

WORLD
NATION

- Ukrainian defenders dig in as Russia boosts firepower
- Massive pro-Imran protests staged across Pakistan
- Telangana CM leads protest in Delhi
- J'khand ropeway accident: 2 dead, 15 remain trapped mid-air as rescue ops halt

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PAGES 12 PRICE ₹ 8

CID raids CSP centers in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, April 11: In connection with misappropriation as well as large irregularities in distribution of minority students scholarship scheme sponsored by Central Government, a sleuth from CID headquarters Guwahati on Monday conducted a massive raid at various CSP centers situated at minority dominated areas in the district like Kachuwa, Juria, Jukati bazar, Kawoimari on the outskirts of Nagaon town. Sources claimed that during raid, the CID team picked up 9 persons including Imran Khan, Jehirul Islam, Mrinal Kunwar for further interrogation and also seized various documents from those Bank CSP centers.

Four fraudsters arrested with fake gold at Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, April 11: During a raid conducted on a specific input at a rented house near Katimari Grant on the outskirts of the small town by a police team from Haiborgaon TOP arrested four fake gold fraudsters hailing from Lakhimpur as well as Nagaon district and also recovered two pieces of fake gold, 3 mobile phones and cash of ₹ 9,700 from their possessions. Sources claimed that the arrested fraudsters are identified as Nurul Amin of Nawboisa, Nurul Haque Chowdhury of Bangalmara, Hiteswar Bora of Dhalpur in Lakhimpur district and Mazharul Islam of Panbari of Dhing in Nagaon district. Police registered a case in this regard.

Ram Navami violence

BHOPAL/AHMEDABAD/RANCHI, April 11 (PTI): Violence marred Ram Navami celebrations in parts of the country, with one person killed and 12 others injured at Lohardaga in Jharkhand, while a curfew was clamped following stone pelting and arson in Madhya (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Noted poet Nilmani Phookan gets Jnanpith award

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: Chief minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma presented today to renowned poet Nilmani Phookan made the people of Assam proud and elated. He said that this honour was a great moment of achievement for the Assamese people and he thanked Bharatiya Jnanpith for presenting the prestigious award to the eminent poet.

Organised for the first time in Assam by Bharatiya Jnanpith, the programme was also attended by Education minister Dr. Ranaj Pegu, Cultural Affairs minister Bimal Bora and chairperson of Jnanpith Selection Board Pratibha Ray among others.

Speaking on the occasion, chief minister Dr. Sarma said that the country's highest literary honour presented today to renowned poet Nilmani Phookan made the people of Assam proud and elated. He said that this honour was a great moment of achievement for the Assamese people and he thanked Bharatiya Jnanpith for presenting the prestigious award to the eminent poet.

Stating that while novelist Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya was the first recipient of the prestigious Jnanpith from Assam, which he received in 1979 and



Mamoni Roisam Goswami being awardee got the award in the year 2000, Dr. Sarma said that repeat-

ing history, poet Nilmani Phookan received the Jnanpith exactly after two decades.

He said that Nilmani Phookan through his dedication to the task of writing poetry over the years and with his uniquely creative language and recurrent use of symbols and imagery gave a new dimension to modern Assamese poetry. He said that by presenting the Jnanpith to Phookan, Bharatiya Jnanpith has infused a new energy into Assamese literature.

"Most of the poems of the poet Nilmani Phookan, who created

the era of modern Assamese poetry, rich in quality that attracted the reader, have a beautiful picture of nature. Through poetry, he explores life, youth, love, joy, the world's most common mysteries, nature, etc. and many other subjects," Dr. Sarma said while terming him as one of the best poets of twentieth century.

The chief minister further said that there is a need to take Phookan's poetry to the world readers and expressed desire to take the initiative through Assam Publication Board to translate his poems.

Laws should be made after thorough debate: LS Speaker

'Indian democracy is vibrant and strong, and a guiding force to other democratic countries'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday said laws should be made after thorough debate and discussion, incorporating the needs of aspirational sections of the society.

He also suggested that public representatives across the country should refrain from raising petty political issues during Question Hour in parliament rather than talking about matters of national importance.

Inaugurating the 8th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (India Region) Conference at Assam Legislative Assembly, Birla said the primary responsibility of legislature is to fulfil hopes of the people.

Talking about B R Ambedkar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the Lok Sabha Speaker said India's policies and programmes should be in the direction of achieving the goals set by founding fathers of the



constitution.

"Laws should be made after thorough debate and discussions, incorporating the needs of the aspirational sections of the society," he underlined.

Calling for active participation of the youth and women in democratic processes, Birla said democratic institutions, from panchayat to parliament, should keep the

youth and women at the centre of policy making.

"This will ensure that ideas and vision of youngsters are used to make the administration more transparent and accountable," he noted.

The Speaker also observed that the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his comprehensive (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Democratic values integral part of Indian way of life: CM

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said democratic values are "integral part of the Indian way of life".

"Democratic institutions have been flourishing in India since ancient times and our reforms exemplified the true democratic values and traditions which have continued in our society ever since," he said while addressing the 8th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (India Region) Conference here on Monday.

In modern democracies, Sarma said people expect a lot from elected representatives.

"People want the lawmakers to be their voice, which bestows responsibilities on them to address the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Shehbaz Sharif sworn-in as new Prime Minister of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, April 11 (PTI):

Shehbaz Sharif was sworn-in as the new Prime Minister of Pakistan on Monday, bringing to an end the political uncertainty that had gripped the country since a no-confidence motion was introduced against his predecessor Imran Khan on March 8.

Senate chairman Sadiq Sanjrani

administered oath of office to 70-year-old Shehbaz in President Dr Arif Alvi's absence, who went on 'sick' leave ahead of the PML-N leader's inauguration.

Earlier, Pakistan Parliament elected unopposed Shehbaz

who was the only candidate left in the race after former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi announced that his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party will boycott the voting and staged a walkout.

"Sharif has secured 174 votes... and has been declared as prime minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan," according to the

formal result announced by speaker Ayaz Sadiq who presided over the National Assembly session after deputy speaker Qasim Suri said his conscience did not allow him to conduct the session.

In the House of 342, the winning candidate should get support of at least 172 lawmakers.

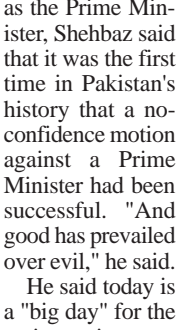
In his maiden address to the house

as the Prime Minister, Shehbaz said that it was the first time in Pakistan's history that a no-confidence motion against a Prime Minister had been successful. "And good has prevailed over evil," he said.

He said today is a "big day" for the entire nation as a

"selected" Prime Minister has been sent home in a legal and constitutional manner.

Shehbaz, the younger brother of former three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, said that the US dollar's value declining by ₹ 8 today signified the "happiness of the people". He acknowledged the apex court's (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



Arms-ammu found in Kokrajhar



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, April 11: A huge cache of arms and ammunition were recovered from different places of Kokrajhar and Chirang districts on Monday morning.

The arms and ammunition were recovered from Ulatpani of Kokrajhar district and Selekhaguri of Chirang district in the last 24 hours

in a search operation against the illegal arms in the region.

The recovery arms included four nos. AK-47 rifles with magazines, one M-16 rifle, one sniper rifle with magazine, one shirley rifle with magazine and bayonet, 130 rounds ammunition of AK series.

The weapons belonged to a group of surrendered militants who

were trying to form a new militant outfit, Special DGP LR Bishnoi told a press conference here.

"Two police parties carried out the search operations which ended early on Monday morning. Our team recovered seven weapons and several rounds of ammunition from Ulatpani forest area," he said.

Bishnoi said the weapons belonged to a group of surrendered militants who had recently fled from their designated camps and were trying to float a new outfit.

"Some cadres had fled from Kokrajhar and Udalguri camps in March and had gone to Arunachal Pradesh.... They were yet to give any name to their group but had tried to start recruitment," he said.

In stepped-up police action against these cadres who had fled, three were killed, two others injured and eight arrested while the rest had surrendered, Bishnoi said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Waterways to boost connectivity and integration: Sonowal

DIBRUGARH, April 11 (PTI):

Emphasising the role of waterways, Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Monday said it can improve domestic connectivity and regional integration.

Harnessing the potential of this sector will also bring a new era of growth for the Northeastern region of the country, the Union minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways said.

Inaugurating a two-day Waterways Conclave-2022 here, Sonowal said the meet would immensely benefit the Northeastern states and help utilise the domestic and international potential of waterways in the region.

The Union minister said that India has already signed bilateral agreements with Bangladesh to



strengthen inland water transportation and maritime relations.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the event, Sonowal said development of the waterways to connect with other nations will be done with a thrust on the vision of

'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India).

He added that improvement in the waterways sector will also lead to more job opportunities. As many as six MoUs will be signed during the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Opium worth ₹ 50 lakh seized, two arrested

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, April 11: The police in Karbi Anglong recovered opium from a tanker truck worth ₹ 50 lakhs and arrested two persons in connection with this case.

The police under Borpathar Police Station at Santipur check gate recovered 48 packages of opium from a tanker bearing registration number GJ-12-AT-6129 on Monday afternoon. Two have been taken into custody in this connection. They have been identified as Bibul Bissai (45), resident of Band goan, under Gudamalami police station, district of Bermer in Rajasthan and Jalaram Bissei (25), also from Bermer district of Rajasthan.

Four die after consuming poisonous mushrooms

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, April 11: Four persons including two minors from Sonari in upper Assam's Charaideo district died at the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) on Monday after consuming poisonous mushroom and several patients were admitted.

The deceased were identified as Rima Karmakar (35), Jonaki Proja (32) Chayanika Karmakar (12) and Ajay Karmakar (10), all residents of No 1 Laloti Pathar village of Sonari. Four other persons from the same village who had also consumed the harmful mushroom are battling for their lives at the AMCH.

It is learnt that the persons were taken ill after eating wild mushrooms on the night of April 7. Several hours after consuming the mushroom dish, they complained of nausea, vomiting and severe abdominal cramp. They were admitted to the local hospital first but as their condition worsened they were referred to the AMCH.

AMCH superintendent Dr Prasanta Dihingia said, "Four patients have died of mushroom poisoning. The other four patients are not yet out of danger. The patients had consumed poisonous mushroom mistaking it for the edible variety. Both the edible variety and toxic one looks similar which results in such unfortunate incidents."

IIM Shillong starts post-graduate prog on emerging economies

We produce managers with ethical and human values: Director

HT Bureau

SHILLONG, April 11: IIM Shillong on Monday inaugurated its one year post-graduate programme for executives with a focus on emerging economies in a commencement ceremony held in its Umsawli campus.

While delivering the commencement address as chief guest, Ravi Prasad Singh, executive director, Nucleus Software, praised the evolutionary and the flexible nature of the curriculum and stressed on the need and importance of enjoying what one does in life.

"If you can't do what you enjoy, then you better enjoy what you do," he remarked.

Singh further introduced the participants to a 3 strategy note, which one needs to follow on their journey, which he himself followed during his professional career.

Learning being the first strategy where a professional can continu-



ously evolve himself as a learner. He stressed on the fact that one cannot learn, until he is willing to put his defects on the table. He mentioned the process of continuous improvement as a second strategy that one needs to adopt to cater the need of the growing demand on resource ca-

pabilities.

"Organisations and people cannot be static. One needs to improve and keep improving every day," he said and advised the students to learn new things every day, take feedback and continue evolving.

The third strategy is to build a

strong foundation of integrity and values where he mentioned few noted entrepreneurs, and highlighted the consequences of not having integrity. "No one starts with that intent, it happens gradually," he said while focusing on the process of eroding ethics.

"Build a strong ethical foundation... Businesses will test your integrity. Integrity is the only way businesses and professionals can last", he reiterated.

He reminded the students to not do the course only for an improved salary package but to understand and cherish the journey of becoming true leaders.

Director IIM Shillong, Prof DP Goyal, while delivering his welcome address, emphasised on the need to set a benchmark by the 10th batch for the years to come.

"We produce managers with ethical and (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

SC seeks Centre, Assam Govt's response

Complaint of harassment of minorities

NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and Assam government on a plea seeking to stop harassment of people belonging to religious and linguistic minority communities in the state on the pretext of detection and deportation of alleged foreigners.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant issued notice and directed for the listing of the matter after the disposal of the 2015 matter pending before the Constitution bench which pertains to the validity of provisions of the Citizenship Act, providing the basis for Assam-NRC. The bench said, "In view of the reference made, list after the disposal of reference. Writ Petition be listed after disposal of the reference."

Senior advocate Sanjay Hegde, appearing for Asom Sankhyalaghu Sangram Parishad, said that there is a saying that people cross borders, but at times even borders have crossed people. He said that the state coordinator of Assam NRC has filed an application seeking re-verification of the National Register of Citizenship (NRC).

Hegde said that the petition has also sought for prohibiting the authority to delete or exclude any person from the final list of the NRC of Assam dated August 31, 2019.

He added that the petitioners have also sought to strictly prohibit the state from doubting one's citizenship without discharging the initial burden of collecting the relevant data.

The plea has also prayed for directing the Registrar General of India to finalise the draft list of NRC published on August 31, 2019, issue NRC identity cards to all persons included in the final list, and provide facilities to prefer an appeal to the left out persons from the NRC.

Gujarat tops NITI Aayog's State Energy and Climate Index-Round 1 among larger states

NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): Gujarat has topped NITI Aayog's State Energy and Climate Index-Round 1 (SECI) among larger states, which is aimed at ranking states and Union territories (UTs) on six parameters including discoms' performance, energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

Gujarat was followed by Kerala and Punjab, according to the government think tank's report.

States like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand were placed at the bottom.

Among the smaller states, Goa topped the Aayog's index, followed by Tripura and Manipur.

Among union territories (UTs), Chandigarh topped the index, followed by Delhi and Daman & Diu/Dadra & Nagar Haveli (D&D and D&N).

Punjab was the best performer in discom performance parameter among larger states, while Kerala emerged as top performer in access, affordability and reliability category among larger states.

Likewise, Haryana was the best performer when it comes to clean



energy initiative among larger states, while Tamil Nadu emerged as top performer in the energy efficiency category.

The index is based on 2019-20 data.

Releasing the report, NITI Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar said that this index that compares states and UTs across many indicators will encourage them towards energy transition, and all the necessary steps must be taken to achieve this.

Kumar further said there is a need to convert the country's efforts towards achieving the 'Pan-

chamrit' targets announced by the Prime Minister at COP-26, Glasgow into a peoples' movement.

NITI Aayog member V K Saraswat said synergy and partnership among the centre and the states will be critical for achieving energy and climate-related goals and making the country self-reliant in the energy sector.

He said that after extensive discussions with stakeholders, several key parameters have been identified to track and rank the performance of the states in this report.

The report said the state governments need to prioritise policies to

facilitate inclusive growth by providing affordable, accessible, reliable, and sustainable energy to the citizens.

Energy being the centerpiece of any development process, the government needs to ensure access to sustainable and clean energy sources through various schemes, it added.

The State Energy and Climate Index (SECI) Round-1 ranks states and UTs on six parameters -- discoms' performance; access affordability and reliability of energy; clean energy initiatives; energy efficiency; environmental sustainability; and new initiatives.

These parameters include a total of 27 indicators based on the outcome of SECI Round-1 scores, states and union territories have been categorised into three groups -- front runners, achievers, and aspirants.

The index can be used by the states and UTs to benchmark their performance against their peers, analyse the potential challenges to develop better policy mechanisms, and efficiently manage their energy resources.

Vi curates special Rongali Bihu playlists to herald the Assamese New Year

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: With the Assamese New Year around the corner, Vi in partnership with Hungama Music, has curated special playlists of Assamese songs welcoming the New Year. These playlists are available to all Vi customers on Hungama Music on the Vi App. Additionally, Vi offers 6 monthly premium subscriptions of Hungama Music at no extra cost with an ad-free experience, unlimited downloads, endless playlists, podcasts, and music videos, to all Vi users on Vi App.

Vi customers in Guwahati, Tezpur, and Jorhat can further enhance their festive joy by visiting select Vi stores in Guwahati, Tezpur, and Jorhat between April 11 and 14, where they can celebrate Bihu with Vi by streaming these songs and singing along.

Sukanta Das, business head-East Cluster, Vodafone Idea, said, "On the auspicious occasion of Rongali Bihu I would like to take the opportunity to wish Vi customers their families, a Very Happy, Healthy, and Prosperous New Year. At Vi, we look out for innovative avenues to engage with our customers and be an important part of their special moments with relevant products and service offerings. Music is an integral part of the culture of Assam. Vi customers can enjoy our specially curated Bihu playlists and join in the festivities at Vi stores in Guwahati, Tezpur, and Jorhat".

Apple confirms manufacturing top-selling iPhone 13 in India

NEW DELHI, April 11 (IANS): In a major fillip to India's dream to become a global manufacturing hub, Apple on Monday confirmed it has started manufacturing its top-selling iPhone 13 smartphone in India.

Apple first started manufacturing iPhones in India in 2017, with iPhone SE.

"We are excited to begin making iPhone 13 -- with its beautiful design, advanced camera systems for stunning photos and videos, and the incredible performance of the A15 Bionic chip -- right here in India for our local customers," Apple said in a statement shared with IANS.

The tech giant manufactures some of its most advanced iPhones in the country, including iPhone 11, iPhone 12 and now iPhone 13 at the Foxconn facility while iPhone SE and iPhone 12 are being assembled at the Wistron factory in the country.

According to industry experts, the new Apple iPhone 13 series has benefitted from the strong consumer appetite and spending to upgrade to premium smartphones.

In the first quarter this year, CyberMedia Research (CMR) estimates point to Apple iPhone shipments potentially growing more than 20 per cent (on-year), with the iPhone 13 series contributing close to 17 per cent of the total iPhone shipments.

"The Apple iPhone shipments will potentially touch the 7 million mark in CY2022, translating into a historic 5.5 per cent market share," Prabhu Ram, head-Industry Intelligence Group (IIG), CMR, told



IANS.

iPhone 13 was available to customers in India simultaneously with the US, among other markets which was a first for the country.

The device features an advanced 5G experience, brings super-fast performance and power efficiency with A15 Bionic, longer battery life, and a beautiful flat-edge design with incredible durability with the Ceramic Shield front cover, tougher than any smartphone glass.

iPhone uses 100 per cent recycled rare earth elements in all magnets, 100 per cent recycled tin in the solder of the main logic board and, for the first time, in the solder of the battery management unit.

Apple started its India journey more than 20 years ago.

The tech giant launched its India online store in September 2020 and will soon open its own retail store in the country.

"With growing domestic Apple iPhone production, aggressive retail forays, and marketing initiatives, we anticipate Apple's growth story in India to remain resilient despite potential headwinds," Ram told IANS.

HDFC's 'Mooh Bandh Rakho' campaign on safe banking practices concludes

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: HDFC Bank concluded the second edition of its "Mooh Bandh Rakho" campaign, aimed at spreading awareness of safe banking practices, through print and digital media. Notably, the second edition of the campaign was launched in November 2021 which involved a 360-degree consumer education program on cyber frauds and how to combat them by simply practicing a few safe banking habits. The program highlighted the importance of not sharing confidential personal information with anyone.

The closing ceremony was graced by Sameer Shukla (IAS), joint secretary, ministry of Finance, and Lt. General Rajesh Pant, National Cyber Security Coordinator in the presence of head of Retail Credit Strategy and Control Prashant Mehra; Chief Information Security Officer Sameer Ratolikar; head of Credit Intelligence and Control (CIC) Manish Agrawal; and head -- CIC, Payment Business and Digital Loans Vivek Goyal. As part of this campaign, the bank has conducted more than 2800 secured banking workshops in just four months across the country. The workshops covered a wide range of audiences that in-

cluded students, teachers, law enforcement agencies, senior citizens, channel partners, housing societies, and educational institutions.

Commenting on the campaign's impact, Prashant Mehra, head -- Retail Credit Strategy and Control, HDFC Bank, said, "While we provide our customers with the highest levels of security when they transact with us, it is also important that we promote safe banking habits among them. The 'Mooh Bandh Rakho' campaign is an effort in this direction. We are delighted with the impact that the campaign has created in its first two years and we will continue to engage with different stakeholders of our society to spread awareness on safe banking practices."

Lt. General Rajesh Pant, National Cyber Security Coordinator, added, "The 'Mooh Bandh Rakho' campaign shows the importance of collaboration between public and private sectors in spreading consumer awareness. I congratulate HDFC Bank for waging a war against cyber frauds and promoting safe banking habits among millions of Indians. We should not lose momentum and continue to protect the interests of our citizens."

Goldman Sachs says 22% upside in RIL stock

NEW DELHI, April 11 (IANS): Goldman Sachs has set a 12-month price target of ₹ 3,200 for Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) stock with a 22 per cent upside.

"We see RIL as a unique energy transition story. For RIL, strong cashflow generation in the best in class old energy business (low cost structure and highest complexity) can fund the capex of the New Energy business and in turn drive one of the fastest and most profitable net zero transitions by 2035 amongst large energy companies, on our analysis," Goldman Sachs said.

RIL is adopting a manufacturing approach to net zero-emissions with a hyper integrated model spanning solar, battery and hydrogen and a focus on net zero supply chain (already spent USD 1.5 billion to acquire technologies across the solar, battery and hydrogen ecosystems).

"We recently revised up FY23/24 EBITDA by 11 per cent/5 per cent driven entirely by RIL's old energy business such as Refining and Gas. We see refining tailwinds to sustain given improved supply demand from closures, jet fuel demand recovery ahead, lower Chinese exports, low inventory and supply disruption. With rising penetration and market share wins ahead in consumer businesses (telecom tech and retail), we see the medium-term growth story remaining intact as well," the report said.

RENEE Cosmetics introduces Face Base

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: RENEE Cosmetics, one of the leading cosmetic brands in India, digitally launched its first essential base products line, Face Base. The new products include illuminating primer, liquid and stick foundation, concealer, compact, and loose powder. The stick foundation, liquid foundation, compact, and concealer will have five shades and the loose powder will have four shades to cater to Indian skin tones and will be available at both online and offline platforms. The launch will be set off through a brilliantly directed and shot music video. The pinnacle of the video stands on the chorus of the music, 'My skin, My story, My beauty, My pride'. The music video emphasizes taking ownership of one's skin and celebrates the Indian skin tones.

RENEE Cosmetics is a timelessly inspired brand with a new-age FDA-approved enhanced product range that's redefining beauty with its high-quality and cruelty-free line. Reflecting these deeply ingrained values, the new products are cruelty-free, vegan, paraben-free, and silicon free. The liquid foundation, compact and loose powder contain Hyaluronic acid which makes the skin smooth and firm. White clay in the Dual stick foundation works as a mild exfoliator for the skin and keeps the pores unclogged. The Macca roots in the illuminating primer promote

healthy skin cells. These products are designed to keep the skin hydrated and have perfect blending properties to give one a natural look. The shades have been carefully crafted to best serve the various shades of Indian skin across seasons and temperatures. All the products launched are lightweight and easy to carry.

Commenting on the launch, Aashka Goradia Goble, founder & director of RENEE Cosmetics said,



"We are thrilled to digitally launch and introduce Face Base in our cosmetic arsenal. This is our first line of base essential products and we have conducted extensive research and worked assiduously to ensure it is consumer-oriented. Our intention is to empower women by promoting all the Indian skin shades in all their beauty and catering to the growing demand of our customers."

With a strong foothold in the cosmetics industry, RENEE Cosmetics has over 300 stores and is planning to expand pan India with their offline stores. With this new line of products, the brand has forayed into the essential base product line and aims to emerge as a category leader in this segment.

Mitch Evans, Sam Bird conquers Rome for Jaguar TCS racing

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: Mitch Evans makes history for Jaguar TCS Racing as the first driver to win both races in a double-header weekend in Rome. He's only the third driver in Formula E history to win an E-Prix on two consecutive days. The Italian capital is turning into a second home for Mitch Evans who has now won three Rome E-Prix. Mitch Evans and Sam Bird lined up fourth and fifth on the grid respectively after a successful qualifying session and saw both drivers compete in the quarter-final duel against each other. Mitch progressed to make his first visit to the semi-finals this season.

Teammate Sam Bird also had a strong race and was set to score more valuable points for the team. Sam showed the exceptional pace of the Jaguar I-TYPE 5 before a collision while battling for position with Nick Cassidy forced him to retire in the final lap of the race. Mitch Evans moves to fourth in the drivers' standings, only nine points behind the leader, while Sam Bird sits in eleventh. Jaguar TCS Racing moved to fifth in the ABB FIA Formula E World Championship teams' standings.

