed and declared that such leniency would only encourage more rigidity within the ruling Army against protestors who rose against the new regime.

True or not, this explains in part why Myanmar shows little interest in repatriating over 1.1 million of Muslim Rohingyas, former Myanmar citizens, driven out forcibly from the Rakhine province, Except for making

promises to Bangladesh and advancing financial help occasionally, the US/EU bloc has not shown much initiative to ensure the return of the Rohingyas to the Rakhines.

The standard Western argument has been that economic sanctions against Myanmar will end up hurting the hapless Burmese community as a whole. In contrast, the US and Europe have imposed by their own admission the most stringent of economic sanctions targeting the entire Russian population despite their non-involvement in the present war!

Such an instant yet overwhelming reaction indicates that Western powers were pre-disposed to bring about a regime change in Russia, culminating in the ouster of President Vladimir Putin - never mind the hardship, sacrifice and high political/economic price that Russian people must pay/suffer in the process! It also exposes the fear of the declining West about the resurgent Russia backed by its major powerful ally, the new rising China', says Charubrata Ray, Kolkata-based analyst.

Bangladeshi analysts argue that not only have Western countries have announced sanctions, they are also pressuring other countries including India and others, to fall in line and cut off all financial engagements with Russia-period! This is simply unacceptable in the multi-polar world of 2022.

It is not surprising that most major countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America have not followed the West. Bangladesh has announced that it

would not in any way curtail any existing trade/business arrangements with Russia. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced that all ongoing projects, such as the construction of the \$12 billion nuclear power plant at Rooppur will continue as scheduled and the second such plant too would be built, on schedule.

Bangladesh as of now is suffering from a critical shortage of natural gas, which has hit its industries hard. Even in normal times it has a power shortage to contend with. It buys gas from neighbouring India and other sources. Its decision to set up nuclear power plants had been taken long back, keeping in view the long term energy requirements of its expanding local industrial/ manufacturing base.

As for Ukraine: the country has always been a part of the US/EU bloc in matters relating to foreign policy. Despite its current denials issued under duress, the fact remains that Ukraine had always pressed for an entry into the anti-Russian military alliance, NATO.

Among major questions being discussed among Dhaka-based experts are the following: "After the dissolution of the USSR, why was the membership of NATO increased from 12 to 30? Who is being targeted in Europe and why has it been found necessary for smaller entities like Montenegro, Estonia, Luxembourg, Lithuania and Albania, for heaven's sake! - join a military alliance possessing a nuclear arsenal? Who has threatened them? Would the US ever accept the emergence of a military al-

liance at its doorstep, based off Panama or Cuba?"

More alarmingly, the NATO's exertions to further the cause of democracy and the pursuit of universal happiness were NOT necessarily restricted to Europe only. Like the erstwhile Soviet-led Warsaw Pact, older Western military alliance like the SEATO or CENTO exist no more. But that has hardly changed anything.

It has been NATO which has been involved in the long, and eventually fruitless military campaign in Afghanistan, an ill-advised misadventure leaving the Afghans with a ruined economy, a devastated country and countless poor people currently looking to recover the basic necessities of life!

It needs stressing strongly, troops from Ukraine had participated in the Afghan campaign. Today Ukraine is accusing that democracy has been trampled by Russia, its aggressor in east Europe. Its critics in South Asia point out that Ukraine had never protested even verbally against the mistreatment of displaced Palestinians and the loss of their human rights by Israel, backed by the West, at any level!

The present Indian Government led by Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi, whatever its other faults, has made it unapologetically clear not only to Ukraine but to the US and EU as well, that they deal with a sovereign country capable of securing its own long interests - thanks, but no thanks to others. (IPA Service)

Talking Points

Unmasking the new variant, but nothing to worry

By: Narvijay Yadav

In most places, including the Capital City Delhi, Mumbai, Haryana and Chandigarh, the legal compulsion of masks has been done away with. Still, it would be prudent to wear a mask in crowded places as a precaution. It is similar to wearing a helmet while driving a bike or scooter to protect one's life, whether the police are there to challan or not. In the same way, even though no one will come and punish you with a penalty for not wearing a mask, but to avoid infection, it is advisable to keep using a mask and sanitizer. Now alerts are coming again that a new variant of Corona, named XE has been detected. A person infected with the same variant was found in the country recently. It's a facelift of Omicron, the same variant that was responsible for the third wave during the first two months of this year. Since almost everyone has got infected

once with Omicron in India, and the majority of the population has been vaccinated, the XE variant will not pose any danger. Once a person is infected with Corona virus, antibodies are made in the body, which resist further infection. This is called natural immunity, while the second type of immunity is developed through vaccine. The effect of antibodies made from the vaccine lasts for six months or more, while the effect of natural immunity may go on for lifelong.

The rise in global temperature is a matter of concern, due to which the climate is changing on the Earth. Sometimes there is a problem of unexpected rain and snow, while sometimes there is uncontrolled flood or severe drought conditions. In April itself, tem-

perature is rising due to climate change, causing tourists to rush to hill stations, where hotel rooms are available at double the normal rates. Hotels have got advance booking till May and room occupancy is going up to 80-90 per cent in Uttarakhand, Himachal and Kashmir. With the influx of tourists moving to the mountains in search of coolness, it is expected that the tourism industry will make up for the losses of the past two years. The emission of

greenhouse gases is responsible for the rise in temperature, which can be controlled by shifting to renewable and safe sources of energy. India contributes about 7 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. Between 1990 and 2018, India's greenhouse

gas emissions increased by 172 per cent.

In India, we have the highest emissions i.e. up to 74 per cent due to the excessive use of coal and fossil fuels. This means that India will have to pay more attention to the development of alternative sources of energy in the coming time. Meanwhile, Adani New Industries Ltd. has announced plans to manufacture wind turbines for wind power generation, to develop green hydrogen projects, solar panels for solar powered equipment and machines, and production of batteries. Adani aims to produce hydrogen at the lowest cost in the world. The group has also ensured the use of environment friendly technology in steel production. For this, the group has tied up with Posco Company of South Korea. Together, the two companies will set up a green integrated steel plant in Mundra, Gujarat. (The writer is a senior journalist & columnist. He can be reached at narvijayindia@gmail.com)



What to know about kidney stones

By: Peter Crosta

Kidney stones may be small and pass unnoticed through the urinary tract, but some grow to the size of a golf ball. Larger stones can cause severe pain as they leave the body. Without treatment, kidney stones can lead to urinary problems, infections, and kidney damage.

Kidney stones are a common problem in the United States, and the incidence appears to be growing. Dietary factors and climate change may contribute to this increase, according to one study.

In this article, we look at how to recognize kidney stones and explain what to do if they occur.

Symptoms

Kidney stones do not always cause symptoms. A person may pass very small stones out of the body in the urine without being aware of them.

When symptoms appear, they commonly include:

- Pain in the groin, the side of the abdomen, or both
- Blood in the urine
- Vomiting and nausea
- A urinary tract infection (UTI)
- Fever and chills, if there is an infection
- An increased need to urinate

If kidney stones block the passage of urine, a kidney infection may result. The symptoms include:

- A fever and chills
- Weakness and fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Cloudy, foul-smelling urine

If a person has any of these symptoms, they should seek medical help at once.

Complications

When kidney stones remain inside the body, complications can develop.

If they block the tube that connects the kidney to the bladder, urine will not be able to pass out of the body. This dysfunction increases the risk of a UTI or kidney infection.

If recurring kidney stones cause blockages in the urinary system, this can increase the risk of chronic kidney disease.

Causes

There are four different types of stone: calcium, uric acid, struvite, and cystine.

Calcium stones form when the kidneys retain the excess calcium that the muscles and bones do not use, rather than flushing it out of the body. The calcium combines with other waste products to form crystals, such as calcium oxalate, which clump together to make a stone.

Uric acid stones result from a lack of water in the body. Urine contains uric acid. When there is not enough water to dilute the uric acid, the urine

becomes more acidic. Struvite stones can form after a UTI. They consist of magnesium and ammonia. Cystine stones develop when cystine, a substance present in the muscles, builds up in urine. These are rare.

The American Urological Association say that people who are susceptible to kidney stones should consume enough fluid to produce 2.5 liters (l), or about 85 ounces (oz), of urine each day. On average, this means consuming close to 3 l, or about 100 oz, of fluid a day. Not all of this needs to come from water.

Risk factors

Apart from dehydration, factors that increase the risk of kidney stones include:

- A family or personal history of kidney stones
- Being aged 40 years or older, although they can sometimes affect children
- Sex, as they are more common in males than females

- A diet that is high in protein and sodium
- A sedentary lifestyle
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Pregnancy
- Recent surgery on the digestive system
- Health conditions that affect how the body absorbs calcium, such as inflammatory bowel disease and chronic diarrhea

Various medications, such as allopurinol (Zyloprim) and topiramate (Topamax), can also increase the risk. People should check with their doctor if they have concerns about any medications they are taking.

Diagnosis

Various tests can show whether a kidney stone is present.

- A physical examination may identify the kidneys as the source of pain.
- Urinalysis can reveal blood in the urine or signs of an infection.
- Blood tests can help identify complications.
- Imaging tests, such as a CT scan or ultrasound, will reveal any structural changes.

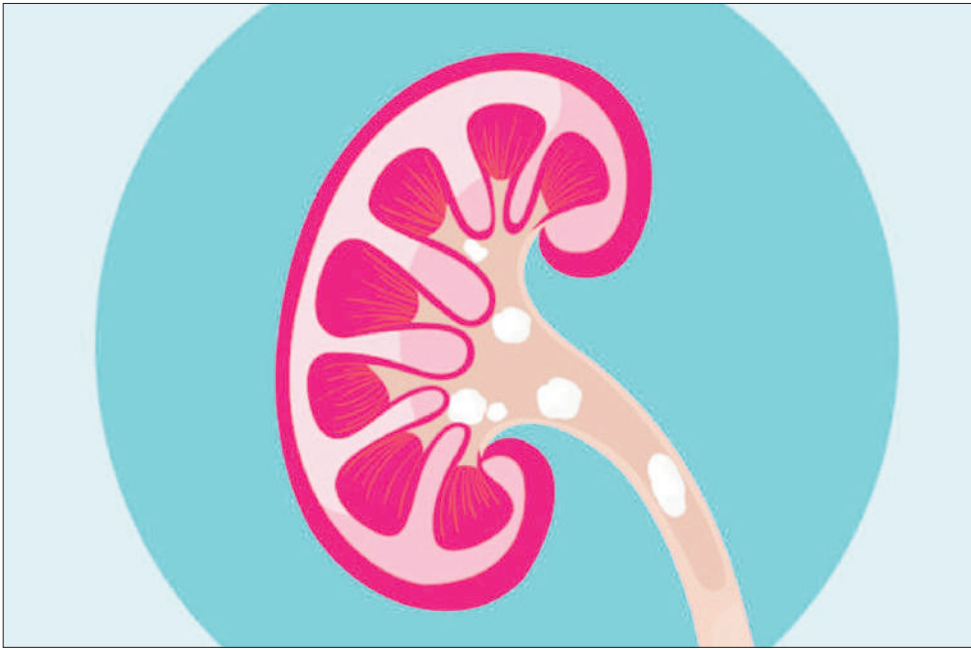
Imaging tests can help doctors determine:

- Whether a stone is present
- The size and location of any stones
- Whether there are any blockages
- The condition of the urinary tract
- Whether complications have affected other organs

During pregnancy, an ultrasound is preferable to a CT scan, as it does not involve radiation.

Treatment

Treatment will focus on managing symptoms and removing the stone. There are various ways to do this.



Treatment may involve:

- A high intake of fluids by mouth or intravenously
- Pain relief medication
- Medications to help speed up the passage of stones

How long do kidney stones take to pass?

Large stones

Large stones may need other types of intervention, such as shock wave lithotripsy (SWL), ureteroscopy, or percutaneous nephrolithotomy (PCNL). SWL involves the use of ultrasound waves to break the stone into smaller pieces to make it easier to pass.

If a doctor opts to use ureteroscopy, they will pass a long, thin tube through the person's urethra as far as the ureter, which connects the bladder and the kidney. They will then use laser energy to break up the stone.

PCNL involves passing a long, thin instrument through the back and into the kidney, where it can break up or remove the stone using laser energy. This procedure requires general anesthesia.

There may be a risk of complications, such as an infection, after removing a large kidney stone. A doctor should explain the possible complications beforehand so that if any develop, a person can recognize the signs.

Home remedies

A person can usually treat small kidney stones at home.

A doctor may recommend:

- Drinking plenty of fluid and waiting for the stone to pass
- Using over-the-counter drugs to relieve pain and nausea
- Taking alpha-blockers to help the stone pass more quickly

Avoiding salt and sodas

They may advise the person to continue to drink plenty of fluid after the stones have gone to prevent new ones from forming.

Diet and natural remedies

Some foods may benefit kidney health and help reduce the risk of kidney stones.

Herbs and spices

Guidelines from the American Family Physician (AFP) note that people have long used herbal remedies for kidney stones. However, there is uncertainty regarding their safety, effectiveness, and possible interactions with other drugs.

The AFP add, though, that:

- Phytonutrients in green tea, berries, and turmeric may help prevent infection
- Parsley may boost urine production
- Agropyron repens (couch grass) may help flush out the urinary tract

Proponents of natural remedies note that other foods and supplements that may help protect the kidneys include:

- Basil
- Celery

- Apples
- Grapes
- Pomegranates
- Vitamin B6 supplements
- Pyridoxine supplements

Some research suggests that vitamin D deficiency is common among people with kidney stones, but there is not enough evidence to show that vitamin D supplements are safe or effective for preventing stones.

Do kidney beans help?

Some people drink kidney bean broth to help the stones pass.

People can make the broth by boiling the pods inside the beans for about 6 hours and then straining them. Once the liquid has cooled, they can consume some every 2 hours for 1–2 days.

However, it is important to note that there is no scientific evidence to confirm that this is effective.

Foods to avoid

Limiting foods that contain the following substances may help prevent stones from developing:

- Protein
- Oxalate
- Sodium (salt)
- Sugar, such as high fructose corn syrup
- Vitamin C supplements

Oxalate is present in many common foods, such as:

- Nuts
- Rhubarb
- Beets
- Miso
- Tahini
- Swiss chard

However, people should not completely avoid foods containing oxalates, calcium, and protein, as they can have other nutritional benefits.

Prevention

Kidney stones are not always preventable, but experts recommend that people reduce the overall risk by:

- Drinking at least 2 ltr of water each day
- Following a healthful diet
- Doing regular exercise

For those with a higher risk of developing kidney stones, a doctor may make dietary recommendations or prescribe medication.

Takeaway

Kidney stones are a common problem. Not drinking enough fluid is a major causative factor, but dietary habits, obesity, and a sedentary lifestyle can all contribute.

Anyone who has symptoms of a kidney stone, urine infection, or kidney infection should seek medical advice to prevent complications from developing. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

What do high levels of uric acid do to your body? Experts explain

By: Ashlesha Thakur

An increase in uric acid in the body can become a serious problem. It can often snowball into diseases like gout, kidney stones, bladder stone among others.

The right action at the right time can save us from these serious issues, and it all begins with being informed.

FIT speaks to experts about uric acid, and what leads to high levels of it in the body. Also, what should you, and shouldn't you, do when uric acid levels in your body go up?

How uric acid is made in the body

"Uric acid is a type of chemical, which is formed in the body by the breakdown of an element called purine. Most of the uric acid is filtered by the kidneys and passes out of the body through the urinary tract. But when the level of uric acid in the body increases," says Dr Ajay Kumar, Director, Urology, Nephrology and Transplantation, Paras HMRI Hospital, Patna.

"Kidneys are also not able to filter it, due to which it breaks down in the form of crystals and starts collecting between the bones. High uric acid in medical term is called hyperuricemia," said Dr Ajay Kumar, Director, Urology, Nephrology and Transplantation, Paras HMRI Hospital, Patna.

What should be the normal amount of uric acid in the body?

Hyperuricemia is the scientific name for an increased level of uric acid.

To detect uric acid in the body, a spe-

cialist may ask the patient for a blood test that helps determine the level of uric acid in the patient's blood.

The normal range of uric acid is different in women and in men.

- For women, this is more than 6 mg/dL.
- For men, this is greater than 6.5 mg/dL.

If the patient's uric acid level is above these standards, then definitely consult a specialist for that. Please note that there can be slight variations in the standard of labs that test the level of uric acid.

