

6  
WORLD  
8  
NATION

- Pak's apex court seeks record of NA proceedings on no-trust motion
- Lanka economic crisis: Rajapaksa's grip on power weakens
- Tit for tat: Haryana Assembly denounces Punjab move on Chandigarh, passes resolution on SYL
- On BJP foundation day eve, PM Modi asks MPs to dedicate themselves to 'seva'

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## Himanta asks DCs to connect with people to understand problems



**GUWAHATI, April 5 (PTI):** Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asked deputy commissioners (DCs) of all districts to make extensive field visits to understand problems faced by the public.

He also urged them to encourage 'emotional connect' between the district administration and make the district administration more citizen-centric.

In a Tweet after attending a day-long DCs conference here, Sarma wrote: "As part of our continued efforts to make administration more citizen-centric, I've ad-

vised DCs to make their offices fulcrum of governance delivery system..."

He said the DCs have been directed to "celebrate district days to facilitate & generate 'emotional connect' between district administration & people".

The state Cabinet had decided in January that District Day will be marked by all districts on the date of notification of its creation, and if the notification is not available, it will be celebrated on the date of joining of the first deputy commissioner. "DCs must undertake extensive field visits to (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## ₹ 249.12 cr allocated for China border infra in Arunachal, IS told

Arunachal Pradesh shares a 1,126-km-long border with China

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** The government has allocated six times more funds for the development of infrastructure along the Sino-Indian border in Arunachal Pradesh - from ₹ 42.87 crore in 2020-21 to ₹ 249.12 cr in 2021-22.

Union minister of state for Home Nityanand Rai said in Lok Sabha that ₹ 602.30 crore has been allocated in 2021-22 and ₹ 355.12 crore in 2020-21 under the Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) scheme to improve infrastructure along the international border in the Northeast with China, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

While ₹ 42.87 crore was allocated under the BIM for the India-China border in the Northeast in 2020-21, ₹ 249.12 has been allocated in 2021-22 for it, he said in a written reply to a question.



India shares 3,488 km-long Line of Actual Control with China from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh. Arunachal Pradesh shares a 1,126-km-long border

with China. The Indian Army and China's PLA continue to engage in a stand-off in Ladakh from April 2020. Rai said ₹ 17.38 crore was allocated

under the BIM for the India-Myanmar border in 2020-21 and ₹ 50 crore has been allocated for the same in 2021-22.

He said ₹ 294.87 crore was allocated under the BIM for the India-Bangladesh border in 2020-21 and ₹ 303.18 crore has been allocated for 2021-22.

According to the minister, the government has adopted a multi-pronged approach to strengthen the security along international borders, which includes deployment of border guarding forces, effective domination of the borders by patrolling, laying nakas, manning observation posts, vulnerability mapping and holistic review of deployment periodically, establishing new border outposts, deployment of surveillance equipment, strengthening of intelligence network, erection of border fencing among others.

## Dacoits claim another life

## Two ex-NLFB cadres killed, ASP injured in gun-battle

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, April 5:** Two surrendered National Liberation Front of Bodoland (NLFB) militants, allegedly involved in dacoity, were killed and an additional superintendent of police was injured in a gunfight in Chirang district on Tuesday, police said. In another incident, dacoits shot dead a man inside his house in the same district which falls under Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

Acting on a tip-off about the presence of former NLFB militants suspected to have been involved in dacoity incidents in three villages along the India-Bhutan



border on March 29, an operation was launched in Runikhata area on Monday night, a police officer

said. The suspected dacoits, who were hiding inside a house, opened fire on the police team on spotting them early on Tuesday. In retaliatory firing, two of them, including Mahanta Narzary, a prime accused in a dacoity case, were killed while additional superintendent of police (headquarters) Prakash Medhi and his bodyguard sustained bullet injuries.

Around two-three people who were inside the house, however, managed to escape and search operations have been launched to nab them. Medhi, who received bullet injuries on his right hand, and his bodyguard were (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Parliament passes accountancy bill

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Parliament on Tuesday passed a bill to revamp the functioning of the institutes of chartered accountants, cost accountants and company secretaries, with Union minister Nirmala Sitharaman asserting that the changes will usher in transparency and will not in any way impact the autonomy of these bodies.

Rajya Sabha passed the Chartered Accountants, the Cost and Works Accountants and the Company Secretaries (Amendment) Bill, 2022 with a voice vote after negating all amendments moved by the Opposition.

Lok Sabha had cleared the bill on March 30.

Replying to the discussion in the Upper House, Sitharaman asserted that the new legislation would facilitate India in creating homegrown world class institutions soon, com-

parable with the 'Big Four' in the audit and accountancy areas, and meet the global demands.

"This (bill) is with the intention of making the three institutions a lot more transparent in their disciplinary matters, and raise the quality of the disciplinary processes. Above all, I think this would also facilitate India to be able to support institutions and firms which can be encouraged by the council to create something (completely of India origin) similar to the Big Four, which we periodically talk about," she said.

Sitharaman, who is in charge of finance and corporate affairs ministries, noted that the bill has been envisaged after consulting various stakeholders and taking into account the findings of the Meenakshi Datta Ghosh committee. Stressing that India (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## 2 bodies, car fished out from Aie river

**HT Correspondent**

**ABHAYAPURI, April 5:** Bodies of two men including a local journalist along with a four-wheeler were found in the Aie River at Borghola under Abhayapuri Police Station on Tuesday morning. The deceased have been identified as Abdul Latif, Abhayapuri correspondent of an Assamese daily and Dipankar Ray, resident of West Khamarpara village of Srijangram area.