Nykaa opens 100th store on International Women's Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: Nykaa, India's leading omnichannel lifestyle destination opened its 100th beauty store, 'Nykaa On Trend' at HSR Bangalore on the globally celebrated occasion of International Women's Day. Having started its retail journey at T3 terminal of Delhi airport in 2014, Nykaa stores today offer its unparalleled repertoire of global luxury beauty labels and trendsetting Indian brands to consumers across 45 cities. Welcomed and loved by consumers in every city, Nykaa stores have gone wide across the country, and nearly half of its stores are now in Tier 2 & 3 cities. The personalised consultation offered by 700+ well-trained beauty advisors, who pay special attention to Nykaa's signature 'Art of Retailing', make these stores a destination of choice for consumers. Nykaa's omnichannel approach has been both a differentiator and an advantage, with the company witnessing consistently higher revenue and accelerated business in cities with stores. Nykaa operates two formats of beauty stores -- 'Nykaa Luxe' and 'Nykaa On Trend', each built in line with the company's vision that focuses on digitalisation not just in business processes but to deliver a truly seamless customer journey. Nykaa stores also have the capability for hyper-local delivery, and to accept endless aisle orders, making its entire online assortment available to the store-consumer.

Nykaa stores carry 100+ well-curated brands including Luxe brands like Estee Lauder, Mac, Clinique, Bobbi

Brown, SmashBox, Huda Beauty, Aveda; the company's own brands like Nykaa Cosmetics, Nykaa Naturals, Kay Beauty, and Dot & Key, besides exclusively available global favorites like Charlotte Tilbury, Jo Malone London, e.l.f. Cosmetics, Too Faced, Murad, Nuxe, Sulwhasoo, among others. This selection offers a unique and attractive proposition to consumers while also reiterating the confidence these brands have in Nykaa's retail expertise and beauty leadership in India.

Commenting on the launch of the 100th store, Ankit Nayar, CEO E-commerce Beauty, Nykaa said, "From store one to hundred, our confidence in the power of the omnichannel model has remained strong and continues to grow. With innovation and agility at the heart of our business, Nykaa is constantly exploring newer pin codes for our retail stores to deepen our reach and to make shopping online and offline entirely seamless. Our focus remains on delivering on-trend, authentic products in line with the ever-evolving consumer behaviour and beauty trends. This has enabled us to secure the trust of consumers and we are humbled to witness their loyalty across all our points of sale for nearly a decade."

Commenting on this milestone, Rohan Vaziralli, GM India at Estee Lauder Companies, a key partner brand said, "Congratulations on your 100th door! We are proud to partner with Nykaa to bring an omnichannel prestige beauty experience to our consumers across India."

Shares of Adani Group cos surge after USD 2 bn foreign investments

NEW DELHI, April 11 (IANS): Shares of Adani Green Energy, Adani Transmission, and Adani Enterprises surged on Monday on an otherwise broader market.

Adani Green Energy shares were locked in the 20 per cent upper circuit, Adani Transmission locked in at 10 per cent upper circuit, and Adani Enterprises rose 0.4 per cent.

Analysts attribute the rise in share prices with International Holding Company PJSC (IHC), the Abu Dhabi-based conglomerate's investment of USD 2 billion as primary capital in these Adani Group companies.

Nykaa launches the All Day MATTE Foundation in 15 diverse shades

HT Bureau

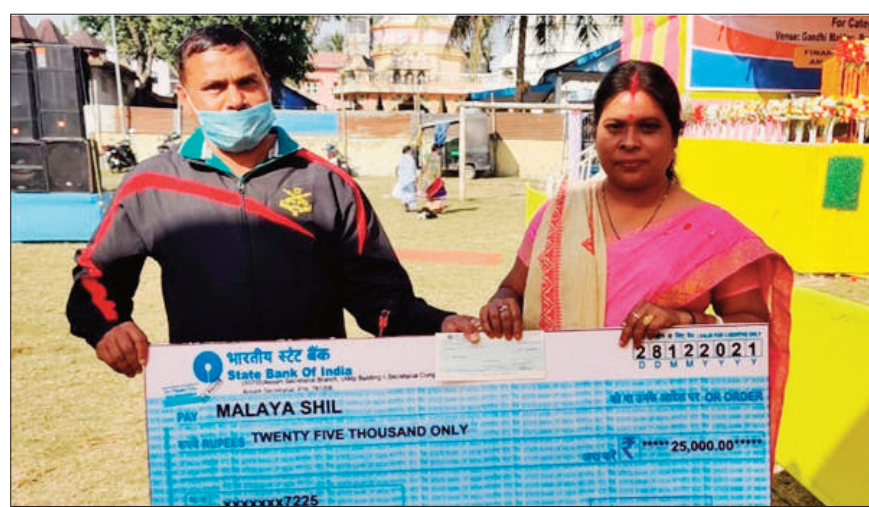
GUWAHATI, April 11: Just like all things good are built on a strong foundation, you can now ace your base with the latest range from Nykaa, All Day MATTE Foundation. The All-Day MATTE collection which debuted last year with compacts and liquid lipsticks now also features 15 shades of foundation to match the diverse skin tones of Indian consumers. Celebrating #MyShade-MySquad, the matte foundation range caters to different kinds of skin tones and undertones, and lifestyles for everyone who is looking at an accessible yet effective offering. True to its name, the matte foundation is formulated to stay in place all day, providing comfort and hydration for a very long-lasting effect. The meltingly soft, light texture of the range instantly makes the skin look flawless. Non-cakey and easily blendable, every day, lightweight foundation provides medium-to-buildable coverage, projecting a second skin-like feel that looks just like your original skin. Available in 15 shades for light, medium, tan, and deeper skin tones, it covers a variety of skin tones and undertones that will match your compact. The range is completely vegan, dermatologically tested, paraben-free, and not tested on animals. Reena Chhabra, CEO, Nykaa Brands says, "Our products celebrate the diversity of Indian skin tones, and we are excited to launch the Nykaa All Day MATTE Foundation in 15 shades. The foundation will complement our other offerings from 'All Day Matte', an everyday beauty range with a focus on long lasting matte formulations. Customers are always looking for daily makeup essentials that can do their job while being budget friendly/ accessible."

Assam govt comes in aid of women entrepreneurs

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: Microfinance has been playing a very important role in making underserved populations financially independent and self-sufficient. The remarkable support system of microfinance institutions and the self-regulatory organisation for the industry have helped the women entrepreneurs sail through the pandemic and overcome its impact on their business and other challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted the business activities of especially the low-income group segment, resulting in a significant reduction in regular income and in some leading to business loss.

The story of Malaya Shil is no different. The owner of a dairy business, Malaya has been a borrower of Arohan's Bongaigaon Branch of Assam for the last six years. She had started a dairy business to meet the financial need of her family by taking a microfinance loan from Arohan. Her business was running well till the pandemic hit the



globe after which she could no longer manage to pay the EMIs for the third cycle of her loan.

The timely intervention of the Assam

state government helped many women like Malaya in becoming self-reliant again. Notably, the government in partnership with 39 MFI lenders, announced the Assam Micro

Finance Incentive & Relief Scheme 2021 (AMFIRS'21) for microfinance customers like Malaya. Under this initiative, the Assam government rewarded customers who were regular with the repayment of their microfinance loans and enabled others who are in difficult circumstances to become regular and be a part of the mainstream.

Malaya was eligible for a one-time incentive of ₹ 25,000 under AMFIRS (Assam Micro Finance Incentive and Relief Scheme), which helped her repay EMIs and save her business. A thankful Malaya, while expressing her gratitude, said, "I am grateful to Arohan. I have built my business with the help of the collateral-free loans from this company, and I expanded it with the second cycle loan and got immense support from the loan officers at every stage. Arohan stood beside me even when my business was challenged by the pandemic and helped me rebuild my business. I will never forget this support from Arohan in my life."

Baokhungri festival to start today at Harinaguri

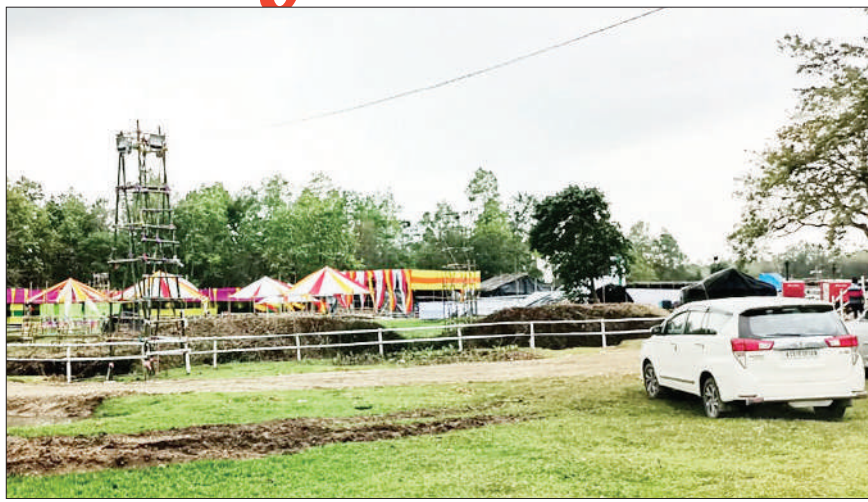
HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, April 11: Preparations have so far been completed to hold the 9th Baokhungri Festival which will begin on April 12 with three-days of colourful programme scheduled at Harinaguri, 10 km east of Kokrajhar town along the Baokhungri Hill in Kokrajhar district.

Necessary arrangements and deployments as well decorations have been made at the festival venue. The venue has been decorated with beautiful designs besides stalls for indigenous food are also installed in the festival.

A multi-community cultural demonstration has also been organised in the festival. The Baokhungri festival is the biggest festival in Bodoland Territorial Region which is organised by the Tourism department of Bodoland Territorial Region.

The festival is organised to mark the last day of Chaitra month (April 14) as the Bodos traditionally celebrate the festival as



Baokhungri Hajw Gakhwnai (climbing of Baokhungri Hill).

The festival will start with a flag hoisting

at 9 am in the morning followed by ceremonially flagging off the festival on Tuesday, followed by various programmes, apart from

adventure sports like Khomlainai (Bodo wrestling), cock-fighting, traditional cuisine, Hill trekking, cycling competition, etc.

Cultural troupe and stalls from the region as well as neighbouring states have arrived in Kokrajhar to participate in the festival.

BTR CEM Pramod Boro will attend as chief guest on the inaugural day of the festival. "People are expected to participate in huge numbers in the three-day festival programme where different events are to be organised," said Dharma Narayan Das, BTC executive member.

He said that the Baokhungri festival is the biggest festival of Bodoland region, especially on the eve of Bwisagu where people from all walks of life participate with great enthusiasm.

"The Baokhungri itself has a history based on its beautiful scene sustaining a natural look. The festival is organised every year by the BTC Tourism department to explore the tourism of the region," he said.

Karimganj DC inaugurates Baishakhi Mela

The deputy commissioner hailed the efforts taken by SHG groups

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, April 11: A three-day Baishakhi Mela was inaugurated in Karimganj on Sunday for sale and promotion of products of the district's women self help groups (SHGs). Mridul Yadav, deputy commissioner of Karimganj, inaugurated the fair by lighting a lamp at the playground of Nilmoni Higher Secondary School in Karimganj on Sunday at the initiative of Karimganj District Branch of Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission and in collaboration with the district administration. Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that the fair was organised for the first time by the Assam government to encourage SHG groups and to promote the sale of their handicrafts as there was no proper market for them. He hoped that the products made by them would be sold in the area and urged the people of the district to purchase the products of SHG group at the fair and hoped that the organisation would be successful with the co-operation and participation of the people. Earlier, Nitu Chandra Das, district functional expert, Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, said that there are a total of 7,310 SHGs covering 83,420 households in the district. Out of this, 210 people in the district have been provided employment in various organisations under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana scheme. Lead district manager Siddharth Shankar Som in his speech urged the SSC groups to keep the bank transactions regular and abide by the specific rules of the bank. He requested the deputy commissioner to set up a market for the products of SHG groups on government land in Karimganj district. He also encouraged the members of SHG Group to take advantage of various insurance schemes of the government, Atal Pension Yojana, etc. Later, Karimganj DC Mridul Yadav also visited 30 stalls at the fair, inspected the quality and appreciated their works. Chief executive officer of Karimganj Zilla Parishad, Ruth Liangthang along with DPM Rasingia Entip of Karimganj District Mission Management Unit of Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission participated in the program.

Induction training of newly appointed officers concludes



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: A residential two-week induction training programme for the newly appointed officers of Industries, Commerce and Public Enterprises Department which was held at

Assam Administrative Staff College, successfully concluded on Monday.

The 26 officers included deputy directors, functional managers, assistant directors and deputy general managers and deputy manager

of Assam Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (AIIDC).

During his address in the valedictory session, secretary Dr Lakshmanan S hoped that the new officers will be the ambassadors of Assam's industrial goals and aspirations. He also called upon them to imbibe a spirit which can nurture the dreams of budding entrepreneurs.

"Adopt an approach which is professional and friendly for the entrepreneurs. Industry is the one of the most potential sectors which is ever-expanding, all-pervasive and can improve the quality of life," said Dr Lakshmanan S.

He further called upon the officers to expand their connections and work in tune with other departmental to bring about a positive

and sea-change in the lives of the people of the state. Commissioner of Industries and Commerce, Oinam Sarankumar Singh, asked the officers to promote and avail the schemes like One District One Product (ODOP), Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food Processing Enterprises (PMFME). The commissioner laid special emphasis to lessen physical interface through optimum utilisation of Ease of Doing Business (EODB) and asked the officers to work in a diligent and dedicated manner.

The officers shared their feedback and expressed their gratitude for conducting a useful and well-structured training programme. They also assured of delivering their best services for the overall growth and development of the state.

Village headman appointed

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, April 11: Villager of Dimsolangso, Chandrasing Terang has been made a Headman with traditional Karbi rituals. It is believed that an elder Rukasen had made the rules for making someone a village elder in ancient times among the Karbis.

In a function held at Dimsolangso under Bokajan sub-division, under traditional Karbi rituals and worship Terang took an oath known by the Karbis as arolong (stone), ingching (iron) ase-me (oath). The function was attended by Sarkari Gaonbura of Hanjlangso and traditional village headmen. Chandra Tisso attended the function as the representative of traditional Karbi king Ramsing Ronghang. Later a feast was held for the attendees.

Dibrugarh-Pasighat-Lilabari flight to be inaugurated today



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: In a bid to further boost air connectivity of North Eastern Region with the rest of the country, Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has approved a Scheme – "Providing air connectivity and Aviation infrastructure in North Eastern Region (NER)" to promote air connectivity in the states of NER and, if required, to develop infrastructure for air connectivity. As a part of this scheme, two important developments will take place on Tuesday – First flight of Made in India HAL Dornier Do-228 from Dibrugarh in Assam to Pasighat in Arunachal Pradesh. Alliance Air will be India's first commercial airline to fly Indian made aircraft for civil operations. There will also be inauguration of First FTO (Flying Training Organisation) for North Eastern Region at Lilabari, Assam. Both events will be graced by minister for Civil Aviation, Jyotiraditya M Scindia with the presence of chief ministers of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh Himanta Biswa Sarma and Pema Khandu respectively. Apart from them, secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Rajiv Bansal, Usha Padhee and Amber Dubey, joint secretaries from Ministry of Civil Aviation and other dignitaries from the state governments of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, Alliance Air will also be present. Development of the North Eastern Region (NER) is not only of strategic importance, but is also part of India's growth story. Connectivity in NER is very essential and Under "Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)", the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS), Ministry of Civil Aviation has identified NER as a priority area. This has helped in enhancing inter and intra connectivity for the NER. In this regard, new airports are getting developed and old airports are getting upgraded. Considering the hilly terrain, helicopter operations under UDAN scheme have been given focus for connectivity.

AASU to conduct workshop for students on April 18, 19

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, April 11: The Jorhat district unit of AASU jointly with Abhigyan Academy, a junior college here will conduct a two-day workshop on April 18 and 19 for students who have appeared for HSLC (Class 10) and Higher Secondary (Class 12) exams on different topics related to the growth and development of a student in the next phase of life. The workshop will be conducted at the Radha Kanta Handique Bhawan in the Assam Sahitya Sabha headquarters here from 10 am. Sankalpa Gogoi and Dip Dutta, Jorhat district unit AASU in charge president and general secretary, respectively said that the workshop will impart training to students on how to analyse their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT), the significance of classes 10 and 12, how school is different from college, the physical and mental changes that students undergo at this age, how to fix one's aim in life, note taking, IQ, EQ, SQ, etc.

AAJU announces journalism award to five noted journalists of Assam

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, April 11: All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU) has announced names of five noted journalists of the state Prashanta Jyoti Baruah, executive editor of English daily The Assam Tribune; Wasbir Hussain, chief editor of North East Live; Gautam Sarmah, executive editor of Assamese daily Amar Asom; Pranjal Sen Deka, editor of Assamese daily Dainik Agradoot and joint editor of Pratidin Time, Sonit Kumar Bhuyan for the four prestigious awards. It is to be mentioned here that AAJU has been conferring four prestigious awards in memory of noted journalist Radhika Mohan Bhagawati, Prafulla Chandra Baruah, Hari Barman and martyr journalist Manik Deuri. In a press conference held at the office of the All Assam Journalists' Union here on Sunday, president of the scribe's body Pankaj Kumar Nath; working president Dhrubajyoti Sarmah and secretary Nakul Talukdar said that executive editor of Assam Tribune Prashanta Jyoti Baruah, who has been providing an incomparable and active contribution towards the media field over the last 38 years has been selected for the Radhika Mohan Bhagawati memorial award while chief editor of North East Live Wasbir Hussain has been selected for Prafulla Chandra Baruah memorial journalist award. "For Hari Barman memorial award, Pranjal Sen Deka, editor of Assamese daily Dainik Agradoot is selected and the martyr journalist Manik Deuri memorial award will be conferred jointly on Gautam Sarmah, executive editor of Assamese daily Amar Asom." The selected journalists would be honoured with the awards on May 8 in a special award giving function to be held in Biswanath Chariati. "Speaker, Assam Assembly, Biswajit Daimary has consented to grace the august event as chief guest while noted journalist Samudra Gupta Kashyap and state cabinet minister Pijush Hazarika will attend the event as special guest," the event organisers said.

Dr Saikat Patra new chairman of Dibrugarh Municipal Board



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, April 11: Commissioner of ward no. 14, Dr Saikat Patra was selected as the new chairman of Dibrugarh Municipal Board (DMB), while Ujjal Phukan of ward no. 11 was selected as vice chairman.

Sources said there was a contest between Ujjal Phukan and Dr Saikat Patra for the post of chairman. But at last the party decided to select Dr Saikat Patra as the chairman of DMB. Dr Saikat Patra, who contested from ward no. 14 defeated Independent candidate Shymal Das by a margin of 1,624 votes. Prasanta Gogoi was selected as the chairman of Namrup Municipal Board while Nitu Sonowal Borgohain was given the charge of vice chairman.

Brajen Baruah was selected as the chairman of Chabua Municipal Board while Lakhi Sonowal was selected as vice chairman.

Pompi Shah was selected as chairperson of Naharkatia Municipal Board while Uday Ranjan Sonowal was given vice chairman charge. The names of four Municipal Board of Dibrugarh district were announced officially by BJP observer Gobind Saikia at the BJP district office in

Dibrugarh on Sunday.

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: Meanwhile, the names of chairman and vice chairman of the newly elected Nagaon Municipality Board were announced on Sunday here at a party meeting held at the district office of the saffron party.

Ambika Majumder was selected as the new chairman for Nagaon municipality board in presence of the party's district president Abhijit Nath and district observer Santanu Pujari by the district party workers while Simanta Bora was nominated as vice chairman of the new body of Nagaon Municipality Board, sources said.

It is noteworthy to mention that out of a total 26 wards, the ruling BJP was able to snatch 22 wards and its alliance partner AGP achieved 3 wards while the Opposition Congress retained only one ward.

Our Jorhat correspondent adds: Lakshmi Baruah Khargharia who was elected as a BJP ward member from ward no. 16 of the Jorhat Municipal Board (JMB) in the civic polls held last month has been chosen by the party to be the chairperson of JMB.

A party source said that in a meeting held at the party office here on Sunday among the party ward members and district leaders in the presence of state vice-president Ajoy Konwar, the name of Lakshmi Baruah Khargharia and Dilip Dutta, ward member of ward no. 2 were selected for the posts of chairperson and vice-chairman respectively of the over 100-year old JMB. However, the party has not yet made the official announcement in this regard, the source said.

Khargharia will be the third woman to occupy the JMB chairperson's post with one from the Congress and BJP having headed the board respectively. BJP and its ally AGP managed to secure a majority in the JMB by winning 11 (BJP-9 and AGP-2) wards out of the total 19. Congress won the rest of the eight wards and improved its tally by one in the last JMB run by BJP; the Congress had seven ward members.

SITA co-vice chairman visits Bigyan Mandir

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: SITA Co-vice chairman Ramen Deka visited the Bigyan Mandir of Sonapur along with the officials of the Secondary Education department to inspect the condition of the Bigyan Mandir. On seeing the dilapidated condition of the Bigyan Mandir, Sonapur, he expressed his grief and requested the concerned officials to take necessary steps to revive them immediately. He emphasised and requested the concerned officials present to take necessary steps to preserve the prestigious institution and also to make the campus encroachment free and to make proper demarcation of the area.

It needs to be mentioned that prior to the visit, in March last month, a meeting was held at the office of Ramen Deka along with officials of the Secondary Education to take first hand information of the condition of Bigyan Mandir of the state and this joint visit was decided in the meeting. In the said meeting Mamata Hojai, director of Secondary Education apprised the meeting that in the current financial year, Rs 2.5 crore has been earmarked for the



revival of Bigyan Mandir. She said that once the institution is revived, steps will be taken to create some posts like scientific officer and other subsidiary staff. Deka asked the department to look into the matter to complete the construction work with the allotted amount so that the institute may be revived and also mentioned that SITA can also provide logistic support by setting up a Robotics/ Drone Club among the students. He also offered his views and said that the institute should be made in such a way that urban students would also be interested to come and study.

In the site visit, the co-vice chairman was accompanied by Barbie Hazarika, OSD, Secondary Education Department, Gopal Sharma, circle officer, Sonapur Revenue Circle, DS Hazari, ARO, SITA and other officials of SITA.

10th biennial convention of Margherita Journalists Association concludes

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, April 11: The 10th Biennial two-day convention of Margherita Journalists Association, which started on April 9 concluded here successfully. It was held at Sanjeevani complex, Margherita. On the first day, the programme began with hoisting of the flag of Margherita Journalists Association by Ram Prasad Ambedkar, president of Margherita Journalists Association, which was followed by 'Smriti Tarpan' by both the vice-presidents of Margherita Journalists Association: Partha Pratim Goswami and Samiron Borthakur.

Following this, a sapling was planted by ward no. 5 commissioner Bhim Karmakar of Margherita Municipal Board.

An open session was held which was presided by Ram Prasad Ambedkar on the topic "Your dream of Margherita Town" (Apunar Hopunar Margherita Nagar) where the winning ward commissioners of Margherita Municipal Board such as Rajlaxmi Devi Gogoi, Bhim Karmakar, Ashish Paul, Moni Dutta, Pranami Sonowal, Shamita Deb, former Margherita Municipal Board chairperson Niru Borah, senior Congress leader Taufik Khan, senior AGP leader Dr Om Prakash Sahu, Margherita Daily Bazaar Committee president Ram Hriday Sah, Satra Mukti Sangram Samiti Central Committee working president Pappu Dutta, Aam Aadmi Party Tinsukia district coordinator Anita Das Mahanta, social worker of Margherita Nazma Ullah and numerous distinguished persons of Margherita town were present.



Samiron Borthakur, vice-president of Margherita Journalists Association moderated the programme.

Bhim Karmakar in his speech said, "We are committed to make Margherita a beautiful and clean town where every citizen shall enjoy the basic amenities and to make this happen, for the second consecutive term, BJP has won all the 10 seats of Margherita Municipal Board election."

On the latter part of the day, an executive meeting of Margherita Journalists Association was held where the old committee was dissolved and a full-fledged new committee for the year 2022 to 2024 was formed with Ram Prasad Ambedkar and Rajiv Ningkhoo both as advisors, Partha Pratim Goswami as president, Prashanto Chetia as general secretary, Samiron Borthakur and Bikash Baruah both as vice-president, Manash Pratim Gogoi and Tapan Dey both as joint secretary, Faizur Rehman as organising secre-

tary, Mithun Baruah as treasurer along with 12 executive and invited members.