What happens when you have high uric acid?

Having high uric acid can manifest into a number of other issues. These include,

- Gout

If the level of uric acid in the blood of the patient is found to be more than the above mentioned standards, crystals can form in the joints of the body like hands and feet. This can lead to 'gout', a disease that occurs in the joints of the bones of the body, which causes swelling in the joints, severe pain, and the inability to move.

- Kidney stones

Having high uric acid can also lead to kidney stones.

Often these stones are small, which pass out of the body through urine, but when it becomes large, it can cause blockage in parts of the urinary system.

- Bladder stone

Urinary tract or bladder stones is a condition that occurs when solid minerals accumulate in your bladder. This

problem has the potential to completely damage the bladder.

Causes of high uric acid

"The level of uric acid increases when the body makes more purine, or more purine is taken through food. Apart from this, uric acid level also increases due to reduced kidney function," says, Dr Rajiva Gupta, Vice Chairman, Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, Medanta Hospital, Gurugram.

Some other factors that lead to a spike in uric acid levels in the body are,

- Obesity
- Eating foods high in purines
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Genetic factors
- Hypothyroidism
- Decreased kidney function
- Diseases like cancer that lead to higher levels of uric acid

"Sometimes the reason for high uric acid is also genetic". In such a situation, it is important to take care and contact the doctor as soon as the symptoms are realized," said Dr Rajiva Gupta, Vice Chairman, Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology, Medanta Hospital, Gurugram.

Treatment of high uric acid

The treatment of the patient depends on the cause and symptoms of his disease. For conditions like gout, and kidney stones, doctors recommend medication, surgery or lifestyle changes depending on its severity. Therefore, if you experience the above-mentioned symptoms, contact your doctor at the

earliest. "High uric acid can be brought under control by lifestyle changes. Avoid obesity and take care of diet, then it is possible."

Foods to avoid

"Elevated uric acid can be controlled with certain dietary restrictions or advice. If a patient has gout along with hyperuricemia, diet can prevent or reduce the damage caused by gout," says Dr Ajay Kumar.

In illness, it is important that the patient follow the diet prescribed by the doctor.

One should typically avoid the following foods if you have high levels of uric acid or renal issues.

- Red meats
- Foods containing high fructose corn syrup such as cold drinks, canned fruit, ice cream
- Seafood
- Spinach, Peas, Beans and Mushrooms
- Beer and alcoholic beverages

Food to say yes to

Dr Ajay Kumar advises filling your plate with these foods to control high uric acid.

- Lots of water
- Low-fat dairy products like milk, yogurt and cheese
- High fiber food
- Drumsticks
- A variety of fruits, and their juices
- Foods rich in Vitamin C such as oranges, pineapples, strawberries, bell peppers, tomatoes and avocados
- Coffee (Courtesy: The Quint)

8 tips to fight bad breath

By: Dr Karishma Jaradi

Despite regular brushing and flossing, everyone tends to experience bad breath also known as halitosis at some or the other time.

It has been researched that more than 80 million people tend to suffer from long-lasting halitosis. In most cases, this dental malady tends to originate from the gums and tongue. Bad breath can be very uncomfortable, putting the person in an awkward position, but it is a common condition and there are plentiful ways to avert it.

The roots of this dental issue are not secretive: Oral cavities, gum ailments, faulty dental hygiene, coated tongue (a yellow or white coating on the tongue, typically due to inflammation) are among the most commonly known causes.

Umpteen bacteria reside in our mouths and some of them on the tongue or underneath the gumline or in pockets generated by gum ailments between gums and teeth.

Other causes may encompass undernourishment (fat breakdown lends your breath a fruity smell), unrestrained diabetes, and dry mouth.

Contagions like painful throat or sinusitis, or abdominal complaints, such as ulcers, heartburn, and being lactose intolerant, can all lead to bad breath.

It can also be caused by underlying dental diseases like cavities, gum diseases, and food lodgement. A visit to your dental care expert is recommended to cure these.

Here are some tips that will help you fight bad breath as well as facilitate in upholding a healthy mouth on a regular basis:

1. Efficient brushing technique

You definitely are aware of the fact that proper brushing of teeth will aid in whisking away odours. But the primary aspect to comprehend is that are you doing it appropriately?

It is recommended to brush enamel twice a day and it is prudent to properly brush all teeth surfaces, including the gum line and internal portion of the teeth close to the tongue and the palate.

To get rid of foul breath, you must invest time in brushing the overall surface of your tongue where bad microorganisms tend to loiter the most after you have finished brushing the teeth and gum line.

Additionally, you may also try an extra round of brushing with baking soda to lessen the acidity in the mouth, thus making it hard for the germs and microbes that lead to the growth of bad breath.

2. Daily flossing can lend a helping hand

Flossing will help in removing the food fragments that tend to get stuck in between the enamel that a toothbrush possibly cannot reach out to.

If the food particles are not removed, the bacteria will start feeding on it, thus paving the way for bad breath.

3. Consider stimulating saliva production

Saliva plays a very important role in reducing bad breath by moistening the mouth. A dry mouth can be the major cause of halitosis. Hence, you must try eating sugar-free chewing gum which will surely encourage the production of saliva.

The increased flow of saliva will facilitate

washing away food remains and germs causing bad breath.

4. Brushing or scraping your tongue is beneficial too

To eliminate any remains that may be accumulating in between the taste buds and folds in the tongue, it is advisable that one must invest in a reasonable tool called a tongue scraper.

Scraping your tongue will help get rid of any food debris stuck to your tongue, thus keeping bad breath at bay.

In case you don't have a tongue scraper, you can also use your toothbrush for brushing your tongue.

5. Choose your edibles wisely

Some nourishments are unsurprisingly harsh on your breath.

Pungent seasonings like vinegar or garlic can stay well past mealtime, so eat them frugally.

It is also advised to avoid sugar-rich, gummy foods that stay on the enamel for long time intervals, and are extremely challenging to eliminate.

6. Smoking and intake of tobacco products is a complete no-no

If you have been looking out for a reason to quit your smoking habits, you definitely have one handy.

Smoking majorly contributes to bad breath. Tobacco can dry out your mouth and can leave a nasty smell that stays even post tooth brushing.

7. Stay hydrated

Ensure that you are drinking an adequate amount of water about 6-to-8-ounce glasses on an everyday basis to escape dryness of the mouth.

Drinking water will facilitate keeping the bad odour under control since it aids in washing away food particles and bacteria, which are the primary cause of bad breath.

If you have long-lasting dry mouth or have been taking medications that are causing you to have dry mouth, you can always consult with your oral expert who can recommend an over-the-counter saliva substitute.

Staying hydrated is vital, chiefly prior and post a heavy workout, when fast breath can increase dryness in the mouth.

While it's a good practice in itself, ensure to drink enough water the moment you wake up. This is because a dry mouth can occur while you are asleep, so hydrating first thing in the morning lends you a jump on a night's worth of accumulated bacteria that can contribute to bad breath problems.

8. Try munching on healthy edibles like carrots and apples

Indulging in wholesome edibles between meals as fresh fruits and vegetables help in stepping up the flow of your saliva flow to facilitate washing away bacteria present in the teeth, tongue, and gums that can lead to bad breath.

An unfilled stomach from skipping meals can lead to foul breath as abdominal acids tend to build up. These nibbles can also benefit in alleviating bad breath triggered by hunger or fasting.

Along with the above-mentioned tips, timely dental visits and appropriate oral sanitation are important for a restored mouth and to reduce bad breath problems. These remedies can make a big difference in your overall oral hygiene. (Courtesy: Rediff.com)

Living with Covid: Experts divided on UK plan as cases soar

LONDON, April 10 (AP): For many in the UK, the pandemic may as well be over.

Mask requirements have been dropped. Free mass testing is a thing of the past. And for the first time since spring 2020, people can go abroad for holidays without ordering tests or filling out lengthy forms.

That sense of freedom is widespread even as infections soared in Britain in March, driven by the milder but more transmissible omicron BA.2 variant that's rapidly spreading around Europe, the US and elsewhere.

The situation in the UK may portend what lies ahead for other countries as they ease coronavirus restrictions.

France and Germany have seen similar spikes in infections in recent weeks, and the number of hospitalisations in the UK and France has again climbed — though the number of deaths per day remains well below levels seen earlier in the pandemic.

In the US, more and more Americans are testing at home, so official case numbers are likely a vast undercount. The roster of those newly infected include actors and politicians, who are tested regularly. Cabinet members, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Broadway actors and the governors of New Jersey and Connecticut have

all tested positive.

Britain stands out in Europe because it ditched all mitigation policies in February, including mandatory self-isolation for those infected. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's conservative government is determined to stick to its "living with Covid" plan, but experts disagree on whether the country is coping well.

Some scientists argue it's the right time to accept that "living with Covid" means tolerating a certain level of disruption and deaths, much like we do for seasonal flu. Others believe that Britain's government lifted restrictions too quickly and too soon.

They warned that deaths and hospital admissions could keep rising because more people over 55 — those who are most likely to get seriously ill from Covid-19 — are now getting infected despite high levels of vaccination.

Hospitals are again under strain, both from patients with the virus and huge numbers of staff off sick, said National Health Service medical director Stephen Powis.

"Blinding ourselves to this level of harm does not constitute living with a virus infection — quite the opposite," said Stephen Griffin, a professor in medicine



at the University of Leeds. "Without sufficient vaccination, ventilation, masking, isolation and testing, we will continue to live with disruption, disease and sadly, death, as a result."

Others, like Paul Hunter, a medicine professor at the University of East Anglia, are more supportive of the government's policies.

"We're still not at the point where (Covid-19) is going to be least harmful ... but we're over the worst," he said. Once a

high vaccination rate is achieved there is little value in maintaining restrictions such as social distancing because "they never ultimately prevent infections, only delay them," he argued.

Britain's official statistics agency estimated that almost 5 million UK residents, or 1 in 13, had the virus in late March, the most it had reported. Separately, the REACT study from London's Imperial College said its data showed that the country's infection levels in March were

40% higher than the first omicron peak in January.

Infection rates are so high that airlines had to cancel flights during the busy two-week Easter break because too many workers were calling in sick.

France and Germany have seen similar surges as restrictions eased in most European countries. More than 100,000 people in France were testing positive everyday despite a sharp dropoff in testing, and the number of virus patients in intensive care rose 22% over the past week.

President Emmanuel Macron's government, keen to encourage voter turnout in April elections, is not talking about any new restrictions.

In Germany, infection levels have drifted down from a recent peak. But Health Minister Karl Lauterbach backed off a decision to end mandatory self-isolation for infected people just two days after it was announced. He said the plan would send a "completely wrong" signal that "either the pandemic is over or the virus has become significantly more harmless than was assumed in the past".

In the US, outbreaks at Georgetown University and Johns Hopkins University are bringing back mask requirements to those campuses as officials seek out quar-

antine space.

Across Europe, only Spain and Switzerland have joined the UK in lifting self-isolation requirements for at least some infected people.

But many European countries have eased mass testing, which will make it much harder to know how prevalent the virus is. Britain stopped distributing free rapid home tests this month.

Julian Tang, a flu virologist at the University of Leicester, said that while it's important to have a surveillance program to monitor for new variants and update the vaccine, countries cope with flu without mandatory restrictions or mass testing.

"Eventually, Covid-19 will settle down to become more endemic and seasonal, like flu," Tang said. "Living with Covid, to me, should mimic living with flu."

Cambridge University virologist Ravindra Gupta is more cautious. Mortality rates for Covid-19 are still far higher than seasonal flu and the virus causes more severe disease, he warned. He would have preferred "more gentle easing of restrictions".

"There's no reason to believe that a new variant would not be more transmissible or severe," he added.

French go to the polls in 1st round of presidential election

PARIS, April 10 (AP): French citizens flocked to polling stations across the country Sunday to vote in the first round of the country's presidential election, where up to 48 million eligible voters will be choosing between 12 candidates.

Centrist President Emmanuel Macron is seeking a second five-year term, but faces a strong challenge from the far right.

Polls close at 7 pm (1700 GMT) in most places and an hour later in some larger cities.

By noon, just over a quarter of France's electorate had cast their ballot, slightly down from previous elections.

France operates a manual system for elections: Voters are obliged to cast ballots in person, and they are hand-counted once voting closes.

Unless someone gets more than half of the nationwide vote, there will be a second and decisive round between the top two candidates on Sunday, April 24.

Bundled up against an April chill, voters lined up to cast ballots at one polling station in southern Paris on Sunday before it opened.

Once inside, they placed their paper ballots into envelopes and then into a transparent box, many wearing masks or using hand gel as part of Covid-19 measures.

Many candidates made early visits to their own polling stations, smiling at journalists.

Valerie Pécresse of the Republican Party cast her vote in Velizy-Villacoublay, southwest of Paris, while far right leader Marine Le Pen cast hers in Henin-Beaumont, a town in northern France 190 kilometers northeast of Paris.

Macron and his wife cast their votes in the town of Le Touquet, in northern France.

Far-left firebrand Jean-Luc Mélenchon is among other prominent figures vying to take the presidential Elysée. Macron for months looked like a shoo-in to become France's first president in 20 years to win a second term.

But that scenario blurred in the campaign's closing stages as the

pain of inflation and of pump, food and energy prices roared back as dominant election themes for many low-income households.

They could drive many voters Sunday into the arms of Le Pen, Macron's political nemesis.

Macron trounced Le Pen by a landslide to become France's youngest modern president in 2017.

The win for the former banker — now 44 — was seen as a victory against populist, nationalist politics, coming in the wake of Donald Trump's election to the White House and Britain's vote to leave the European Union, both in 2016.

With populist Viktor Orban winning a fourth consecutive term as Hungary's prime minister days ago, eyes have now turned to France's resurgent far right candidates — especially National Rally leader Le Pen, who wants to ban Muslim headscarves in streets and halal and kosher butchers, and drastically reduce immigration from outside Europe.

This election has the potential to reshape France's post-war identity and indicate whether European populism is ascendant or in decline.

Meanwhile, if Macron wins, it will be seen as a victory for the European Union.

Observers say a Macron re-election would spell real likelihood for increased cooperation and investment in European security and defense — especially with a new pro-EU German government.

With war signing the EU's eastern edge, French voters will be casting ballots in a presidential election whose outcome will have international implications. France is the 27-member bloc's second economy, the only one with a U.N. Security Council veto, and its sole nuclear power. And as Russian President Vladimir Putin carries on with the war in Ukraine, French power will help shape Europe's response.

Russia's war in Ukraine has afforded Macron the chance to demonstrate his influence on the international stage and burnish his pro-NATO credentials in election debates.

Shanghai releases thousands of recovered Covid patients, but new cases continue to rise

BEIJING, April 10 (PTI): Shanghai, which is reeling under a massive outbreak of coronavirus cases, has released over 11,000 recovered Covid-19 patients from hospitals, but infection numbers continued to climb, raising questions about China's much-touted dynamic zero-case policy.

Wu Qianyu, a senior official with the east Chinese city's public health commission, told a media briefing on Sunday that the patients would be put under home quarantine and no further controls should be imposed on them.

"Relevant authorities in the areas they live in have to be alerted that they are allowed to go home. At the same time, the officials are required to monitor their health (during the quarantine period)," the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

Over 11,000 recovered patients have been released, it said.

But much to the disquiet of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) headed by President Xi Jinping, single-day new infections in Shanghai hit 24,944 on Sunday, setting a new record for the 29th consecutive day.

However, positive cases dropped slightly to 1,006 from 1,015 on Saturday.

Shanghai, China's commercial and financial capital, has seen more than 179,000 cases since the current outbreak, driven by the Omicron variant, began on March 1, the Post report said.

About 5,400 patients were reported to have mild symptoms, while others were asymptomatic.

The sudden rise of cases has led to the much-criticised lockdown of the city of 26 million people amid public criticism of the separation of children from parents in hospitals and testing centres as well distribution of food supplies to the people who were confined for days to the



apartment blocks.

"The tidal wave has yet to peak, and worries are that the citywide lockdown will last for another few weeks, which may cripple the local economy," said Wang Feng, chairman of Shanghai-based financial service group Ye Lang Capital.

"The business community is keeping a close eye on how the government will lift the lockdown," Wang told the Post.

Vice-mayor Zong Ming told media on Saturday that the city would embark on a zoning strategy to gradually lift the lockdowns but did not give a clear timeframe for implementing the policy.

People in areas classified as "precautionary zones" will be able to move about and certain essential businesses in these areas will be allowed to reopen, with limitations on the number of customers.