The four-wheeler of the deceased journalist has also been recovered from the river. According to the local people, the two men with their vehicle fell into the river from the Borghola-Kahibari bridge which has been lying incomplete for the last 10 years. "Last night, they were at a cultural function. Besides being a journalist, Abdul Latif was a former AASU leader. He was associated with various socio-cultural organisations. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Crimes by Russia no different than those carried out by ISIS: Zelenskyy tells UNSC

**UNITED NATIONS, April 5 (PTI):** Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told the UN Security Council on Tuesday that the atrocities committed by Russian troops are no different from terrorists like the Islamic State extremists as he demanded immediate action to bring the Kremlin's forces to justice for "war crimes".

"Yesterday I returned from our city of Bucha, recently liberated from Russian troops not far from Kiev. There is not a single crime that they would not commit there. The Russian military searched for and purposefully killed anyone who served our country," Zelenskyy said in his first address to the UN Security Council.

Giving a detailed account of the brutalities conducted by the Russian forces, he said "this is no different from other terrorists such as Daesh who occupied some territories. And here it is done by a member of the United Nations Security Council, destroying internal unity, borders and countries."

"We are dealing with a state that is turning



the veto in the UN Security Council into the right to die," he said in his impassioned address to the UNSC.

"This undermines the whole architecture of global security. It allows them to go unpunished."

He asserted that the UN system must be reformed immediately "so that the veto is not the right to die."

"The Russian military and those who gave them orders must be brought to justice immediately for war crimes in Ukraine," he said, adding that (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Not an inch of land ceded during Modi rule: Rijiju



**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Not an inch of land has been ceded since Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, Union minister Kiren Rijiju said in Lok Sabha on Tuesday, hitting back at an Opposition MP who accused the government of giving away Indian territory "bit by bit to China".

Intervening in the discussion in the lower house on the situation in Ukraine, Rijiju took strong objection to the remarks made by BSP MP from Jaunpur

Shyam Singh Yadav.

"Everyone knows that our claimed territory under the control of China and Pakistan dates back to earlier times. I don't want to take anyone's name. Since Narendra Modi has become Prime Minister, not an inch of land has been ceded," Rijiju said after Yadav alleged that Indian territory was being given away "bit by bit to China".

The minister said Arunachal Pradesh, which is a border state, is also "100 per cent safe and secure".

"I come from Arunachal Pradesh. A TV channel did mischief and, taking images from a foreign website, said that China has established a village inside Arunachal which is false as that village had been occupied by China in 1959," Rijiju said.

One should not mislead the country by making such claims, he said.

Rijiju recalled that in 2013 when A K Antony was the Defence minister, he had stated in the House that India's policy not to build infrastructure (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## HT BRIEFS

### Kathar accuses CEM of disrupting APHLC meetings

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, April 5:** All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) accused chief executive member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang of disrupting APHLC meetings in his Bithung Rengthama, Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency in West Karbi Anglong through his workers.

In a press conference held at District Press Club of Karbi Anglong here on Tuesday, APHLC spokesperson Angtong Engti Kathar said, "It is not only on one to two occasions, but 11 times the party workers of CEM Tuliram Ronghang used to disrupt and terrorise APHLC meetings in his Bithung Rengthama MAC constituency." The spokesperson mentioned that on April 2 in a meeting at Ingchin Langso a former APHLC worker who recently (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

### Body recovered

**HT Correspondent**

**DONGKAMUKAM, April 5:** The body of a youth in West Karbi Anglong has been recovered from Langpi River on Tuesday. The body has been identified as that of Bedanto Bodo (23) of Borthol Village, West Karbi Anglong who went missing in the river at Baithalango on April 2. The body was seen floating in the river by passersby at Baithalango and was fished out at around 8:30 am. The deceased youth along with several others went fishing in the river on April 2.

### Dibrugarh to host Inland waterways meet

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, April 5:** The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) with Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) as the Industry partner is organising a two day Inland waterways conclave, 2022 on April 11 and 12 at Chowkidinghee ground here.

Talking to reporters, Jayant Singh, vice chairman, Inland waterways, said that the Centre is seeking to revive the waterways in the region. He said that the conclave would be a platform for all stakeholders to deliberate on the potential of the waterways and all its logistics, to boost the economy of the region.

"The waterways conclave will be attended by participants from the port sector, ship builders, vessel owners and operators, Indian chamber of commerce, container corporation of India, experts from world Bank of India and Asian Development Bank, foreign experts from Holland and Belgium officials (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## India generates 3.5 million tonnes plastic waste annually: Env Min

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** India is generating 3.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually, Union Environment minister Bhupendra Yadav said on Tuesday as he launched several green initiatives for plastic waste management.

Speaking at the launch of mascot 'Prakriti' to spread awareness among masses about small changes that can be sustainably adopted in lifestyle for a better environment, Yadav urged everyone to join the efforts to beat plastic pollution and work towards a better future.

"Plastic has become one of the most pressing environmental issues that we are facing today. India is generating about 3.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually and the per capita plastic waste generation has almost doubled over the last five years.

"Plastic pollution adversely affects our



ecosystems and is also linked to air pollution," he said.

He also launched several initiatives like National Dashboard on Elimination of Single Use Plastic and Plastic Waste Management to bring all stakeholders, including central ministries, departments, states and Union Territories, at one

place and track the progress made for elimination of single-use plastic (SUP) and effective management of such waste.

Another initiative that was launched was Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Portal for plastic Packaging for improving accountability, traceability, transparency and facilitating ease of reporting compliance to EPR obligations by producers, importers and brand-owners.

A mobile app for Single Use Plastics Grievance Redressal was also launched to empower citizens to check sale/usage/manufacturing of SUP in their area and tackle the plastic menace.

The various green initiatives taken by Ministry of Environment and Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to ensure effective Plastic Waste Management (PWM) in the country, were launched at the event, which was also (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Group announces plan to build world's largest church in Mizoram

**AIZAWL, April 5 (PTI):** A Christian group of Mizoram has claimed that it will build the world's largest church building in Serchhip district of the North-eastern state.