On the second day of the programme, Late Gajen Borthakur and Gokul Sharma Memorial Lecture was held on the topic "Journalism and its Challenges in its Present Time" where Ram Prasad Ambedkar presided the programme and veteran journalist and former president of Tinsukia district Journalists Association Amulya Khatanar was present as a keynote speaker. In his speech, Amulya Khatanar said, "For six decades I was a professional journalist and I have crossed many challenges and obstacles. Now-a-days, journalists are using their press identity card as an ATM card which is a great threat to the ethics of journalism and I appeal to all the journalists to keep their honesty in this profession as it is a holy service towards mankind and nation."

Prominent journalists of Tinsukia district who were present as chief guests during the programme were veteran journalist of Ledo Jagat Changmai, Tinsukia District Journalists Association president Anuj Kalita; Tinsukia District Journalists Association former president Dr Rishi Das; senior journalist of Doomsday Manoj Dutta; Digboi Press Club president; Doomsday Press Club president; Margherita sub-divisional public relation and information officer Gurmeet Singh Suri and All Assam Bhojuri Parishad Central Committee president Kailash Kumar Gupta.

School students enthralled the present audience by their traditional folk songs and dance.

Presidential elections

In July 2002, APJ Abdul Kalam became the choice for President as the ruling Atal Behari Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance did not have enough votes to get anyone from its ideological family elected. Fifteen years later, the NDA led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was much better placed yet it tried for a consensus pick. Though there was consensus, the NDA candidate Ram Nath Kovind got the support of friendly regional parties. This year, the NDA will once again require the support of friendly parties to get its choice elected as the 15th President of India. It may make an effort towards consensus, though it is likely to be dismissed as tokenism by the Opposition. President Kovind will complete his tenure on July 24. A President who often insisted on following constitutional morality, Kovind has had a successful and controversy-free tenure so far. He made 29 foreign visits till December and rejected all seven mercy petitions that came before him. The official website says that he has discharged his duties with foresight and humility.

Kovind was a surprise pick but fit well into the BJP's outreach to Dalits. He was only the second Dalit to occupy the post after KR Narayanan. There is already much discussion regarding whether Kovind will get NDA's backing for the second term. Given Modi's style of secrecy, no one is willing to guess. Governorial appointments are another indication of Modi's style of functioning. In eight years of NDA rule, most of the Governors have been replaced after a five-year term so that veteran politicians could be rewarded with the post. While leaders who are 75 or older are not part of the union cabinet, there are half a dozen Governors who are over 80. Kovind himself is 76. Vice President Venkaiah Naidu's tenure will also be over by August. Naidu has been an active vice president, commenting on the government's policies, and pushing and praising it. As Rajya Sabha chair, Naidu has been a stickler for the rulebook and has managed the house amid incessant protest. He has also not shied away from commenting on social issues like when he lashed out against hate speech in January.

The political landscape has changed much since 2017. The BJP has lost allies like the Shiv Sena, the Akali Dal, and the Telugu Desam Party. But, the party's recent good showing in Uttar Pradesh, Goa, and Manipur has put the BJP-led NDA in a comfortable position, though short of a majority. The gap to the halfway mark though has widened after the BJP lost seats in multiple states. For example, the 312 seats it had in UP in 2017 have fallen to 255. However, the BJP has also gained 60 MPs in both houses since 2017. The party is expected to gain more in the Rajya Sabha as 75 seats will go to the polls before the presidential election. Nevertheless, the ruling party will still need support to get the President of its choice as it needs around one percent more for a majority. As the number stands, unless the joint Opposition can wear away BJP-friendly parties, its nominees stand no chance. However, the election would be politically significant as it would provide the anti-BJP parties an arena to test their affinity for an alliance ahead of the 2024 general elections.

BJP leaders demand for ban on meat is against the Indian constitution

First they wanted a ban on Hijab. Then they wanted a ban on Halal meat and loudspeakers for Azaan. Now, they want to ban meat.

On April 5, the South Delhi Municipal Corporation [SDMC] Mayor Mukesh Suryan attracted criticism from the citizens when he wrote a letter to the SDMC Commissioner Gyanesh Bharti, requesting him to order the closure of meat shops under its jurisdiction during Navratri. Navratri is a nine-day Hindu festival, celebrated this year from April 2-11.

According to the letter, as reported by the Indian Express, Suryan wrote "During Navratri days, people visit temples to pay respect to the goddess and to seek blessings for themselves and their families. People forgo even the use of onion and garlic, and the sight of meat being sold in open or near temples makes them uncomfortable. Their religious beliefs and sentiments are also affected when they come across meat shops or when they have to bear the foul smell of meat on their way to offer daily prayers to the goddess".

An appeal from SDMC's counterpart, the East Delhi Mayor, came the next day. He appealed to the traders to close their shops on all nine-days or at least in the last three-days of Navratri. But no official order was published in this regard. Both Corporations are ruled by BJP.

In 2018, the SDMC also passed a resolution directing all restaurants and eateries to put up prominent boards, specifying if they were serving 'halal' or 'jhatka meat' in their region. Halal and jhatka are two different forms of slaughters, wherein the former is permissible in Islam as it is claimed to have been designed in such a way that it reduces the pain suffered by the animal. Whereas, jhatka is killing the animal instantaneously.

Similar orders were also passed by the District Panchayat of Aligarh [DPA] and the Ghaziabad Nagar Nigam [GNN] for shutting down meat and fish shops during Navratri. The official directive issued by the DPA President Vijay Singh, as reported by Hindustan Times, gave an ultimatum to the traders that failure to comply with the same may also lead to cancellation of the licence without any prior notice. Whereas, GNN order issued by Mayor Asha Sharma, stated "It has been directed by the mayor to maintain cleanliness in temples, and to close meat shops during the period. It has been directed that cleanliness be maintained in respective zones, in temples and to ensure meat shops remain closed", as reported by Indian Ex-

press.

The officials of the GNN claimed that such directions, which are applicable on five zones in the district, are routine orders issued every year during Navratri. The said order, which was issued on April 1, was reversed the next day stating that there is no official regulation from the government yet. However, these executive orders eventually led to the closure of meat shops under its jurisdiction during Navratri. Navratri is a nine-day Hindu festival, celebrated this year from April 2-11.

Although the ban led to hue and cry between the communities, the nail in the coffin was the politically charged statements on this issue. BJP MP Parvesh Sahib, from West Delhi constituency, came in support of the ban and told the NDTV reporters, "I welcome the decision which was taken by South MCD. I want all three municipal corporations to implement this. Also, I want Delhi-NCR and the whole country to implement this".

Loni MLA Nand Kishor Gurjar has a history of forcefully shutting down meat shops in his constituency. Last year, in October, the MLA went from shops to shops and ordered the owners to close it. According to the MP,

as reported by TOI, all meat shops in Loni are illegal. Yunus Idres Qureshi, Vice-President of the Delhi Meat Association, in response to the orders of the SDMC Mayor said, "The Mayor's request is politically motivated". On the other hand, Lok Sabha MP Mahua Moitra tweeted her criticism against the ban remarking "I live in South Delhi. The Constitution allows me to eat meat when I like and the shopkeeper the freedom to run his trade".

National Conference Leader Omar Abdullah called out against the order of the SDMC Mayor and tweeted, "During Ramzan we don't eat between sunrise & sunset. I suppose it's OK if we ban every non-Muslim resident or tourist from eating in public, especially in the Muslim dominated areas. If majoritarianism is right for South Delhi, it has to be right for J&K".

According to the 2021 Pew Research Survey, most Indians, except 39 per cent that describe themselves as pure vegetarian, do not abstain from eating meat and only 44 per cent Hindus consider themselves as pure vegetarians. Only 8 per cent of Muslims and 10 per cent of Christians consider themselves as vegetarians respectively.

Essentially, 8 out of the 10 people consume meat in India including those from the majority religions. This survey can also be corroborated by the 2014 nationwide survey

published by the Registrar General of India. The survey indicated that males above the age of 15 who ate meat, fish or eggs was 71.6%. Whereas, the proportion of females was marginally lower to 70.7%.

The ban started in Karnataka when various Hindu outfits including Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad were found to have been running door-to-door campaigns asking people to not use halal meat, when a section of Hindus organised 'Hosa Todaku' after the Ugadi (New Year's Day).

The Ugadi was celebrated on April 2, after which the Hosa Tadaku is celebrated in which those Hindus who consume non-vegetarian food, cook meat and offer it to gods.

These bans, especially the one on meat, comes down to two issues. First, are these bans necessary to maintain the sanctity of a religion? Second, if yes, how does that ban take place?

To answer the first, it is important to understand that the Constitution grants the fundamental right to carry out trade under Article 19(1)(g). The only permissible limitation of this fundamental right is through imposing reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2)-(6). However, any reasonable restriction under Article 19(2)-(6) must only be through a statutory 'law' as held in *Bijoe Emmanuel & Ors. v. State of Kerala* (1986). The orders by Mayors are executive orders and are not sufficient to restrict the freedom of trade. The existence of law is a necessary requirement.

Second, even if these bans were backed by statutory law, it has to pass the tests of the golden triangle (Article 14, 19 and 21). To pass the test of Article 14, the law has to be tested through the parameters of reasonableness since the guarantee of equality is a guarantee against arbitrariness. Any law which is disproportionate or excessive would be manifestly arbitrary as held in *Sharyaya Bano v. UOI* (2017).

These laws prima facie fail the test of equality since the Constitution does not permit a blanket ban on meat. The only restriction, that too not without any statutory law, is the one on cow slaughter under Entry 15 of List II of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. The ban is not backed by a legitimate aim since it's not just meat that people do not consume during Navratri. A blanket ban on meat whereas onion and garlic are also not consumed as even claimed by the SDMC Mayor, is unreasonable. Further, if the smell of the meat affects the sentiments and beliefs of a community, the same should be there throughout the year and not just on Navratri.

Second, if the state wants to restrict Arti-

cle 19(1)(g), there must be a legitimate state interest since it will ensure that the law does not suffer from manifest arbitrariness. These bans are enforced on the grounds of respecting religious morality, in the absence of a statutory law to its effect. Morality, although a permissible ground of reasonable restriction on the right to carry out any trade, must not mean motivated by majoritarian sentiments. Constitutional morality, as observed in *NCT Delhi v. UOI* (2018), holds a balance against popular morality. The meat shops, that have been closed or led to forceful closure, are owned by individuals from different communities whose livelihood is dependent on it. Thus, even if the minuscule population is affected, which in this case is, the constitutional courts are bound to protect their rights as held in *K.S. Puttaswamy v. UOI* (2017) and *Navtej Singh Johar v. UOI* (2018).

Moreover, it violates the right to freedom of choice of individuals under Article 21. The right to food as reiterated recently in *Re: Problems and Miseries of Migrant Labourers* (2021) and the right to choose as observed in *Soni Gerry v. Gerry Douglas* (2018), is an intrinsic part of Article 21. Thus, it is understandable that the freedom to choose a particular food of choice would also be a matter of personal liberty and individual autonomy.

Lastly, Article 51(A)(e) of the Fundamental Duties promotes harmony and spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities.

According to the Census of India, apart from the majority religions, more than 6 million people profess other religions and faith. Every religion and faith has its own custom and practice. An attempt to give these orders any legislative colour would infringe upon the secular feature of the Constitution because then it would lead to floodgates of different claims from different religious communities, shaking the very essence of Article 25. Article 25 of the Constitution allows freely professing, practicing and propagating religion.

Sans legitimacy, these bans only create societal unease leading to communal disharmony. While many communities do observe restraints on eating meat on certain occasions or eating certain types of meat, there is no logical corollary on putting a blanket ban on meat consumption for others when more than 70% of the people in India consume the same.

Thus, any political overreach, regulating from the choice of clothes to wear to the type of food to consume, is surely unwarranted and constitutionally unsound. (IPA Service)

The clash within the civilisation

The Russian-Ukraine war has been instrumental to forge a new narrative of the world and how it is going to transform, very soon

By: Asad Mirza

It seems as if the Russia-Ukraine war has rendered the seminal work by Samuel Huntington *The Clash of Civilisations*, as completely wrong. As the narrative painted by him 30 years earlier, and which occupied the central place in the world politics particularly by the western liberals has not happened. Instead of a clash of the civilisations, it is now a clash within the civilisation i.e. white, European and Orthodox Christians fighting amongst them. In an interview to George Eaton for the New Statesman, political theorist Noam Chomsky describes the on going war between Russia and Ukraine as "monstrous" for Ukraine.

Chomsky, who has never condemned any anti-Western government, unhesitatingly denounces Vladimir Putin's "criminal aggression". But adds that to answer the question, one has to plumb the recesses of Putin's twisted mind and try to analyse his deep psyche.

"The other way would be to look at the facts: for example, that in September 2021 the United States came out with a strong policy statement, calling for enhanced military cooperation with Ukraine, further sending of advanced military weapons, all part of the enhancement programme of Ukraine joining NATO. You can take your choice, we don't know which is right. What we do know is that Ukraine will be further devastated. And we may move on to terminal nuclear war if we do not pursue the opportunities that exist for a negotiated settlement," he further said in the interview.

Expressing his views on democracy and the US interpretation of democracy, Chomsky says that Putin is as concerned with democracy as we are. He said, "If it's possible to break out of the propaganda bubble for a few minutes, the US has a long record of undermining and destroying democracy. Do I have to run through it? Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, Chile in 1973, on and on... But we are supposed to now honour and admire Washington's enormous commitment to sovereignty and democracy. What happened in history doesn't matter. That's for other people."

Chomsky, who observed in 1990 that "if the Nuremberg laws were applied, then every post-war American president would have been hanged", spoke disdainfully of Joe Biden, saying: "It's certainly right to have moral outrage about Putin's actions in Ukraine, but it would be even more progress to have moral outrage about other horrible atrocities... In Afghanistan, literally millions of people are facing imminent starvation. Why? There's food in the markets. But people who have little money have to watch their children starve because they can't go to the market to buy food. Why? Because the United States, with the backing of Britain, has kept Afghanistan's funds in New York banks and will not release them."

Chomsky's contempt for the hypocrisies and contradictions of US foreign policy comes out very clearly in this interview, and in his usual style he has given words to the sentiments prevailing across the globe.

On the other hand the other leading political theorists

of our times Francis Fukuyama, while speaking to Megan Gibson for *New Statesman* opined that we could be facing the end of "the end of history".

On the recent political drama over presidential elections in the United States, Fukuyama describes the situation as serious, really, since the American Civil War. Commenting on the US's current political polarisation he says, "There's a significant chance we're going to be in a major constitutional crisis at the time of the next presidential election."

Fukuyama's critics point out that his thesis about liberal democracy being "the final form of human government" seems obsolete. In his book *The End of History and the Last Man*, he outlined his theory that liberal democracy is greatly preferable to any other form of government and, crucially, that no liberal democracy could progress to a better alternative.

Fukuyama commenting on the likely geopolitical consequences of the war in Ukraine, says that chief among his predictions are: Russia will lose the war, perhaps spectacularly, and this defeat will help the West get out of "our funk about the declining state of global democracy. The spirit of 1989 will live on, thanks to a bunch of brave Ukrainians. For those interested in the stability of the international order, it's an optimistic, even reassuring, vision of the war's potential outcome."

On the surge of global support for Ukraine, Fukuyama sympathises with and endorses the urge to support the Ukrainian plight, but he also warns that it's hardly a universal phenomenon, even among seemingly democratic countries. He cites India and South Africa as two countries that have so far refused to condemn Russia's invasion.

Fukuyama also opines that while different opinions might be tolerable, they have also once again highlighted the dysfunction of certain multilateral bodies, like, the United Nations. His "ultimate nightmare", he said, is a world in which China and Russia work in harness with one another, perhaps with China bolstering Russia's war and Beijing launching its own invasion - of Taiwan. If that were to happen, and be successful, Fukuyama said, "then you would really be living in a world that was being dominated by these non-democratic powers. If the United States and the rest of the West couldn't stop that from happening, then that really is the end of the end of history."

Analysing the views expressed by the two giants one can only say that the wrong interpretation of liberal democracy and its implementation through force might have resulted in the erosion of the democratic concepts all over the world. Its main champions United States and Great Britain both seem to be faltering and trying to impose their will or version of the concept with use of force, which may ultimately result in the establishment of a non-democratic global system, instead of the new world order which the so-called western liberalised world is trying to implement. (The author is a political commentator based in New Delhi. He was also associated with BBC Urdu Service and *Khaleej Times* of Dubai. He can be reached at www.asad-mirza.blogspot.com)



RBI is taking higher inflationary pressures on Indian economy seriously

By: Anjan Roy

The Reserve Bank of India sees the prospects of higher inflation in the current year against the background of a volatile global economic situation.

The RBI believes India will experience an inflation rate of close to 6% against 4.5% during the current fiscal year. RBI governor, Shaktikanta Das, gave an assessment of the Indian economic situation while announcing a more nuanced monetary policy for the current quarter.

Indian inflation is influenced by the price of oils and internal supplies of food articles. Of these, oil is under tremendous pressure due to the evolving geo-political scenario as a result of the Russia-Ukraine war. The respite might not be close at hand either. This is why.

While the aggression had begun as a purely one-sided move of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, in search of his megalomaniac dreams, the unbelievably stout resistance movement from the Ukrainians had changed the complexion of the conflict. The Ukrainians have fiercely fought back and stalled the Russian progress. Indeed, Russia is now in retreat.

It is important to comprehend the changing character of the hostilities. There lies the key to the future course of this war and also the prospects of the global economy. As the Russians are facing rout and humiliating defeat on the battlegrounds, they are getting entrenched. In their desperation, they could be expected to continue fighting no matter at what cost.

The implication is that Russia being a major supplier of energy to the whole world, its supplies would remain disrupted. The sanctions struggle would be sought to be further stiffened and buying Russian oil and gas would increasingly be subject to sanctions and black-balling by the western powers.

The second implication is that Russia and Ukraine had hitherto been the breadbasket for the world, being the major producers of wheat. These are already in shortage in the global markets. Some of the poorer countries are facing food shortages already.

A collateral damage from the conflict is on the supplies of fertilisers to the world. Both these countries are principal suppliers of fertilisers to a large number of countries, including India. The means, fertilisers prices will rise and, worse, fertilisers would be in short supply. That will not only hurt countries in terms of higher prices, but their farm sectors could also be constrained.

The Reserve Bank governor has referred to "tectonic shifts" in the global situation since February 24, when the war began. That observation has to be interpreted in the light of these implications of Russia's Ukraine war. A long drawn-out conflict between the two neighbours will thus have global ramifications. It will not spare India.

As the headwinds start blowing, the RBI has upped its ante. RBI's changed monetary policy stance is the beginning of its defence of the Indian economy against the onslaughts of a possibly nose-diving global geo-economic situation. Security uncertainties apart, the economic fall-out could be severe.

In this geo-economic war, prices would be the first victim and the ripple effects of global inflation would start impacting India. One does not have to explain that it is the price of energy that has started an upward swirl of general prices and taking against run-away inflation would be the first priority.

Inflation would be triggered from two distinct sources: first, food price inflation; and secondly, from the multiplier effects of a rise in energy prices. Of these two, containing food inflation could be more a domestic affair for India, though global food prices have already started climbing

up, India's Achilles heel would be the energy — mainly oil and natural gas — price hikes.

Prices of food items are anticipated to keep rising, as wheat supplies from the Black Sea area, which mainly are supplies from Ukraine and Russia, would keep the pressure on food supplies and prices. Black Sea producers account for the lion's share of world wheat trade.

This of course could mean some opportunities for India. With bulging food grains stocks in the country and the acute shortages of food grains in the global markets, India could explore possibilities of exports of wheat to draw down the large domestic wheat stocks.

But overall, Das felt that the inflation rate in the country would remain north-bound dominated by the uncertain global geo-economic situation. The silver lining for India is that the monsoon is expected to be normal and farm sector growth was expected to remain buoyant.

But the continuing war between Russia and Ukraine would leave its footprint on every sphere of the global economy. Continuing boycott of Russian oil and increasing animosity between the west and Russia could further dampen the spirit in the financial markets.

It would be a better strategy not to fight energy price hikes and let these pass through. The Indian economy should eventually get used to high imported energy prices. The high prices should egg on India to adjust to these and economise on use of imported energy resources.

The worry is that, while you cannot do otherwise and prepare for fighting inflation, that should not hurt the prospects for growth. We have just emerged from the debilitating effects of a pandemic. Geo-economics should not now throttle the growth green shoots.

The good news is that with larger government spending and improving activities, domestic demand is regaining its pace. Furthermore, RBI feels that with normal monsoon, the rural demand should continue to remain buoyant. It is domestic demand and purchasing power which drives the Indian economy.

Currently, Indian industry is operating at an average of 73% of capacity utilisation. While there is some scope for further improvement in capacity utilisation, any fresh climbs should mean larger investment at the next stage. RBI believes that the government's production linked incentives scheme is working well to encourage Indian industry to make fresh investments.

The GDP growth rate has been somewhat pared for the whole year. RBI expects India's GDP to grow at around 7% against its earlier projections of around 8%.

However, this is remarkably comfortable. India is a major economy and this level of growth can make it one of the engines for global economy. RBI is afraid that western European economies would suffer a huge jolt from the continuing Russian misadventures in Ukraine. These might drag all down. That is what we should fight, maybe by focussing on internal growth drivers. (IPA Service)



Decolonising the search for extraterrestrial life

By: Doug Johnson

In his 1962 Moon speech, then-President John F. Kennedy Jr. declared that the United States would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. Speaking from a football stadium at Rice University, Kennedy adopted the language of the Wild West to describe Houston, Texas, the seat of the country's fledgling human spaceflight operations: "What was once the furthest outpost on the old frontier of the West will be the furthest outpost on the new frontier of science and space."

Kennedy's speech and his characterisation of space as a new frontier shaped the rhetoric of space exploration for decades to come. As recently as 2020, former President Donald J. Trump invoked the expansion of national boundaries when he referenced the Artemis program in his State of the Union address: "Now we must embrace the next frontier, America's Manifest Destiny in the stars."

Such rhetoric has recently come under scrutiny by historians and Indigenous scholars who say that conceptions of outer space have long been rooted in colonialism. The term "Manifest Destiny," for example, was coined in 1845 by a journalist arguing for the inevitable expansion of the US across North America — an effort that ultimately resulted in the death and forced migration of tens of thousands of Native Americans, if not more. The language of expansion, frontiers, and conquest reflects a long history of settlers taking Indigenous land and trying to eliminate Indigenous cultures; therefore, these scholars say, this rhetoric and way of thinking should be scrutinised when applied to efforts to reach outer space.

In 2018, a group of Indigenous studies scholars shared this view with the Berkeley SETI Research Center. The organisation's Breakthrough Listen Initiative had invited the scholars to talk at an event exploring diverse perspectives on the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, a practice commonly called SETI. According to Kim TallBear, a Native studies professor at the University of Alberta and part of the working group, some of the SETI researchers were dismissive, even carrying on their own conversations during the scholars' presentation. "It's really unclear why we were invited in the first place," TallBear said.

Researchers from Berkeley's SETI organisation and Breakthrough Listen did not respond to multiple requests for comment. The SETI Institute, a large nonprofit research organisation, declined to comment. In an email to Undark, Rebecca McDonald, the institute's director of communications, wrote that "while we appreciate the

importance of this topic, it's not an area where we have particular expertise."

TallBear went on to co-edit a special SETI-themed issue of the American Indian Culture and Research Journal, published in December. The goal, the editors wrote, was to highlight what Indigenous worldviews can bring to space exploration, including perspectives on the history of science, first contacts with new cultures, environmental sustainability, and ethics.

Space exploration organisations may be starting to heed these calls. NASA, for example, has initiated a number of efforts to engage Indigenous communities. In 2020, a white paper penned by Matthew Tiscareno, a research scientist with the SETI Institute, and other experts in the field, called for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in planetary nomenclature, and outlined previous efforts to engage with Indigenous peoples.

However, the document also notes that work in the field needs to continue — a view other scholars hold as well. "SETI-affiliated voices are literally working on a scale of planetary contact," said David Delgado Shorter, the other co-editor of the special issue and a professor of world arts and cultures/dance at the University of California, Los Angeles. These researchers, more than any others, should be willing to tackle "issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity," he said, "because they're allegedly representing humanity."

Colonial language and thought have influenced SETI and science writ large, said Rebecca Charbonneau, a historian at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. During Europe's Scientific Revolution, the philosopher Francis Bacon described nature as something to be subjugated, she said: "a thing for mankind, in his words, to control. And that's kind of formed the basis for the way we think about science."