Thousands of businesses in Shanghai, from small restaurants to big-name multinational firms have been forced to halt production.

Shanghai set an economic growth target of 5.5 per cent for 2022, but analysts believe it will miss that goal because of the Covid controls, the Post report said.

Australian Prime Minister calls May 21 election

CANBERRA, April 10 (AP): Australia's prime minister has called for a May 21 election that will be fought on issues including Chinese economic coercion, climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Sunday advised Governor-General David Hurley as representative of Australia's head of state, Queen Elizabeth II, to set the election date.

Morrison's conservative coalition is seeking a fourth three-year term. The date is the latest available to him.

He urged voters to stick with a government that delivered one of the lowest pandemic death tolls of any advanced economy rather than risk the opposition Labor Party.



"This election is a choice between a government that you know and that has been delivering and a Labor opposition that you don't," Morrison said.

Morrison led his government to a narrow victory at the last election in 2019 despite opinion polls consistently placing the center-left opposition Australian Labor Party ahead.

The Liberal Party-led coalition

is again behind in most opinion polls, but many analysts predict a tight result.

The last election occurred in the hottest and driest year Australia had ever experienced. The year ended with devastating wildfires across Australia's southeast that directly killed 33 people and more than 400 others through smoke.

The fires also destroyed more than 3,000 homes and razed 19 million hectares (47 million acres) of farmland and forests during the Southern Hemisphere summer.

Morrison was widely criticised for taking a secret family vacation to Hawaii at the height of the crisis while his hometown Sydney was blanketed in toxic smoke.

He cut his vacation short due to the public backlash, but was further criticized over his explanation

for his absence: "I don't hold a hose."

His government was criticized for its responses to the fires and also record flooding this year in some of the same areas in Australia's southeast that were razed two years earlier.

Both the government and opposition have set a target of net zero carbon gas emissions by 2050.

Morrison was widely criticized at the U.N. climate conference in Glasgow, Scotland, in November for failing to set more ambitious targets for the end of the decade.

The government aims to reduce emissions by 26% to 28% below 2005 levels, while other countries have made steeper commitments.

The Australian Labor Party has promised to reduce emissions by 43% by 2030.

Pope Francis calls for an Easter truce in Ukraine

VATICAN CITY, April 10 (AP): Pope Francis opens Holy Week Sunday with a call for an Easter truce in Ukraine to make room for a negotiated peace, highlighting the need for leaders to "make some sacrifices for the good of the people."

Celebrating Palm Sunday Mass before crowds in St. Peter's Square for the first time since the pandemic, Pope Francis called for "weapons to be laid down to begin an Easter truce, not to reload weapons and resume fighting, no! A truce to reach peace through real negotiations."

Francis did not refer directly to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but the reference was clear, and he has repeatedly denounced the war and the suffering brought to innocent civilians.

During the traditional Sunday blessing following Palm Sunday Mass, the pontiff said leaders should be "willing to make some sacrifices for the good of the peo-



ple." "In fact, what a victory would that be, who plants a flag under a pile of rubble?"

During his Palm Sunday homily, the pontiff denounced "the folly of war" that leads people to commit "senseless acts of cruelty."

"When we resort to violence ... we lose sight of why we are in the world and even end up committing

senseless acts of cruelty. We see this in the folly of war, where Christ is crucified yet another time," he said.

Francis lamented "the unjust death of husbands and sons" ... "refugees fleeing bombs" ... "young people deprived of a future" ... and "soldiers sent to kill their brothers and sisters."

After two years of celebrating

Palm Sunday Mass inside St. Peter's Basilica without a crowd due to pandemic distancing measures, the solemn celebration returned to the square outside. Tens of thousands of pilgrims and tourists clauded olive branches and braided palms emblematic of the ceremony that recalls Jesus' return to Jerusalem.

Traditionally, the pope leads a Palm Sunday procession through St. Peter's Square before celebrating Mass. Francis has been suffering from a strained ligament in his right knee that has caused him to limp, and he was driven in a black car to the altar, which he then reached with the help of an aide. He left the Mass on the open-top popemobile, waving to the faithful in the piazza and along part of the via della Conciliazione.

Palm Sunday opens Holy Week leading up to Easter, which this year falls on April 17, and features the Good Friday Way of the Cross Procession.

UK inquiry launched into Akshata Murty's tax affairs leak

LONDON, April 10 (PTI): An internal inquiry has been launched into how the tax affairs of Akshata Murty, daughter of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy, were leaked to a newspaper, according to UK media reports on Sunday.

The Whitehall investigation within UK government quarters will look into how the information about the non-domicile status of the wife of Chancellor Rishi Sunak was passed on to "The Independent" newspaper, which first published the story earlier this week.

According to "The Sunday Times", Sunak's team believes an Opposition Labour Party supporting a government official dubbed "red throat" is responsible for the leak.

"There's going to be a full Cabinet Office and HM Treasury investigation into who had that information and if anyone has requested that information. Divulging the tax status of a private individual is a criminal offence," the paper quoted an unnamed senior government official as saying.

The revelation that the Chancellor's wife, who is an Indian national, was "non-domiciled" in the UK for tax purposes meant she was not legally bound to pay taxes on her overseas earnings.

This led to allegations of hypocrisy from the Opposition benches, pointing to recent tax rises imposed by the Indian-origin finance minister. The Labour Party accused his family of potentially saving millions as a result of Murty's tax arrangement.



On Friday, Akshata announced that she would pay tax in the UK on all her income in order to avoid the issue being a continued "distraction" for her husband.

"My decision to pay UK tax on all my worldwide income will not change the fact that India remains the country of my birth, citizenship, parents' home and place of domicile. But I love the UK too," Murty said in a Twitter statement on Saturday.

It comes as a new opinion poll by Opinium shows Sunak's approval rating dropped by three points to 28 per cent since late March and his disapproval rating has risen by eight points to 43 per cent.

This reflects the damage to his prospects as a future leader of the Conservative Party and a key candidate tipped to succeed Boris Johnson as Prime Minister.

Over 2,200 airguns surrendered in Arunachal over appeal to save birds, animals

ITANAGAR, April 10 (IANS): In response to the Arunachal Pradesh government's appeal, over 2,200 airguns and a few rifles were voluntarily surrendered in the past one year by people who vowed not to hunt birds and animals.

After Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh launched a campaign last year in an effort to persuade people to provide protection and sanctuary to the birds and wild animals although they have been hunted for centuries now.

The announcement of the voluntary surrender was made by the state's Environment and Forests minister Mama Natung on Saturday.

Natung, chief minister Pema Khandu, Union minister Kiren Rijiju, and top officials of Environment, Forests and Wildlife Departments have been holding numerous events regularly in the state's far flung areas to motivate the people to protect the wild species.

"We did not enact a law and force our people. Instead, we created awareness and asked them to surrender their guns and airguns voluntarily. Surrendered guns are a big success of our campaign. The campaign should not be limited to Arunachal Pradesh alone, the entire country should follow this model for a better future," Natung told IANS over the phone.

He said that 80 airguns were surrendered on Saturday in presence of Union Environment minister Bhupendra Yadav, his deputy



Ashwini Kumar Choubey and chief minister Khandu.

Yadav also chaired the 20th Meeting of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in the state's Pakke tiger reserve.

Highly appreciating Arunachal Pradesh's efforts, the Union Environment minister said that within a year of this community and compassion driven programme, the state witnessed a surrender of over 2,200 airguns.

"I urge all state governments to take up the 'Airgun Surrender Abhiyan'. Arunachal offers a model to emulate with programmes like Hornbill Nest Adoption and Airgun Surrender Abhiyan," Yadav said.

The Union minister said that rampant use

of airguns was a problem in northeastern states and Arunachal Pradesh in March last year had started the campaign which has so far yielded great results.

Forest and wildlife officials said that those who have surrendered their airguns and rifles, the state government has presented them certificates.

"The state government is considering framing suitable policies to give some support to those people who would be affected after depositing airguns and rifles to the government," an official told IANS over phone.

He said that the tribal people's lives have long been dependent on wildlife and forests and without realising the impact of climate

change and global warming, the continued to hunt and cut trees.

"Now is the time for us to protect wildlife and stop unabated felling of forest trees, as it has greatly impacted on global warming."

Airguns do not require any license and a huge number of people hunt birds and small animals using them across Arunachal Pradesh, unaware of the biodiversity loss.

All the surrendered air guns are being held in custody of the forest department for now.

Part of eastern Himalayan ranges, Arunachal Pradesh occupies the largest area, 83,743 sq.km, in the northeastern region and about 82 per cent of total geographical area occupied by various types of forests.

Earlier, Nagaland had started a massive campaign to provide sanctuary to the birds especially the Amur falcons, known to be one of the world's longest-distance migratory birds as they travel up to a staggering 22,000 km a year.

Tribals of all communities have positively responded to the Nagaland government and environmentalists' appeal and now the killing of birds in the state has become a history.

Official notifications of the Nagaland government said that Amur Falcons are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

As such, hunting, trapping, killing or selling of Amur Falcons could lead to three years of imprisonment or a fine of Rs 25,000 or both under Section 51 of the said Act.

Mizoram celebrates Palm Sunday



AIZAWL, April 10 (PTI): Mizoram celebrated Palm Sunday amid festive fervour with children taking out processions in different parts of the state early morning.

Chants of 'Hosanna' echoed towns and villages as people commemorated the entry of Christ into Jerusalem on the last Sunday before his crucifixion. Special prayer services were held in the churches of different Christian denominations across the state. With devotees engaging in mass, singing hymns and offering prayers, Aizawl wore a deserted

look as only a few vehicles were seen on the roads. Locally known as 'Tumkau Ni', Palm Sunday could not be celebrated in 2020 due to the pandemic. Although worship services and prayers were held to mark the day in 2021, children could not take out processions, except a few places in Aizawl and some villages. Processions by children carrying palm leaves, chanting 'Hosanna', is an integral part of the Palm Sunday celebrations in Christian-majority Mizoram.

Five held with huge quantities of opium, drugs in Manipur



IMPHAL, April 10 (NNN): Police in Manipur have arrested five persons including a woman with huge quantities of opium and other illegal drugs in separate operations in the last 24 hours. One of the persons was arrested by a team of police commandos on frisking and checking duty along NH-2 at Motbung under Sapermaina police station of Kangpokpi district on Friday night, according to police. The police arrested the man after a huge quantity of opium and brown sugar valued around Rs 2.50 crore in the international market was recovered from the vehicle he was driving. The arrested person was identified as Paominlen of Tengenoual district, according to police. A police source said that the police commandos detected the opium and drugs in the vehicle he came with. The arrested person has been handed over to Sapermaina police station along with the recovered items, police further said. In another operation, police in Churachandpur district recovered 6.285 kg of opium during a check to a Bolero at Boljang village of the district on Friday evening, around 5 pm. The police further recovered Rs 2.6 lakh in cash suspected to be sale proceeds of opium from their possessions. Police arrested two persons including a woman in this connection. The woman was identified as Hoikim and the other person has been identified as Seikhoah. Both of them are from Churachandpur district, according to police. Further operation based on the disclosure made by them led to the recovery of more quantities of opium with a cash amount of Rs 5 lakh from the house of the woman. In yet another incident, a team of Narcotic Cell of Imphal East district police arrested two youths along with 12 gm of heroin powder on Friday night, around 8.30 pm from Imphal East district. The arrested persons have been identified as Serto David of Senapati district and VS Chuimui from Kamjong district, according to police.

Heavy rainfall spell to continue over Meghalaya

NEW DELHI, April 10 (IANS): The heavy rainfall spells that have pounded several areas in northeastern India are likely to continue Meghalaya during next five days.

Scores of places across north-east Indian states have been receiving very heavy rainfall for almost a week now while Tamil Nadu and Kerala have received rainfall in varied measures over the last two days.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said, under the influence of strong southwesterly winds from Bay of Bengal to northeastern states at lower tropospheric levels, fairly widespread to widespread rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm/lightning is very likely over sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and Meghalaya and isolated/scattered rainfall over Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura during next five days.

Isolated heavy rainfall is very likely over Arunachal Pradesh on April 10 & 13, over sub-Himalayan West Bengal-Sikkim on April 10, over Assam and Meghalaya on April 12, while isolated very heavy rainfall also likely over Assam-Meghalaya on April 10 and 11.

"Under the influence of trough/wind discontinuity over south peninsular India, heavy rainfall likely over Kerala on April 10 and over ghat areas of Tamil Nadu on April 10," the IMD bulletin warned and added that squally weather (wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph) is very likely over Gulf of Mannar, Comorin area, south-west Bay of Bengal on April 10, because of which fishermen have been advised not to venture into these areas.

Nagaland legislators to visit Delhi today over peace process

KOHIMA, April 10 (PTI): A delegation of legislators from Nagaland would reach Delhi on Monday to meet Union ministers and central leaders of different political parties to urge them for formulating a solution to the vexed Naga political issue at the earliest.

The decision was taken on Saturday at a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the assembly on Naga political issue chaired by chief minister Neiphiu Rio. It was decided that the core committee of the Parliamentary Committee, comprising at least 15 MLAs, would be leaving for Delhi on Monday to meet Union ministers and central leaders of different political parties, Parliamentary Affairs minister Neiba Kronu told PTI.

Asked if the core committee would also be meeting the NSCN(IM) and Working Committee of Naga National Political Groups (WC-NNPGs), Kronu said they have not decided on it and it would depend on the outcome of



their meeting with the central leaders. United Democratic Alliance (UDA) chairman TR Zeliang, who is the co-convenor of the committee, was also present in the meeting, held at the State Banquet Hall in chief minister's Residential Complex.

Kronu, who is the member secretary of the committee, said that

the meeting was also attended by the two MPs from the state.

The meeting also reviewed the activities of the Parliamentary Committee since its formation in June last year.

The Parliamentary Committee has been holding consultative meetings with the tribal bodies and civil societies in the state to ac-

tively facilitate the Naga peace process, while also appealing to the negotiating groups to come together for a solution that is honourable, acceptable and transparent.

The Centre has been holding negotiations to find a solution to the Naga issue with NSCN(IM) since 1997 and signed the Framework Agreement on August 3, 2015.

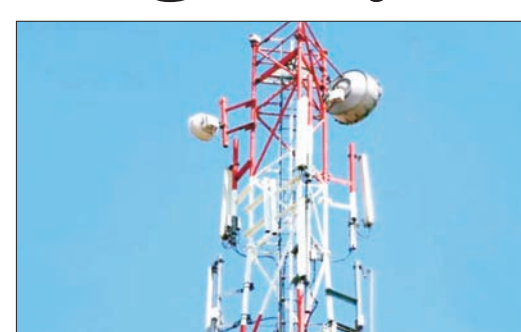
Parallel talks are also being held with WC-NNPGs, which comprise seven Naga groups and inked the Agreed Position on November 17, 2017.

Talks with both the Naga negotiating parties were said to have concluded on October 30, 2019 but no final solution has been arrived at till date.

The Working Committee of NNPGs has expressed its willingness to ink the final solution but the NSCN(IM) has remained rigid on its demand for a separate flag and constitution of the Nagas, which has been refused by the Centre.

Over 350 mobile towers to be set up in Meghalaya

SHILLONG, April 10 (PTI): Over 350 mobile towers will be set up in Meghalaya to ensure that all villages come under mobile network, officials said on Sunday. Meghalaya has 6,839 villages of which 1,164 villages are not covered by any mobile network, they said. The chief secretary recently reviewed implementation of the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) scheme aimed at providing mobile internet services to 1,164 remote and uncovered villages in the northeastern state at a cost of Rs 726.65 crore, officials said. BSNL has approved setting up of 352 mobile towers to ensure that the uncovered villages get coverage, they said. "BSNL has approved setting up of 346 additional mobile towers in remote villages across Meghalaya besides six mo-



Mobile towers along NH 42 and NH 51," a senior BSNL official told PTI.