The proposed church building will be erected on a land measuring 23,809.52 square metres, 809.52 square metres more than the area occupied by St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, which is currently the largest church in the world, the chief of the religious group said.

The 'Zofate Pathian Biakinpu' (Big church for all Mizos) will be set up at Thenzawl town, around 87 km from here, said Rev Dr Zaichhawn Hlawndo, who founded the Zoram Thar Zofate Lairelna Inpu, a non-denominational church, in February 2016.

Releasing the blueprint of the church

here on Monday, Hlawndo said the church will belong to all 'Zofate' (Mizo tribes across the world) and will be constructed through public donations and voluntary services.

The length and breadth of the church area will be 270 feet each and its height will be 177 feet, he said.

There will be 30,000 seats inside the building and its courtyard will be large enough to accommodate about 70,000 people, Hlawndo said.

The building can be used by any church or Christian group for worship or religious assembly, he said.

It will belong to all Mizo tribes, the Zoram Thar group leader said adding that land has been purchased for building it but construction work is yet to start.

The group members claim that they are

descendants of Joseph, one of the 12 sons of Biblical patriarch Jacob.

Hlawndo worked as a missionary under the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram in various parts of the world and has settled in the United Kingdom before he returned to the state in 2012. He floated 'Zoram Thar' four years later.

He claimed that he received a 'divine call' to return to Mizoram while in transit at Dubai airport.

The group had contested 24 seats in the last assembly polls in 2018 but failed to win a seat. It had organised a religious conference of all Mizo tribes in December last year during which memorial stones for various Mizo tribes were erected. The conference was held at the proposed site of the "world's largest church".



## Markets snap two-session rally; HDFC twins slip on profit-booking



**MUMBAI, April 5 (PTD):** Equity benchmarks took a knock on Tuesday after two days of sharp up moves as investors pocketed gains in banking and financial stocks after their recent rally.

HDFC twins, which topped the gainers' chart in the previous session after announcing their mega merger, were the biggest drags on Tuesday. Investor focus also returned to the Russia-Ukraine war and rising oil prices, which hobbled global markets, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex slumped 435.24 points or 0.72 per cent to finish at 60,176.50. Similarly, the NSE Nifty tumbled 96 points or 0.53 per cent to 17,957.40. HDFC Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, skidding 2.98 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finserv, HDFC, Kotak Bank, Reliance Industries, IndusInd Bank and Bajaj Finance.

On the other hand, NTPC, PowerGrid, ITC, Titan, TCS and Nestle India were among the gainers, surging up to 3.40 per cent. Of the Sensex constituents, 17 shares closed lower while 13 were in the green.

"Main indices took a breather after yesterday's rally and as the global market moderated."

But the broad market continued its positive trend. Mid and smallcaps have become attractive after the consolidation of the last 5 to 6 months.

"Such a trend to outperform can be expected with volatility in the short to medium term as Russia-Ukraine war, rate hikes and inflation

are factored in the current market price," said Vinod Nair, head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said markets may consolidate after the recent surge and it would be healthy.

"However, there'll be no shortage of trading opportunities, thanks to scheduled events like MPC's monetary policy review meet and the beginning of the earnings season. Participants should focus on the sectors/themes which are playing out well and utilise the pause to accumulate quality stocks on dips," he added.

Sector-wise, BSE bankex, finance, realty and tech lost as much as 1.33 per cent, while power, utilities, consumer durables, industrials and auto logged healthy gains.

The BSE midcap and smallcap gauges climbed up to 1.37 per cent. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul closed on a firm footing.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a negative note in mid-session deals. International oil benchmark Brent crude spurted 1.59 per cent to USD 109.24 per barrel. Investors are keeping a close watch on the developments in Ukraine amid speculations that Russia could face stricter economic sanctions.

The rupee continued its winning momentum on Tuesday, rising 24 paise to settle at 75.29 against the US dollar, as the American currency and crude oil prices retreated from recent high levels.

## GST Council did not recommend reducing GST on health insurance: FM

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS):** The GST Council has not recommended reduction of the 18 per cent GST rate on health insurance schemes, Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman told the Parliament on Monday. At present, GST on health insurance services is levied at a standard rate of 18 per cent. "Health insurance, like the majority of other taxable supplies, is standard rated at 18 per cent."

In pre-GST regime also, health insurance was standard rated," Sitharaman told the Lok Sabha in a written reply. "A significant relief in GST has been provided by way of exemption to above stated insurance schemes catering to



economically weaker sections of the society and differently abled. Furthermore, healthcare services are also exempt from GST." Health

insurance schemes catering to the needs of economically weaker sections of the society and differently abled, such as the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, the Universal Health Insurance Scheme, the Jan Arogya Bima Policy, and the Niramaya Health Insurance Scheme are fully exempt from GST.

According to Sitharaman, representations to reduce the GST on health insurance were placed before the Council in its 31st meeting held on December 22, 2018 and in its 37th meeting held on September 20, 2019.

"GST Council did not make recommendations for reduction of GST," she added.

## Profit booking subdues equity

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS):** Taking a further hit later in the day, benchmark indices -- Sensex and Nifty -- settled in the red on Tuesday primarily due to profit booking.

Sensex closed 0.7 per cent or 435 points down at 60,177, whereas Nifty dipped 0.5 per cent or 96 points down to 17,957.

For the near-term, the outcome of the Reserve Bank of India's upcoming monetary policy meeting starting Wednesday would be the major factors that will dictate the market outlook.

"Markets took a breather after yesterday's (Monday's) surge and ended marginally lower. After the flat start, the benchmark hovered in a range and ended around the day's low," said Ajit Mishra, VP, Research at Religare Broking.