The Scientific Revolution made it easier for Europeans to travel the globe, thanks to new navigational tools, and advances in science and medicine were used to justify colonialism because, from a European perspective, they improved the quality of life for all. Some of these aged worldviews are still present in today's efforts to explore space. For example, much as Bacon thought that all successful nations need to be expansionist, Charbonneau said SETI researchers often assume that any intelligent life on other planets will also develop technology and seek to colonise other places.

SETI's roots can be traced back to 1959, when physicists Giuseppe Cocconi and Philip Morrison published a paper in the journal *Nature* proposing that two far-flung civilisations could communicate by transmitting and receiving electromagnetic ra-



diation — which includes light and radio waves. Radio astronomy, one of SETI's core technologies, allows humans to do that, though so far no one out there has been answering.

Radio astronomy grew out of military infrastructure built before and during World War II, with the invention of radar, which uses radio waves to determine an object's distance, angle, and velocity. The technology continued to advance throughout the Cold War, and during this time, several facilities were built on land that was once populated by, or otherwise important to, Indigenous peoples, Charbonneau said.

A prominent example is the now collapsed Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico, an island that was Indigenous land prior to Spanish colonisation. The US military helped fund the observatory's development, and in 1974, scientists used its equipment to transmit a simple graphical message into space. By 1993, data gathered from the observatory helped garner a Nobel Prize. "I see SETI as, in part, being able to be developed at all because of the US investment — and the Soviet investment to a lesser extent — in equipment for the Cold War," Charbonneau said.

The construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope atop Mauna Kea, the largest mountain in Hawaii, offers a more recent example. Mauna Kea is on public lands held by the state and already hosts several telescopes. But the mountain is sacred to

some Native Hawaiians who have protested the new construction in an effort to preserve the mountain's integrity as a spiritual space and to prevent further environmental degradation. (In Hawaii, there was some Indigenous support for the new telescope, and in Puerto Rico, the Arecibo Observatory was a point of pride for some.)

Indigenous land is often located in remote areas, where limited light pollution and radio frequency interference enable telescopes to obtain better data, Charbonneau wrote in an email to Undark. And because Indigenous people didn't hold much political sway, she wrote, it has been easier for the US government to acquire large swaths of their land.

Other trappings of colonialism have ended up in modern space exploration. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos wore a cowboy hat before his spaceflight, for example. In all, if anyone out there is looking, said Shorter, humanity isn't necessarily putting its best foot forward.

Embedded within the colonialist mindset is the notion that everything is a resource to be exploited or extracted, said Margaret Huettl, a scholar of Native American history at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This perspective, she said, has had devastating consequences for humans and for the planet. According to Huettl, many Indigenous groups are more closely attuned to the relationships between humans, animals, plants, rivers, and

the land. SETI researchers could benefit from considering a pair of pressing questions: "How have we treated the planet on which we live now?" asks Huettl. "Will we behave the same way in a different, an extraterrestrial, place?"

According to Shorter, if humanity only views other planets as potential resources, science could miss out on deeper levels of understanding, such as the recent discovery that forests on Earth think or communicate. SETI researchers might also miss the presence of intelligent alien species if they assume that such species would necessarily prioritise technological advancement, Shorter said.

A 2009 paper provides some support for Shorter's view. A pair of Penn State scientists addressed the question of why humanity hasn't made contact with intelligent life in outer space, despite the raw number of potentially habitable planets. The researchers posited that as a species gets more advanced, it tries to be more resource conservative and more sustainable, thus putting less effort into finding others and expanding to other planets.

SETI researchers are, by and large, unfamiliar with Indigenous worldviews, Shorter wrote in the SETI-themed special issue. Jason Wright, a professor of astronomy and astrophysics and director of the Penn State Extraterrestrial Intelligence Center, said he agrees with Shorter. Many space researchers stick to STEM fields, with few taking courses in fields relating to Indigenous peoples. "Very few of us have any of those backgrounds at all," he said, adding that he has read the special issue, and it is a valuable text that those working in his field should take to heart.

Now that he's aware of these issues, he can better avoid biases in the field, Wright said. Right now, it's difficult to say how humanity will interact with extraterrestrials. But Wright noted that Indigenous perspectives challenge Western assumptions about how humanity will handle first contact with another civilisation.

Huettl said that "from a young age, Indigenous students are taught that their perspectives are not valid" in classrooms. This, in turn, pushes them away from STEM fields. If education systems were to include some Indigenous knowledge, scientists from Indigenous groups might be better positioned to influence the conversation. Additionally, she said that the stories Western countries tell about the exploration of the Earth need to change.

"I think if we tell more honest histories about colonialism and colonial exploitation on Earth," she said, "those stories may help us rethink where we are going in the future." (Courtesy: *The Wire*)

What is more empowering? A dress code or education? Volcanoes on Pluto baffle scientists: How can such a cold body power eruptions?

By: Shoma A Chatterji

Which, do you think, is more empowering for women and girls? Is it when they attend institutes of higher learning to empower themselves? Or, is it the way they stick to dress codes they have been conditioned to wear, according to the dictates of the faith they belong to?

This question was recently answered by the Karnataka High Court which decreed that as the hijab was not mandatory in Islam, institutes of higher learning have the right to decide on dress codes for women students. Unshaken by the court's decision, many women students of these institutions retaliated stating that they would prefer to give up on education and continue to wear the burqa/hijab. This will have dangerous repercussions on their future. Without education, they will remain as backward and unempowered as their Islamic faith has decreed them to be. More dangerously, they will unwittingly fall into the diabolic trap the Hindu Right has laid for them, by forcing them to forego the burqa if they wish to continue to educate themselves.

The women are talking of "freedom of choice" to wear the burqa as, according to them, it is a principle of belonging to the Islamic faith and a mark of their identity. But what "choice" are they talking about when this "choice" has been compelled by patriarchy? Many of the young women from the minority community had persuaded their parents to allow them to go to college on the condition that they would wear the burqa. But now they may have to forego a college education, if they insist on wearing the burqa. Their parents will be happy to see them married off.

"Choice" is defined as "the power or right of choosing." Are these young women really "choosing" to wear the burqa at the cost of surrendering their education? Or, are they actually surrendering to the ultimate goal of the Hindu Right Wing groups, who do not want women of the minority community to be empowered?

Muskan Khan, a student raised slogans of Allah-hu-Akbar after being heckled by a right-wing Hindu mob shouting slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" in Karnataka this February. She acted impulsively in a moment of anger. She did not know then that she was actually playing into the hands of the saffron-clad, "Jai Sree Ram" shouting hooligans. The hooligans were not even linked to the college at all except. All they did was to create unrest and insist on the saffronisation of institutes of higher education in Karnataka.

Whether it is right to wear the hijab to school or college or not, calls for a study on the dilemma. One needs to understand if the Hindu saffronised Right Wing is using the hijab controversy as a cleverly disguised political strategy. Are they doing this to spread their hate for the minority community among the majority, most of whom are not as hate fuelled as the saffron groups. The Right Wing may have hoped that though the controversy began in Karnataka, it will rapidly spread to other states of the country.

Recently, a female health worker was not permitted to enter the office in Malda District of West Bengal because she was wearing a hijab. According to Afroza Khatun who teaches Bengali at the Surendranath College for Women, these "rebellious girls" are unknowingly stepping into a trap created by the Hindu Right. Scholars are wading through volumes of research on the hijab debate when the true purpose is far removed from any scholarly dispositions.

Proponents of Hindutva have stated that their singular aim is to "empower" their "Muslim sisters." This

is a cleverly devised excuse to "excite the masses". The Muslim Women Bill 2019 proposed to declare the practice of "triple talaq" or instant divorce, void and illegal. It was approved on June 12 2019 by the Supreme Court. On August 1, 2019, triple talaq/teen talaq was declared a crime according to a Faujdari Court that deals with Criminal cases. These courts are also known as Sessions Courts. This day was also declared as the "Muslim Woman's Day!" The saffron groups claimed that this was a classic example of "imparting justice" to Muslim women. Is it false propaganda? Let us take a closer look. An "instant divorce" ensures that the husband will be arrested. But there is no clarity on how the "divorced wife" will fend for herself and her children. Is this then empowering the husband or the divorced wife? Think about it! Schools in India have made the uniforms compulsory. In colleges, it is optional. But this must be stated clearly, much before the academic term begins. The students need to be aware. A ban on the hijab for Muslim girls cannot be imposed as an afterthought, as this deprives the girls of an education that will empower them.

The Right to Education was made a Fundamental Right by the 86th constitutional amendment in 2002, and Article 21A was added to the Constitution under Fundamental Rights. Education is a prerequisite for a person's development. A nation cannot flourish unless its population is educated. So, the young women who have decided to wear the hijab and give up going to college, must realise that they are taking several steps backwards. And this is exactly what the saffron groups want! The doors to education must be kept open at all costs. We must wait and watch which the Muslim girls choose, education or the hijab.

They must remember that the "choice" to opt for the hijab was not theirs to make. It was made hundreds of years ago by their patriarchal forefathers, who were also responsible for the criminal practice of triple talaq. The women never had a choice at all.

In patriarchal societies, men have the power and control over manipulating women's conduct. They use this power to enforce "modesty" codes on women. This is traced back to man's unconscious fears of the "castrating mother". Edmund Bergler, a social scientist, argued that unconsciously, every man is afraid of every woman. A man's relationship with his mother evokes in him fears, which, as he grows up, he transfers to all women. These are: fear of being starved, devoured, poisoned, choked, chopped to pieces and drained. All these culminate in a fear of being castrated. They lead the man to evolve an unconscious, powerful portrait of himself.

Therefore, if he finds a woman imitating and/or equaling his way of dressing, an integral part of this 'powerful portrait,' his defenses are up at once. He proceeds, with the help of this 'powerful portrait' and the 'strength' he derives from patriarchy, to 'cut the woman down to size.' Like forcing Muslim girls to withdraw from education and hide behind their hijab "to sustain their cultural, social and religious beliefs", all structured by men. This includes the Hindu Right Wing hooligans and the Muslim 'fathers'.

They are participating in a 'race' to prove which one of them is more patriarchal, fundamentalist, and more oppressive of women in general and Muslim women in particular. By insisting on wearing the hijab and sacrificing their right to education the Muslim girls, are unknowingly, strengthening the arms of patriarchy. They need to decide soon whether education is empowering, or the hijab. (Courtesy: *The Citizen*)

By: David Rothery

Pluto, the Solar System's largest dwarf planet, just became even more interesting with a report that icy lava flows have recently covered substantial tracts of its surface. In this context, "recently" means probably no more than a billion years ago.

That is old, of course — and there is no suggestion that volcanoes are still active — but it is only a quarter the age of the Solar System and no one knows how Pluto brewed up the heat needed to power these eruptions.

The news, coming nearly seven years after the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's New Horizons probe made its spectacular flyby of Pluto on July 14, 2015, is thanks to an analysis of images and other data by a team led by Kelsi Singer of the Southwest Research Institute in Boulder, Colorado.

Singer's team draw particular attention to a mountainous feature named Wright Mons, which rises 4 km-5 km above its surroundings. It is about 150 km across its base and has a central depression (a hole) 40 km-50 km wide, with a floor at least as low as the surrounding terrain.

The team claims that Wright Mons is a volcano, and cite the lack of impact craters as evidence that it is not likely to be older than 1 billion-2 billion years. Many other areas of Pluto have been around long enough to accumulate large numbers of impact craters — no recent icy lava flows have covered them.

As volcanoes go, Wright Mons is a big one. Its volume exceeds 20 thousand cubic kilometres. Although considerably less than the volume of Mars's biggest volcanoes, this is similar to the total volume of Hawaii's Mauna Loa and much greater than the volume of its above sea-level portion. This is particularly impressive given Pluto's small size, with a diameter about a third that of Mars and a sixth that of Earth.

Wright stuff
In detail, the slopes of Wright Mons and much of its surroundings are seen to be

crowded with hummocks up to 1-km high and mostly 6 km-12 km across. The team conclude that these hummocks are made primarily of water-ice, rather than nitrogen- or methane-ice that covers some other young regions on Pluto. They argue that this is consistent with the material strength necessary to form and preserve these domes, but they do recognise small patches of much weaker nitrogen-ice, mainly in the central depression.

The hummocks were likely created by some sort of ice volcanism, known by the technical term "cryovolcanism" — erupting icy water rather than molten rock. Pluto's bulk density shows that it must have rock in its interior, but its outer regions are a mixture of ices (water, methane, nitrogen and probably ammonia and carbon monoxide, too, all of which are less than a third as dense as rock) in the same way that the crust of the Earth and other rocky planets is a mixture of several silicate minerals. At Pluto's surface temperature of well below minus 200 degrees Celsius, ice made of frozen water is immensely strong. It can (and on Pluto, does) form steep mountains that will last for eternity without sagging downhill like a glacier on the much less frigid Earth, where water-ice is weaker.

What melts ice?
Ice, of course, melts at much lower temperatures than rock. And when there is a mixture of two ices, melting can begin at a lower temperature than for either of the pure ices (the same principle applies in silicate rock made of different minerals). This makes melting even easier. Despite this, it is a surprise to find evidence of relatively young water-rich cryovolcanic eruptions on Pluto, because there is no known heat source to power them.

There is only very limited scope for Pluto's interior to be heated by tidal forces — a gravitational effect between orbiting bodies, such as a moon and a planet — which warm the interiors of some of the moons of Jupiter and Saturn. And the amount of rock inside Pluto is not enough to produce much heat from radioactiv-

ity. Singer and her coworkers speculate that Pluto somehow held on to heat from its birth, which was unable to leak out until late in the body's history. This would be consistent with Pluto having a deep internal liquid water ocean, suggested based on other evidence. If the hummocks from which Wright Mons is built do represent water-ice eruptions, this stuff clearly was not flowing freely like liquid water but must have been some kind of gooey crystal-rich "mush", maybe within a completely frozen, but still pliable, outer skin that confined each effusion of fluid into a dome-like hummock.

Hole in argument?
The team cite the depth and volume of the central depression of Wright Mons to dismiss earlier suggestions that this is a volcanic crater (a caldera) or that it has been excavated by explosive eruptions. Instead, they regard it as a gap that somehow avoided being covered by erupted hummocks. I have my doubts about that, because there is an even bigger probable volcano, Piccard Mons, to the south of Wright Mons that also has a large central depression. It strikes me as too much of a coincidence for there to be two adjacent volcanoes both with fortuitous holes in their middles. I think it is more likely that these central depressions are somehow integral to how these volcanoes grew or erupted. Piccard Mons is less well characterised than Wright Mons because, by the time New Horizons made its closest approach, Pluto's rotation had carried Piccard Mons into darkness. The flyby was so fast that only the side of Pluto facing the Sun at the right time could be seen in detail. However, New Horizons was able to image Piccard Mons thanks to sunlight weakly reflected onto the ground by haze in Pluto's atmosphere.

That was a remarkable achievement, but it leaves us wanting to know more. What extra details are lurking in the poorly imaged half of Pluto? It will probably be decades before we find out or learn much more about how these icy volcanoes formed. (Courtesy: *Scroll.in*)

Can space exploration really find a new home?

By: Aamir Junaid

The vast open sky full of stars has been bothering humankind. The twinkling of stars, planets and galaxies up above in the farthest corner of blue has remained a matter of great curiosity in the field of astronomy since the beginning of human civilization.

These various otherworldly bodies mesmerise early humans. Though the science of space exploration has reached a much-advanced level now, it is not so progressed yet to grasp the abundant knowledge of the vast enigmatic universe. Therefore, we have merely been able to explore a tiny fraction of the humongous world due to our restricted space technologies. If we talk about our solar system, which is physically closer to us and in which we are residing right now, it will take a huge amount of time and more advanced technology to thoroughly explore our neighbourhood.

We are still exploring Mars because of its similarities to Earth and appropriate distance from the Sun.

Astronauts, without the help of robots, have not been able to land on Mars even after having explored the planet for decades. And I think humans might not be able to reach beyond their own solar system in their lifespans, given the lack of technologies. Certainly, we have discovered a huge portion of the unknown universe with the help of the Hubble Telescope, but sending a manned spacecraft out there would be a hypothetical ambition from today's perspective. It was a great accomplishment of humankind when the first Moon mission successfully landed 24 astronauts on the surface of the Moon, which was a good outcome of the space race between the USA and Soviet Russia.

Since the USSR lost and the USA became the Superpower, it became less unlikely to witness another space revolution (maybe between the USA

and China) in the near future. So here, a question arises.

What is the significance of exploring the huge universe? Is it any good for the welfare of humankind? I leave this upon you to decide. If we observe the deteriorating condition of our planet, it will force us to believe that our world may become a victim of extermination of any kind by meteorite or asteroids explosion same as faced by Mars long ago that had probably wiped out the lives from its surface. Similarly, our planet also faced an asteroid explosion ages ago that had eliminated dinosaurs from its surface. Though the possibility of meteorites hitting earth can not be denied even today, if we somehow are able to avoid a meteorite explosion, we ourselves will put humanity into danger by our wrongdoings.

Within the last century, we have consumed almost 70% of the natural resources. With the advent of new technologies and inventions, we have

severely disturbed the mechanism of life on our planet, which resulted in pollution, increased amount of carbon gases, deforestation and many more man-made problems.

We have come a long way where it might not be possible to reverse things except by moving to another life-supporting planet. Moreover, there is a theory that dictates that the ancestors of humans may be from Mars. And in support of the theory scientists claim that humans might not have originated from the Earth, rather, they used to move frequently from one planet to another whenever the natural resources started to come to end. Several ancient manuscripts point toward the human connection to the rest of the world that was not supposed to be found in that era. It might however be possible that the history of human civilization is much longer and they would have had a Martian identity before coming to Earth. (Courtesy: *Youth Ki Awaaz*)

Ukrainian defenders dig in as Russia boosts firepower

Ukraine's fate as the war shifts south and east depends on whether the US will help match a surge in Russian weaponry

KYIV, April 11 (AP): A showdown looms in Ukraine after Russia appointed a new military commander and looked to concentrate its attacks in the east, while Ukraine's president said his troops will hold their ground, urging Western leaders, in particular President Joe Biden, to do more.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy warned Sunday in a nightly address that this week will be as crucial as any during the war, saying "Russian troops will move to even larger operations in the east of our state."

Ukraine's fate as the war shifts south and east depends on whether the United States will help match a surge in Russian weaponry, he said, echoing comments he made in an interview with The Associated Press on Saturday.

"To be honest, whether we will

be able to (survive) depends on this," Zelenskyy said in a "60 Minutes" interview. "Unfortunately, I don't have the confidence that we will be receiving everything we need." Zelenskyy said he was grateful to Biden for U.S. military aid to date but added that he "long ago" forwarded a list of specific items Ukraine desperately needed.

"He has the list," Zelenskyy said. "President Biden can enter history as the person who stood shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainian people who won and chose the right to have their own country. (This) also depends on him." Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer was due to meet Monday in Moscow with Putin, after meeting with Zelenskyy in Kyiv. Austria, a member of the European Union, is militarily neutral and not a member of NATO.



Also Monday, New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said it was sending a military transport plane and a support team of 50 to Europe to carry much-needed equipment and supplies to key distribution centers.

More than six weeks of war in Ukraine has flattened cities, killed untold thousands and isolated Moscow economically and politically, and experts say the next phase of the battle may begin with a full-scale offensive that could de-

termine the course of the conflict.

Questions remain about the ability of depleted and demoralized Russian forces to conquer much ground after their advance on the capital, Kyiv, was repelled by determined Ukrainian defenders. Britain's Defense Ministry says Russia is trying to compensate for mounting casualties by recalling veterans discharged in the past decade. In his Sunday night address, Zelenskyy also accused Russia of trying to evade responsibility for war crimes in Ukraine.

"When people lack the courage to admit their mistakes, apologize, adapt to reality and learn, they turn into monsters. And when the world ignores it, the monsters decide that it is the world that has to adapt to them," Zelenskyy said.

"The day will come when they will have to admit everything. Ac-

cept the truth," he added.

Ukrainian authorities accuse Russian forces of committing war crimes against civilians, including airstrikes on hospitals, a missile attack that killed at least 57 people at a train station and other violence.

In another report of atrocities, the village of Buzova outside the capital, Kyiv, charred vehicles and buildings marked an area where local official Taras Didych told Ukrainian media Sunday that bodies showing "evidence of execution" were found after Russian forces withdrew from the region. It was unclear how many bodies were discovered.

Buzova is near Bucha, another of the towns near Kyiv, where hundreds of bodies, many with their hands bound and signs of torture were found after the Russian retreat.

Massive pro-Imran protests staged across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, April 11 (IANS): Massive protests were staged across major cities of Pakistan against the ouster of former Prime Minister Imran Khan through a vote of no-confidence called by the country's opposition.

The protests on Sunday night took place from about 9.30 p.m. in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Malakand, Multan, Khanewal, Khyber, Jhang, Quetta, Okara, Abbottabad, Bajaur, Lower Dir, Shangla, Kohistan, Mansehra, Swat, Gujrat, Faisalabad, Nowshera, Dera Ghazi Khan and Mandi Bahauddin, reports Dawn news.

Taking to Twitter late Sunday night, Khan thanked the thousands of protesters who came out in his support.

"Thank you to all Pakistanis for their amazing outpouring of support & emotions to protest against US-backed regime change abetted by local Mir Jafars to bring into power a coterie of pliable crooks all out on bail. Shows Pakistanis at home & abroad have emphatically rejected this," he said.

On Sunday evening before the protests were staged, the former premier had tweeted: "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."

In capital Islamabad, the protest started from the city's Zero Point, leading to traffic snarl at the Srinagar Highway, reports Dawn news.

Meanwhile, a large number of Khan's supporters, including women and children, turned up at the Peshawar Press Club and chanted slogans against the opposition. In Lahore, a rally moved towards the city's Liberty Chowk, with people sloganeering against the US.

The protest in Karachi was held on the Rashid Minhas Road where a large number of supporters were in attendance.

Besides Pakistan, protests were also staged in Dubai and London's Hyde Park.

Khan has become the first Prime Minister in the history of Pakistan to be ousted through a no-confidence vote after 174 members in the 342-strong National Assembly on Sunday voted in favour of removing him from the post.

Death toll in Ukraine train station attack rises to 57

KIEV, April 11 (IANS): The number of civilians killed in the Russian missile strike on a train station in Ukraine's Kramatorsk has increased to 57, with 109 people injured, a top official announced.

Addressing the media on Sunday, Pavlo Kyrylenko, the military head in Donetsk region where Kramatorsk is located, confirmed the new toll and said that "people with light injuries were sent home. All the seriously wounded are already in a safe region, and necessary assistance is being provided", Ukrayinska Pravda reported.

On April 8, Russian troops from the occupied territories in the Luhansk region deployed a Tochka-U system to carry out the cluster shelling on the Kramatorsk railway station, where some 4,000 people were awaiting to be evacuated. The victims included five children. Russia has denied accusations that it was responsible. Instead it suggested that the missiles were Ukraine's.

US seeks to impose new conditions for lifting sanctions: Iranian FM

TEHRAN, April 11 (IANS): Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Sunday that the US is seeking to impose new conditions for lifting anti-Iran sanctions, official news agency IRNA reported.

"In the past two or three weeks, the American side has made excessive demands that contradict some paragraphs of the text prepared for a possible agreement in the recent Vienna talks," Amir-Abdollahian said, adding the US wants to propose and impose new conditions outside the negotiating framework in exchange for the lifting of anti-Iran sanctions.

"If the US government has good intentions, it should take practical and concrete steps in the negotiations, such as releasing some of Iran's frozen assets or lifting sanctions," the Iranian top diplomat was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency.

Iran will continue the path of diplomacy to reach a dignified, lasting and good agreement, he said, adding "Iran stands and will stand on its red lines."

Iran signed a nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with the world powers in July 2015.

French polls: Macron, far-right rival Le Pen face runoff



PARIS, April 11 (AP): French President Emmanuel Macron and far-right nationalist Marine Le Pen are heading for another winner-takes-all runoff in the country's presidential election, polling agencies projected Sunday, as the fierce political rivals with sharply opposing visions for France pulled clear of 10 other candidates in the first round of voting.

If confirmed by official vote counts later Sunday, the initial projections mean France is teeing up for a repeat of the 2017 head-to-head contest that turned the centrist Macron into France's youngest president — but there is no guarantee this time that the outcome will be the same.

Macron for months had looked like a shoo-in to become France's first president in 20 years to win a second term. But National Rally leader Le Pen, in a late surge, tapped into the foremost issue on many French voters' minds: the soaring costs for food, gas and heating due to rising inflation and the repercussions of Western sanctions on Russia.

The French election result will have wide international influence as Europe struggles to contain the havoc wreaked by Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Macron has strongly backed European Union sanctions on Russia while Le Pen has worried about their impact on French living standards. Macron also is a firm supporter of NATO and of close collaboration among the European Union's 27 members.