NPF prez Liezietsu expresses opposition to Hindi as alternative to English in Nagaland

DIMAPUR, April 10 (NNN): Naga People's Front (NPF) president, Dr Shürhozelie Liezietsu has expressed his opposition to the use of Hindi as an alternative to English in Nagaland. In a statement, the NPF leader said that even after 40 years, Nagaland still remains almost in the same position "because we have not seen any serious efforts made on the part of the Central government towards development of the language whichever party is in power in Delhi". He further said, "We are not against Hindi", while adding, "But we cannot agree at the moment to use Hindi as an alternative to English in Nagaland because it is impossible in its totality". According to Dr Shürhozelie Liezietsu, this is the ground reality and "we do not find any other option at the moment". According to the NPF president, the then Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, who was holding Education portfolio during

1979-'80, in his inaugural speech in the Education ministers' Conference in New Delhi had said, "Hindi should be used from the beginning to PG level in education." Views were sought by the chairperson, Shilla Kaul (minister of State, Education) from the members present, the NPF chief also said. According to Dr Shürhozelie Liezietsu, Nagaland had expressed that it was not possible in Nagaland. Dr Shürhozelie Liezietsu stated that the Prime Minister then, in a threatening tone, insisted why. Nagaland had said, "We want to learn Hindi but our Naga people do not know Hindi because no one has taught us. As of now, Hindi teachers in Nagaland are mostly ex-servicemen from Assam Regiment. Therefore, if you (PM) come down to Nagaland, you cannot understand our Hindi in as much as we cannot understand your Hindi in Delhi," according to Dr Shürhozelie Liezietsu.

Nagaland party asks state leaders to clarify on 'imposition' of Hindi



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, April 10: The Rising People's Party (RPP) has asked the United Democratic Alliance government in Nagaland to clarify on the recent statement of Union home minister Amit Shah that all the eight northeastern states had agreed to make Hindi compulsory up to class X in their states. Stating that this is a "very serious issue", the RPP said there is a lingering suspicion that the state politicians may have given their personal assurance to Shah to make Hindi compulsory up to class X following which he must have made the statement.

The RPP demanded that chief minister Neiphiu Rio, deputy chief minister Y Patton, state BJP president Temjen Inna Along and adviser to school education department KT Sukhalu issue a clarification in this regard immediately. "The personal nod given by our state politicians cannot be ruled out because two years back the state government banned sale of dog meat on the 'advisory note' of a central leader seated in Delhi having no respect for our Naga sentiments or our cul-

ture," the party said in a statement.

"The proverbial sell-your-mother attitude of the state politicians eager to please Delhi is not only utterly disgusting but shameless too," it said.

The RPP asserted that it stands for unity in diversity and any attempt to impose Hindi in the state or the country is crass chauvinism and majoritarianism at play. The party said it will oppose such policies tooth and nail.

It pointed out that the state educational policy falls under the prerogative of the state governments and any dictats by the central government on the issue is violative of the federal structure of the country and thus unacceptable.

The party added that unlike in the south of India where politicians fiercely guard their regional and linguistic identity, Nagaland being helmed by "spineless leaders" and of late "rank sycophants", it is absolutely possible that the Union home minister indeed extracted the nod from "our politicians" to go ahead with his controversial statement.

Transportation solution under PM Gati Shakti Cargo Terminal scheme discussed NFR holds meeting with LPAI, state government officials of Tripura

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 10: A team of senior railway officials representing Lumding division and NF Railway Construction Organisation recently held a meeting with the state government officials of Tripura and officials from Land Port Authority of India (LPAI) at Sabroom in Tripura. Officials from department of Industries and Commerce, Customs and Transport of Tripura were also present. The meeting was aimed to facilitate working together for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects for seamless transportation of goods and cargo through railways.

The meeting, organised on April 6, 2022 was also graced by MLA of Sabroom Shankar Roy. Senior officials of Lumding division including Amit Jaiswal, senior divisional engineer, KK Sharma senior divisional operations manager, Ramesh Kumar Mahato, divisional commercial manager and



area railway manager, Badarpur Deepak Kumar Murmu were present in the discussion.

The NF Railway team along with other officials also visited the site of the Integrated Check Post (ICP), a strategic project for seamless transportation that is coming up at Sabroom (Tripura). A series of projects are also being imple-

mented by LPAI at Sabroom ICP. Further, setting up of Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Logistic Hub and Rubber Park is planned by the Govt of Tripura to generate additional economic and to promote other developmental activities. In the meeting, NF Railway officials briefed all present about the Pradhan Mantri Gati Shakti Cargo Ter-

minial scheme, which will help in implementing these projects in time-bound manner and enable them to have direct connectivity with Railways. If it becomes effective, it will make the cargo handling and transportation from the Land Port much faster and in an efficient manner. In the discussion, it was planned that railway connectivity will be provided inside ICP for the benefit of all stakeholders and the proposal regarding the same will be submitted to NF Railway authority by the LPAI at the earliest. PM Gati Shakti initiative aims for seamless and simplified co-ordinated infrastructure projects. Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals will further aid to streamline Railways cargo movement as well as eliminate bottlenecks for transportation to benefit the last mile customer. Once, these infrastructural projects are effectively implemented, it will help in improving connectivity as well as assist the North-eastern region becoming a logistic hub leading to economic transformation.

Jai Ram Thakur to continue as Himachal Pradesh CM: Nadda

2 LeT terrorists involved in attack on CRPF personnel killed in Srinagar

SHIMLA, April 10 (PTI): BJP president J P Nadda on Sunday said the party won't replace Himachal Pradesh chief minister Jai Ram Thakur and upcoming state Assembly polls will be contested under his leadership.

Nadda made the statement when asked about Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia's claim that Union minister Anurag Thakur will replace Jai Ram Thakur as the state CM.

Jai Ram Thakur is doing work and he will continue with it in future, Nadda told reporters.

He will not be replaced and the BJP will contest the Assembly elections under his leadership, he added.

To another question, Nadda said none of the state ministers will be changed. He, however, said 10 to 15 per cent of sitting BJP MLAs may not get ticket in the elections.

Ten to 15 per cent BJP MLAs did not get ticket in the UP Assembly elections and it is likely to



happen here too, he added.

Nadda also exuded confidence that the BJP will emerge as one of the main political parties in Punjab.

He said the BJP used to contest only 23 of 117 Assembly seats in Punjab as a junior alliance partner but in the recently held elections there, it contested on 68 seats as a senior alliance partner.

So, the BJP will emerge as a major ideological alternative in

Punjab in the next elections, he added. The Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh are scheduled for later this year.

While earlier the elections always remained a bipolar contest between the Congress and the BJP, this time the Aam Aadmi Party is trying to gain a foothold in the state.

AAP had stormed to power in Punjab in the just-concluded Assembly polls.

SRINAGAR, April 10 (PTI): In a pinpoint intelligence operation, two Pakistani Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists involved in the April 4 attack on CRPF personnel in the city, were killed while three security personnel got injured in an encounter here on Sunday, police said.

Inspector general of police (IGP), Kashmir, Vijay Kumar said the police was tracking both the Pakistani terrorists from the day of the attack on the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) men on April 4, and the operation was launched on Sunday after pinpointing their location.

A police spokesman said at about 10:50 am, on specific input generated by Srinagar Police regarding the presence of terrorists in Bishembar Nagar area of the city, a cordon and search operation was launched by the police and Valley QAT CRPF there.

He said as the search party proceeded towards the suspect spot, the hiding terrorists fired indiscriminately upon search parties which was retaliated, leading to an encounter. In the initial exchange of fire, one terrorist was killed.

Keeping in view the tourist movement and huge rush in the area, police and CRPF exercised maximum restraint and carried out the operation in a professional manner to avoid any civilian casualty, the spokesman said.

During the course of evacuation of civilians, the trapped terrorist hurled a grenade, resulting in



minor splinter injuries to two policemen and a CRPF jawan who were shifted to hospital for treatment of their injuries, he said.

The operation was resumed and in the ensuing encounter, another hiding terrorist was killed and bodies of both the killed terrorists were recovered from the site of the encounter, the spokesman said. Both the killed terrorists were Pakistanis and identified as Mohammad Bhai alias Abu Qasim, alias Mir Shoaib alias Mudassir, and Abu Arsalan alias Khalid alias Aadil.

According to police records, both the killed terrorists were 'A' categorised and linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT.

While Mohammad Bhai was active since 2019, Abu Arsalan was active since year 2021 in Central Kashmir.

"Both the killed terrorists had a history of terror crime cases, including pistol-borne attacks and grenade throwing incidents. They were also in-

involved in an attack on CRPF personnel on April 4 in Maisuma area in which one CRPF jawan attained martyrdom and another got injured," he said.

The spokesman said both the killed terrorists were carrying fake Aadhaar cards to conceal their identity.

Meanwhile, IGP Kumar told reporters near the encounter site that the killing of the two terrorists is a huge success for the police and CRPF.

"I want to give a message that whoever attacks innocent police personnel, civilians or journalists or anyone, be it a Pakistani or a local terrorist, he will be neutralised," he said.

The valley's police chief said the Srinagar operation is one of the best examples of how investigation of a terror crime case leads to an anti-terrorist operation. This surely is a big success for Srinagar Police, the IGP Kashmir said.

Asked about seizing of properties of those who harbour terrorists, the IGP said the process will continue and the house in which Sunday's encounter took place will also be seized.

Kumar said there is a decline in the number of terrorists in the Kashmir Valley and the police, Army and CRPF will work on reducing the number further.

He said security force personnel were a soft target for terrorists, but the forces were giving a befitting response to them.

Communal clashes in two cities in Gujarat during Ram Navami processions



AHMEDABAD, April 10 (PTI): Communal clashes broke out between two communities in Himmatnagar and Khambhat cities in Gujarat on Sunday during Ram Navami processions, prompting the police to fire tear gas shells to control mobs who pelted stones at each other and damaged shops and vehicles at both places. The number of injuries, if any, is not known so far, officials said.

Members of two communities hurled stones at each other when a Ram Navami procession reached Chhapariya locality in Himmatnagar city in the Sabarkantha district in the late

afternoon, a police official said.

"Police fired tear gas shells to control the situation. Later, the additional police force was brought in from outside the city to bring the situation under control," the official said.

In Khambhat town in the Anand district, a clash broke out during a Ram Navami procession wherein stones were pelted and shops and vehicles were damaged by two groups, a control room official said, adding that tear gas shells were fired.

The processions were taken out on the occasion of Ram Navami celebrated as the birthday of Lord Ram.

Bengal yet to receive ₹ 2,786 crore MGNREGA dues from Centre: TMC

KOLKATA, April 10 (PTI): Wondering whether the Centre spends more time "sleeping or spewing venom", Trinamool Congress on Sunday claimed that West Bengal was yet to receive MGNREGA dues amounting to ₹ 2,786 crore from the BJP-led Union government.

The party, quoting a list recently issued by the Centre, said that the eastern state has topped the chart in providing employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), giving work to 1.1 crore people in 2021-22, and has come second in generating mandays under the scheme.

"Under @MamataOfficial's exemplary leadership, Bengal ranked first among all States in 'Total Persons Worked' (Employed) in MGNREGA (2021-22), Bengal Govt. gave work to nearly 1.1 Cr people through MGNREGA! This is the #BengalModel that @narendramodi ji could only dream of!" it tweeted.

"Bengal ranked 2nd among all States in Person-Days-Generated (2021-22), having generated 36.4 Cr of person days. ₹2,876 Cr is PENDING from the Central Govt upto March 31st, 2022. We're still awaiting payment and wondering if the Govt spends more time sleeping or spewing venom!" the party said in another Twitter post.

BJP state spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya, however, alleged that West Bengal has a "pathetic record" in implementing MGNREGA, with the needy in rural areas never getting work, and there has been a flight of industry and no fresh investments in the state.

He questioned why the TMC is not taking the initiative of jointly approaching the Centre with BJP MPs from the state for the dues, while casting aspersions on the



figures claimed by the ruling party in West Bengal.

"They have to present facts before our MPs. We know they won't as their figures may not be correct. While the BJP believes in participatory federalism, TMC indulges in competitive federalism," he told PTI.

Chief minister Mamata Banerjee and other TMC leaders have in the past repeatedly claimed that financial grants under various heads were pending with the Centre. They had alleged that despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi surveying the damages caused by Cyclone Amphan in 2020, the BJP-led government at the Centre was sitting over the state's compensation package running into thousands of crores of rupees for a long time.

Agriculture minister Sovandeb Chattopadhyay recently informed the assembly that 10 lakh farmers in the state were yet to receive funds under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme, despite their details having been uploaded on a designated portal.

Women and Child Development minister Shashi Panja had said in the assembly that inadequate fund allocation by the Centre was affecting several welfare projects, but the state, despite the constraints, has managed to run these effectively thus far.

She had pointed out that the Union government has reduced allocation for autonomous bodies such as Central Adoption Resource Authority, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and National Commission for Women.

CBI refutes reports claiming FBI team in India to probe 'bitcoin scam'

NEW DELHI, April 10 (PTI): The CBI on Sunday refuted reports that a team of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was in India to probe the alleged bitcoin case being investigated by the Karnataka Police, and termed the statements "speculative" and "without any basis".

In a statement, the central agency said the FBI has not sent any team to India to conduct a probe in the matter nor has any request been made by the US probe agency to the CBI for conducting an investigation in this case.

"Accordingly, the question of according any permission for the probe by Competent Authority in India does not arise. CBI as the National Central Bureau for INTERPOL in India coordinates closely with international law enforcement agencies including FBI," Central Bureau of Investigation spokesperson RC Joshi said.

The statement comes after the Congress on Friday asked whether the FBI is in India to investigate an alleged "Bitcoin scam" which the party had accused the BJP government in Karnataka of covering up last year.

Later, senior officials added that the statements and reports claiming the presence of the FBI team to probe the case are "speculative, without any basis" and issued with a "malafide intent".

In a tweet, Congress MLA from Chittarpur Priyank Kharge had said he believed the "FBI is in Delhi to investigate the billion dollar Bitcoin scam."

"Like I said before, if the state investigates the matter diligently, a lot of BJP's skeletons will tumble out,"



he had said.

Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surajewala had also tweeted, saying, "The layers of #BitcoinScam are finally being unearthed!"

He had asked several questions related to the alleged scam, including whether the FBI was in India to investigate India's biggest Bitcoin Scam Coverup under Karnataka BJP Govt?

He had also asked the government to release details of the investigation and suspects, including political people.

Accusing the Congress of playing politics on the alleged bitcoin scam issue, chief minister Basavaraj Bommai had last year asked the Opposition party to give documents, if any, to investigating agencies.

Centre reduces raw jute stock limit to facilitate supply to mills

KOLKATA, April 10 (PTI): The Centre has further reduced raw jute stock limit for balers and traders in a bid to increase supply of the raw material to mills at a time when major foodgrain producing states are facing a shortage for the environment-friendly packaging material, industry stakeholders said on Sunday.

In a recent notification issued by the Office of the Jute commissioner, the maximum stock limit has been brought down to 500 quintals for jute balers from 750 quintals and 50 quintals for traders from 150 quintals, they said. This is the second such move that the authorities have taken in the current year.

"In January, the government reduced the raw jute limit to 750 quin-

tals from 1,500 quintals. Now, the same has been brought down to 500 quintals. It is not a viable quantity for a baler unit to run its operation smoothly," Jute Balers Association secretary A K Palit told PTI.

Balers are major suppliers of raw jute to mills. The ongoing raw material crisis has led to "closure of nearly 15 mills and units that are still running have reduced utilisation and are making losses", a source in the industry claimed.

The Centre has put a ceiling on the stock limit with an objective to prevent hoarding of raw jute in the market and ease supply of the commodity to mills at a reasonable price, the industry stakeholders said.

The price of raw jute continues to hover around ₹ 7,000-7,200 per

quintal, but the government will pay ₹ 6,500 per quintal as the raw material cost for gunny bag production, they claimed.

"The move to prevent hoarding could not yield much result for improving supply of the key raw material to jute mills. Millers and trade unions have been vocal against ineffective support price operation of the Jute Corporation of India," the industry source said.

Meanwhile, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) has recommended that the JCI, a state-run organisation which procures raw jute, should take proactive steps to extend its reach for spot procurement directly from villages as this will help discover competitive prices.

Covid and climate change push many older women into prostitution in Sundarbans

NEW DELHI, April 10 (PTI): In the swamplands of the Sundarbans, where steady erosion has robbed thousands of people of their homes and livelihoods, Covid has combined with climate change to wrought another dimension of grimness — older women, some even grandmothers, being pushed into prostitution.

Their abject poverty, made worse by a pandemic that has stretched on for more than two years, made them vulnerable to traffickers who found it difficult to procure young women and minor girls and shifted focus to middle aged women from West Bengal's coastal regions, said activists working in the area.