"Markets may consolidate after the recent surge and it would be healthy. However, there'll be no shortage of trading opportunities, thanks to scheduled events like MPC's monetary policy review meeting and the beginning of the earnings season."

## Fuel prices hiked for 13<sup>th</sup> time in 15 days



**NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS):** The state-run oil marketing companies on Tuesday raised key transport fuel prices for the 13th time in the last 15 days.

Consequently, in the past 15 days, petrol prices have increased by ₹ 9.40 per litre in the national capital.

These prices were revised for the very first time on March 22 after a gap of more than four months.

On Monday, the price of petrol and diesel in New Delhi were in-

creased by 80 paise per litre.

As per pump prices, petrol now costs ₹ 104.61 per litre and diesel ₹ 95.87 per litre in the national capital.

In the financial capital Mumbai, prices were hiked to ₹ 119.67 per litre for petrol and diesel to ₹ 103.92 per litre.

Besides, the prices of both the transport fuels were raised in Kolkata. The petrol prices rose to ₹ 114.28 and diesel to ₹ 99.02 per litre.

In Chennai too, they were in-

creased. Petrol there now costs ₹ 110.09 and diesel ₹ 100.18 per litre.

Till last Tuesday, fuel prices were steady since November 2021 when the Centre reduced excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹ 5 and ₹ 10 per litre, respectively.

The OMCs revise the transportation fuel cost based on various factors such as rupee to US dollar exchange rate, cost of crude oil and demand of fuel amongst others.

Resultantly, the final price includes excise duty, value added tax and dealer's commission.

It was widely expected that the OMCs will revise the current prices due to high crude oil cost.

Lately, crude oil prices have been volatile on fears of tight supplies due to sanctions against Russia.

The crude oil price range is a cause of concern for India as it may ultimately add ₹ 10-15 in petrol and diesel selling prices.

At present, India imports nearly 85 per cent of its crude oil requirements.

## Netcore Cloud expands ties with AWS to boost digital experiences for B2C brands



**NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS):** In a bid to enhance digital experiences for B2C Brands, customer engagement and Communications Platform as a service (CPaaS) company Netcore Cloud on Tuesday announced a multi-year pact with Amazon Web Services (AWS) for its cloud service offerings.

This agreement will enable Netcore Cloud to build modular systems based on demand, manage hyper-scaling, and lower equipment and maintenance costs.

It will also offer Netcore Cloud's global customer-base access to software and platforms from the AWS ecosystem, skilled support for services, and the benefits of global infrastructure, the company said in a statement. "This collaboration allows us to cater to different geolocation customer demands efficiently. AWS will help us reach clients across geographies seamlessly and meet their expectations regarding data localization, security, and compliance," said Kalpit Jain, Group CEO, Netcore Cloud.

"Moving workloads to the cloud will enable us to seize new market opportunities quickly, enhance security and address the needs of the customers better," Jain added.

Currently working with AWS in a hybrid

model, Netcore Cloud will migrate more workloads to reduce its dependency on private clouds. The company aims to achieve high uptime using AWS services across multiple geographies resulting in a better customer experience. "Netcore is transforming the way brands use data through various phases of customer lifecycle, using AWS to accelerate its innovations," said Tim Barnes, director of Worldwide Solutions for Advertising & Marketing Technology at AWS.

"By taking advantage of AWS's global infrastructure footprint in the cloud and its broad selection of cloud-based analytics and machine learning services, Netcore engineering teams can reduce development time and deliver new customer experience solutions to its global customer base more quickly," he added.

"Through this collaboration with AWS, Netcore will be able to accelerate the pace of its cloud migration as well as implementation of its Cloud first strategy," said Praveen Sridhar, head of ISV segment, AISPL.

The agreement will further enhance Netcore Cloud's digital-first marketing offerings optimising the user experience with search optimisation, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.

In addition, the collaboration will allow Netcore Cloud access to the AWS Partner Network (APN) and the APN Customer Engagements (ACE) Programme helping Netcore Cloud drive successful customer engagements with AWS.

The partnership also provides opportunities for collaboration with AWS business and Marketing teams and ensures technical support for co-selling with AWS, according to the company.

## IBM unveils next-gen system to safely process key financial data

**NEW YORK, April 5 (IANS):** Tech giant IBM on Tuesday unveiled a new system, billed as industry's first quantum-safe system, that will help customers analyse real-time transactions at scale for mission-critical workloads such as credit card, healthcare and financial transactions. Building on the company's history of security leadership, "IBM z16" is specifically designed to help protect against near-future threats that might be used to crack today's encryption technologies. "IBM is the gold standard for highly-secured transaction processing. Now with IBM z16 innovations, our clients can increase decision velocity with inferencing right where their mission-critical data lives," said Ric Lewis, SVP, IBM Systems.

This opens up tremendous opportunities to change the game in their respective industries so they will be positioned to deliver better customer experiences and more powerful business outcomes, he added. IBM z16 uniquely brings together 'AI inferencing' with the highly secured and reliable high-volume transaction processing. For the first time, banks can analyse fraud during transactions on a massive scale as IBM z16 can process 300 billion inference requests per day with just one millisecond of latency.

"For consumers, this could mean reducing the time and energy required to handle fraudulent transactions on their credit card," said the company.

For both merchants and card issuers, this could mean a reduction in revenue loss as consumers could avoid frustration associated with false declines where they might turn to other cards for future transactions, it added. Building on IBM technologies like Pervasive Encryption and Confidential Computing, IBM z16 takes cyber resiliency a leap further by protecting data against future threats that could evolve with advances in quantum computing. As the industry's first quantum-safe system, IBM z16 is underpinned by lattice-based cryptography, an approach for constructing security primitives that helps protect data and systems against current and future threats.