Macron, a 44-year-old political centrist, won by a landslide five years ago but he is bracing for a far tougher runoff battle on April 24 against his 53-year-old political nemesis. Le Pen is promising seismic shifts for France — both domestically and internationally — if elected as the country's first woman president.

The projections showed both Macron and Le Pen on course to improve their 2017 first-round showings, highlighting how

French politics have become increasingly polarized. Macron was expected to capture a sizeable first-round lead of around 28 per cent support, ahead of Le Pen's projected 23 per cent-to-24 per cent of the vote. Hard-left firebrand Jean-Luc Melancon — one of half a dozen candidates on the left — finishing out of the runoff in third place, with about 20 per cent support.

After the projections were announced, Macron sought wide support, calling on those from both the mainstream left and right to rejoin his project and defeat the far right.

"I want to reach out to all those who want to work for France. I'm ready to invent something new to gather diverse convictions and views in order to build with them a joint action," he said, vowing to "implement the project of progress, of French and European openness and independence we have advocated for." For her part, Le Pen seemed to target Melancon's left-wing supporters in particular by promising "social justice" and fixes for "a France torn apart."

"The French people honored me by qualifying me for the second round," Le Pen said Sunday night as she thanked her supporters and called on those who didn't vote for Macron to back her in round two.

Her supporters celebrated with champagne and interrupted her speech with chants of "We're going to win!" Describing herself as "profoundly worried," defeated conservative candidate Valerie Pécresse warned of "the chaos that would ensue" if Le Pen was elected, saying the far-right leader has never been so close to power. Pécresse said she would vote for Macron in the runoff.

In the 27-member EU, only France has a nuclear arsenal and a UN Security Council veto.

To beat Le Pen in the runoff, Macron must pick apart her years-long rebranding effort to make herself seem less extreme, a makeover that has even highlighted her love of cats.

Talks between Lankan Prez Rajapaksa and independent MPs inconclusive on interim govt

COLOMBO, April 11 (PTI): Efforts to establish an all party interim government in Sri Lanka to deal with the unprecedented economic crisis remained inconclusive as the talks between President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and the group of independents from his own ruling SLPP coalition failed to make progress on the issue.

On Sunday, President Gotabaya invited the eleven-party coalition allies comprising 42 independent MPs for a discussion on the country's worst economic crisis.

"We discussed our letter which contained 11 points in regard to our proposal, the talks would continue," Vasudeva Nanayakkara, an independent group member, told reporters on Monday.

He and 41 others had declared independence from the ruling coalition last week but declined to join the Opposition.

Anura Yapa, another independent group leader, said that prior to meeting Rajapaksa they had met the main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa in the presence of the former President Maithripala Sirisena.

"Both sides discussed the situation without making any decisions," Yapa said.

The government sources said that appointing the balance 26 members of the Cabinet would be further delayed. Rajapaksa appointed just four Cabinet members after the resignation of all ministers.

Last week the entire Sri Lankan cabinet resigned apart from Mahinda Rajapaksa at a time when the country was facing its worst economic crisis since gaining independence from the UK in 1948.

Meanwhile, the anti-Rajapaksa protest which started on Saturday has continued to its third day on Monday. The gathering calling for the Rajapaksa family's resignation has continued their all night vigil.

"This is the new generation who are protesting here, we want accountability for all political wrongs over the



last 74 years since independence", a protester said.

The protest organised through a social media political campaign is being backed up by volunteers who provided food and drink for the protesters.

The island observes a public holiday on Monday and Tuesday which the protesters said was a government ploy to reduce the scale of protests.

The people were thought to be leaving the capital Colombo to outer areas in order to celebrate the National New Year which falls on April 13 and 14.

There were pro-Rajapaksa demonstrations held in a few parts of the country yesterday. They urged the Rajapaksa family to stay on. "We are grateful to the President who gave us vaccines to save our lives from the pandemic", a placard said.

These political manoeuvrings were taking place amid a massive anti-government street protest demanding the Sri Lankan President's resignation.

People have been protesting for weeks over lengthy power cuts and shortage of gas, food and other basic goods.

Romania's main ruling party elects PM as new leader

BUCHAREST, April 11 (IANS): Romania's main ruling National Liberal Party (PNL) elected incumbent Prime Minister Nicolae Ciuca as its new chairman.

Ciuca, the sole candidate and the new party leader announced after his election that the party, together with its governing partners, would finalise a series of recently proposed economic and social measures during the coalition's session on Monday, reports Xinhua news agency. "There is no discussion about populism, but measures for ensuring that the economy will function, to protect jobs and protect vulnerable citizens," he said.

Ciuca, a retired army general, has been leading the current three-party coalition government since November 2021. Last week, then PNL Chairman Florin Citu announced his resignation after just over six months in the role, amid the growing dissatisfaction with him in the party and the calls from several major party leaders for his stepping down.

Aus governing coalition, PM make up ground as election campaign begins

CANBERRA, April 11 (IANS): A new poll revealed on Monday that Australia's governing coalition has made up ground on the opposition ahead of the general election on May 21.

According to the latest edition of Newspoll, the government now trails the Labor Party 47-53 on a two-party preferred basis, reports Xinhua news agency.

It marks the second consecutive poll the coalition has made up ground on Labor after trailing 44-56 in late January.

The poll was published after Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Sunday called the general election for May 21.

Despite making gains in Monday's poll, the coalition still has to make up significant ground over the course of the campaign to win a fourth consecutive term in government. Applied on a uniform basis nationally, a 53-47 two-party margin would result in Labor winning 79 out of 151 seats in the lower house of Parliament where the government is formed.

Morrison and Labor leader Anthony Albanese on Monday began their first official day of the campaign with multi-million dollar funding announcements.



The Prime Minister visited the marginal New South Wales Labor seat of Gilmore where he announced \$40 million (\$29 million) for local road upgrades.

He accused Albanese of spending "the last three years fighting me while I've been fighting the pandemic and standing up for Australia". Newspoll found that Morrison has extended his lead as voters' preferred Prime Minister, with 44 per cent choosing the incumbent compared to 39 per cent for Albanese, down from 42 per cent earlier in April.

Albanese, who has led Labor since the party's shock loss in the 2019 election, began the first day of the campaign in the Tasmanian seat

of Bass where he promised funding to provide better care for children with hearing loss.

He said that the party faces an "uphill battle" to win the election, noting that the Labor has won power from Opposition only three times since World War II and dismissed Morrison's assertions that he is an unknown quantity.

"No one knew who Scott Morrison was when he became prime minister, when he knocked off a sitting Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

"I'm not going that way. I'm not stabbing someone in the back to become Prime Minister. I'm asking the Australian people to elect me."

Guangzhou closes to most arrivals as China's outbreak grows

BEIJING, April 11 (AP): The manufacturing hub of Guangzhou closed itself to most arrivals Monday as China battles a major COVID-19 surge in its big eastern cities.

Shanghai has taken the brunt of the surge, with another 26,087 cases announced on Monday, only 914 of which showed symptoms. The city of 26 million is under a tight lockdown, with many residents confined to their homes for up to three weeks.

No such lockdown has yet been announced for Guangzhou, a metropolis of 18 million northwest of Hong Kong that is home to many top companies and China's busiest airport. Just 27 cases were reported in the city on Monday.

However, primary and middle schools have been switched to online after an initial 23 local infections were detected last week. An exhibition center was being converted into a makeshift hospital after authorities said earlier they would begin citywide mass testing.

Only citizens with a "definite need" to leave Guangzhou can do so, and only if they test negative for the virus within 48 hours of departure, city spokesman Chen Bin said in a social media announcement.

China has stuck to its "zero-COVID" strategy of handling outbreaks with strict isolation



and mass testing, despite complaints in Shanghai over shortages of food and medical services. China's government and the entirely state-controlled media are growing increasingly defensive about complaints over the COVID-19 prevention measures, censoring content online and rebuking foreign critics.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian on Sunday said China had "lodged solemn representations with the U.S." after the State Department advised Americans to reconsider traveling to China due to "arbitrary enforcement" of local laws and COVID-19 restric-

tions, particularly in Hong Kong, Jilin province and Shanghai. U.S. officials cited a risk of "parents and children being separated."

China was "strongly dissatisfied with and firmly opposed to the U.S. side's groundless accusation against China's epidemic response," Zhao said. Despite that, and indications the headline policy is being dictated by head of the ruling Communist Party Xi Jinping, China has rejected any notion that its response is political in nature. Xi has demanded social stability above all else in the runup to a key party congress later this year at which he is expected to bestow on himself an unprecedented third-term as party leader.

The English-language China Daily acknowledged that Shanghai's measures are "far from perfect," and pointed to the firing last week of three local officials for failing in their duties. But it said that shouldn't become an "excuse to politicize the event and blame China."

Despite the large number of cases, no new deaths have been reported in the Shanghai wave, possibly because the omicron variant is less deadly than older variants. City authorities also say they have secured daily supplies for residents, following complaints about deliveries of food and other necessities.

Media mogul Jimmy Lai appeals to UN over Hong Kong cases

HONG KONG, April 11 (AP): Lawyers for Hong Kong media mogul and pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai are asking the United Nations to investigate his imprisonment and multiple criminal charges as "legal harassment" that punish him for speaking out.

The publisher of the now-defunct Apple Daily newspaper was one of the most prominent activists arrested in Hong Kong's crackdown on virtually all political criticism since mass pro-democracy protests in 2019. The crackdown continued early Monday with the arrest of another veteran journalist, Allan Au Kalun, a teaching consultant who'd worked for a number of Hong Kong media outlets.

The actions by Lai's lawyers in Britain followed that country's announcement last month it would withdraw its judges from Hong Kong's top court because keeping them there would "legitimize oppression" in the former British colony.

Lai, 74, has been charged under Hong Kong's sweeping national security law and is serving 20 months in prison. His assets have been frozen and the raft of legal cases against him include four separate

criminal prosecutions related to attending and joining various protests, his legal team at Doughty Street Chambers in the U.K. said in a statement.

Lai faces "the risk of spending the rest of his life in prison simply for speaking out, and for seeking to defend freedom of the press, democracy and the rule of law in Hong Kong," Lai's counsel, Caoilfhionn Gallagher, said in the statement.

In a follow-up email, Gallagher said the appeal had been filed with the U.N. special rapporteurs for freedom of opinion and expression, counter-terrorism and human rights, rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and human rights defenders.

"We are awaiting a response," she wrote. Lai's son, Sebastian Lai, was quoted as urging U.N. special rapporteurs to investigate Chinese and Hong Kong authorities' actions against Hong Kong residents.

While the U.N. has a number of special rapporteurs, their powers are limited mainly to seeking information from government agencies and possibly seeking real steps to end violations.

Naga MLAs sense public mood, mount pressure on Rio to 'deliver' peace

NEW DELHI, April 11 (IANS): Naga voters are hardly naive. Only they can decide, and no other factor can influence the outcome during elections.

No one knows these hard realities better than the elected political protagonists, the 60 legislators who were elected in 2018, after the polls were held from the verge of 'open boycott'.

Thus the elected MLAs now want chief minister Neiphiu Rio and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to deliver a peace pact at the earliest.

One crucial fact about Nagaland politics is that while money and other factors often tilt the mandate; but when it comes to the crux, the people themselves would decide in all their rustic style and political wisdom.

Macho-ism is part of Naga political life. This is one reason, the women are generally 'defeated' in electoral contests for the state assembly.

To lie docile is never a typical characteristic of Naga politics. Politicians often quiz one another, "Mota no hoe (Are you not a man)?"

The query is a direct challenge to know the person's decision making ability and sheer determination in the face of complex situations. Head hunting was a sport for this valiant community.

The MLAs now sense public mood

perhaps crystal clear and hence are insisting to work unitedly for an early solution and peace accord.

Most elected legislators irrespective of party affiliation now believe that time for reckoning and taking a final call has come. It is in this context they are questioning each other and also the opposition-less UDA leadership on the relevance of consultative committees and repeated meetings.

The approach to hold such meetings with social organisations and pressure groups might have delayed the peace process; but they also know that to continue in power is one thing but to face people during elections is another ball game.

The 2023 battle would be tougher than many might have presumed. No one knows this better than 60 elected MLAs including ministers from Rio's own party NDPP and also BJP.

There have been a few desertions from the ruling NDPP of Rio in Mokokchung district lately. This could be attributed to local factors but normally such a thing does not happen in a party whose senior most legislator is the chief minister.

"It's time we truly deliver as the facilitator because the talks between the Government of India and two negotiating Naga groups NNPG and NSCN (IM) are



over," is one new refrain.

Of course, the NSCN (IM) denies such an idea and it has blamed the then negotiator and Governor RN Ravi for so called 'misinterpretation'.

Even in a statement on April 10, 2022 (Sunday) evening, the NSCN (IM) said: "Ravi could not convince the NSCN (IM) to sign an agreement without the Naga flag and the separate Constitution."

However, Governor Ravi had made a statement on the floor of the House that all discussions between the Centre, NNPG and NSCN (IM) were over by October 31, 2019. The elected legislators are also aware that the Governor's speeches in state legislatures are endorsed by the cabinet decision.

So they know the state government and chief minister cannot deny or disown the statement made by the Governor. And if at all the Governor made a statement in assembly without cabinet nod, the chief minister and his cabinet were duty bound to step down that very day.

Hence, the belated realisation, that it is time to face the reality without resorting to any other strategies that could further delay the peace process and finally an accord.

It is reported that in the April 9 meeting at Kohima, some MLAs including chief minister Neiphiu Rio were 'emotional' as the Naga issue and to arrive at a peace pact is certainly an emotive issue for every Naga worth his salt.

"Everything is in the hands of the centre now..." was one refrain at the meeting, sources say.

A section of legislators irrespective of party affiliation suggested that the consultative committee or core committee of the state legislators headed by the chief minister himself should now 'honestly report' to the centre on the feedback they receive from the Naga people and various Naga groups and voluntary organisations.

A couple of MLAs maintained that if someone (or organisations or groups) say flag and constitution are important, it should be reported to the centre frankly.

If the NNPG, an umbrella organisation of militant groups led by N Kitovi Zhi-momi, says it is keen to accept the "arrangement worked out" by October 31, 2019, all these have to be honestly conveyed to the centre.

There is no point looking the other way or hoping for some major or drastic changes. The Centre should then apply its mind and take a final call.

"The NNPG, and former Nagaland Governor (RN Ravi) negotiated on the principle that politics is an art of possibilities, and so the focus was to resolve the Indo-Naga political problems. We should aim for a win-win situation for both sides," Kitovi said in Delhi recently.

Left to it, the Modi government has been treading the path cautiously unwilling to take any risk. Hence it has been going slow and even soft at times. The centre wants to avoid any situation like the 1970s when the Shillong Accord actually split the rebel-guerrilla camp.

Chief minister Rio is expected in the

capital this week and it is likely he could face a few tough questions on such meetings.

Rio was understood to have been "embarrassed in a big way" when state BJP chief and his own minister (for Higher Technical Education), Temjen Inma Along, said on the floor of the assembly last month that no less than Home minister Amit Shah had made it clear "in front of Rio" that even in 400 years some demands (Flag and a separate Constitution) cannot be met.

In effect, Rio lost grip that very moment as he ran a coalition regime with the support of 12 BJP legislators.

Hence the MLAs including ministers are now giving much importance to the coming week's political and administrative developments once the 'core team' under chief minister Rio's leadership is in Delhi.

The developments related to ED summons to five associates of chief minister Rio are also curious and crucial things unfolding.

Last week, it is learnt Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself indicated to veteran Naga leader SC Jamir that he is keen to put the peace talks on a faster track.

Time is running out in terms of ensuing elections by February-March 2023 and hence even MLAs are getting restive.

Manipur Cong opposes making Hindi compulsory in schools in the region



IMPHAL, April 11 (NNN): Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) on Sunday raised a strong objection to the Centre's move to introduce Hindi as compulsory up to Class-X in Northeast states of the country.

Union Home minister Amit Shah, in a statement at the 37th meeting of the Parliamentary Official Language Committee, had reportedly pitched to make Hindi compulsory in schools up to Class X in the eight Northeast states.

Addressing a press conference, MPCC president, K Meghachandra termed the move of the BJP-led government at the Centre as a "cultural terrorism". The Congress leader alleged that if the Centre goes ahead with its move to use Hindi as an alternative to English and force people to learn the language in the region (NE states), it will give a great impact to the language, culture and religions of smaller communities living in the Northeast states. "The move is a part of BJP's agenda to eliminate smaller communities," he also alleged. "The move will make meaningless the inclusion of Manipuri language in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution. There will be no need for pressing the Central government for inclusion of the Meitei Mayek script in the currency notes of the country if this is the case," he added.

The MPCC chief then stated the BJP government's move will also be a big challenge to the indigenous religions of the Meitei and other communities living in the region. At the same time, Meghachandra stated that the move of the Central government is at a time when efforts are on to replace the Bengali scripts used in Manipuri language by the indigenous Meitei scripts.

Hindi compulsory language subject up to Class 8: Nagaland edu dept

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, April 11: The Nagaland school education department has clarified that Nagaland follows a three-language formula up to Class 8 and Hindi is offered as a compulsory language subject up to Class 8. In classes 9 and 10, the students have the liberty to study either Hindi or any modern Indian language (Ao/ Bengali/ Lotha/ Sumi/ Tenyidie) or Alternative English as the second language.

School education department principal director Shanavas C on Monday issued the clarification in the backdrop of Union home minister Amit Shah's statement that all the eight north-eastern states had agreed to make Hindi compulsory up to Class X and various sections of society in Nagaland, including some political parties, opposed it.

Shanavas said the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocates adopting a three-language policy up to secondary level, but it does not impose any language on states. As per NEP 2020, the three languages learned by the chil-



dren will be the choices of states, regions, and of course the students themselves, he said.

The timeline for the implementation of NEP 2020 is within 2030 and the ministry of educa-

tion has not issued any instructions for making Hindi compulsory in the secondary stage, he added.

Shanavas also reproduced Policy No 4.13 of the NEP 2020 as: "The three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the constitutional provisions, aspirations of the people, regions, and the Union, and the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity. However, there will be greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any state. The three languages learned by children will be the choices of states, regions, and of course, the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India. In particular, students who wish to change one or more of the three languages they are studying may do so in Grade 6 or 7, as long as they can demonstrate basic proficiency in three languages (including one language of India at the literature level) by the end of secondary school."

3 Bangladeshi women escape from Tripura govt custody

AGARTALA, April 11 (IANS): Three Bangladeshi women, who were detained in March 2020 for illegal entry into Tripura, went missing from custody in the state's northern Unakoti district, police said on Sunday. A search has been launched to nab the fleeing foreign nationals. A police official said that Istamur Ali and three women - Lalmati Rani Sarkar, Janata Rani Sarkar, and Khela Rani Sarkar, all resident of Nabiganj under Habiganj district of Bangladesh, were ar-

rested from Kailashahar in March 2020 when they, after entering Tripura without any passports, had tried to go to neighbouring Assam. The police official said that after completion of their jail term seven months ago all the four Bangladeshis were under the custody of Unakoti district administration and the concerned authority, in consultation with Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala, was scheduled to repatriate them on Sunday.

KNA militant arrested in Manipur, firearm seized

IMPHAL, April 11 (PTI): A militant belonging to proscribed outfit Kuki National Army (KNA) has been arrested in Manipur's Bishnupur district and a pistol seized from his possession, police said on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, police conducted vehicle checking and frisking at Torbung Bazaar on Saturday night, during which two men riding a motorcycle attempted to flee, an officer said.

Police chased the duo and nabbed one of them while the other managed to escape, he said, adding that a 7.65 mm pistol was seized from his possession.

During interrogation, he disclosed that he is an active member of KNA, the officer said, adding further investigation is underway.



MEELAL, students' body react to Amit Shah's pitch for Hindi language



IMPHAL, April 11 (NNN): Union Home minister Amit Shah's comment on making Hindi compulsory in all eight north-eastern states up to Class X drew opposition from various civil society organisations and students' bodies in Manipur on Sunday.

Meetei Erol Eyek Loimasilou Apunba Lup (MEELAL), a body campaigning for the revival and popularisation of the indigenous Manipuri script on Sunday said that the move is a

part of carrying out BJP's "one nation, one language, one religion". "Now, the time has come for the legislators of the state to stand united against such a move that will destroy the languages, religions, cultures, traditions of the indigenous communities of the northeast region," MEELAL said in a statement. It further urged the legislators to take up necessary steps for the development of Manipuri language and its original scripts.

The statement warned that MEELAL will always stand against such BJP's agenda in Manipur.

Also reacting to Amit Shah's comment, Federal Students' Organisation Kangleipak (FSOK) alleged the BJP has been trying to eliminate the indigenous of the region in order to fulfill its RSS backed "one nation, one language, one religion" agenda. It said that language is the wealth of a community. "Eliminating the language means abolishing the religion, culture and tradition of the community," the student body also said.

Training programme on honeybee keeping and beehive making organised

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 11: The inauguration function of the three-day "Training Programme on Honeybee Keeping and Beehive Making", which was organised by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Apunba Imagi Machasing (AIMS) and Yang Honey Promotion Society (YHPS), was held at the Community Hall of the Khamasom Walely Village, Ukhrul district, Manipur on Monday. Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, minister of State, External Affairs & Education, Dr Homen Thangjam, faculty of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Kamesh Salam, executive director, South Asia Bamboo Foundation, Judgeson Kasomwoshi, chairman, Khamasom Walely Village Authority, K Vareiyu, president, YHPS and M Khelendro Singh, president, AIMS, graced the function as the chief guest and guests of honours, respectively. Teruaki Watanabe was the special guest, and Dr I. Meghachandra Singh, joint director, ICAR, Lamphelpat, Manipur presided the function. The function was a fusion of virtual and offline one in which various stakeholders from different parts of the world and the Walely villagers participated.

Judgeson Kasomwoshi, as the host of the programme, warmly welcomed the participants. He wished a bright future for the villagers, whom he believed the participants would have learned hands-on during the training and adopt the best practices in the future for a suitable pattern of development for the village.

In his virtual message to the gathering, Dr Ranjan Singh fondly recalled his visit to the village in 2021 in which he declared Khamasom Walely the 'Honeybee Village of Manipur'. He further recollected the memoirs of the function in which he emphasised the need of popularising the Walely honey through instilling up-to-date technol-



ogy in collaboration with ICAR (KVK Ukhrul). He shared that a review of the progress of the venture was the need of the hour to gauge if there has been popular participation by the villagers and how far the mission has progressed. He also appraised how certain members of the Indian Parliament were taking keen interest in promoting organic honey as a source of livelihood means for the rural population of India. For example, he cited how Nitin Gadkari, Union minister of Road and Transport, had been pushing forward the necessity of applying modern scientific technology for improving the livelihood avenues of rural India. He emphasised that such initiative can certainly improve the villagers in Manipur. And according to him, beekeeping and honey production provide such alternative livelihood chances.

Kamesh Salam focused on the need for producing organic honey for sustainable economy through the use of bamboo beehive boxes. According to him, bamboo grows aptly in Ukhrul district and if the villagers upgrade their craftsmanship in making bamboo bee boxes, this could be another means of earning livelihood income. He further emphasised that Khamasom Walely could enter into collaboration with the National Bee Board of India to have testing centres for organic honey, thereby not only expanding the scope of honey production but also make the village a site of tourist attraction. He wished the village to be the Model Bee Village of India just as Dr. Ranjan had envisioned.

Khelendro Singh representing AIMS stated that much precious natural wealth is lost on account of human misdirection and instantaneous greed. He cited the example of mass poppy plantations in several hill villages which is driven by the phenomenon of 'easy money'. He cautioned that such ventures in the long run would destroy the natural ecology and lives of the future generation. In such a situation, he shared that looking for alternative livelihood means, which had been practiced by our forefathers infused with modern scientific technology, perhaps, could bring about sustainable development. As such beekeeping is one alternative in which even the womenfolk can participate equally with their male counterparts.

Dr. Homen Thangjam also emphasised on eco-friendly sustainable development. According to him, there would be no food, fruits and seeds without bees, which are the primary agents of pollination. He added that beekeeping can be a sustainable means of earning livelihood and with more efforts and dedication can become a professional occupation thereby increasing the wealth of the village.

Teruaki Watanabe in his brief address as the special guest emphasised on producing organic honey, which carries the potential of being a rich food as well as medicine. He recommended setting up a honey testing centre in the village. He sincerely wished that villagers across the hills of Manipur would refrain from poppy cultivation and take up beekeeping. He also expressed his willingness to import honey from Walely to Japan and provide assistance in quality production processes.