"There is less scrutiny on older women and their vulnerability has made them accessible to traffickers," Nihar Ranjan Raptan, director of the Ghoranbore Gram Bikash Kendra (GGBK), told PTI while explaining why traffickers are interested in middle aged and older women.

"It was difficult to find minor girls during the lockdown as they were locked in their homes so traf-

fickers moved their attention to older women who were in need of money to keep the sex trade going. Earlier, women below 24 years were usually seen to be trafficked," Raptan, whose NGO works on issues of human trafficking, child rights and climate change impact, added.

He said 12-13 women in their late 30s and 40s from the Sundarbans area who were pushed into sex slavery have been rescued over the last four months. And this could just be the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

"There must be many many more caught in this prostitution ring," Raptan said.

In the marshland that is the Sundarbans — a vast area of about 10,000 square kilometres including both land and water that stretches between West Bengal and Bangladesh where countless homes have been washed away and agriculture in many places has become unviable due to salinity — Covid has added another chapter to the stories of exploitation, sexual abuse and desperation.

Like Gareema*, whose life took



turns she never could have imagined after her husband's death due to a brain stroke in March 2020, just when the pandemic was gathering force and India went into lockdown. Two months later, Cyclone Amphan hit, and the 49-year-old like many thousands of others lost her home and belongings.

Gareema*, who said she was raped multiple times everyday in a brothel in Pune to which she was sold to, has now returned to her home in Diamond Harbour in the

Jagan to induct 13 new faces into AP Cabinet today

AMARAVATI, April 10 (PTI): As many as 11 legislators, who resigned from the Andhra Pradesh council of ministers on April 7, will be re-inducted when chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reconstitutes his Cabinet here on Monday.

The reconstituted Cabinet will have 13 new faces while a veteran will make a come back after a long gap.

Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan on Sunday evening accepted the resignations submitted by the 24 ministers, a Raj Bhavan communiqué said.

As per norm, the AP Cabinet can have 26 members, including the chief minister.

The new Cabinet will be constituted on Monday, with the Governor administering the oath of office and secrecy to 25 members at a function starting at 11.31 am.

Names of Cabinet ministers, who would be sworn-in on Monday, were not officially released but the chief minister's own media house Sakshi put out the list this evening.

Sakshi later made one change and came up with a fresh list, which the ruling YSR Congress sources said "could be the final".

Veteran legislator Dharmana Prasada Rao from Srikakulam district, who previously served as a minister under various chief ministers, is being taken into Jagan's new Cabinet in the place of his elder brother Dharmana Krishna Das, who was the deputy chief minister (Revenue).

Amzath Basha Shaik Bepari and K Narayana Swamy, who served as deputy chief ministers in the previous Cabinet, will also be re-inducted.

Seniors like Botsa Satyanarayana, P R C Reddy, P Viswaroop and Buggana Rajendranath are being given a fresh chance.

S Appala Raju, Ch Venugopala Krishna, G Jayaram and T Vanita are also getting a second chance, owing to caste calculations.

The composition of the fresh Cabinet, as the names revealed, clearly indicated that Jagan wilted under pressure while picking his new team that would lead the party



to the 2024 general election.

Jagan went back on his word of replacing "90 per cent of the incumbent ministers" and giving an "opportunity to freshers" as he is set to retain at least 40 per cent of his first Cabinet.

The Cabinet revamp also fomented discontent in the YSRC with several senior legislators venting out their displeasure over being denied a Cabinet berth.

In fact, a senior like Balineni Srinivasa Reddy, who just stepped down as Minister, did not show signs of cooling down when Jagan's emissary S R K Reddy sought to placate him over denial of a continuance.

Balineni, a relative of Jagan, was peeved not so much over having to quit the Cabinet but more over the re-induction of A Suresh, a colleague from Prakasam district.

At one point, Jagan seemed to have acceded Balineni's demand and dropped Suresh from the list, instead proposing to give the slot to the latter's uncle Thippe Swamy from Sri Satya Sai district.

Subsequently, however, Jagan included Suresh's name in the fresh list, much to the chagrin of Balineni. This, party sources maintained, was to ensure representation to Prakasam district that otherwise would have gone unrepresented in the new Cabinet.

Senior legislators like Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy, Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy, Samineni Udayabhanu and many others were also sore over being left out.

In Macherali, elected representatives of local bodies, owing allegiance to Pinnelli, threatened to quit their posts if their leader was not given a Cabinet berth.

to take me to Kolkata where he said there are many houses looking for maids," she told PTI over the phone.

Instead of Kolkata, Gareema*, a grandmother, was trafficked to Pune and sold to a brothel where she was sexually abused for 14 months.

"I was raped by eight-nine men everyday. If I refused I was beaten and not given food," she said.

Gareema* was rescued in a police raid last year. After three months in a rehabilitation home, she has returned home where she is still facing abuse from her family.

"My sons abuse me, call me dirty. I have started doing odd jobs at homes to get some money but still there are days when I just drink water and go to sleep," she said despairingly.

Social activist Pampa Ghosh said they are seeking compensation for her and also looking for rehabilitation homes where she can be shifted for long term.

There are many Gareemas* in the region, said the social worker from GGBK and others.

Mayawati hits back at Rahul Gandhi; asks him to worry about his own party

LUCKNOW, April 10 (PTI): BSP chief Mayawati on Sunday rejected Rahul Gandhi's claim that she had spurned an alliance offer from his Congress during the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, asking him to get his own house in order instead of worrying about other parties. Gandhi had on Saturday said that the Congress reached out to the BSP leader, offering her the chief minister's post for contesting the assembly polls together, but she did not respond.

Hitting back at the Gandhi scion, Mayawati said all the allegations levelled by him are wrong and reflect his party's "casteist mindset" and feeling of malice.

"Yesterday, the former president of the Congress had made some remarks regarding our party and especially about its chief, which clearly reflect the casteist mindset and a feeling of malice towards the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). It also shows similar feelings towards deprived sections of the society, especially the dalits," she told reporters here.

"Before levelling any allegation on the BSP, Rahul Gandhi must introspect," she said. "The Congress leader is unable to manage his scattered house, but is raising fingers on the style of working of the BSP. This clearly shows the tremendous anger and hatred towards the BSP. Instead of worrying about other parties, Rahul Gandhi should think about his own party. This is my advice," she added.

The BSP supremo also accused the Congress of failing to take any concrete step during its long tenure to improve the social and economic condition of dalits and other deprived sections of the society. She also alleged that the



community was not given full benefits of various other facilities, including reservation.

Mayawati claimed it was because of this attitude of the Congress that Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, who was the then law minister in the Congress government, had tendered his resignation.

She also questioned the Congress' claims of preventing the BJP from coming to power. "The Congress had fought the previous (2017) UP assembly elections with the Samajwadi Party. Despite this, it could not prevent the BJP from coming to power. The Congress should answer this," she added.

The BSP leader also mentioned about the previous Congress government terming BSP founder Kanshi Ram a "CIA agent".

"... before this, his (Rahul) father late Rajiv Gandhi (and former prime minister) had termed Kanshi Ram an agent of CIA to defame and weaken the BSP. And, following his footsteps, Rahul Gandhi is levelling wrong allegations on the BSP chief that since she fears the CBI and

Income Tax, she has a very soft approach towards the BJP. "However, this is not the truth. He must know that we won the cases in court and not by partnering with any government at the Centre," she said.

Sharpening her attack on the Congress, Mayawati said, "Before making any comments on Opposition parties, especially BSP, the Congress should think 100 times that what has been its record till now, as far as taking on the BJP is concerned. The record of the Congress in fighting the BJP has been very weak.

"The Congress cannot be seen anywhere fighting the BJP and the (Rashtriya Swayamsevak) Sangh. The BJP is adamant in ending democracy, and making a party system from panchayat to parliament like in China," she claimed. She said the working style of her party is different, and that she will not at all change it. Taking a jibe at Rahul Gandhi hugging Prime Minister Narendra Modi in parliament, she said, "The former Congress president, all of a sudden, got up and hugged Modi. Our party does not indulge in such drama. The entire country and the world laughed over this drama."

The Congress won only two out of 403 seats and got a vote share of less than 2.5 per cent in the recently-held Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, where the BJP retained power. As many as 97 per cent of Congress candidates lost their security deposit.

The BSP won just one seat and a vote share of around 13 per cent. Nearly 72 per cent of its candidates also lost their deposits in the election, which turned out to be a bipolar contest between the BJP and the Samajwadi Party (SP).

Study links high pollution, biofuel burning in Delhi's crematoria at peak of 2nd Covid wave



NEW DELHI, April 10 (PTI): The devastating second Covid-19 wave in Delhi saw unusually high air pollution despite a lockdown during the March-May period which could be attributed to exceptionally high biofuel burning at crematoria and increased frequency of dust storms, according to a new study.

The study conducted by researchers from National Institute of Advanced Science, Bengaluru; Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPPC); Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune; Utkal University; and Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology has been published in the multidisciplinary journal Chemosphere.

The research team included scientist and senior meteorologist Gufran Beig and DPPC member

secretary K S Jayachandran. The research explained the reasons for the worsening air quality during lockdown using India's first air quality forecasting framework model of SAFAR.

It suggested that an unaccounted emission source played a leading role in high air pollution. The hidden source of emission is believed to be associated with additional biofuel burning at crematoria which could not be accounted for in modelling.

"The model failed to reproduce some observed unusual features mainly related to an unaccounted hidden source of emission which was related to biomass burning at the crematorium in all likelihood," the paper read. The model also established that north-westerly winds often brought dust particles from

the desert region to Delhi, leading to an increase in the concentration of particulate matter even during the lockdown.

The increase in PM2.5 followed the steep surge in infection count and the peak mortality period (around 400 deaths per day) and directly coincided with peak levels of PM2.5, it showed.

The study modelled the emission as per the wood required for cremation (around 300-400 kg per pyre) for open pyre and accounted for the chemistry of crematoria flue gases which contain a higher percentage of organic, inorganic matter and particulate dust material. The increased carbon rich PM2.5 and PM10 further aggravated the severity of condition of Covid-19 patients and vulnerable population, adding to the misery. The impact lasted longer as carbonaceous PM2.5 remain suspended in the air relatively longer, it said.

The researchers further found that other peaks in the later part of lockdown were related to the north-westerly winds which often brought dust particles from the desert region to Delhi. The frequency of such dust storms was unusually higher than normal, probably due to free and faster flow of dust without much resistance during the lockdown period.

Noida twin tower demolition: Test blasts done

Experts feel 'more explosive' would be needed

NOIDA, April 10 (PTI): Ahead of the demolition of Supertech's twin towers here next month, test blasts were carried out at the site on Sunday to ascertain the amount of explosives that would be needed for razing the nearly 100-metre tall structures, officials said.

The Supreme Court had on August 31 last year ordered demolition of the twin towers which had come up inside the Supertech Emerald Court housing society's premises in Sector 93A in violation of building laws and in an area earmarked for green cover.

The demolition of the Apex and Ceyane towers is scheduled for May 22 but after the Sunday test blasts, experts engaged in the job said the structures are "very solid" and they may have to use "more explosives" than what was estimated earlier to bring the buildings down.

Earlier, it was estimated that 2,500 to 4,000 kg of explosives would be needed to demolish the twin towers but the "quantity is likely to go up" and they would "need more time" to plan out the final working, an expert told PTI.

The test blasts were held in the presence of representatives of Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) at Roorkee in Uttarakhand, Noida Authority, Supertech, Edifice Engineering and Jet Demolitions. A siren lasting a few seconds went off at 2.15 PM followed by two to three sirens at 2.30 PM, moments preceding the blasts (a series of six blasts separated by micro-seconds) which lasted less than two seconds. A last short siren went off at 2.45 PM in an indication by representatives of Edifice Engineering and Jet Demolitions that everything was okay, officials said. Mumbai-based Edifice Engineering and South Africa-based Jet Demolitions are private agencies entrusted with the demolition job.

The test blasts were carried out with less than four kg of explosives in the Apex tower. The explosives were placed on five columns in the basement of the building and one on the 13th floor, officials said.

"The objective of the test blasts was to determine the total amount of explosive required for the complete demolition and the procedure to be followed to control the flying dust as a result of the demolition," the Noida Authority said in a statement.

BJP doesn't hold Hindutva patent: Uddhav 'Bal Thackeray led saffron agenda'

MUMBAI, April 10 (PTI): Maharashtra chief minister and Shiv Sena president Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said the BJP doesn't hold 'patent' on Hindutva and claimed that the late Sena supremo Bal Thackeray had showed BJP that the combination of "saffron and Hindutva" will help in achieving power in Centre.

Thackeray also said Sena has always been committed to the "bhagva" (saffron) and Hindutva "unlike BJP which had different names like Bharatiya Jan Sangh and Jan Sangh which propagated different ideologies". Joining virtually the campaign for Maha Vikas Aghadi's (MVA) candidate Jayashree Jadhav, who belongs to Congress, for the April 12 bypoll from the Kolhapur North seat, Thackeray also blamed BJP for the defeat of the Shiv Sena nominee from the constituency in the 2019 polls despite the alliance between the two parties at that time.

He wondered if BJP had had a hidden alliance with Congress in this constituency in the 2019 polls.

"The BJP doesn't have the patent for Hindutva. I wonder had Lord Ram not been born what issue the BJP would have raised in politics. Since BJP is bereft of issues it is talking about religion and (spreading)

hatred," Thackeray said. Thackeray said it was his father Bal Thackeray who had shown them (BJP) that saffron and Hindutva will lead them on the road to Delhi. Speaking on the Kolhapur North bypoll, Thackeray said that votes of Congress increased in the 2019 polls ((in Kolhapur North) compared to the 2014 elections which resulted in the defeat of Shiv Sena's nominee despite the alliance with the BJP.

"Where did the BJP's votes go in 2019? Did you (BJP) have a hidden alliance with Congress at that time?" Thackeray asked.

Thackeray also said that if the BJP claims to respect Bal Thackeray then why is that party opposing the proposal to name the upcoming Navi Mumbai international airport after the late Sena founder. "Why has the BJP gone back on its word and commitment given by (Union Home Minister) Amit Shah in Balasaheb's room which I consider a temple," Thackeray asked, in an apparent reference to his claim that BJP had promised the CM's post to Sena in the 2019 polls.

The issue of sharing the chief minister's post after the state elections in 2019 led to the break up between the Sena and the BJP.

eating rockets and vanishing satellites as part of measures to reduce space debris.

According to the Orbital Debris Quarterly News, the US has 4,144 spacecraft (active and defunct), and 5,126 objects that can be categorised as space debris in the earth's orbit.

China has 517 spacecraft, active and defunct, and 3,854 objects, including spent rocket bodies, orbiting the earth. Singh said ISRO has also set up the Directorate Space Situational Awareness and Management at its headquarters to deal with issues related to space debris.

A dedicated Space Situational Awareness Control Centre is set up in Bengaluru to coordinate all space debris related activities within ISRO and to safeguard Indian operational space assets from collision threats, he said.

The minister added that ISRO was also planning to have its own observational facilities to track and catalogue the space objects.



the growth of space debris objects.

"ADR is a very complex technology and involves policy and legal issues. Technology demonstration studies have been taken up by many countries, including India. Developmental studies for finalising necessary technologies are initiated to demonstrate ADR," he said.

A top ISRO official had told a technology conclave last year that the space agency was working on futuristic technologies such as self-

Contd. from Page 1...

Improving nutrition value

a bank account for the first time in their life. 68 per cent of beneficiaries of Mudra Yojana are women and 80 per cent of the beneficiaries of Stand-Up India are women, Irani said. Minister of state for Women and Child Development Dr. Munjpara Mahendrabhai Kalubhai in his address highlighted the three major umbrella schemes by the Ministry of Women and Child Development Mission POSHAN, Mission Shakti and Mission Vatsalya.

Talking about the Zonal conferences held in different states of the country he said that this government is focusing on empowerment of women through various schemes and the objective of these zonal conferences is to sensitise state governments/UT administrations on the 3 Umbrella Missions of the Ministry to facilitate proper implementation of the schemes over the next 5 years. Finance and Social Welfare minister, Government of Assam Ajanta Neog was also present on Sunday's event. Neog in her speech highlighted the initiatives taken by the state government for the welfare of children and women. The Government of Assam is committed to all-round development of women and children in the state, she said.

PML-N's Shehbaz Sharif

will be elected in the National Assembly on Monday and a special session has been summoned. In the house of 342, the winner would need 172 votes to become the new Prime Minister. On Sunday, the Opposition had mustered 174 votes to ouster Khan.