With IBM z16's quantum-safe cryptography, businesses can future-ready their applications and data today, said the company.

## MakeMyTrip acquires foreign exchange services provider BookMyForex



**NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS):** As India reopened international travel last month after two years of the pandemic, MakeMyTrip's fintech arm TripMoney on Tuesday said it has acquired a majority stake in BookMyForex, India's leading online foreign currency exchange services provider, for an undisclosed sum. With this move, BookMyForex's suite of services, including currency exchange that offers real-time exchange rate, multi-currency prepaid forex cards, cross border remittances as well as other ancillary products, will soon be available for MakeMyTrip and Goibibo customers.

"The acquisition of a majority stake in BookMyForex is in line with our strategic vision to build a travel super app offering a complete suite of services for the discerning traveller," said Rajesh Magow, co-founder and Group CEO of Make-

MyTrip. The leading online travel platform will also leverage the network of BookMyForex's partners, including select banks and reputed exchange companies, to fulfil forex requirements of customers in multiple cities across the country. "The investment from TripMoney comes at an opportune time, as the world warms up to international travel. We will leverage the strength of MakeMyTrip and Goibibo to scale new heights by gaining deeper geographic penetration," said Sudarshan Motwani, CEO of BookMyForex. Leading private equity firm Faering Capital as well as founders and promoters - Nitin Motwani and Sudarshan Motwani -- will continue to stay invested in BookMyForex.

"We are delighted to welcome MakeMyTrip as a shareholder in the company," said Aditya Parekh, managing director at Faering Capital.

## Shares of Tata Motors shift gear on firm sales volumes

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS):** Shares of Tata Motors rose on Tuesday in an otherwise subdued broader market. The shares of the automaker gained 6 per cent in the past three trading days as the company reported healthy sales volumes -- for both passenger and electric vehicles -- in March and the entire FY22 fiscal. It reported the highest ever annual sales of its passenger and electric vehicles at 370,372 units in FY22, which was 67 per cent more than the off-take in FY21. In March, Tata Motors' total domestic sales volume grew 30 per cent year-on-year to 86,718 units as against 66,462 units reported in the same month last year. Tata Motors set several new records in a challenging year disrupted by two waves of Covid, semiconductor crisis and a steep increase in commodity prices globally.

## Recovering from Covid, hospitality sector finds hiring tough

**CHENNAI, April 5 (IANS):** With the Covid-19 restrictions being removed and international travel opening up, hoteliers in and around Chennai are expecting their till boxes ringing this fiscal, said industry officials.

In line with the expectations and also increased room occupancy and guest footfalls in their restaurants, the industry has started hiring processes.

However, hoteliers also say finding talent is difficult as many of those who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic have gone into other sectors and those who wanted to continue have found jobs in other professions.

According to surveys, the travel and hospitality sectors lead in hiring.

"Room occupancies and restaurant footfalls are on the rise. Once international travel is opened up then the business will further improve," Yangya Prakash Chandran, founder and CEO, Crossway Hotels and Resorts, told IANS. Crossway Hotels manages the Days Hotel By Wyndham Chennai OMR.

According to Chandran, the hotel's restaurant NutCracker is getting higher footfalls during the weekend which shows people are wanting to go out and have food.



"Once the IT sector reverts to work from office instead of work from home then the restaurants in the OMR will gain good traction". While the CEO said he will start having food festivals once the business gains momentum, Mercure Chennai Sriperumbudur had one festival recently.

The 100-room property Mercure, part of French group Accor, is located in the Sriperumbudur-Oragadam industrial area.

Celebrating its fourth anniversary, Mercure Chennai organised the 'Art Brunch Festival'

last month. The art exhibition was on the theme 'Here, There and Everywhere', depicting the history of transportation.

The show traced the concept of mobility starting from the Vahanas from ancient Indian mythology to the ancient modes of transportation using animals and log boats up to the technological marvels we see today.

According to Rahul Nama, general manager, Mercure Chennai Sriperumbudur, there is pent-up demand as domestic travel restrictions have been removed.

"The business and leisure travel sectors are picking up. As there is still work from home regime, there are guests who come with their family and do their office work," Amit Kumar, general manager of the luxury beach resort Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort and Spa told IANS.

According to Kumar, the domestic MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) segment has picked up with several corporates from other parts of the country booking rooms at Sheraton Grand. "Sixty per cent of our room nights last month was from the corporate sector," Kumar added.

However, the window lead time for book-

ing for the MICE segment has come down, he added.

Kumar also added that once international travel is opened up fully then the leisure travel within the country may stagnate as people would like to go overseas.

He said the 129-room Sheraton Grand had an occupancy ratio of about 75 per cent last month and the same levels are expected in April. Referring to the upcoming Chess Olympiad in Mahabalipuram near Chennai, Kumar said star hotels in the East Coast Road and Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR) will be full from July 25 to August 9.

"As a result, people wanting to stay along the coast may go to Puducherry. The hotels in Puducherry may benefit then."

On hiring trends, Kumar said the hospitality sector is recruiting people but finding the right talent is tough. The industry is tapping into its database and contacting their old employees who had lost their jobs due to Covid-19 lockdown. "The people are not coming at pre-Covid costs. Pre-Covid the cost was different and now it is different. Further, people have changed their mindset as some do not want to come back to the sector."

## Zomato shares decline as CCI probes alleged unfair business practices

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS):** Shares of food-aggregator Zomato declined on Tuesday after the Competition Commission of India ordered a thorough investigation into the conduct of online food delivery platforms Zomato and Swiggy. The two online food delivery platforms are allegedly involved in delayed payment cycles and exorbitant commissions.