K. Vareiyu expressed that for centuries the Tangkhuls of Khamasom had practiced the art of beekeeping. According to him the old generation could positively exploit the conducive environment for bee culture including the natural vegetation, geographical terrain and the climatic condition. Further, honey was widely used for health and medicinal purposes and as an economic enhancer. However, the young generation had abandoned the valuable practice for reasons best known to them. He stressed that beekeeping and associated practices like bee box making still carries the potential of uplifting the economic condition of the village. For him, it is a matter of persistence and dedication.

While proposing the vote of thanks, N Ratan emphasised on the sincerity and integrity of Walely villagers to make the village a destination of ecotourism and work towards making honey the precious village product of Khamasom Walely. He earnestly thanked all the participants, trainers and sponsors of the programme.

No: SMED/DMC&H/TENDER/2019-20/023/
NOTICE INVITATION FOR BIDS

Sealed tender affixing Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Eight rupees & twenty five paise only) are invited from the original manufacturer/intending and experienced firms/parties/supplier/dealer/distributor for supply of CT Scan Film, X-ray Film etc. in the department of Radiology of Diphu Medical College & Hospital, Diphu, 782460.

Prospective Bidders may submit tender document with specification as stated to the office of the Principal cum Chief Superintendent, Diphu Medical College and Hospital, Diphu, 782460 during office hours from 13th April, 2022 against non refundable payment of Rs. 500 (Five Hundred) only through DD drawn in favour of Principal cum Chief Superintendent, Diphu Medical College & Hospital, Diphu, payable at Bank of India, Diphu Branch. Tender will be received by the office of undersigned till 12:00 PM of 26th April, 2022 and will be opened on same day at 2:00 PM.

Tender document can be downloaded through the DMC&H website: www.dmcassam.in from 12th April, 2022 by 04:00 PM.

Sd/-
Principal cum Chief Superintendent
Diphu Medical College & Hospital, Diphu
Janasanyog/C/390/22

Telangana CM leads protest in Delhi

NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): Stepping up protest against the Centre's paddy procurement policy, Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Monday led a dharna in the national capital organised by his party, and warned the Modi government to respond within 24 hours if it will buy the grain from the state.

If the Central Government failed to respond, Rao threatened to take the protest across the country. This is the Telangana Rashtra Samithi's first protest rally in Delhi after coming to power in the state in 2014. TRS working president and chief minister's son K T Ram Rao and party MPs, MLCs, MLAs, and entire cabinet ministers sat on the dharna.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait also expressed solidarity with the Telangana chief minister at the dharna here. Staging a protest at Telangana Bhawan here, Rao warned Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "...Don't play with the sentiments of farmers, they have power to topple the government. History says that all governments have fallen

whenever farmers were put in hardship."

"With folded hands, I urge Modiji and (Piyush) Goyalji, to procure paddy in Telangana like you buy in other states. We will wait for 24 hours for your response to our demand on paddy procurement. After that, we will take a call," he said. Rao further said that the country's farmers are not beggars and are seeking minimum support price (MSP) for their produce. However, "injustice" has been meted out to Telangana farmers by not procuring the paddy from the current rabi season, he said.

About 15 lakh tonnes of parboiled rice from the current rabi season has not been procured from the state, he claimed.

Attacking the Centre for making contradictory statements on paddy procurement, the chief minister said while the central government asked the state government to shift from paddy in rabi season and when it was being done so, Union minister Kishan Reddy and BJP state president Bandi Sanjay "instigated" farmers to grow paddy and promised to

Gives 24-hr deadline to Centre for paddy procurement



procure the entire quantity.

Rao alleged that his ministers and MPs were not treated properly and asked to wait for hours when they had approached

the Union Food minister Piyush Goyal to discuss the matter. "Is this behaviour appropriate? Is this the seriousness of running the central government?" he asked.

The chief minister also alleged that the Centre's policy is to corporatise the farm sector and demanded the centre to come out with a new integrated agriculture policy. He further alleged that the BJP-ruled Central government was running a government of "conspiracy" and not a government for the people. Those who speak against it are sent notices from enforcement agencies like the CBI.

Rao also questioned the BJP leaders in Hyderabad for staging a protest on a day when TRS leaders are sitting on the dharna in the national capital over the paddy procurement. Praising Tikait for the success of 13-months long protest at Delhi borders against three farm laws which forced the Prime Minister to apologise and withdraw the legislations, the CM extended support to the BKU leader for his upcoming 'mahasangram' to be launched across the country.

"Our PM is a master in seeking apology. He seeks apology whenever the election approaches. Recently, he apologized and he may do it again," he said.

Highlighting steps taken in the field of agriculture in Telangana, the CM said after his party came to power in 2014, there has been substantial growth in the state but the PM never appreciated the work undertaken in the state. Even 24x7 free power is supplied to farmers in the Telangana which is not done by other states, even in Modi's home state Gujarat, he said, before going back to his home state. Rao said he had come this time with a paddy issue and next visit would be a political one to discuss the President's elections and to expose the central policies.

Expressing solidarity with Rao at the dharna, Tikait said farmers need remunerative prices for their produce and the BKU will support those who fight for farmers. He also told Rao to form a grand alliance of Opposition to take on the current government on the farmers' issue.

Tikait also mentioned that the Centre has not yet set up a committee on MSP as promised by the PM in November last year while announcing withdrawal of three farm laws.

J'khand ropeway accident: 2 dead, 15 remain trapped mid-air as rescue ops halt



DEOGHAR (JHARKHAND), April 11 (PTI): One more person died on Monday after falling from a chopper during a rescue operation for trapped passengers following malfunction of a ropeway in Jharkhand's Deoghar district, pushing the toll to two, officials said. Around 32 people have so far been rescued while 15 people remain trapped mid-air in a row of cable cars, nearly 28 hours after the accident took place around 20 km from the famous Baba Baidyanth temple in Deoghar town.

One person had died late on Sunday and 12 people were injured.

The rescued passengers were airlifted with the help of two Indian Air Force helicopters, Deoghar deputy commissioner Manjunath Bhajantri said. The ropeway which runs through a picturesque and densely-forested valley is surrounded by hills, making the operation difficult, except by air. "Thirty-two people were rescued with the help of choppers, while 15 people are still trapped mid-air in the cable cars suspended at varying heights, the maximum being nearly 1,500 feet. The rescue operation had to be stopped after sunset and will resume tomorrow," additional director gen-

eral of police, R K Mallick, told PTI over phone from the spot. Mallick said there is heavy security deployment in the area and the rescue effort by joint teams of the Air Force, the Army, ITBP and NDRF will commence early on Tuesday. He also confirmed that one person fell from a chopper in the course of rescue and was rushed to hospital, where he died. According to Deoghar Civil Surgeon C K Sahi, he succumbed to injuries after falling from a considerable height. Local BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, however, claimed three people were killed in the accident that took place around 4 pm on Sunday. Drones were used to supply food and water to those who remain trapped mid-air in the cable cars. Eleven of the stranded tourists were rescued Sunday night.

Expressing sorrow over the incident, Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren said rescue and relief operations are being conducted on war footing. "The government is keeping a close watch on the situation," he said. Jharkhand Governor Ramesh Bais said: "The accident on the ropeway built on Trikuta mountain of Deoghar, a world-famous religious place, is very sad and painful. I express my deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and pray to Baba Baidyanth for the speedy recovery of the injured."

Health minister Banna Gupta said an enquiry will be conducted and action would be taken against those found guilty of negligence. The injured people were rescued and

hospitalised, Bhajantri said, adding, one passenger died of injuries on Sunday after the accident that saw cable cars colliding with each other, due to a fault in the ropeway system. The 766-metre Trikuta ropeway, according to the Jharkhand Tourism Department, is India's highest vertical ropeway.

Sandip, who was stuck in a trolley for 19 hours, said, "I feel Baba Baidyanth gave me a second life. I can't explain the harrowing experience in a hanging trolley overnight. It was frightening." He said the power supply of the trolley suddenly went off and it stopped midway. "When I called on the helpline number around 4 pm on Sunday, I was told that it stopped due to a technical snag, which is being rectified. I again called them around 7 pm. They said the ropeway is not working and we will be rescued on Monday." Added Devang Jaipal from West Bengal, "After offering prayers at Baba Baidyanth temple, I wanted to enjoy nature on this ropeway ride... who knew that I would be hanging in a trolley for a whole night?"

"With no food and water, we had a sleepless night on Sunday. On Monday, we were given some food and water through drones. Thanks to the administration for saving our lives," he said. Meanwhile, BJP vice-president and former Jharkhand chief minister Raghubar Das accused the state government of being inactive, even after such a major accident, and claimed that ministers hailing from the region did not visit the site.

Hate, violence weakening country: Rahul Gandhi



NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday urged all citizens to stand together to secure a just and inclusive India, saying hate and violence are weakening the country.

His remarks came a day after communal violence was reported in some states during Ram Navami processions, leaving one person dead, and clashes broke out on the JNU campus allegedly over the serving of non-vegetarian food in a hostel during the festival.

"Hate, violence and exclusion are weakening our beloved country. The path to progress is paved

with the bricks of brotherhood, peace and harmony. Let's stand together to secure a just, inclusive India," Gandhi said on Twitter.

Senior Congress leader and leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that during the BJP rule, festivals have become events of hatred and violence. On the assassination of Gandhi and now on the murder of his values, only two words are relevant - 'Hey Ram', Kharge said on Twitter.

"Once upon a time, during festivals in India, people would wish peace prosperity and abundance. Now under the BJP rule, festivals have become events of hatred and violence. On the assassination of Gandhi and now on the murder of his values, only two words are relevant - 'Hey Ram', Kharge said on Twitter.

Another Congress leader Manickam Tagore slammed the JNU incident.

"It's New India of Modi sahib... For eating in hostel mess chicken and egg students beaten up by RSS arm ABVP in JNU...Choice of food...what our children will eat now will be decided by Sanghis now...Condemn it," Tagore said in a tweet, using the hashtag "#JNUAttack".

JNU VIOLENCE

AISA-affiliated students protest near Delhi Police headquarters

NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): Scores of JNU students affiliated to the All India Students Association staged a protest near Delhi Police headquarters here on Monday and demanded the arrest of ABVP activists for their alleged role in the violence at the university.

Two groups had clashed at the Jawaharlal Nehru University's Kaveri Hostel here on Sunday allegedly over serving of non-vegetarian food in the mess on Ram Navami, with the police saying they have received 20 Medico-legal cases of students who were injured in the incident.

Members of other left-affiliated student bodies also accused the ABVP of inflicting violence and imposing their food choices on students. AISA activists at the protest site alleged that some students were detained and taken to the Tughlaq Road police station.

A senior police officer also denied allegations of any type of manhandling by the personnel during the protest.

"We have detained them because they were trying to protest near the police headquarters. They were detained before they could reach the spot and taken to Tughlaq Road police station."

"Another group of protesters who came later have also been detained and taken to Madhir Marg police station. Around 30 students have been detained so far and would be released later," the officer added. AISA president Sai Balaji said, "Our protest is going to continue. People who attacked the students are repeat offenders and so is the JNU administration."

"Protest at PHQ (police headquarters) was to ensure accountability of the Delhi Police and ensure that justice happens. There will be more protests today."

"Women protesters were manhandled and their clothes were pulled by male security personnel. Several protesters have also got injured. We have been detained inside the Tughlaq Road Police Station," AISA activist Neha said.

The Delhi Police on Monday registered an FIR against unknown ABVP students based on the complaint received from a group of students in connection with a clash in JNU.

Meanwhile, at a press conference outside the university, Anagha Pradeep, JNUSU councillor, said, "In this university, the

ABVP and the RSS orchestrated a big incident again and unleashed violence in the name of food. All the 16 hostels in JNU serve both non-vegetarian and vegetarian food."

Recalling the sequence of events on Sunday, she said when the vendor came to supply meat to Kaveri Hostel, the ABVP activists tried to attack him and heckle him.

"He was told that that he won't be spared and asked to leave the campus. They said non-vegetarian food will not be prepared here. The mess committee members, who were present there, were also attacked and heckled," she alleged.

After that, students went to the warden to ask him to ensure that Kaveri Hostel residents are provided food since sufficient amount had not been prepared owing to the diktat on non-vegetarian food.

While students were talking to the warden, ABVP activists arrived there and attacked several students, she alleged.

"Water coolers were thrown at the students. Guards and the warden were not doing anything. Phones of some of the students, who were making videos, were snatched and broken by the ABVP members."

"As soon as we stepped out of the mess, they started hurling stones. They used wipers, flower pots and whatever they could lay their hands on. Many students sustained injuries. They are spreading lies that we thrashed them. Nothing of that sort happened. We have evidences to prove their claims wrong," Pradeep said.

All this happened in front of Delhi Police and yet there have been no arrests in the matter, she said. Apeksha, another student councillor, said, it is a known fact that every Sunday, non-vegetarian food is prepared in every hostel.

Barring Kaveri Hostel, non-vegetarian food was prepared in every other hostel of JNU on Sunday, Apeksha said.

"Nobody in the hostels had any issues but the ABVP activists said they are organising a puja on the occasion of Ram Navami and won't allow meat to be served."

"Initially, the ABVP members kicked and punched the students and also hurled sexist abuses and rape threats. Two guards were also seriously injured. One of the guards was hit with a tubelight," she said.

No reason to worry until new Covid 'variant of concern' detected, says Jain

NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): The Delhi government is keeping a watchful eye over the Covid-19 situation and there is no reason to worry until a new variant of concern is detected, Health minister Satyendar Jain said on Monday. Interacting with reporters here, the minister also sought to allay apprehensions over the steady rise in daily cases in Delhi and the positivity rate remaining over one per cent during the last few days.

"The count of daily cases in Delhi is being reported in the range of 100-200. We are keeping an eye on hospital admissions, and that is going down. Focus shouldn't be on positivity rate much as of now," Jain said. Delhi reported 141 fresh Covid cases and one more death on Sunday, while the positivity rate stood at 1.29 percent, according to data shared by the city health department. The positivity report has been hovering above the one per cent mark in the last few days.

Meanwhile, doctors cautioned on Monday that while daily cases have been rising a "sense of complacency has set in among the masses" in general especially after the mask mandate was removed.

"I do not foresee any new wave as long as we remain cautious, follow all Covid-appropriate behaviours and wear masks while being outside, especially in crowded



places. But, I am seeing visuals on internet and reports that people are gathering in large numbers, and not many wearing mask, which would mean that cases could further rise," said Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, senior consultant, internal medicine, Apollo hospital here.

The doctor also said that the city government should increase the number of Covid tests. Positivity rate refers to the percentage of people who have tested positive among those overall tested.

A total of 10,939 Covid-19 tests were conducted in Delhi on Saturday, according to the Sunday bulletin. Later in a statement, the Delhi

health minister's office quoted Jain as saying: "The XE variant is yet to be classified as a variant of concern. New variants of the virus are being discovered around the world almost every other day, and many more will emerge as time passes. We have to understand that unless a variant is deemed as a 'variant of concern' by the WHO, we need not be worried about it."

"However, we still need to keep our guards up and follow the rules pertaining to the pandemic containment," he said, while adding, the Delhi government has taken all necessary precautions beforehand to tackle any rise in cases.

This year's Amarnath yatra expected to be 'much bigger' than before: Official



SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): This year's Amarnath Yatra is expected to be "much bigger" than before, with the administration here preparing to welcome about eight lakh pilgrims to the cave shrine in south Kashmir, officials said on Monday. The arrangements for the 43-day pilgrimage, to be held after a gap of two years due to the Covid pandemic, were discussed at a meeting here chaired by Union Information and Broadcast-

ing Ministry secretary Apurva Chandra.

Jammu and Kashmir chief secretary Arun Kumar, divisional commissioners of Jammu and Kashmir regions, and deputy commissioners, also took part in the meeting.

Talking to reporters here, Chandra said during the meeting, it was informed that this year's yatra scheduled to begin from June 30 is expected to be "much bigger and better than before". "Expectations are that this year's

yatra will be twice the size than ever before. They expect about six to eight lakh pilgrims to visit the cave shrine," the secretary said. He said the arrangements for the yatra will also be twice the size than previous years. "Be it drinking water, lodging, or sanitation, the whole administration is equipped to welcome a large number of pilgrims," Chandra said.

Chief executive officer (CEO) of the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board, Nitishwar Kumar, said, "We are expecting a two-fold increase in the yatra this year and similarly, we have also done two-fold preparations to make it successful." Chandra, who convened the meeting for the yatra's publicity, said arrangements will be done for the security of pilgrims. "The nation's security agencies are on it. The security in Kashmir is good as can be seen by the huge number of tourist arrivals," Chandra said.

The registration for the annual pilgrimage to the cave shrine of Amarnath commenced across the country on Monday. It could not be held in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. In 2019, the yatra was cut short days before

August 5, when the Centre abrogated Article 370.

During the meeting, Chandra said activities related to the pilgrimage will be projected throughout the country and focus will also be on showcasing tourism in the region.

"There is a need to highlight the various achievements of the Centre and the Jammu and Kashmir administration with respect to developmental work done in the Union Territory. We need to amplify such positive stories about the region throughout the country. Six to eight lakh pilgrims are expected to cover the yatra this year," he said.

Chief secretary Kumar said that this year's yatra will record the highest numbers because of better facilities. "The Amarnath Yatra is a prime example of composite culture and fraternity which has been preserved since ages by the cordial working of locals with pilgrims," he said, adding that the administration has taken every measure to provide better facilities and roadside amenities to make the journey convenient.

Wonder if minor died after being slapped, Mamata on Hanskhali 'gang-rape'

KOLKATA, April 11 (PTI): West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday expressed doubt about the cause of a minor girl's death which her family attributed to gang rape, and wondered if the class 9 student of Hanskhali in Nadia district died after a fall after being slapped by someone.

Asserting that the victim had an affair with the accused, a Trinamool Congress leader's son who was arrested, Banerjee wondered if she was pregnant.

The chief minister also asked why the girl's family members lodged a police complaint five days after her death and cremating the body.

Opposition parties described Banerjee's statement as "shocking" and alleged that she seeks to shield the accused as he is the son of a leader of her party.

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar sought an urgent report from the state chief secretary on the alleged gang rape and death of the minor girl.

The girl died after she was allegedly gang-raped at a birthday party at the house of the accused on April 5. She was bleeding profusely when she returned home and died later that night, according to her parents who lodged a police complaint on April 10.

"The police are yet to understand the cause of the death. I had asked them. Will you call it rape or was she pregnant? Was it (the fall-off) a love affair? Have you enquired about these? This is an unfortunate incident," Banerjee said while inaugurating the Biswa Banga Mela Prangan here.

She said that her family members and local people knew about the affair between the girl and the



accused.

"You (girl's family) also conducted the last rites of the body. I am talking as a layman. From where will they (police) get the evidence whether she was raped or she was pregnant or there was any other reason such as she was slapped by someone after which she fell ill," Banerjee said.

A detailed investigation is being carried out, she said adding that she will ask the state commission for protection of child rights to take up the case.

"I do not have any word to sympathise with the family," Banerjee said.

Those who are in relationships should be cautious so that people in the guise of being friends cannot harm them, she added.

The girl died on April 5 and the police got the information on April 10, the TMC supremo said and asked about the cause of the delay.

Banerjee also alleged that a section of the media is trying to tarnish the image of West Bengal but she would lay down her life to protect her "motherland".

She questioned why the Press Club Kolkata, as well as the Press Council of India, are silent when

seven journalists were stripped to their underwear in Madhya Pradesh for allegedly writing reports against the BJP government.

The Opposition BJP panned Banerjee for her comment and wondered whether her remarks were aimed at influencing the probe.

"Shocking statement by Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, who trivialises the brutal rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl in Nadia's Hanskhali. She questions the victim and asks if it was a love affair or a case of unplanned pregnancy gone awry! Because the accused is TMC leader's son," senior BJP leader and the party's co-in charge of West Bengal, Amit Malviya, tweeted.

Echoing him, the leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari said such kind of comments only prove how Banerjee is trying to influence the probe and shield the culprits.

"When any such incident occurs in BJP-ruled states, she is the first to protest against it. But when similar incidents take place in West Bengal, she tries to shield the culprits. It is shameful that despite being a woman chief minister, she is making such comments. This is

the real picture of the lawless situation of Bengal," he said.

The CPI(M) and the Congress also slammed Banerjee for her comments.

Leader of the Congress party in Lok Sabha and state Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury claimed that several such incidents happening in West Bengal go unreported.

"We don't get to know about them. Now we have come to know about this incident. What has happened is horrific. The ruling party is trying to influence the probe," he said.

Senior CPI(M) leader Sujana Chakraborty alleged that the incident proves there is lawlessness in Bengal.

The ruling TMC condemned the incident but said it should not be politicised.

"The police are investigating the matter and have also made an arrest. Let the investigation be over. The opposition should not try to politicise the matter," TMC spokesperson and state general secretary Kunal Ghosh said.

The girl's mother had on Sunday told reporters that from the sequence of events and after talking to the people present at the party, "we are sure she was gang-raped by the accused and his friends."

She also alleged that a group of people forcibly took the minor's body for cremation even before her death certificate was issued.

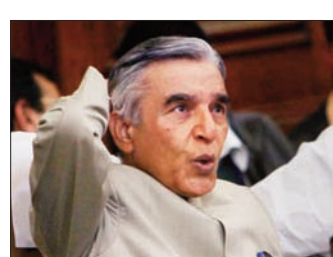
Meanwhile, a petition was filed before the Calcutta High Court on Monday seeking a CBI probe into the alleged rape and resultant death of the minor girl.

The petitioner's lawyer said the matter is likely to be mentioned before the court on Tuesday.

National Herald: ED examines Congress leader Kharge, summons Pawan Bansal

NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): The ED on Monday questioned senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge here in connection with a fresh money laundering case to probe alleged financial irregularities in the party-promoted Young Indian that owns National Herald newspaper, officials said.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has also summoned former Union minister Pawan Kumar Bansal, who is Associated Journals Limited's managing director and interim treasurer of the Congress



party, to appear before it on Tuesday in connection with the case.

The agency is expected to summon other promoters of Young Indian soon. The first family of the

Congress party, including party president Sonia Gandhi and her MP-son Rahul Gandhi, are among the promoters and shareholders of Young Indian.

The National Herald is published by Associated Journals Limited (AJL) and owned by Young Indian Pvt Limited.

Seventy-nine-year-old Kharge, the leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, is currently the CEO of Young Indian and hence summoned to join the investigation, they said.

Contd. from Page 1...

Laws should be made after

action on education, health, infrastructure and other areas are remarkable steps in this direction. Discussing the country's democratic setup, he said Indian democracy is vibrant and strong, and a guiding force to other democratic countries.

Speaking at the same conference, acting chairperson of CPA, Ian Liddell-Grainger, MP (UK) enumerated several path-breaking initiatives of the association and hoped that the deliberations at the conference will help the entire commonwealth to respond to the challenges being faced by them in a more effective manner.

Speakers from various legislative assemblies, Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh and other dignitaries also attended the conference.

Democratic values integral part of

fundamental issues affecting people's lives as well as fulfilling their dreams and aspirations," he said.

Dr. Sarma said that to make democracy a guiding force in the polity, the ancient Indians coined the terms Sabha and Samiti, which represented two democratic institutions of the bygone era.

"Both these institutions were mentioned in Rig Veda and Atharva Veda. In these institutions, decisions were made after the discussion with the king, ministers and scholars at that time," he said.

Dr. Sarma said that democratic tradition was evident in Assam in the days of Ahom rule also.

"Though the king, who was called Swargadeo, was the head of the state, all decisions were taken by him only in consultation with the ministers, which initially consisted of Buragohain, Borgohain and Borpatra Gohain," he said. He further underlined the rich heritage and democratic practices of Assam Legislative Assembly and said that over the years the state Assembly "unceasingly raised the voice of the voiceless, stood with the weakest among the weak, debated all important issues with zeal and zest and steered the state through thick and thin".

Shehbaz Sharif sworn-in as new

"unanimous" verdict, saying the day when the Supreme Court gave its judgment should be marked as a "historic day" in the history of Pakistan. On the letter controversy, Shehbaz said the letter came on March 7, but decisions to bring a no-trust motion was made way before that.

"So, if (what the previous government claimed) is a lie, then the matter should be disclosed transparently before the public," he said. He announced that the parliament's security committee would be given a briefing on the "threat letter" to the members of the committee in presence of the armed forces personnel and bureaucrats — the Inter-Services Intelligence chief, foreign secretary, and the ambassador who wrote it.

"If there's an iota of evidence that we were backed by foreign conspirators ... then with you Mr speaker and God as my witness, I will not think for another second and resign from the office of the prime minister," Shehbaz said, vowing to hold an in-camera session of the security committee at the earliest.