Sharif is expected to be elected the new Leader of the House. In 2019, the National Accountability Bureau had arrested Shehbaz and his son, Hamza Sharif, accusing them of money laundering.

It will be a real challenge for Sharif to shepherd the motley herd that also includes four independent candidates and allow Parliament to complete its five-year term that will end in August next year. Before filing nomination, Sharif offered "special thanks" to those who stood up "for the Constitution!" "I don't want to go back to the bitterness of the past. We want to forget them and move forward. We will not take revenge or do injustice; we will not send people to jail for no reason, law and justice will take its course," he said while addressing the National Assembly early Sunday. Ex-president and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chair Asif Ali Zardari had proposed Sharif's name for prime minister in a joint opposition's meeting. Zardari's son Bilawal Bhutto is likely to be appointed as the new Foreign minister. According to media reports, in the run up to the no-trust vote, Khan made a botched attempt to replace Army chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa in order to bring someone more pliant and sympathetic to his idea of "foreign conspiracy" and cling on to power. BBC Urdu reported that a helicopter carrying "two uninvited guests" landed in the PM House on Saturday night and they met alone for 45 minutes with Khan. No details were provided about the meeting but it was not held in a cordial atmosphere, it said.

"The Prime Minister had issued orders an hour ago to remove one of the high officials who came to meet him. So the uninvited arrival of these guests was unexpected for the Prime Minister. Khan was waiting for a helicopter but those arriving on the helicopter were against his estimate and expectations," it said.

It further added that Khan was expecting that the helicopter would bring his "newly appointed official" whose arrival would put down all political disturbance. However, the attempted effort for a "change" failed as the defence ministry did not issue the necessary notification for the new appointment. The BBC did not identify the "uninvited guest" but the choice of words, tenor and tone of the report unmistakably show that they could be Gen Bajwa and ISI chief Lt Gen Nadeem Ahmed Anjum.

The army's media wing Inter-Services Public Relations rejected the BBC Urdu article and termed it as "totally baseless and a pack of lies". Pakistan has struggled with political instability since its formation in 1947 with multiple regime changes and military coups. No Prime Minister has ever completed a full five-year term.

Khan, however, told a group of his favourite journalists that there was no truth in the rumour that he was trying to replace the Army chief. Khan apparently lost support of the powerful Army after he refused to endorse the appointment of the ISI spy agency chief last year. Finally he agreed but it soured his ties with the army, which has hitherto wielded considerable power in the matters of security and foreign policy. Gen Bajwa last week appeared to distance himself from Khan's anti-US stance and said Pakistan wants good relations with Washington, its largest export trading partner and with China, Islamabad's all-weather ally.

Khan has been claiming that the Opposition's no-trust motion against him was the result of a "foreign conspiracy" because of his independent foreign policy. He has named the US as the country behind the conspiracy, a charge denied by Washington. Khan, who came to power in 2018 with promises to create a "Naya Pakistan", was dogged by claims of economic mismanagement and his government battled depleting foreign exchange reserves and double-digit inflation. Khan will also chair a meeting of the party's core committee to announce the future course of action. "Pakistan became an independent state in 1947; but the freedom struggle begins again today against a foreign conspiracy of regime change. It is always the people of the country who defend their sovereignty & democracy," Khan tweeted in his first comments since his ouster. He is expected to address his supporters here later this evening. On Friday, Khan had said that he will not accept an "imported government" in Pakistan.

Sixth edition of Assam's

Every year the festival is becoming bigger in terms of participation and footfall. It's a matter of huge honour that 200 entrepreneurs, startups, self-help groups, farmer producing companies and government agencies took part in Vocal for Local exhibition and made connections and profit. We promise to come back again next year with a new and better experience," said Shyamkanu Mahanta, chief organiser, Rongali. There was also a 500-year-old Ankiya Bhaona face-off, where various groups performed on plays such as Ram Bijoy, Rukmini Haran, Parijat Haran. Group Dast R won the competition and took home Rs 80,000 cash prize. Monikanchan Kala Kendra and Gandharba Kala Kendra adjudged second and third position respectively.

Rongali had an Open Mic, Hip Hop stage where music, poetry sessions and other activities were held and provided a platform to fresh talents. Artists presented folk music, independent music. As music binds people together, 'Rongali Good Vibes Music Stage' saw gigs of some fresh and famed names including Samnidhya Bhuyan, Bhaskar Opsel, Dipakshi Kalita along with Zubeen Garg, Raghu Dixit, Bipul Chetri. The fest organised special screenings of blockbuster Assamese movies such as Hiya Diya Niya, Mission China, Ratnakar among others in association with the Assam State Film Finance & Development Corporation.

Rongali presented spectacular fashion shows by the best designers, models, and showstoppers, who showcased the rich handloom and fabrics of the region. Art has always been an indispensable part of Rongali and this time too it hosted an art exhibition that aimed at creating awareness about various art forms.

Two-day 'Sahitya Sanskriti Aru Sampriti

by young Karbi boys and girls during Chomangkan. The Karbis could still retain its age-old tradition. Winding up poet meet the moderator Sar-et Hanse said the poets who have participated have presented their beautiful poems. He expressed thanks to the organisers KAAC, ASS and KCS.

Editor-in-chief of Prag News Channel, Prasanto Raj Guru and president of Asam Sahitya Sabha Dr. Kuladhar Saikia also attended the poet's meet. President of the Reception Committee MLA Bidyasing Englung on behalf of the organiser thanked the participants and cultural troupes. He commented that the event has allowed various ethnic tribes and communities to showcase their culture and tradition and thereby building up communal harmony through culture, language and literature. He thanked the president of ASS, Dr. Kuladhar Saikia, Karbi Anglong Sahitya Sabha and Diphu Sahitya Sabha. In the evening Bihu dance, Bengali traditional dance, Adivasi dance, Nepali dance, Manipuri dance and Mech Kachari dance were presented. DC of Karbi Anglong, IAS, Dibakar Nath inaugurated the dance programme.

Covid-19 has not gone

185 crore doses (of vaccines) were administered, which surprised the world. This has been made possible due to your support," he said. The PM also said the devotees of Maa Umjia should undertake a project to take care of the health of malnourished children and anemic mothers at the village level. The 'Maa Umjia Trust,' which manages the temple, should organise competitions at the village level promoting good health of children, he said. "The devotees of Maa Umjia should ensure no child suffers from malnutrition, irrespective of which community he/she belongs to. If a child is strong, then the community and the country will become strong," he said. The Prime Minister also said the awareness against female foeticide has resulted in the country's daughters showing their might in the Olympics. "Who will not take pride in our daughters?" he added.

Modi also requested people to support the government's campaign to save Mother Earth through adoption of natural farming, and continue the work to conserve water. "We will have to save Mother Earth...We have got a governor (of Gujarat-Acharya Devvrat) who is totally committed to natural farming. He has addressed farmer meetings at the taluka level, and lakhs of farmers have turned to natural farming," he said.

People should support Gujarat chief minister Bhupendra Patel by responding to his call for the same, he said. Modi also asked people to undertake water conservation by creating 75 'Amrit Sarovars' in each district by digging, deepening, and renovating the existing water bodies. "Let us undertake the project of 75 lakes in each district...It's not a big deal for you all who have made lakhs of check dams. Imagine how big a service this will be," he said. The PM said people who have faced severe water crisis should not give up the practice of water conservation, regardless of the success achieved in this field. "This is something that needs to be undertaken every year before monsoon by deepening of lakes and cleaning of water channels to conserve water," he said.

Christians celebrate Palm Sunday

Fellowship and Prayer Center held Palm Sunday services at different churches. NKBA, SABF, Nilip Area, Duarbagori Area, UCF, Presbyterian, Catholic, AG, GEL and others organised their own observation of the day with prayer, procession with palm leaves and feast.

US official: Russia appoints

ranks after starting as a platoon commander in 1982. He fought during the second war in Chechnya and took several top positions before being placed in charge of the Russian troops in Syria in 2015. In 2016, Putin awarded Dvornikov the Hero of Russia medal, one of the country's highest awards. Dvornikov has served as the commander of the Southern Military District since 2016.

Sullivan described the general as having a record of brutality against civilians in Syria and said "we can expect more of the same in this theatre." But he stressed that the U.S. strategy remains the same in providing Ukraine the military and logistical support it needs.

College principal faces

started preliminary investigation into the entire episode, sources said. Speaking to this correspondent here, OC Nagaon PS Monuj Rajbongshi said that police received an FIR from Dr Saikia on April 8 against the principal. "We are investigating both the allegations against each other and we will take action after getting the further details," Rajbongshi said.

JAMEEL KHAN

Remaining a working actor for 25 years more important than winning awards

MUMBAI, April 10 (IANS): Veteran actor Jameel Khan, who is receiving a lot of praise for his performance in the recently-released web series "Gullak 3", says the biggest sign of success is to work constantly for the last 25 years and staying connected with the audience. Starting his career in 1998, the actor has appeared in several television series and feature films. Even though people recognise him as a skilled actor for all these years, he only received 'Best Actor (Comedy Series)' award for "Gullak" in 2021.

Asked about the importance of awards and recognition in the life of an actor, Jameel told IANS: "I would like to believe that the biggest sign of success is to remain a working actor for the last 25 years and be recognised by the audience for our work. Award and stardom happen only to a few people but if the aim is to become an actor, then not the award but the acting projects and remaining relevant for the craft is important for me."

After graduating from Aligarh Muslim University, Jameel came

to Mumbai to become an actor. He appeared in films like "Rock On!!", "Gangs of Wasaypur", "Goliyon Ki Rasleela Ram Leela", "Tiger Zinda Hai", "Pagglait" to name a few.

In the web series "Gullak", he plays the character of a middle-aged man Santosh Mishra, and the story of the show revolves around Mishra family.

Asked about how he dealt with the initial struggle, Jameel said: "I believe that anyone, who has achieved success, must have had some kind of talent that I might not be having and also it has everything to do with timing. At times, just knowing your craft of acting is not enough to get big projects. At times, the choice you make defines your success."

"So, I would tell all the youngsters, be focused on the craft, because every opportunity will take you to your destination of becoming the actor that you wish to be."

Created by Shreyansh Pandey, "Gullak 3", also featuring Geetanjali Kulkarni, Vaibhav Raj Gupta and Harsh Mayar, is streaming on SonyLiv.



First single from Ravi Teja-starrer 'Ramarao On Duty' released

CHENNAI, April 10 (IANS): The makers of director Sarath Mandava's upcoming action-thriller 'Ramarao On Duty', starring Ravi Teja in the lead, on Sunday released 'Bulbul Tarang', the first single from the film.

Rendered by Sid Sriram, the song has lyrics by Rakendu Mouli and music by Sam C S.

The beautiful and romantic number attempts to showcase the love Ravi Teja's character has for Rajisha's character in the film.

Produced on a grand scale by Sudhakar Cherukuri, the film is based on real incidents and features a host of stars. Apart from Ravi Teja and Rajisha Vijayan, the film will also feature Divyasha Kaushik,

Venu Thottampudi, Nasser, Sr Naresh, Pavitra lokesh, 'Sarpetta Paramabara' fame John Vijay and Chaitanya Krishna among others.

Cinematography for the film is by Sathyan Sooryan, while National Award winner Praveen KL is its editor. 'Ramarao On Duty' is slated for a grand release worldwide in theatres on June 17.

'Never thought we would be where we are today: 'KGF' director Prashanth Neel

MUMBAI, April 10 (IANS): With 'KGF: Chapter 2' gearing up for release, the buzz around the movie's star continues to grow.

The movie's director Prashanth Neel told Bollywood actor and director Farhan Akhtar about the film's star Yash's role in the KGF success story.

Yash and 'KGF' garnered a worldwide following after the release of the 'KGF: Chapter 1'. The actor who enjoys a massive Kannada fan base, emerged as a pan-India star with the release of the film in 2018.

In a recent interaction with Farhan Akhtar, Yash and Prashanth Neel spoke in detail about the process of developing KGF into the big name that it is today.

Prashanth mentioned that KGF's eight-year-long journey gave them the confidence which helped them take the film to another level. The filmmaker also added, "When we



started we never thought that we would be where we are today".

Crediting Yash, Neel extended his gratitude and said "The only person that had this vision was Yash. We started this as a small Kannada project and today the film is really big and the expectations are very high"

Adding more to the discussion, Prashanth said "Initially, it was meant to be a Kannada movie. However,

Yash helped cinematic comedy in the same way he wrote the script. This movie is coming to a release. It feels like I am marrying off my daughter", said Prashanth. Releasing nationwide on April 14, in Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, and Malayalam, 'K.G.F: Chapter 2' is written and directed by Prashanth Neel, and produced by Vijay Kiragandur, under the Hombale Films banner.

Bryan Cranston, Aaron Paul to guest star in 'Better Call Saul' season finale



LOS ANGELES, April 10 (IANS): 'Breaking Bad' stars Bryan Cranston and Aaron Paul have been confirmed to guest star in the final season of 'Better Call Saul', which is the spinoff of 'Breaking Bad'.

The show's co-creator Peter Gould officially confirmed the news, reports 'Variety'.

As per 'Variety', Gould announced the news on Saturday (Pacific Standard Time) at PaleyFest LA on a 'Better Call Saul' panel moderated by Variety television

editor Michael Schneider. However, Gould didn't exactly reveal as to when Cranston and Paul will appear in the show or in what capacity. Gould said on the panel, "I don't want to spoil things for the audience, but I will say the first question we had when we started the show was, 'Are we gonna see Walt and Jesse on the show?' Instead of evading, I'll just say yeah. How or the circumstances or anything, you'll just have to discover that for yourself, but I have to say that's one of many things that I

think you'll discover this season."

"If you can believe it, there's more," star Bob Odenkirk teased, but Gould cut him off before he said too much. Before making the PaleyFest announcement, Gould attended the 'Better Call Saul' premiere and told 'Variety', "These two worlds cross over in a way that you haven't seen before, that's for sure." Co-creator Vince Gilligan told 'Variety', "It would be a damn shame if the show ended without (Cranston and Paul) appearing, would it not?"

Director Ayan Mukerji shares new poster from 'Brahmastra'



MUMBAI, April 10 (IANS): 'Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani' director Ayan Mukerji shared a new poster of the soon-to-be-married couple Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt's 'Brahmastra' on Sunday.

He also shared a glimpse of the soulful song 'Kesariya' with the poster. The director took to his Instagram to share the film's asset.

Explaining the essence of the film's title, he wrote in the caption, "Love is the Light! Part One: Shiva is what this first chapter of Brahmastra is now called. But for the longest time, it used to be. Part One: Love. Because at its core, Brahmastra is about the Energy of Love. A Love - that spread like Fire, beyond the Movie, and into Life. So here it is, our Love Poster."

The director further wrote in the caption, "The Time feels Right for it. There is some extra love in the air these days! (And with it, a little piece of the magic of Kesariya, Pritam (Dada), Amitabh Bhattacharya, Arijit, Shiva & Isha, Ranbir & Alia. Love - The Greatest Astra".

The poster shows Alia and Ranbir sharing an intimate moment with their eyes closed and bruise marks on their appendages.

The film, produced by Fox Star Studios, Dharma Productions, Prime Focus and Starlight Pictures, also stars Amitabh Bachchan, Mouni Roy and Nagarjuna Akkineni. The film will hit theatres on September 9, in five languages - Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada.

CHINA CINEMAS TO REOPEN TO INDIAN FILMS

Recently, China has accepted two Hindi films for theatrical exhibition in the country. And, is in the process of acquiring a South Indian film. This is not the first time that China has started screening Indian movies. China had started regular imports of Indian movies, albeit with a limit on the number of films per year.

When one talks of China, the unpredictability always needs to be considered. The imports were stopped for whatever reasons for the last two years. With countries such as Pakistan and China, you can never predict. Since the Balakot air strikes, for instance, Pakistan has stopped importing Hindi movies. Whenever there is a tiff between the two nations, India and Pakistan, the first victims are always films. But guess who the loser is? It is the Pakistani exhibition trade, the cinema owners. Though they are improving now, content as well as technique wise, Pakistani films are no match to Hindi films, especially when it comes to popularity. Besides, only Pakistani films can't feed the country's cinemas for 52 weeks.

The fact that the Chinese had started importing Indian films came as a morale booster for our filmmakers. It was consid-



ered a kind of acknowledgement of the great popularity of our films.