At 3.26 p.m., the shares traded at ₹ 83.75, down 2.9 per cent.

Following a complaint from the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), the CCI said that it is of the view that there exists a prima facie case with respect to some of the conduct of Zomato and Swiggy, "which requires an investigation by the director general (DG), to determine whether the conduct of platforms have resulted

in contravention of the provisions". The NRAI represents over 50,000 restaurant operators across the country. The NRAI had alleged that the commissions that are charged from restaurants are "unviable" and "are to the tune of 20 per cent to 30 per cent, which are extremely exorbitant".

Post the CCI's order, Zomato said in a regulatory filing to the exchanges that it will continue to work closely with the Commission to assist them with their investigation and explain to the regulator why all of its practices are in compliance with competition laws and do not have any adverse effect on competition in India.

"We intend to promptly comply with any recommendations given to us by the Hon'ble Commission," it further said in the filing.

## Jio-bp, TVS Motor Company collaborate

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS):** Aviation fuel supplier Jio-bp and two-and-three wheeler manufacturer TVS Motor Company on Tuesday announced that the two entities have agreed to explore the creation of a robust electric vehicles charging infrastructure for both electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers in the country.

Under this proposed partnership, the customers of TVS electric vehicles are expected to get access to the widespread charging network of Jio-bp, which is also open to other vehicles. Leveraging the strength of both companies, the said partnership aims at creating a regular AC charging network and a DC fast-charging network. Jio-bp is operating its EV charging and swapping stations under the brand Jio-bp pulse. "With the Jio-bp pulse app, customers can easily find stations nearby and charge their electric vehicles," a joint statement said. TVS Motor Company has made significant strides towards developing new electric mobility products and related technologies. Since its launch, the company has already sold over 12,000 units of its high-speed electric scooter TVS iQube.

"The company has committed ₹ 1,000 crore towards EV business, a good portion of which has already been invested," the joint statement said, adding that the company is readying a complete portfolio of two and three-wheelers in the range of 5-25kW which will be in the market within the next 24 months.

## AFFIDAVIT

I, Pratiba Dewri, Date of Birth 10-02-1974, W/O- Sunti Deka, resident of Vill-Eragoon, Ward no. 6, P.O.-Morigaon, P. S. - Morigaon, Dist.-Morigaon, Assam, have corrected my name from Pratibha Deka to Pratiba Dewri through a notary public at Morigaon court. In my voter ID, vide EPIC No. CTH2250157 where my name is recorded as Pratiba Dewri. Pratiba Dewri and Pratibha Deka is the same and one person.

## VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM AT RPF POSTS & OUT POSTS

**E-Tender Notice No. Sr.DEE/LMG/ 25 of 2021-22, dated: 30-03-2022.** E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN-1. Tender No: EL/LMG/21-22/08-RT; Name of work:** Provision of electrical works for video surveillance system at RPF posts & Out Posts (VSS) at 14 stations of Lumding Division. **Tender Value:** ₹47,42,394.30; **Earnest Money:** ₹4,900.00; **E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 22-04-2022 and Opened at 15:30 hrs. on 22-04-2022.** The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 22-04-2022 in website [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in)

## Sr. DEE/Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

"Serving Customers with a Smile"

## PROVISION OF TEA/MILK STALLS AT STATIONS

**E-Tender Notice No.: C-LMG-270 to 275-2022; Date: 31-03-2022.** E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN-1. Tender No: C-LMG-270-2022; Annual Reserve Price: ₹3,28,500/-; Earnest Money: ₹34,200**



# BTC Legislative Assembly passes budget for 2022-23

*Budget hailed as pragmatic and pro-people*

**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, April 5:** The Budget session of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) concluded on Tuesday with the passing of ₹ 3271.31 crore budget against the estimated receipt of ₹ 3157.6633 crore with a deficit amount of ₹ 113.65 crore for the financial year 2022-23 for the Bodoland Territorial Council districts.

The BTC Budget session was chaired by Katiram Boro, Speaker of Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTCLA) and was held at BTCLA House, Bodofa Nwgrw in Kokrajhar.

The budget of BTC for the year 2022-23 presented by CEM Pramod Boro who is also holding the finance portfolio was hailed by leaders of the ruling party and the Opposition as well. There was no debate on the budget other than implementation of schemes, planning and liabilities.

Notably, on Monday, Boro presented a normal budget estimate of Rs 3271.31 crore against the estimated receipt of ₹ 3157.6633 crore with deficit amount of ₹ 113.65 crore for the financial year 2022-23 for consideration of the house.

In his budget speech, he informed that the budget allocation for the year 2021-22 includes consolidated State Owned Priority Development (SOPD), Assistance to BTC for Infrastructure development.

In his speech after the approval



of the budget, the deputy chief of BTC Gabinda Chandra Basumatary said the BTC budget for 2022-23 was pragmatic and pro-people as many new proposals have been included for the overall benefit of the people. He said important departments were given maximum priorities for sustainable development. Since it is the council budget, it is a minimum budget but an optimum to meet the target, he said adding that education, PWD, health and agriculture were given maximum importance for the larger interest of people.

MCLA of UPPL Sanjay Swargiary said the budget is significant for new changes in the region. He said the budget had a target to cover at least 1000 km of road in the BTC region which is going to be a record. He also said there had been no connecting

roads in Udalguri and UT road by previous government had not connected important towns of Udalguri district.

Meanwhile, Opposition BPF party members have expressed their dissatisfaction over the Budget tabled for the BTC.

Opposition BPF party members have put queries on various developmental aspects in the BTC districts and that led to a healthy discussion over the Budget presentation.

BTR CEM Pramod Boro said that the budget was prepared keeping in mind the development of the region.