He also lauded China for its support to Pakistan at the world stage and said the friendship between the two countries will remain intact. He also thanked his brother and ex-premier Nawaz Sharif for his support.

The oath-taking ceremony will be held in the President House where President Arif Alvi would administer the oath of office to him later Monday.

Earlier, Qureshi in his address announced to boycott the process along with party lawmakers by announcing their mass resignation from the parliament. His decision was not sudden as the party had already announced it would leave the parliament and boycott the election to elect the new prime minister of the country.

The younger Sharif is known as an able administrator who served for years as chief minister of Punjab, the largest province of the country and greatly transformed the road infrastructure of the province.

The successful completion of the process to carry through the no-confidence motion and elect the new leader of the house has for the time being ended the political instability. But the resignation by PTI and its decision to launch protest rallies has seeds of a fresh round of chaos.

The new Prime Minister would have to face not only the unruly PTI taking to the streets but a brittle economy that needs a very careful handling. There are a lot of expectations of the masses from the new leadership to control inflation, which is a tough task. Shehbaz's PML-N has only 86 seats and the rest of numerical support has come from the coalition partners who apparently has nothing in common except their rivalry for Khan, and it will be a big challenge for him to keep them calm and satisfied.

On the security front, there has been a revival of terrorist attacks in the country and the new Prime Minister would have to take quick measures to nip this evil in the bud.

Foreign policy challenges are also no less daunting, especially after the allegations of former Prime Minister Khan against the US in the context of "conspiracy" to remove him. Similarly, Pakistan's ties with India will also be a crucial test for the new leader of the country.

But Shehbaz's strength flows from various political parties - the former combined opposition - that are behind him. His historical good ties with the establishment would also be an asset to deal with the multiple challenges.

Arms-ammun found in Kokrajhar

"Based on information extracted from these ex-militants, the operations were conducted, leading to the recovery of the weapons," he added. The senior police official said these cadres were members of breakaway factions of the National Democratic Front of Boroland (Songbijit faction).

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma congratulated the police on the successful recovery of the weapons.

"Huge catch by @assampolice In a major operation, @KokrajharPolice has recovered one M16, one Sniper Rifle, one Shirley Rifle, four AK47 and 130 rounds of ammunition from Ultapani forest area in Kokrajhar. Well done! Keep it up!" Sarma Tweeted. (With inputs from PTI)

Waterways to boost connectivity

Conclave that seeks to deliberate on collaborative opportunities between India and its neighbouring nations in the waterways sector. A technical session on regional connectivity through waterways was held on the opening day of the event. Countries like Netherlands, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh are participating in the meeting. The Conclave is also taking forward the vision of "Vocal for Local" by giving a platform to local companies to highlight Assam's handicrafts and tea in the exhibition.

Ram Navami violence

Pradesh's Khargone city, where more than 80 people have been arrested, officials said on Monday.

One person was also killed in clashes at Khambhat in Gujarat's Anand district on Sunday and authorities in different states said the situation in the violence-affected areas was under control, while in Madhya Pradesh, the administration launched a demolition drive against "illegal" structures of miscreants who pelted stones at a Ram Navami procession in Khargone.

Khargone's superintendent of police Siddharth Choudhary received bullet injury and at least 24 others, including six policemen, were also injured in the arson on Sunday during the festival which marks the birthday of Lord Ram, the officials said.

In Gujarat, police arrested nine people for violence and stone pelting during a Ram Navami procession at Khambhat, while CrP Section 144 was imposed in Himmatnagar town of Sabarkantha district, banning gathering of people, following a similar incident there. A stone-pelting incident was also reported during a Ram Navami procession in Sendhwa town of MP's Barwani district where a police station in-charge and five others were injured. The situation was later brought under control, according to officials.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) alleged minority community leaders and Left liberals are to be blamed for "attacks" across the country on people celebrating Ram Navami and cautioned them against leading their followers on the path of violence. In a video message, VHP joint general secretary Surendra Jain termed the violence in MP, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi as "unfortunate" and said it is everybody's responsibility to ensure such incidents do not happen.

In Jharkhand's Lohardaga, one person died and 12 people suffered injuries following clashes between members of two communities near Hirhi village on Sunday evening after a group of miscreants pelted a Ram Navami procession with stones, district officials said.

Internet services have been suspended in Lohardaga town and prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrP imposed in the entire district, Sub-divisional Officer Arbind Kumar Lal said.

Ten motorbikes and a pick-up van were set on fire during the violence, the officials said.

We produce managers with ethical

human values, wherein sustainability is our core focus," Professor Goyal added. He also mentioned how teachers are only facilitators who would create and provide an environment suitable for effective learning, but the students have to be self-motivated. He also spoke about the unpredictability of the market, and how the pandemic had taught everyone the same. He asked the participants to make themselves ready for any such kind of situation.

Andhra Pradesh Cabinet reconstituted, 25 ministers sworn-in



AMARAVATI, April 11 (PTI): Apparently giving in to pressure from seniors in the party and relying heavily on caste calculations, Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday reconstituted the state Cabinet, re-inducting 11 from his first team and taking in 13 freshers, besides a veteran.

Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan administered the oath of office and secrecy to 25 members of the Cabinet at a public function near the state Secretariat in capital city Amaravati.

On expected lines, nobody from the Legislative Council was taken into the Cabinet.

The fresh council of ministers has been constituted solely on caste and community lines, with the lion's share of 10 berths going to backward classes.

Two, including the chief minister, are from the minority communities, five from the Scheduled Castes and

one from the Scheduled Tribes.

Four each from the Reddy and the Kapu communities have also been inducted.

The Cabinet has four women members, one up from the previous.

Kamma, Kshatriya and Vyasa communities that had one representative each in the previous Cabinet were now completely left out. Brahmin community was denied a Cabinet berth yet again.

Of the total 26 districts in the state, at least seven did not find any representation in the new Cabinet.

The ruling YSR Congress described it as the "Social Cabinet", with 70 per cent representation to the BC, SC, ST and minority communities.

When he formed his first Cabinet in June 2019, the Chief Minister had announced that he would undertake a revamp after two and a half years (December 2021) and bring in 90 per cent new faces, retaining only ten per cent (3 mem-

bers).

By that count, only two ministers, apart from the Chief Minister, were to be retained but Jagan Mohan Reddy has apparently clearly buckled under pressure and brought back 11 from the previous Cabinet, who were made to resign on April 7.

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

Veteran legislator Dharmana Prasada Rao has also been taken into the Cabinet, making him the senior-most minister.

Seniors like Botsa Satyanarayana, P R C Reddy, P Viswanath, G Suresh and Buggana Rajendranath also secured a fresh berth.

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

Film star R K Roja, serving her second term as an MLA, finally made it to the Cabinet.

Another senior leader Ambati Rambabu, who missed the bus in 2019, also managed to get a berth this time.

Gudivada Amarnath, P Rajanna Dora, B Mutyalu Naidu, Dadiseti Ramalingeswara Rao, K V Nageswara Rao, K Satyanarayana, J Ramesh, V Rajini, M Nagarajuna, K Govardhan Reddy and Usha Sricharan were the others who became new ministers.



tion in air quality to emerging industries and residential sources like road traffic, waste burning, and widespread use of charcoal and fuelwood.

"Open burning of biomass for land clearance and agricultural waste disposal has in the past overwhelmingly dominated air pollution in the tropics," said study lead author Kam Vohra from University College London (UCL) in the UK.

"Our analysis suggests we are entering a new era of air pollution in these cities, with some experiencing rates of degradation in a year that other cities experience in a decade," said Vohra, who completed the study as a Ph.D. student

at the University of Birmingham, UK.

The researchers also found 1.5 to four-fold increases in urban population exposure to air pollution in 40 of the 46 cities for NO₂ and 33 of the 46 cities for PM_{2.5}, caused by a combination of population growth and rapid deterioration in air quality.

The study found that the increase in the number of people dying prematurely from exposure to air pollution was highest in cities in South Asia.

Dhaka, Bangladesh, saw a total of 24,000 excess premature deaths, while the Indian cities of Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Hyderabad,

Chennai, Surat, Pune and Ahmedabad had 100,000 excess deaths.

The researchers noted that India has an extensive network of monitors operated and maintained by local and national authorities as well as research institutions.

However, the use of these for informing policies is hindered by data quality issues for the national network and restricted access to data collected by research institutions and state governments, they said. The number of deaths in tropical cities in Africa are currently lower due to recent improvements in healthcare across the continent resulting in a decline in overall premature mortality, the researchers said.

However, the worst effects of air pollution on health will likely occur in the coming decades, they said.

"We continue to shift air pollution from one region to the next, rather than learning from errors of the past and ensuring rapid industrialisation and economic development don't harm public health," said study co-author Eloise Marais from UCL.

"We hope our results will incentivise preventative action in the tropics," Marais added.

NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): Exposure to air pollution has been linked to 100,000 excess premature deaths in the Indian cities of Mumbai, Bangalore, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, Surat, Pune and Ahmedabad between 2005 and 2018, according to a study.

The international team of scientists aimed to address data gaps in air quality for 46 cities in Africa, Asia and the Middle East using space-based observations from instruments onboard NASA and European Space Agency (ESA) satellites for 2005 to 2018.

The study, published last week in the journal Science Advances, shows rapid degradation in air quality and increases in urban exposure to air pollutants which are hazardous to health.

The researchers found significant annual increases in pollutants directly hazardous to health of up to 14 per cent for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and up to 8 per cent for fine particles (PM_{2.5}).

They also found increase in the level of up to 12 per cent for ammonia and up to 11 per cent for reactive volatile organic compounds.

The team, including researchers from the Harvard University in the US, attributed this rapid degrada-

JR NTR COMPLETES 25 YEARS IN TELUGU FILM INDUSTRY

HYDERABAD, April 11 (IANS): 'RRR' actor Jr NTR, who shone as Komaram Bheem, has completed 25 years in the Telugu film industry.

April 11 marks the 25th anniversary of Jr NTR's first movie 'Ramayanam', better known as 'Bala Ramayanam'.

Jr NTR had made his debut as a child actor with 'Bala Ramayanam', which was released on this date in 1997. NTR, who was a classical dancer, had grabbed the attention of the casting team, who had him on board to essay the role of Rama.

'Shakuntalam' director Gunasekhar wielded the megaphone for this mythological drama which showcased Jr NTR as Lord Rama.

The film had bagged two Nandi Awards - Best Children Film (Gold) and Best Child Actress (Swathi as Ravana) in 1998. Featuring more than 3,000 children, 'Bala Ramayanam' was produced under Shabdhalaya Theaters.

With an illustrious career of 25 years, Jr NTR has worked in over 30 films, some of which are blockbuster hits. His career is replete with massive hits

such as 'Aadi', 'Simhadri', 'Temper', 'Janatha Garage' and 'Aravinda Sametha Veera Raghava'.

'RRR', which marks S.S. Rajamouli's fourth collaboration with Jr NTR, is the actor's first pan-India movie. Known for his multi-linguistic approach, Jr NTR will be next seen in 'NTR30' directed by Koratala Siva. He will also be starring in Prashanth Neel's upcoming directorial.



Rajamouli: Films based on human emotions can cross geographical boundaries

HYDERABAD, April 11 (IANS): Released a couple of weeks ago, 'RRR' is continuing its dream run as the movie surpassed the Rs 1,000 crore mark at the worldwide box office.

An overwhelmed S.S. Rajamouli is responding to reports of the movie's success with humility.

The 'Yamadonga' director, said, "I'm grateful, humbled, and overwhelmed that I have not just one, but two such films ('Baahubali' and 'RRR') that received the kind of reception they did and entered the Rs 1,000 crore club."

Within 16 days of its worldwide release, 'RRR' has reached the Rs 1,000 crore club, and also becomes the third highest-grossing Indian film of all time.

With this, Rajamouli ascends to the top position among the Indian directors, with three of his titles ('Baahubali', 'Baahubali 2', and 'RRR') in the

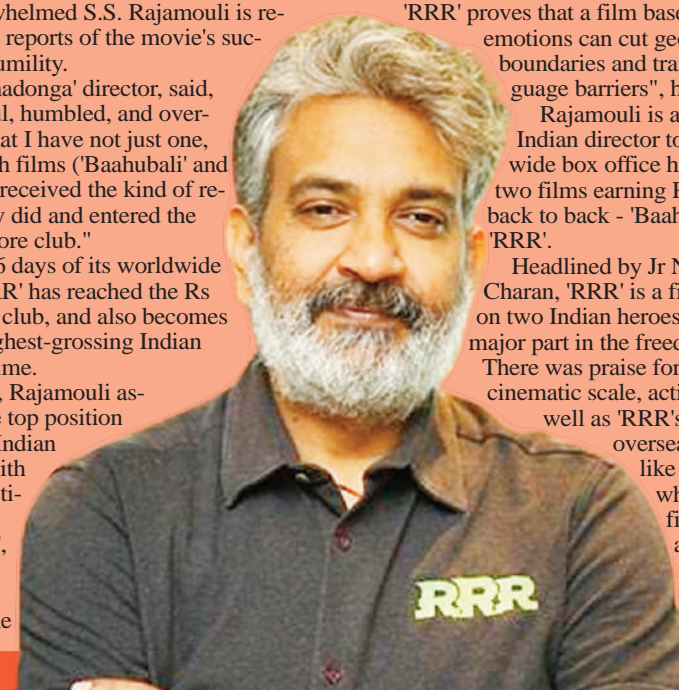
top 10 list of Indian films worldwide.

"The biggest desire of every storyteller is to have as many people listen to his story as possible", Rajamouli explained.

"The success of both 'Baahubali 2' and 'RRR' proves that a film based on human emotions can cut geographical boundaries and transcend language barriers", he said.

Rajamouli is also the only Indian director to make worldwide box office history with two films earning Rs 1,000 crore back to back - 'Baahubali 2' and 'RRR'.

Headlined by Jr NTR and Ram Charan, 'RRR' is a fictional take on two Indian heroes, who had a major part in the freedom struggle. There was praise for the film's cinematic scale, action, drama, as well as 'RRR's' popularity in overseas markets, like the UK where Indian films traditionally don't do well.



Yash apology at 'KGF: Chapter 2' press event wins respect

HYDERABAD, April 11 (IANS): With south India's next biggie 'KGF: Chapter 2' marching towards its April 14 release, the makers and star are literally racing against the clock to publicise the magnum opus. Arriving late for a media interaction, Yash, who plays Rocky Bhaay in the movie, had to face the ire of a journalist at the event on Monday.

Yash did not hesitate to apologise, and convinced the journalist that he had not been aware of the timings, was simply following the team's

schedule. "I know the value of time. So, please accept my sorry, as I was not aware of the exact timings you people were called here for an interactive session", Yash said. Elaborating further, Yash explained that they have been travelling by private jet, which requires permission with respect to the weather conditions, thus causing a mix-up in their schedules. Yash's humility in this particular situation has drawn much positivity for him among the folks. Earlier during

the promotions of Sukumar's directorial 'Pushpa', Allu Arjun faced the same situation, as he was juggling between cities for the movie's publicity. Allu Arjun had quoted a similar reason, when a journalist posed a question on his punctuality in Bengaluru. 'KGF: Chapter 2' is gearing up for its worldwide release on April 14. Helmed by Prashanth Neel, the 'KGF' franchise is one of the most-hyped productions of the Kannada film industry.



Reyhna Pandit: 'Lock Upp' is a wake-up call for many reality shows

MUMBAI, April 11 (IANS): 'Ishqbaaz' actress Reyhna Pandit is enjoying watching her boyfriend and TV personality Zeeshan Khan in the reality show 'Lock Upp'. She says: "'Lock Upp' game is very good. It is successful and keeps the audience engaged every second. Until now I feel it's the most genuine reality show. Not like other shows where you wonder why the contestant is being dragged even though they have nothing to offer. It's a wake-up call for many reality shows."

The actress known for featuring in shows like 'Jamai Raja', 'Ishqbaaz', 'Manmohini' among others is supporting her love.

She adds: "I enjoy watching Zeeshan, not only because he's close to me but also being liked by the audience. He is super entertaining, straight forward and clear. I just hope he comes out as a winner. In fact reading about the feedback for his game on social media by his fans and audience is making me feel proud of him."



RANBIR-ALIA WEDDING

Decorations arrive at Ranbir's Bandra residence

MUMBAI, April 11 (IANS): Ahead of Bollywood couple Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor's rumoured wedding, decorations were seen arriving at Ranbir's Vastu residence complex in Bandra with pastel carpets, and rustic wooden tables.

The festivities are reported to kick off from April 13.

As per reports, Ranbir and Alia will have an intimate

house wedding and that Ranbir's place of residence, RK Studios and Krishna Raj Bungalow will host their guests for the celebrations, which are speculated to go on for a week. It is also reported that the star couple has zeroed down on pastel shades for their wedding outfits. However, Ranbir and Alia, who are currently busy with their professional commitments, are yet to make an

official announcement with regards to their wedding.

The two will be seen sharing space in Ayan Mukerji's upcoming superhero fantasy adventure epic 'Brahmastra', which 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.

Akansha Singh: Fascinating to see Ajay Devgn direct and act at the same time

MUMBAI, April 11 (IANS): Actress Akansha Singh who is playing a pivotal role in the upcoming film 'Runway 34', directed by and starring Ajay Devgn along with the legendary Amitabh Bachchan, says it was quite fascinating for her to see how the actor-filmmaker was multitasking on the set.

Akansha is playing the wife of Captain Vikrant Khanna played by Ajay.

Asked about sharing screen space with Ajay, Akansha told IANS: "It was quite fascinating for me to watch how Ajay sir was directing and acting in the same scene. Of course, it was not easy, especially in some of those action sequences. But Ajay sir is a master in it I



guess because he was handling multitasking with so much ease."

During the shooting of the film, the actress had a leg injury and had to shoot

some of the sequences with her plaster on.

Sharing how cooperative the whole cast and crew were, Akansha said, "throughout that time, I was in a wheelchair but Ajay sir and all our crew members were so supportive. In one of the plane sequences, when I was almost immobile, they picked me up and put me in the place and stood by me throughout, including Ajay sir. It is my first big project in Bollywood and this is such a special memory."

Starting her career in theatre, making her screen debut with the TV serial 'Na Bole Tum Na Maine Kuch Kaha', Akansha always had a wish to work with

Amitabh Bachchan.

"I remember meeting him for the first time on the set of the film. Though I did not have a dialogue with him, I told him how happy I am just sharing screen space with him. He smiled and asked me what happened to my legs, and how I am commuting on the set to the hotel. "When he got to know I am using a walker, the next day he got me a buggy and said, 'Use this, it is better and more comforting.' Such gesture says a lot about the kind-hearted man he is," shared Akansha.

'Runway 34', also featuring - Boman Irani, Rakul Preet Singh, Angira Dhar - releases in theatres on April 29.



Title race wide open as Man City, Liverpool share 4 goals in Premier League

LONDON, April 11 (IANS): Manchester City and Liverpool drew 2-2 in the game of the week in the Premier League to see City keep their one-point lead over their rivals for this season's title.

A thrilling game saw Pep Guardiola's City open the scoring thanks to Kevin de Bruyne's deflected shot in the fifth minute, although Liverpool needed just eight minutes to replay with Diogo Jota's finish after good work from Trent Alexander Arnold and Andy Robertson on Sunday night.

Gabriel Jesus then ghosted in at the far post nine minutes before the break to put City back in front

in a thrilling first half, Xinhua reports. The excitement continued after the break with Sadio Mane equalising almost directly from the kick-off and despite chances at both ends and Raheem Sterling seeing a goal ruled out for offside, it ended 2-2 to leave the title race still wide open. Chelsea recovered from painful home defeats against Brentford and Real Madrid with a 6-0 win away to Southampton on Saturday afternoon.

Thomas Tuchel's men, looking like a team with something to prove, were 3-0 up by the 21st minute with goals from Marcos Alonso, Mason Mount and Timo



Werner. Kai Havertz added a fourth just after the half-hour and Werner and Mount doubled their tally in the 49th and 54th minutes before Chelsea eased up to save their legs for next Tuesday's Champions League quarterfinal in Madrid.

Tottenham strengthened their claim for a top-four finish thanks to Heung Min Son's hat-trick and some excellent first-half saves from Hugo Lloris that saw them win 4-0 away to Aston Villa.

Dejan Kulusevski also scored for Spurs, for whom Harry Kane was excellent despite not scoring. Arsenal remain fifth, but lose

ground after a shock 2-1 defeat at home to Brighton, who took a two-goal lead thanks to Leandro Trossard on 28 minutes and Enock Mwepu, before Martin Odegaard's late consolation for Arsenal.

Anthony Gordon's deflected first-half strike gave Everton three vital points in their battle against relegation against a hapless Manchester United, who are in real danger of not playing in Europe next season.

Everton's win gained extra importance 24 hours later as the bottom of the table Norwich beat Burnley 2-0 at Carrow Road, with

goals from Pierre Lees-Melou after nine minutes and Teemu Puuki in the 86th minute denying Burnley the chance to remain within a point of Everton.

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 an eighth successive home league defeat while lifting Leeds nine-points clear of the bottom three.

Brentford punished West Ham's tired legs after Thursday's European game against Olympique Lyon as they won their London derby 2-0.

MotoGP 2022

Marquez steals the show in Austin with a scintillating recovery



TEXAS, April 11 (IANS): An Americas GP masterclass was put on by Marc Marquez as he carved through the field, overcoming a problem at the start to show what he and the Honda RC213V are capable of. Pol Espargaro dug deep to conquer illness and net more points.

The King of COTA may not have walked away with another crown, but a heroic recovery after problems on the start line showed that Marc Marquez has lost none of his speed or talent - especially in Texas.

A technical problem at the start, which Honda HRC are investigating, saw Marquez drop back from ninth on the grid. Arriving last into Turn One, the seven-time Americas GP winner put the start behind and began his comeback through the field with unrelenting efficiency. By the end of the first lap, the #93 had already made up six places and would continue with the lap times of the race leaders.

As the race entered its second half, Marquez continued to increase his pace, improving on the fastest lap of the race on multiple occasions as he reeled in the likes of Quartararo, Martin and Bagina. Firmly inside the top ten, the Repsol Honda Team rider spent the closing laps fending off a ferocious Fabio Quartararo who launched a late counterattack.

Welcomed back to the garage with a round of applause by the team, Marquez's champion spirit shone through as he was left wanting more from a race that promised so much. Sixth place moves Marquez to 13th in the championship points table, 40 points behind World Championship leader and Americas GP race winner Enea Bastianini. Although sixth left him unfulfilled, Marquez leaves America with renewed and refreshed confidence upon his return from injury.

On the other side of the Repsol Honda Team garage, Pol Espargaro's incredible physical effort was rewarded with a handful of points for 13th place.

Battling against illness throughout the weekend, Espargaro used all of his remaining energy and effort to finish the race. A promising start had the #44 well placed in the top ten after another lightning launch aboard the RC213V. Doing all he could to maintain his position, Espargaro put together an overall consistent race to collect valuable points before the paddock returns to Europe. With 23 points, Espargaro is 11th in the championship.

The MotoGP World Championship is now preparing for its return to Europe, the Portimao circuit in Portugal starting the calendar's European tour.

Babar, Rachael emerge ICC players of the month for March

DUBAI, April 11 (IANS): Pakistan's all-format skipper Babar Azam, and Australia's run-machine Rachael Haynes have been named the ICC Men's and Women's Players of the Month for March by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday.

Azam had several thrilling batting displays in Pakistan's multi-format series against Australia recently. He amassed 390 runs in the three-Test series, which the hosts lost 0-1.

But Azam's superb contribution was highlighted by his record-breaking innings of 196 in the second Test, which salvaged a draw for his side on the final day in Karachi.

His exploits during the subsequent three-match ODI series in March also cemented his claim as the standout player in international cricket during the month. His scores of 57 and 114 -- the latter helping his side chase down an imposing 349 set by Australia -- saw Pakistan clinch the ODI series 2-1.

Azam received the award ahead of West Indies' Kraigg Brathwaite and Australia Test skipper Pat Cummins, and in doing so, became the first player to win the ICC Men's 'Player of the Month' award on two occasions, after being crowned back in April 2021.



Rachael Haynes had a formidable set of displays on the road to Australia's seventh ICC Women's Cricket World Cup trophy. She scored 429 runs in eight games at an average of 61.28, her feats at the top of the order proving crucial to her side's unbeaten run to the final, where they thrashed England to lift the trophy at Christchurch in New Zealand.

Her 130 against England in the opening game set the tone for a dominant unbeaten run to the final, while her other standout performance came in the form of a classy 85 during the semifinal win against the West Indies.