The overseas circuit, as it was known in the film trade over the years, was considered as big as the Bombay circuit, as defined by the trade. Unknown to filmmakers, the overseas market was much bigger, but the producers had no way of knowing it. The trade was monopolised by one or two buyers and they had made sure it remained their market.

The filmmakers just felt happy that their overseas rights had been sold, for, as per the

trade practice, a film's profit margin came from one circuit and that was 'Overseas'.

They never realised how lucrative the overseas market was, but even the staff and clerks working for the one or two distributors did. One after the other, they all left the parent company to start their own! Suddenly, there were a dozen or so buyers for the overseas rights of films. But the pioneers had minted gold while their monopoly lasted.

The overseas trade consisted of the traditional market, which extended to mainly the

African countries, where a huge Indian diaspora had settled, UK, Middle East, South East Asia and smaller countries such as Fiji, Mauritius and such. Even South America was a sizeable market.

Then there was the non-traditional market. It consisted of European countries, mainly the Eastern Bloc. Mostly, these countries released just one or two Indian films a year, because their people's exposure to foreign films was limited to what their national governments approved.

In this market, the one country that appreciated our films the most was the USSR, or the Soviet Union, as it was called before its disintegration. Earlier, Raj Kapoor and, later, Mithun Chakraborty, were the heartthrobs there. In exchange, of course, we had to accept the Russian propaganda films that never attracted footfalls. That was government diplomacy and had nothing to do with the Indian film industry.

The US and Canada were slated to become a major market for Hindi films 1970s onwards following Ugandan despot Idi Amin throwing out the Indian families who had settled in these countries, besides England and other Commonwealth nations, being British

passport holders. Almost at the same time, a lot of Indians were migrating to the US and Canada, some seeking higher education and then staying back.

Today, the Indian diaspora in the US accounts for more than 40 lakh people, besides having spread all over the world. The Indian films have been making the most of it ever since. Till the 1970s, Indians abroad loved mainly desi-themed films. Mostly, romances with melodious music. Generally, the feel-good films. That was their nostalgia trip.

They were still old-fashioned, living with the same values they had left India with. Their communications with home were limited and travelling back was never on the cards and, if it ever was, it was via long ship voyages.

They loved Rajesh Khanna films the most and kept doing so till long after Amitabh Bachchan had displaced him. Khanna's films were what they identified with because of romance and music. Action and other stuff was available in Hollywood films in plenty!

Now, of course, the scene has changed. With a huge young Indian population working in the U.S. and other countries, a lot of them from the South of India, the preference is mostly for youth-oriented films. IANS

Leclerc takes dominant F1 Australian GP win as Verstappen retires again

MELBOURNE, April 10 (IANS): Ferrari's Charles Leclerc took a lights-to-flag victory in Sunday's F1 Australian Grand Prix to seize the initiative in the 2022 title race, as Red Bull's Max Verstappen once again retired with mechanical issues.

Starting from his pole position, Leclerc looked comfortable at the front all afternoon long, and was never headed as he also set the fastest lap on his way to his second win in three races so far in 2022.

"It's the first win where we have controlled the gap," said a jubilant Leclerc afterwards. "Honestly, what a car today. Of course I did a good job all

weekend but it was not possible without the car."

"Especially in the race pace, we were extremely strong. Tyres felt great -- from the first lap to the last lap we were managing the tyres extremely well. I am just so happy."

Leclerc's joy stood in stark contrast to the misery of Verstappen, Xinhua reports. The Dutchman appeared unable to live with the pace of the Ferrari, and ended up pulling off on lap 39 with an apparent engine issue. After having also retired from the first race of the season, Verstappen already has a 46-point deficit to his would-be title rival Leclerc, and rued his poor reliability so far in 2022.



"We're already miles behind," the Dutchman said. "I don't want to think about a title fight, I just want to finish races. It's frustrating and unacceptable. These kinds of things, if you want to fight for the title, cannot happen."

Behind Leclerc, Verstappen's teammate Sergio Perez took a distant second place, with Mercedes' George Russell taking advantage of a fortunately-timed Safety Car period to vault into third. Russell's teammate Lewis Hamilton took an unhappy fourth place, ahead of the two McLaren drivers of Lando Norris and Daniel Ricciardo, with the Woking squad putting on a much-improved showing after a

tough start to 2022.

Esteban Ocon took seventh in his Alpine, ahead of Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas and the AlphaTauri of Pierre Gasly.

After going almost the whole race without making a pitstop, Williams' Alex Albon climbed from the back of the field to take the final point for 10th place, just ahead of China's Zhou Guanyu in his Alfa Romeo.

In addition to Verstappen, Leclerc's teammate Carlos Sainz was another notable retiree after spinning out on lap 1, with Sebastian Vettel compounding a miserable weekend for Aston Martin by crashing out on lap 23.

After two wins from three races, Leclerc is already well ahead in the 2022 Drivers' Championship with 71 points, as he seeks to be Ferrari's first World Champion since 2007. Russell currently sits second with 37 points, ahead of Sainz, who drops to third on 33 points.

In the Constructors' standings, Ferrari are well out in front on 104 points. Despite their early-season struggles, Mercedes currently sit second with 65 points, with Red Bull's reliability woes keeping them in third place with 58 points.

The next round of the 2022 F1 season is the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix in Imola, Italy, on April 24.

CARLOS ANCELOTTI'S SIDE MARCHES TOWARDS LA LIGA TITLE

Easy for Real Madrid as Betis and Sevilla also win in Spain



MADRID, April 10 (IANS): Real Madrid continued their march towards the La Liga title with a routine 2-0 win at home to Getafe.

Real Madrid coach Carlos Ancelotti rested Luka Modric and Toni Kroos for the game on Saturday night, but his side never looked to be in much

trouble after Casemiro headed home Vinicius Jr's cross in the 38th minute.

Lucas Vazquez scored a second in the 66th minute after good work from Rodrygo down the right wing.

Gareth Bale replaced Karim Benzema with around 15 minutes to play, making his first

home appearance for Real Madrid in almost two years -- and he was booed onto the pitch by the fans in the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium, Xinhua reports.

Two late goals keep Betis fifth and leave Cadiz in trouble as Betis claimed a 2-1 win with Cristian Tello's 77th minute

goal and Borja Iglesias's 84th minute penalty cancelling out Ivan Alejo's opener for Cadiz.

That result had consequences at the top and bottom of the table as Javier Aguirre claimed his first win as Mallorca coach thanks to Vedat Muriqi's 69th-minute penalty against Atletico Madrid.

Atletico were off the pace, perhaps focusing more on next week's Champions League return leg at home to Manchester City and after the defeat they are just one point above Betis in the table.

Seventh place Villarreal and eighth place Athletic Club drew 1-1 in Villarreal's Estadio de la Ceramica in a game in which both sides had their chances.

Raul Garcia put Athletic ahead shortly before halftime and Alfonso Pedraza levelled for the home side, who made 11 changes ahead of their trip to play Bayern Munich next Tuesday.

Sevilla ensured they will remain in the top-four at the end of the weekend when they claimed a hard-fought 4-2 win at home to Granada, which was tougher than the final score implies.

Darwin Machis fired Granada ahead in the 22nd minute, but Diego Carlos' powerful header levelled for Sevilla 10 minutes later.

Lucas Ocampos got Sevilla ahead in the hour, but it looked as if Victor Diaz's 87th minute strike had saved a point for Granada. However, there were nine minutes of injury time and that was enough for Raf Mir to score at the far post and Papu Gomez to finish off a neat break with the last kick of the game. I

Chelsea recover in style as Spurs take big step towards Champions League spot



LONDON, April 10 (IANS): Chelsea recovered from painful home defeats against Brentford and Real Madrid with a 6-0 win away to Southampton.

Thomas Tuchel's men looked like a team with something to prove and led 2-0 after the 16th minute with goals from Marcos Alonso and Mason Mount late on Saturday.

Timo Werner made it 3-0 in the 21st minute and Kai Havertz all but ended the match when he added a fourth just after the half hour, Xinhua reports.

Both Werner and Mount scored again in the 49th and 54th minutes before Chelsea took the foot off the gas to save their legs for next Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal in Madrid and after this display they will believe they have a chance of overturning their 3-1 first leg defeat.

Anthony Gordon's deflected first half strike gave Everton three vital points in their battle against relegation against a hapless Manchester United, who produced another chaotic display that puts their hopes of playing in Europe next season in severe doubt.

Arsenal's hopes of a top-four finish also suffered a big set-

back as they suffered a shock 2-1 defeat at home to Brighton -- a team with six defeats and a draw from their last seven matches.

Leandro Trossard on 28 minutes and Enock Mwepu's 67th minute half-volley put Brighton 2-0 up before Martin Odegaard's late consolation for Mikel Arteta's side.

Tottenham took full advantage of Arsenal's slip up with a 4-0 win away to Aston Villa. The win had two heroes, Heung Min Son, who scored a hat-trick, with the first goal coming in the third minute.

Hugo Lloris made a series of first half saves as Villa peppered the Spurs goal after Son's opener, but after Dejan Kulusevski doubled the lead five minutes into the second half, Son netted twice more to seal the win. Leeds United look safe from relegation after Raphinha, Rodrigo and Jack Harrison gave Jesse Marsch's men a 3-0 away win to condemn Watford to their eighth successive home league defeat, while lifting Leeds 9-points clear of the bottom three. Newcastle United also look safe as Chris Wood's second half penalty gave them a 1-0 win at home to Wolverhampton.

Netherlands beat India 3-0 in semi-finals

POTCHEFSTROOM (SOUTH AFRICA), April 10 (IANS) A fighting Indian Junior Women's hockey team went down to the Netherlands 3-0 in the semi-finals of the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup, here on Sunday.

The Netherlands scored through Tessa Beetsma (12th min), Luna Fokke (53rd min) and Jip Dicke (54th min) to book their berth in the final and set themselves up for a shot at winning their third title.

India had made a good start and had early possession but they could not score any goal.

For India, Mumtaz Khan's

early shot on goal gave a positive start in the last-four encounter.

The forward has been quite impressive in the tournament so far, however, she could not find the right deflection as her shot hit the crossbar, denying India an early lead.

Meanwhile, the Dutch came up with a brilliant 18-pass goal that was patiently executed, beating the Indian defence to the goal. It was the Player of the Match Tessa Beetsma, who opened the scoring for the Dutch with a fine goal in the 12th minute.

A few minutes later, the

Netherlands nearly doubled the lead but the goal was disallowed by the umpire as the shot had come off the attacker's back stick.

Though India showed their abilities with attack, creating eight circle penetrations at half

JR WOMEN'S HOCKEY WC

time, with five shots on goal which included a couple of penalty corners, they were unable to find success. The score at half-time was 1-0 in the Netherlands' favour.

With the match being evenly played by both teams, the

Dutch returned after the break with an improvised attack that proved tough to beat for India. While they pushed for goals in the first few minutes of the third quarter, India lived up to the challenge with goalie Bichu Devi coming up with some fine

saves. The Indian team Captain Salima Tete who tried to dominate the midfield but India's attack was outnumbered by the Dutch defenders, and they denied India every opportunity to take successful shots on goal.

With the match going into the deciding quarter, India still had their hopes of making it 1-1. But the Dutch went into top gear to finish the match with two more goals.

Luna Fokke and Jip Dicke scored back-to-back goals in the 53rd and 54th minute that ensured they snatched the match from India and marched into the final.

The Netherlands next play the winner of the match between Germany and England with India taking on the loser to settle for the bronze medal.

India junior women had won their maiden bronze medal in the 2013 edition.

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Jamshedpur FC announces squad for RFDL

JAMSHEDPUR, April 10 (IANS): Indian Super League side Jamshedpur FC on Sunday announced its squad for the Reliance Foundation Development League, scheduled to be held in Goa from April 15.

Jamshedpur will be featuring their youth team (TFA), which will compete alongside Reliance Foundation Youth Champs and six other ISL clubs -- Bengaluru, Chennaiyin, Goa, Hyderabad, Kerala Blasters, Mumbai City.

The squad registered by the club has all players born in or after 2002, which makes it an entirely U20 youth team. The players in the team are majority those who played the U18 Elite League in 2020 where they provided some stellar performances in their group before the Covid-19 pandemic. The team also participated in the Durand Cup back in September 2021 under the guidance of coach Noel Wilson.

The side will also consist of Sandip Mandi, Vishal Yadav and Mohit Singh Dhami, who plied their trade in the league winning run of Jamshedpur in the recently concluded ISL 2021-22 season, the

franchise said.

The team will be led by their head coach Carlos Santamarina, along with assistant coach, Indranil Chakraborty and goalkeeping coach, Subrata Dasgupta. Jamshedpur will kick-off its first match of RFDL on April 16 against Mumbai City.

Squad: Goalkeepers: Vishal Yadav, Arman Tamang, Mohit Singh Dhami. Defenders: Sandip Mandi, Rishi, Saphabha, Deepak Hansdah, Gopal Hembram, Ankit Toppo, Nayan Tamang, Piush Thakuri, Kojam Beyong, Aryan Sonowal, Raj Mukhi.

Midfielders: Keisan Angelo Singh, Advait Sumbly, Hijam Lenin Singh, Phijam Vikash Singh, Anand Kumar, Robin Das, Sorokhaibam Nongpoknganba Meitei.

Forwards: Nikhil Barla, Khulakpam Sakir Ali, Lalruatmawia.

Travelling Staff: Carlos Santamarina (Head Coach), Indranil Chakraborty (Asst Coach), Subrata Dasgupta (GK Coach), V Ramkrishna (Academy Manager), Md Salah (Physiotherapist), Abhishek Ganguly (Team Manager).

KALYANI, April 10 (IANS): Pedro Manzi scored an equaliser in the dying embers as Rajasthan United held Real Kashmir for a frustrating 2-2 draw in the I-League at the Kalyani Stadium, here on Sunday.

Mason Lee Robertson notched up a first-half brace to put his side ahead but they squandered it once again as Rajasthan managed to steal a draw from the jaws of defeat, courtesy of goals from Alocious and Pedro Manzi.

The second I-League game of the day started with Real Kashmir exerting pressure on their rivals from the first minute of the game. They were also rewarded for the same as the team from Kashmir got their very first chance in the fourth minute in the form of a free kick. All eyes were on Mason Robertson to deliver as he came forward to take the free kick. The Scottish attacker did not disappoint, converting from a set-piece to put Real Kashmir ahead early in the encounter.

Rajasthan United had a chance to equalise through Sardor



Jakhonov minutes later, but he was denied a well-deserved goal by a spectacular save from Bilal Khan. Rajasthan appeared desperate in the middle of the field as they attempted to equalise the game after conceding early. Pedro Manzi attempted another shot after getting a good cross into the box, but his

bicycle kick sailed straight into the goalkeeper's hands. In the 16th minute, Omar Ramos attempted to create an opportunity for his team, but his header was cleared off the line. Rajasthan United were given more time on the ball and looked at ease as the half-hour mark approached, with the Snow Leopards

defending. Real Kashmir upped the ante as the first half came to a close, scoring their second goal of the game in the 43rd minute. Robertson was on target again after being set up by Ragav Gupta's excellent cross from the right side.

They got off to a fast start in the second half as well, looking to ex-

tend their lead. Bernard attempted

a wild shot from the centre of the field in the 49th minute of the game, but it was saved. He attempted another shot four minutes later, but it went over the bar. In the 55th minute, Rajasthan United made two changes, replacing Sardor Jakhonov and Harmanjot Singh with Alocious M and Anil Chawan. Rajasthan came close to reducing the gap in the 60th minute, but a great challenge from Koushik Sarkar denied them a goal. They dominated ball possession in the final third of the game but lacked creativity.

Super-sub Alocious pulled one back for his side in the 75th minute by flicking the ball into the back of the net through a header after receiving a perfect cross down the right from Ramos.

Rajasthan kept pushing for an equaliser as the contest neared the end while Real Kashmir looked to avoid late drama and the former were finally awarded for their continuous effort as Pedro Manzi levelled the contest in the 90th minute with an overhead kick.

Delhi Capitals return to winning ways by out-batting KKR as Kuldeep exacts sweet revenge

MUMBAI, April 10 (PTI): Openers Prithvi Shaw and David Warner's fearless batting laid the foundation as Delhi Capitals out-batted Kolkata Knight Riders by 44 runs to notch up their second win in the IPL here on Sunday.

On a batting belt, KKR skipper Shreyas Iyer's decision to put Delhi Capitals in backfired as they piled up 215 for five riding on half-centuries from Shaw (51 off 29 balls) and Warner (61 off 45 balls).