BPF MCLA and leader of Opposition Derhasat Basumatary in his speech said the budget was overall good for the people but the council should concentrate on the execution of schemes and proposals. He said many propos-

als and assurances have been given in the budget and that they are also ready to co-operate for the success of schemes for implementation. He, however, said the government should maintain transparency keeping the Opposition in faith about the planning and execution.

Pramod Boro thanked all the executive members, MCLAs of both ruling and Opposition and officers for extending their support for the approval of the budget. He said they failed to make a satisfactory budget due to a drop in the economy because of the Covid pandemic but this year they tried to reform it with a more inclusive strategy. He said they faced many hurdles to bring more development in the region because of ₹ 2300 crore liabilities made by previous government but despite this fact they are working with renewed strategy and assured that within 2-3 months the martyr families of Bodoland movement will be given an ex-gratia of ₹ 5 lakh each.

Boro said there had been liabilities of Rs 389 crore in the discretionary fund, over ₹ 900 in PWD and big liabilities in WPT&BC, GAD, education, agriculture, water resources, etc. He also said that the present government has been trying to provincialise the venture schools of BTC through clause 6.1 of BTR accord as venture schools have vast contributions for giving education in backward regions.

## AJYCP stages protest against rising prices of essential commodities

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, April 5:** The Nagaon district unit of Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) staged a protest against the rising prices of petroleum products as well as other essential commodities across the state in front of the office of deputy commissioner's office in Nagaon on Tuesday.

Over a hundred protesters from the students' organisation participated in the demonstration and reverberated the air of the small town with various slogans and strongly criticised the saffron led Union government at the centre and BJP led alliance government in the state for failure in controlling the prices of those petroleum products as well as other essential commodities in the market.

The leadership of the district body of the organisation also criticised the role of the chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma saying that the saffron party snatched up the reins of power with an electoral promise to save the 'Jati, Mati aur Bhet' of the indigenous Assamese people. But after being voted to power, the same leader of the ruling party turned a deaf ear towards the burning issues of those indigenous people of the state, the leadership of the district unit alleged.

The organisation also warned that it would intensify massive protests in the days to come if the government fails to control the prices of petroleum products as well as other essential commodities in the state.

Following the demonstration, the agitators of the organisation submitted a memorandum to the chief minister through the deputy commissioner, Nagaon.

Central publicity secretary Pabin Chandra Das, district president and secretary of the organisation respectively Deepmoni Bora and Pragjyoti



Bona, adviser Diganta Das and Mahendra Kalita were among the participants who carried out the demonstration on Tuesday, a release added.

**BISWANATH CHARIALI:** As per the call of the central committee of Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), the Biswanath committee of the students' body submitted a memorandum to the chief minister of Assam condemning the state government over the uncontrollable price rise of necessary commodities. The students' body demanded the state government to reduce the prices of commodities as early as possible. The district committee had submitted the memorandum through the deputy commissioner of Biswanath here on Tuesday. It was attended by Debarat Medhi, president, Diganta Barua, secretary along with Kamaljit Dutta, Nasir Ahmed, Amarjyoti Bora, Priyanku Deka and Biswajit Das.

**DIBRUGARH:** The Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) on Tuesday staged a protest demonstration in Dibrugarh against the skyrocketing price of fuel and other essential commodities in the state.

The protesters led by AJYCP Dibrugarh district president Priyabrata Gohain took out a rally to the deputy

commissioner's office. Holding banners and placards, the AJYCP members raised slogans against the BJP government for failing to curb soaring prices of fuel and other essential commodities in the state.

The agitators came down heavily on the Centre for failing to curb rising fuel prices and accused them of being a mute spectator in the present situation.

They also accused chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of being oblivious to the sufferings of the common people. The organisation further threatened to launch a series of intensive agitations across the state if the government doesn't initiate steps to control the prices of fuel and other daily needs.

"We demand the immediate intervention of the Centre in checking the skyrocketing price of petrol and diesel. The prices of essential commodities too have shot through the roof due to the rise in fuel price. The common man is being hit hard and they are struggling to survive. The BJP came to power promising good days for the people but they have systematically destroyed the middle and lower class by their anti-people policies. Prices need to come down soon or else there will be huge agitations across the state," AJYCP Dibrugarh district president Priyabrata Gohain said.

## Former MLA Chandi Basumatary joins UPPL

**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, April 5:** Former MLA of Tamulpur LAC, Chandi Basumatary, ex-BTC executive member Christostam Tudu, social activist Uttam Brahma and three other BPF leaders joined the UPPL party at a programme held at UPPL central office in Kokrajhar on Tuesday.

UPPL president Pramod Boro who is also BTR CEM, BTR deputy CEM Gabinda Chandra Basumatary, senior UPPL leaders welcomed and offered warm felicitation to the new members.

Notably, the ruling UPPL party has been reigning the BTR government under the leadership of Pramod Boro under the banner of UPPL-BJP-GSP alliance in Bodoland Territorial Region and alliance partner in the state under the BJP AGP UPPL alliance.

Presently, UPPL have 7 MLAs and one Rajya Sabha MP in the Parliament. Boro said that his party has been emphasising towards the welfare and integration of the society since its inception. BTC deputy chief executive member Basumatary said that former MLA and ex-BTC executive member Tudu formally joined the UPPL party in presence of the UPPL president Pramod Boro. He said that many new members from different parties and organisations are joining the party.

## New ATTSA body formed

**HT Correspondent**  
**BISWANATH CHARIALI, April 5:** The new primary body of All Tea Tribes' Students' Association (ATTSA) under Biswanath branch of ATTSA was formed at Dhuli on Tuesday. The Dhuli primary branch was formed in a public meeting held at Dhuli LP School with Mahesh Satry in the chair. The primary committee of ATTSA was formed with Ashish Hasa Puri as president and Subhash Tanti as secretary along with 21 executive members.