She overcame fellow nominees Sophie Ecclestone (England) and Laura Wolvaardt (South Africa) for the award.

The proteas stand firm at 2nd position in ICC Men's World Test C'ship table

SOUTH AFRICA SWEEP SERIES WITH A 332-RUN WIN OVER BANGLADESH

GQEBERHA (S.AFRICA), April 11 (IANS): Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj hit Bangladesh hard with his second seven-wicket haul of the series as South Africa clinched a crushing 332-run win over Bangladesh in the second and final Test at St George's Park on Monday to seal the series 2-0. Maharaj's 7/40 was supported by off-spinner Simon Harmer taking 3/34.

Bangladesh's resistance lasted just around an hour on day four as Maharaj and Harmer ran through the batting line-up, bowling out the visitors for just 80 in 23.3 overs. The series win means South Africa harden their grip on the second position in the ICC Men's World Test Championship table, with a points percentage of 71.42 while Bangladesh are second from the bottom with 16.66 percentage of points.

The start of day four wasn't the best for South Africa as opener Sarel Erwee and all-rounder Wiaan Mulder tested positive for Covid-19 and were replaced by debutant Khaya Zondo and Glenton Sturman. Resuming from 27/3,

Bangladesh lost their veteran batters, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mominul Haque, in consecutive Maharaj overs.

Rahim survived a few close shaves against Harmer but against Maharaj, he went for an adventurous cover drive and edged to captain Dean Elgar at slip. It was then Mominul Haque's turn to fall to Maharaj, sweeping straight to square leg.

Yasir Ali didn't look to hang around and went for a big slog-sweep but holed out to deep mid-wicket for a duck off Harmer. Liton Das and Mehidy Hasan Miraz stitched a 25-run stand. But Das came out of the crease off Maharaj and was stumped by Kyle Verreynne.

From there onwards, the result was a foregone conclusion as Maharaj took Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Khaled Ahmed in quick succession. With his second seven-wicket haul of the series, Maharaj became the first player in Test history to complete two seven-fors in the fourth innings of back-to-back Test matches.

Harmer finished off the game by trapping Taijul Islam for a duck, ending Bangladesh's mis-



ery. Maharaj was the unanimous choice for the Player of the Match award and also took home the Player of the Series

crown for an overall tally of 16 wickets in the series.

Brief scores: South Africa 453 and 176 for 6 dec beat

Bangladesh 217 and 80 all out in 23.3 overs (Liton Das 27, Keshav Maharaj 7/40, Simon Harmer 3/34) by 332 runs

Goa not ready to host National Games yet: Sports Minister

PANAJI, April 11 (IANS): Contrary to claims made by his predecessor, Goa's new Sports Minister Govind Gaude on Monday said that the coastal state was not ready to host the National Games yet.

"I don't think we are ready for the National Games. There are several things (which need to be done) including infrastructure. We have to prepare," Gaude, who was appointed Sports Minister last week, told reporters.

"I am making a statement as a people's representative. I am not trying to cheat anyone. My department is open and transparent," he also said.

Gaude's claims as Sports Minister are contrary to those made by his predecessor, Deputy Chief Minister Manohar Ajaonkar, who

had repeatedly claimed that the state government was in readiness to host the National Games and was only waiting for a nod from the Indian Olympic Association.

The Goa government has already spent nearly Rs 450 crore on raising infrastructure for the proposed National Games.

Delay in completing the requisite infrastructure in Goa, has been one of the reasons behind the delay in hosting the Games, the last edition of which was held in Jharkhand in 2011.

The Games were originally scheduled to be held in Goa in November 2016. After repeated delays, the Games were later scheduled to begin in October 2021, but were postponed yet again due to the emergence of the pandemic.



Gritty India to take on England in Bronze medal match

POTCHEFSTROOM (SOUTH AFRICA), April 11 (IANS): After losing the semifinal to the Netherlands 0-3, the Indian are now focused on their all-important bronze medal match against England on Tuesday in the FIH Hockey Women's Junior World Cup.

The Salima Tete-led Indian team rued missed chances against the Netherlands in the semifinals. Tete said that the team has had a fruitful discussion post their semifinal debacle and are now focused on the task at hand.

"There is no point thinking about what's happened in the past. Now we need to be absolutely focused on the upcoming match against England. Getting off to a good start against them will definitely give us the right momentum and that is what we will be looking for against them," Tete said.

"We are quite disappointed from our match against Netherlands. We created so many



chances but could not convert. It just felt like it wasn't our day," she said. England, meanwhile, come into the bronze medal match after a 0-8 loss to Germany in the semifinal on Sunday. They were the table toppers from pool B, having beaten South Africa and Ireland convincingly.

In the quarterfinal they got the better of USA 2-1 in a thrilling encounter where England recovered from an early setback, hav-

ing conceded a goal in the 3rd minute.

"England is a good side and we watched videos from their previous matches. I just feel it is important for us to be focused on our game and ensure we score from the chances we create and be tight in our defending. It's important we don't allow space for them and we must play to our strengths," stated vice-captain Ishika Chaudhary.

India want to end home leg of Pro League on a winning note: Coach Reid

BHUBANESWAR, April 11 (IANS): Defender Amit Rohidas will continue to lead while Harmanpreet Singh will be his deputy in India's FIH Men's Hockey Pro League double-header against Germany on April 14 and 15 at the Kalinga Stadium here.

India's chief coach Graham Reid said on Monday while announcing the 22-member squad for the double-header that the hosts would like to finish the last leg of the home games for this year on a winning note in order to carry forward the momentum into the away matches.

"This year's FIH Pro League has provided us with great opportunities to try different combinations and tactics. We have recognised what works and, more importantly, what areas we need to improve on. This

week against Germany is the last leg of our home games for this year and we are looking forward to two more world-class encounters once again.

"Germany are always an extremely tough opponent and given where we both are on the ladder it will be important for us to finish this week with as many points as possible to remain at the top of the points table," opined Reid.

The 22-member squad includes goalkeepers PR Sreejesh, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, and defenders Varun Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Surender Kumar, Jugraj Singh, Harmanpreet Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, and Gurinder Singh.

The hosts have thus far played 10 Pro League matches this season and are placed on top of the table with 21 points,



while Germany are in second place with 17 points from eight games. The Indian team has beaten South Africa at home

(10-2, 10-2), while they won a game and lost a game each against France (5-0, 2-5) which was also held in South Africa.

At home, India won a game and lost one to Spain (5-4, 3-5), won one game 4-3 and lost one 2-2 (1-3 SO) against Argentina, and recently, won both their games against England, 3-3 (3-2 SO), and 4-3.

India squad: Goalkeepers: PR Sreejesh Parattu, Krishan B Pathak. Defenders: Varun Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Surender Kumar, Jugraj Singh, Harmanpreet Singh, Jarmanpreet Singh, Gurinder Singh.

Midfielders: Nilakanta Sharma, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Shamsher Singh, Hardik Singh, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh.

Forwards: Sukhjett Singh, Abhishek, Mandeep Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Dilpreet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Akashdeep Singh.

Bale in the spotlight ahead of Madrid's game against Chelsea

MADRID, April 11 (AP): Just about everything has been going Real Madrid's way recently, in the Spanish league and the Champions League.

Not even the resounding 4-0 loss to Barcelona in the "clásico" at home a few weeks ago was enough to knock the Spanish league leaders off track.

But heading into Tuesday's second leg against Chelsea in the Champions League quarterfinals, when Madrid will defend a 3-1 lead from the first match in London, some of the team's focus was being directed toward Gareth Bale and his old feud with fans.

The 32-year-old Bale, who spent last season on loan at former club Tottenham, was loudly jeered by the Madrid crowd at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium after coming off the bench in the team's 2-0 win over Getafe in the Spanish league on Saturday. Players and coach Carlo Ancelotti couldn't avoid talking about it afterward.

"In a moment like this in the season, when we need every player, the unity between fans and the squad is a very important aspect," Ancelotti said. "Bale is well, he has been practicing and wants to play and help the team, that's the most important thing."

Bale has long been at odds with Madrid fans, who feel he hasn't made the club a priority and instead focuses on Wales' national team. Many fans and Spanish media say Bale failed to consistently perform to his potential since joining the club in 2013 for a then-world record 100 million euros (then \$132 million).

"It's tough," veteran Madrid left back Marcelo said. "We are all important. At the end of the season, when we are playing for a lot of important things, we need to be



united. The fans have to help us. But it is what it is and we have to remain calm. It's a bit sad, but we have to keep working hard and move on."

Bale last month spoke out against the psychological harm that professional athletes can receive from the media after a leading

Spanish sports daily published a column entitled "The Welsh Parasite." Bale accused the media of "encouraging anger and disappointment in fans."

Bale helped Madrid win four European titles, scoring in the 2014 and 2018 Champions League finals. He has made only seven

appearances and scored one goal with Madrid this season, though, while with Wales he has five goals in six matches.

Madrid will be back at the Bernabéu after having to play the home match against Chelsea in last year's Champions League semifinals at the small Alfredo Di Stéfano Stadium at the team's training center because of major renovation work. Madrid drew that game 1-1 before losing 2-0 in London.

Madrid rallied past Paris Saint-Germain at the Bernabéu 3-1 to overturn a 1-0 loss in Paris in the round of 16. Karim Benzema scored a hat trick in that game, and the red-hot France striker got another three-goal performance in the first leg against Chelsea last week.

Madrid hadn't lost in 14 consecutive matches at home before falling to Barcelona in the Spanish league in March.

"We didn't lose our focus after the Barcelona loss," Ancelotti said. "We handled the situation well."

Madrid still has a 12-point league lead over Barcelona with seven matches to go, though the Catalan club has a game in hand.

Ancelotti rested Toni Kroos and Luka Modric in the win against Getafe, and the coach said left back Ferland Mendy is expected to return to the starting lineup against Chelsea after recovering from a muscle problem. He will not count on suspended central defender Eder Militão, however.

Madrid has won 34 of its last 36 two-legged series in UEFA competitions, but it conceded more than three goals at home against Ajax in the round of 16 of the Champions League in 2019. The team lost 4-1 at the Bernabéu after a 2-1 win away and was eliminated.

Barcelona survives 3 penalties, moves back into 2nd place

MADRID, April 11 (AP): Not even conceding three penalty kicks was enough to stop Barcelona's impressive run.

Barcelona rallied to a 3-2 win against second-to-last Levante in the Spanish league on Sunday, with substitute Luuk de Jong scoring in stoppage time after the Catalan club had conceded three penalties in the second half.

The win extended Barcelona's unbeaten run to 15 matches in all competitions and moved the team back into second place in the league after it was leapfrogged by Sevilla on Saturday.

Barcelona is 12 points behind leader Real Madrid with a game in hand. Madrid beat Getafe 2-0 on Saturday.

"It will be hard to contend for the title because Madrid isn't making many mistakes," Barcelona coach Xavi Hernández said. "We both have difficult matches ahead, but if Madrid ends up losing some points maybe we can hope of achieving something bigger."

Barcelona's rally began after Xavi put Pedri González into the game early in the second half with the team a goal down. The 19-year-old playmaker was rested ahead of Barcelona's return leg against Eintracht Frankfurt in the quarterfinals of the Europa League on Thursday. Barcelona and Eintracht drew the first leg 1-1 in Germany last week.

José Luis Morales put Levante ahead by converting a penalty kick in the 52nd after a foul by Dani Alves. The second penalty for the hosts came four minutes later after a handball by Barcelona defender Eric García, with Roger Martí missing from the spot.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang equalized for Barcelona with a header off a cross by Ousmane Dembélé in the 59th, and Pedri scored the go-ahead goal from inside the area in the 63rd.

Levante evened the match after another penalty in the 83rd after a foul by Barcelona defender Clément Lenglet, with Gonzalo Melero converting his shot from the spot before De Jong got the late winner after a well-placed cross by Jordi Alba.

Barcelona, which had not pre-



viously conceded a penalty in the league this season, hasn't lost since playing Athletic Bilbao in the round of 16 of the Copa del Rey in January.

Levante stayed tied on points with last-place Alavés. It is seven points from safety.

SOCIEDAD IN CONTENTION

Real Sociedad continued its push for a Champions League spot with a 2-1 win at Elche.

Alexander Sorloth and Robin Le Normand scored less than 10 minutes apart in the first half to help Sociedad get within three points of fourth-place Atlético Madrid with seven rounds to go.

It was the third win in the last four matches for sixth-place Sociedad, which sits two points behind Real Betis in fifth.

Elche, which opened the scoring with Guido Carrillo in the third minute, stayed in 15th place, four points above the relegation zone. It has lost three in a row. Sorloth scored in the 31st and Le Normand in the 39th, both after assists from veteran David Silva.

Sociedad forward Alexander Isak scored from a penalty kick but it was disallowed as he faked his shot to fool the goalkeeper before sending the ball into the net.

OTHER RESULTS

China forward Wu Lei scored in the 89th for his first goal of the season as Espanyol beat Celta Vigo 1-0 at home in a match between teams near the middle of the table.

Earlier, 10th-place Osasuna scored in stoppage time with a goal from Ante Budimir to beat Alavés 1-0. It was the fourth loss in a row for Alavés with coach Julio Velázquez making his debut.

Amit Rohidas to lead India against Germany in FIH Pro League tie

BHUBANESWAR, April 11 (PTI): Defender Amit Rohidas will continue to lead the 22-member Indian men's hockey team in its next FIH Pro League tie against Germany, starting here on Thursday.

Star dragflicker Harmanpreet Singh will don the responsibility of vice-captain in the double-header at the Kalinga Stadium. The second match of the tie will be played on Friday. There were no big surprises in the squad as the Indian team management continues to test various combinations from the core group in the Pro League ties ahead of a busy calendar year, which includes the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

The squad includes goalkeepers PR Sreejesh, Krishan Bahadur Pathak, and defenders Varun Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Surender Kumar, Jugraj Singh, Harmanpreet Singh, Jarnpreet Singh, and Gurinder Singh. The midfield will be manned by Nilakanta Sharma, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Shamsher Singh, Hardik Singh, and Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh, while the forward line will feature Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek, Mandeep Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Dilpreet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, and Akashdeep Singh.

Speaking about the team composition, India's chief coach Graham Reid said, "This year's FIH Pro League has provided us with great opportunities to try different combinations and tactics. We have recognised what works and, more importantly, what areas we need to improve on. This week against Germany is the last leg of our home games for this year and we are looking forward to two more world-class encounters once again."

"Germany are always an extremely tough opponent and given where we both are on the ladder it will be important for us to finish this week with as many points as possible to remain at the top of the points table," he added. India has so far played 10 matches in this season of FIH Pro League and are currently placed on top of the table with 21 points, while Germany occupy the second position with 17 points from eight games.

The Indian team had beaten South Africa in the double header (10-2, 10-2), while they won a game and lost one each against France (5-0, 2-5), which was also held in South Africa.

At home, India won a game and lost one to Spain (5-4, 3-5), won one game 4-3 and lost one 2-2 (1-3 SO) against Argentina, and recently, won both their games against England, 3-3 (3-2 SO), and 4-3.

Team:

Goalkeepers: Sreejesh Parattu Raveendran, Krishan B Pathak.

Defenders: Varun Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Surender Kumar, Jugraj Singh, Harmanpreet Singh, Jarnpreet Singh, Gurinder Singh.

Midfielders: Nilakanta Sharma, Manpreet Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Shamsher Singh, Hardik Singh, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh.

Forwards: Sukhjeet Singh, Abhishek, Mandeep Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Dilpreet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Akashdeep Singh.

BCCI Apex Council to review probe committee's report on allegations made by Saha

NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): The BCCI Apex Council will review the probe committee's report concerning India wicket-keeper Wriddhiman Saha, who had accused journalist Boria Majumdar of intimidating him, at its meeting on April 23.

The BCCI had formed a three-member panel comprising vice-president Rajeev Shukla, treasurer Arun Dhumal and Apex Council member Prabhat Bhatia to probe Saha's allegation.

The 37-year-old India discard appeared before the Committee last month and so did the accused journalist Majumdar and presented their respective versions. Saha had alleged that Majumdar intimidated him for



not giving him an interview.

BCCI is expected to close the matter at the Apex Council meeting.

"Review of the Committee report on issue concerning Mr

Wriddhiman Saha," read item no.4 on the meeting agenda which is in PTI's possession.

Majumdar on his part had claimed that Saha had "doctored" the whatsapp screenshots of the chats he had with him before putting it on social media, triggering a massive controversy.

A centrally-contracted player, Saha had posted a series of tweets on February 23 against the then unnamed journalist, who happened to be Majumdar.

Saha was told by head coach Rahul Dravid in South Africa that he was no longer in the scheme of things and this classified information was revealed by the cricketer himself.

Saha has played 40 Tests

since making his debut in 2010 and for the last few years he was in the team as the reserve wicketkeeper with Rishabh Pant rising to become the number one choice in all conditions.

Other items in seven-point meeting agenda include "hosting fee and participation fee for multi-day tournaments and resolution for updating of bank signatories".

The members are also expected to finalise the venues for the knock-out stages of Ranji Trophy which will be held post the Indian Premier League from May 30 to June 26.

The league phase of the tournament was held in February-March after a two year gap due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our bowling performance has been our biggest positive: Kuldeep Yadav



NEW DELHI, April 11 (PTI): Delhi Capitals' left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav feels bowling has been the side's strong suit this season, adding that the pace department is doing a good job of keeping the pressure on the opposition during the powerplays.

The Capitals defeated Kolkata Knight Riders by 44 runs on Sunday to register their second win of the season.

"Our bowling performance has been our biggest positive this season," Kuldeep said in a media release.

"When we were bowling against Mumbai Indians in our first match, it looked like they were going to score over 200 at one point, but we restricted them to a total of 177/5."

"The fast bowlers have been bowling really well. They kept the pressure on the opposition in the Powerplay against KKR, which allowed us to bowl freely later on," he added.

Kuldeep, who was adjudged the Player of the Match for returning with figures of 4/35, also spoke about his fantastic running catch to dismiss Umesh Yadav off his own bowling.

"I knew that only I could go for that catch. The ball was quite far away from everyone else. I kept my eye on the ball throughout while running for the catch and managed to reach for the ball in the end. The catch felt really good."

The Delhi Capitals have a five-day break before their next match.

"These two points were really important for us. The morale in the team will be high as we prepare to play for our next game on Saturday. This win will ensure that there is positive energy in the camp during our five-day break."

AUGUSTA, April 11 (AP): Scottie Scheffler looked like a Masters champion even before he slipped into his green jacket, the model of calm as he methodically worked his way around the most stressful course in major championship golf.

Sunday morning was different. That turned out to be the toughest test he had all day.

"I cried like a baby this morning. I was so stressed out. I didn't know what to do," Scheffler said after winning his first major. "I was sitting there telling (wife) Meredith, 'I don't think I'm ready for this ... and I just felt overwhelmed.'"

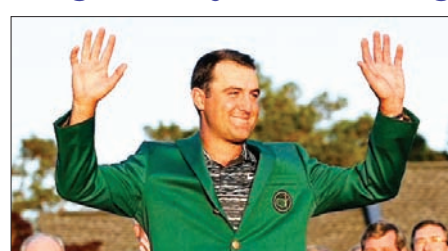
And then he capped off his torrid two-month stretch with his grandest feat of all, leading the entire weekend and strolling to a 1-under 71 — with one lapse in concentration at the end when it didn't matter — for a three-shot victory over Rory McIlroy.

For a guy who had won three of his previous five tournaments, who reached No. 1 in the world, why suddenly be overcome with doubt?

"I think because it's the Masters. I dreamed of having a chance to play in this golf tournament. I teared up the first time I got my invitation in the mail," Scheffler said. "If you're going to choose a golf tournament to win, this would be the tournament," he said. "You don't know how many chances you're going to get. And so having a chance — I had a five-shot lead on Friday and then a three-shot lead going into today — I don't know if you get better opportunities than that. You don't want to waste them."

He felt peace between the ropes and never allowed himself to enjoy the moment until he took that famous walk up the 18th green, his ball 40 feet away and a five-shot lead.

Scheffler gets Masters green jacket to go with No. 1 ranking



"And you saw the results of that," he said with a laugh at his four-putt double bogey that only affected the margin of victory.

McIlroy holed out from the bunker on the final hole for a record-tying final round of 64. That pulled him within three shots, and his only hope for the final piece of the career Grand Slam was for the Sunday pressure at Augusta National to get to Scheffler.

No chance.

Not on Sunday. Not the last four days. Not the last two months.

"You get on those hot streaks, and you just got to ride them out because they, unfortunately, don't last forever," Justin Thomas said. "But he is doing it in the biggest tournaments. ... It's really, really impressive to see someone that young handle a moment this big so easily." And to think that 56 days ago, Scheffler was still trying to win his first PGA Tour title. Now he's won four of the last six he has played, the best stretch since Jason Day in the summer of 2015.

The Sunday theater, thrilling and tragic, belonged to everyone else.

Scheffler overcame a nervy moment early in the round by chipping in for birdie. He delivered

key putts to keep Cameron Smith at bay and never looked rattled, even as he was swatting at short putts at the end.

McIlroy was the runner-up. It was Smith who felt as though he let one get away. The Aussie was still in the game, three shots out of the lead, when he dumped his 9-iron in Rae's Creek on the par-3 12th hole for triple bogey and ended his hopes. "Just a really bad swing at the wrong time," Smith said.

Smith closed with a 73 and tied for third with Shane Lowry, who birdied the 18th for a 69.

Tiger Woods was finishing up about the time Scheffler was getting started, and anyone who left missed quite a show. As for Woods, he found consolation in playing four rounds in his first tournament since a February 2021 car crash shattered his right leg. He shot 78 and finished at 13-over 301, his highest 72-hole score at the Masters and furthest (23 shots) he ever finished behind the winner. Scheffler joined Ian Woosnam in 1991 as the only players to win a major — the Masters in both cases — in their debut at No. 1 in the world. Everyone should have seen this coming. He won the Phoenix Open in a playoff on Super Bowl Sunday. He followed that with a comeback win at Bay Hill to win the Arnold Palmer Invitational. He rose to No. 1 in the world by winning the Match Play two weeks ago in Texas.

And now this.

"He's sort of been head and shoulders above everyone else this week," McIlroy said.

Scheffler, who finished at 10-under 278, won \$2.7 million from the \$15 million prize fund. That brings his total to \$8,872,200 over his last six starts.

Djokovic is motivated to compete again for biggest titles

MONACO, April 11(AP): Novak Djokovic is ready to move on from the controversy surrounding his refusal to get vaccinated against Covid-19.

"I miss competition," the Serbian tennis star said Sunday on the opening day of the clay-court season at the Monte Carlo Masters in Monaco.

"I still feel motivation to be on the tour and compete... and try to challenge the best players in the world for the biggest titles."

The 20-time Grand Slam champion has played only one tournament so far in 2022, losing to Jiri Vesely in the quarterfinals of the Dubai Championships.

Djokovic could not defend his Australian Open title in January after he was deported from the country for not being inoculated.

More recently, he had to skip tournaments in Indian Wells, California, and Miami because he couldn't travel to the United States for the same reason.

He has declared that he would not get the vaccine in order to be able to com-



pete. It has been a turbulent start to 2022 for

Djokovic, who went through detention and a court case during an 11-day saga in

Australia before he was sent home and not allowed to defend his title at Melbourne Park.

Rafael Nadal went on to win the Australian Open for his 21st major trophy, breaking a tie with Djokovic and Roger Federer.

At the end of February, Djokovic lost his No. 1 ranking for the first time in two years, sliding to No. 2 behind Daniil Medvedev, before reclaiming top spot.

And on March 1, Djokovic announced that he and coach Marian Vajda were splitting after 15 years together.

"The last four, five months have been really challenging for me mentally and emotionally but here I am and I try to leave all that behind and move on," Djokovic said on Sunday.

Djokovic said what happened in Australia has not impacted his ability to win.

"I don't feel like it has left huge scars on me that I'm unable to train or participate in tournaments or live my life," Djokovic said.

"I will try to use that as a fuel for

what's coming up."

His opening match in Monaco is scheduled for Tuesday.

The authorities in France and Monaco lifted most COVID-19 restrictions last month, allowing people who aren't vaccinated into the country and back into restaurants, sports arenas and other venues.

With his French Open title in 2021 still fresh in his mind, Djokovic proclaimed that the clay in Monaco is the best surface to stage his comeback even though "historically it has not been my most successful surface."

"I will try to use (the French Open title) as an inspiration to kick-start the clay court season the best possible way," Djokovic said.

"I understand that I probably won't be at my best, particularly at the beginning."

He added that "it will take some time, some matches to really get in the groove."

The French Open starts on May 22 in Paris.