In reply, KKR were all-out for 171 in 19.4 overs and it was left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav's evening at the Brabourne Stadium as he exacted sweet revenge against a franchise that didn't treat him too well during his stint as his career came to a halt.

The scoreboard pressure was always telling and Warner (4/35 in 4 overs), who is proving to be an asset for Capitals, decisively swung the match in the Rishabh Pant-led side's favour, getting opposition



skipper Shreyas Iyer (54 off 33 balls) stumped with a left-arm wrist spinner's googly. Iyer had no clue as he came down the track and the ball turned away after pitching.

Pat Cummins didn't play any manic knock as a Kuldeep leg-break ended his stay and then he

took a magnificent skier off his own bowling to cap off a superb evening under lights.

Left-arm pacer Khaled Ahmed (3/25 in 4 overs) bowled fast and sharp at the onset and in the end Andre Russell (24 off 21 balls) had too much to do with too little time

left and result was a one-sided victory for DC.

At the start, Shaw and Warner feasted on a quality bowling attack before DC survived a scratchy middle-order show to reach a healthy 215 for 5.

If Shaw-Warner added 93 to set the platform, Shardul Thakur (29 not out off 11 balls) and Axar Patel (22 off 14 balls) added 49 in just 3.2 overs to finish the innings in style.

Warner and Shaw were facing one of the most lethal pace attacks of this edition but to their advantage it was perhaps the best batting track.

There was a layer of green but it was more about holding the surface which had even bounce for anyone wishing to hit through the line.

Umesh Yadav (1/48 in 4 overs) had his first bad outing in this IPL, while Warner also launched into Pat Cummins (0/51 in 4 overs) with two boundaries over cover as 50 came in four overs.

It's a rarity to have 10 fours and

two sixes being hit in the Powerplay as Iyer looked clueless.

Cummins was pulled for six by Shaw, while Warner slog swept Varun Chakravarty (1/44 in 4 overs) over mid-wicket for a six. Sunil Narine (2/21) was reverse swept as both spinners were introduced within the Powerplay after pacers got severely punished first up.

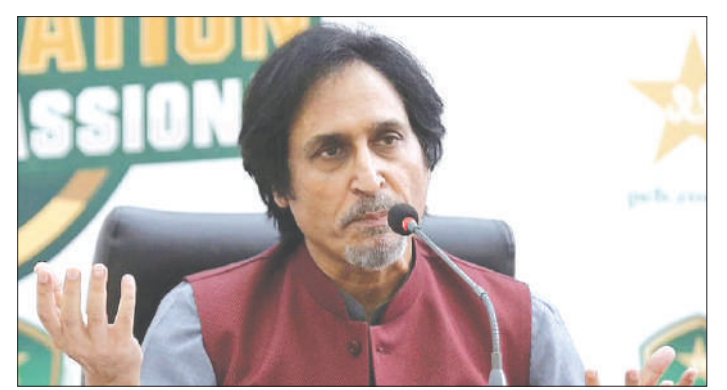
It was Chakravarty, who breached Shaw's defence to give his team first breakthrough but skipper Pant (27 off 14 balls), promoting himself up the order, didn't let the momentum slip away as he and Warner added 55 in just 4.1 overs.

Pant was audacious as usual, hitting those fallen reverse sweep off spinners and a straight six off Cummins.

Warner completed his first half-century of this edition with a six off Russell before Pant was dismissed by a slower bowled by the Jamaican all-rounder.

ICC meeting: Raja's 4-nation tournament proposal unanimously rejected

Chairman Barclay to complete his term till October



NEW DELHI, April 10 (PTI):

The ICC board on Sunday convinced its chairman Gregor Barclay to complete his term till end of October before the global body starts its nomination process to find a new chairman where the Indian cricket board could play a massive role. In another significant development, Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ramiz Raja's proposal for a four-nation tournament has been unanimously rejected by the board, putting an end to speculations of multiple India versus Pakistan matches on neutral venues.

The two-day board meeting which concluded in Dubai on Sunday was a win-win one for the Indian cricket board as Barclay's continuation till October gives it ample time to strategise whether it will field a candidate for the top post in the month of November.

"There has been no discussion on renomination of Barclay. But he will finish his current two year term as a chairman till end of October. So the process of nominating a new chairman only starts in November," an ICC Board member told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Originally, there was a possibility that the renomination or nomination would have happened in the month of June but that changed after deliberations between the member boards.

The decision also helps the BCCI buy time as they are likely to have their AGM in September after which the composition of the national parent body will be clear. The BCCI has already appealed, seeking a few changes in the Lodha Constitution which many feel till date is practically non-implementable. It will be interesting to see whether president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah go for a cooling-off in September.

Shah's name is doing the rounds as the next chairman of ICC but there has been no confirmation from either the BCCI secretary himself or sources close to him about his apparent interest in throwing his hat in the ring. PCB chairman Ramiz Raja's ambitious proposal of conducting a four-nation tourney comprising India, Australia, England under the aegis of the ICC was unanimously rejected by the all-powerful board even though there was a projected revenue of USD 750 million for five years.

"In any case, ICC's Financial and Commercial Affairs Committee (F&CA) was against this proposal. As we know that the MPA (Members Participation Agreement) doesn't allow any member nation to host more than tri-nation, organizing four-nation every year would have in any case devalued ICC's own marquee events," a board member said. Another sensitive issue which board members are talking in hushed tones is whether Raja will remain PCB chairman for long after Imran Khan was removed from Prime Minister's position. PCB chairman is a political appointee as Pakistan PMs are always Patron-in-chief of the board. Hence Raja, an appointee of Imran Khan, might be forced to tender his resignation in current political climate.

The BCCI was always clear in its stand that it won't play four-nations with its calendar choc-a-bloc and a lot of bilateral commitments that need to be honoured. On top of that is player's workload and mental health. There were reports that ECB's Tom Harrison was also independently interested in exploring ideas of a four-nation tourney but it's now evident that nothing of that sort happened at board meeting.

United Chirang Duar FC lift trophy

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, April 10: United Chirang Duar Football Club (UCDFC), Runikatha defeated Barhoongkha Athletic Club (AC), Kokrajhar 1-0 to win the Bodoland Martyrs Gold Cup football championship-2022 in the final match played at Banargaon Jaiklong Sports Club playground in Kokrajhar on Sunday. The 21st edition of Bodoland Martyrs Gold Cup football championship-2022 concluded with prize distribution ceremony amidst huge spectators.

The championship was organised by Kokrajhar district Sports Association (KDSA) in association with ex BLT welfare society under the sponsorship of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) government in memory of Bodoland movement martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Bodoland statehood demand movement.

Situ Basumatary of United Chirang Duar netted first goal in 34th minute against Barhoongkha which led the team 1-0 till first half. In the second half of the match, Barhoongkha tried to equalise the match by scoring goal, but couldn't score any goal against the United Chirang till the last minute and lost to the United Chirang 0-1 goal and subsequently United Chirang Duar Football Club lifted the championship trophy. Rajib Boro of Barhoongkha Athletic Club was adjudged best player of the final match in the championship. He was given away a trophy and cash ₹5000. The champion team United Chirang Duar Football Club received a trophy and cash ₹1 lakh while runners up team was handed over a trophy and cash ₹50,000 respectively.

Assam Football Association secretary and ex MLA Hemendra Nath Brahma, BTC MCLAs Derhasat Basumatary, Rajib Brahma were graced as guests in the prize distribution ceremony and handed over the trophies to the winning team abd runners up team.

Notably, the championship team United Chirang Duar Football Club and runners up team Barhoongkha Athletic Club have contributed their prize moneys to the KDSA for organising sports events in days to come respectively.

Gujarat Titans, the team to beat, take on inconsistent SRH

NAVI MUMBAI, April 10 (PTI): Gujarat Titans, who have become the team to beat in its debut IPL season, would aim to build on a dream start against an inconsistent Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Monday.

Three consecutive wins in the IPL have given Gujarat Titans the momentum and they showed against Punjab Kings that they can win from any situation. Skipper Hardik Pandya will need to showcase his tactical acumen against Sunrisers, who earned their first win against CSK but still are placed in the bottom half of the points table.

Gujarat have found different match-winners in every game while Sunrisers, who got a win after a horrendous start to their campaign, would like to keep improving with every game. At the DY Patil stadium, focus again will be on young Shubman Gill. He has been in prime form and posted his highest IPL score against Punjab Kings.

The elegant right-hander would however need support from Matthew Wade, who has the ability to play big shots and Sai Sudarshan, who also chipped in with a useful knock in the last game. In the last outing against Punjab, Rahul Tewatia found his mojo with



two sixes and emerged as the match-winner. Titans are up against death overs specialist Bhuvneshwar Kumar, the raw pace of Umran Malik, the yorkers of T Natarajan and classical off-breaks of Washington Sundar.

Add to it the variations brought in by lanky South African pacer Marco Jansen, the batters could encounter a tough time. Gujarat's bowlers on the other hand have been right on the money. Hardik's four overs can change the complexion of the game while another pacer who can wreak havoc is Lockie Ferguson. Mohammad Shami too has been impressive with the new ball.

The other important cog in their

wheel is Rashid Khan, who is capable of running riot and can pose challenges to his former team SRH. For the Sunrisers, after failure in the first-two games, skipper Kane Williamson got a start and would be keen to score a big one against Gujarat.

SRH opener Abhishek Sharma reposed the faith shown in-to him and made a match-winning 75 on last Saturday when the team chased a tricky 155 in 17.4 overs. He would also like to continue from where he left.

Rahul Tripathi's role will also be crucial and ditto for Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram. The three need to show consistency and show their mettle while taking re-

sponsibility in the middle-order. Sundar has the ability to play cameos.

Both the teams are unlikely to tinker with the winning combination and considering dew, the toss becomes crucial as it has proved to be the case in majority of the games.

Teams (from) : Sunrisers Hyderabad: Kane Williamson, Abhishek Sharma, Rahul Tripathi, Aiden Markram, Nicholas Pooran, Abdul Samad, Priyam Garg, Vishnu Vinod, Glenn Phillips, R Samarth, Shashank Singh, Washington Sundar, Romario Shepherd, Marco Jansen, J Suchith, Shreyas Gopal, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Sean Abbott, Kartik Tyagi, Saurabh Tiwary, Fazalhaq, Farooqi, Umran Malik, T Natarajan.

Gujarat Titans: Abhinav Manohar, David Miller, Gurkeerat Singh, B Sai Sudarshan, Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya (Captain), Rahul Tewatia, Vijay Shankar, Matthew Wade, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Wriddhiman Saha, Alzarri Joseph, Darshan Nalkande, Dominic Drakes, Jayant Yadav, Lockie Ferguson, Mohammed Shami, Noor Ahmad, Pradeep Sangwan, Rashid Khan, Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore, Varun Aaron, Yash Dayal. Match starts at 7.30 PM.

Indian women hockey team's Pro League matches against England cancelled



BHUBANESWAR, April 10 (PTI): The Indian women hockey team's two FIH Pro League matches against England, which were earlier postponed due to COVID-related issues in the English side, have been cancelled, handing the Savitaled side the top position in the standings.

The two matches were initially scheduled for April 2 and 3 at the Kalinga Stadium here but postponed due to a high number of COVID-19 cases and injuries in the England team. The Indian team has now been awarded six points -- three

each for a match -- for the two cancelled games.

"The FIH Hockey Pro League matches between India and England (Women), initially scheduled on 2 and 3 April in Bhubaneswar, India, but postponed due to a high number of COVID cases and injuries affecting the English team, will unfortunately be cancelled, eventually," the world governing body said in a statement. "Indeed, despite all efforts from Hockey India, England Hockey and FIH, no dates could be found to reschedule the matches in India. Consequently, it has been agreed between the FIH and the 2 nations that the 6 points available for these 2 matches will be awarded to India."

With six points from the two cancelled matches, India leapfrogged Olympic champions Netherlands to occupy the top position in the standings with 22 points. The Dutch are second at 19 points while Germany (13) are third. India had beaten the Netherlands 2-1 in the first match of the two-legged tie here on Friday before losing 1-3 in the shootout in the second game on Saturday. Speaking about her team's performance in the home matches here, India chief coach Janneke Schopmanof said, "If we look at the initial games we played against China in Oman and then here against Spain, we made a lot of steps, a lot of things better as compared to initial matches, but still lots to learn, lots to improve."

season, so we have to keep things tight and keep getting better."

Asked what advice he gives to the players, especially the bowlers, Khan said, "I've always been endorsing one thing -- in this format you've got to express yourself freely and stay with the game as it unfolds. That is important."

"You have to have situational awareness, and act accordingly when the partnership is going on, as a bowler, who is the aggressor and who is going to have a certain option."

"If you can gauge that with the help of the captain and field placements like that, you can get on top of situations."

On the all-Indian pace attack and fielding only two overseas players against RCB, he said, "We just felt that this combination is going to give us that balance we are looking for. We thought that someone like Unadkat, who has been bowling very well in practice, needed a go."



doing well despite the winless streak "need to carry the team and get us that win which is going to be very important". "Those back-to-back win is something which we have to see but not everyday is going to be your day."

Asked why Mumbai Indians, who have won the title five times in the past, have struggled early this season, Khan said his side have not been able

to come out on top in "close situations".

"You've got to be able to close those moments of the game where the momentum is shifting. We've, as a team, not been able to do that. So that is something we have to focus on."

"Focus on the positives, whatever the things that have been working for us, keep building on that. It's a long

Scheffler chases Masters win, with caddie who knows the way

AUGUSTA, April 10 (AP): Scottie Scheffler has never been here before. Never gone to any course with the lead on Sunday in a major championship. Been close a few times, but never in the spotlight as the favorite heading into the final round. It's daunting, anywhere.

At Augusta National, even more so. Luckily for him, someone will be with Scheffler every step of the way, someone who has taken a few rides around the pressure cooker that is a final round with a Masters win at stake. He hired Ted Scott, who caddied in both of Bubba Watson's Masters wins, on a test basis five months ago. It has paid huge and fast dividends, and they'll

try for their fourth win in the span of six starts together on Sunday. "Teddy's been a great addition to the team," Scheffler said. "I have a lot of faith in him. He works really hard. I respect him as a person. When we're out there I have a lot of faith in him. It's really nice just having someone I can trust so much out there with me." Watson had to rally to win his first Masters in 2012, after starting the final round in fourth. In 2014, he held the lead coming into the final round and held it together on the way to another green jacket. He and Scott were peanut butter-and-jelly level of inseparable for 15 years, before deciding to part ways last season.

It's just a matter of getting first win and finding spark: Zaheer on MI's struggles this season

PUNE, April 10 (PTI): IPL's most successful franchise Mumbai Indians are struggling this season with four losses on the trot but their Director of Cricket Zaheer Khan feels it's just a matter finding that "one win" and missing "spark" to get their campaign back on track. Khan, however, is aware that a string of defeats may lead to self doubt among the players.

"There are still 11 league matches to go. We've got to get on a roll. You've seen in this tournament teams get on a losing roll or winning momentum. It's just a matter of (getting the) first win," Zaheer, a former India lead pacer, said.

"At times you get tight as well, you start doubting yourselves in situations where the pressure is highest. So that is something we have to be aware of and look for that spark in the group," he said at the post-match conference after MI's seven-wicket defeat to Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Saturday.

He said players who have been

ATURKIMI ACADEMY, JENGKHA WEST KARBI ANGLONG, ASSAM

SITUATION VACANT

1. Name of the post:	No. of Post Vacant
a) Vice Principal	1
Minimum Qualification - B.Sc (B.Ed.), B.A (B.Ed.), M.A (B.Ed.)	
Salary: Rs. 12,000 Plus	
2. Name of the post:	No. of Post Vacant
a) TGT (Mathematics)	2
b) TGT (Science)	2
Minimum Qualification - B.Sc (PCM), B.Ed preferable	
Salary: Rs. 10,000 Plus	
3. Name of the post:	No. of Post Vacant
a) TGT (English)	2
b) TGT (Social)	2
Minimum Qualification - B.A, M.A	
Salary: Rs. 7,000 Plus	
4. Name of the post:	No. of Post Vacant
a) Computer Teacher (PGDCA)	1
Salary: Negotiable	

Last Date of resume submission 30th April 2022

Interested candidate may send their resume at aturkimiacademy2020@gmail.com / longsingtsiso20@gmail.com

or Through Whatsapp No. 9101069284

(For any query candidate may contact: 9101069284, 9365019535)