## NFR to run bi-weekly summer special train between Guwahati and Kolkata



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, April 5:** The Northeast Frontier Railway has decided to run a bi-weekly superfast summer special train between Guwahati and Kolkata to clear the extra rush of passengers. The train will run between April 9 and May 29.

Train No. 02518 (Guwahati - Kolkata Special) will depart from Guwahati railway station at 21:00 hours on every Wednesday and Saturday from April 9 till May 28. The summer special train will serve for a total of 15 trips and will run via Goalpara, New Bongaigaon, New Jalpaiguri, Malda Town and Nabadwip Dham railway stations to reach Kolkata around 15:00 hours next day.

Train No. 02517 (Kolkata - Guwahati Special) will start its journey from Kolkata railway station at 21:40 hours on every Thursday and Sunday from April 10 till May 29. The summer special train will cover a total of 15 trips from Kolkata and will run via similar routes in a reverse direction to reach its destination of Guwahati railway station at 15:55 hours next day.

The summer special train will consist of 15 coaches. There will be 5 AC 3-Tier coaches, 6 sleeper class coaches, 1 AC First Class cum AC 2-Tier sleeper coach, 1 general second class coach apart from 2 SLR coaches.

The details of stoppages and timing of this train is available on IRCTC website and through NTES. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

## Nagaon DTO collects ₹ 46.85 cr

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, April 5:** The District Transport Office, Nagaon collected ₹ 46,85,53,898 as transport revenue in the fiscal year of 2021-22 out of its total target amount of ₹ 50 crore. Significantly, the total collection in the month of March, 2022 by the department concerned was ₹ 7,86,29,083 while the department collected ₹ 80,90,338 in a single day on March 31 last.

## ATM fraudster arrested at Haiborgaon

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, April 5:** A female identified as Kulsuma Begum of Lahorighat in Morigaon district was arrested on Monday by the police of Haiborgaon TOP while she tried to exchange ATM cards with an elderly man near Haiborgaon State Bank.

Police immediately seized 4 ATM cards and one handbag from her possession, sources said, adding further that she usually used to swap ATM cards and get ATM pin numbers from elderly victims and use them to loot their money.

## FBBWAA welcomes Himanta's statement in cabinet

**HT Correspondent**  
**MARGHERITA, April 5:** The federation of Barua Buddhist Welfare Association of Assam (FBBWAA) welcomed CM Himanta Biswa Sarma's recent statement in the Assam Cabinet with regards to the recognition of minorities in the state. Notably, CM Sarma also pitched for availing the schematic benefit of the Minority Development Fund granted by the Minority Ministry both at the Union and the state as a matter of appreciation. Subhash Barua, president and Sibul Talukdar, secretary general of Federation of Barua Buddhist Welfare As-

sociation of Assam (FBBWAA) said that Minority meant the population of the area under either Legislative or Administrative jurisdiction. "We the Magh Barua, an indigenous inhabitant of Assam, and our organisation do hereby extend our warm support to the iconic statement of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. There is a need for a policy to extend a discreet survey by the District Authority of Territory of India/Assam to evaluate the actual population structure of the people who are residing in their respective administrations, as mentioned by the chief minister," added Talukdar.

## Varsity weeks generate positive, vibrant campus life: AWU VC

**HT Correspondent**  
**JORHAT, April 5:** Vice Chancellor of Assam Women's University Dr Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar on Tuesday underlined the importance of annual students' weeks in generating a positive and vibrant campus life. She was addressing the gathering at Sriha 22 (wish, enthusiasm), the annual varsity week of the University (AWU) which began at its campus field at Rowrah, Jorhat on Tuesday.

In the inaugural address, the Registrar of Assam Women's University, Tapan Kumar Gohain, welcomed the guests and gave a brief narration about the journey of AWU. The Registrar along with two student volunteers also lit the Olympic fire.

The event started with a speech by the chief guest Dr Bidyut Chandan Deka, VC of Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, in which he highlighted the need and rele-



vance of sports and cultural activities in heightening creativity in studies and other academic activities. He urged the students to be self-dependent and encouraged them towards entrepreneurship in a rapidly changing world.

Dr Kajal Saikia, deputy manager (HR) of Numaligarh Refinery Limited in his deliberation as the guest of honour spoke on challenges and opportunities for a young institution like Assam

Women's University in shaping the upcoming educational scenario in the region while emphasising the need for Sriha in our personal lives. The highlight of the first day's activities was the March Past event where all the fifteen departments of the university participated. The top prize for March Past went to the Physiotherapy Department of the university. The varsity week of Assam Women's University will conclude on April 9.

## National Health Fest for divyangjans held in Jorhat

**HT Correspondent**  
**JORHAT, April 5:** A national health fest for Divyangjans - We Care was held for three districts: Jorhat, Golaghat and Sivasagar, at the Jorhat District Sports Association ground here on Tuesday.

The event, organised by Special Olympics Bharat Assam in collaboration with the Social Welfare department of the Assam government, was inaugurated by state Finance and Social Welfare minister Ajanta Neog, who was present as the chief guest.

The fest was organised coinciding with Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

Hailing the initiative, the minister said that the primary aim of holding the fest was to provide a platform to the specially-abled children to show their talent and for their holistic development.

She hoped that the health check up of the specially-abled children would be done and awareness on consumption of healthy and nutritious food would be imparted to the guardian.

Another aspect on which Neog emphasised was registration of the specially-abled children on the app 'Swavilamban' to avail the unique disability card. The minister said that the card is given to those children suffering from any of the 23 disabilities determined by the Centre and is essential to avail the benefits granted to the specially-abled by the Centre.

Later, while talking to media persons, she said that she would urge the chief minister and the Sports minister to make the stadiums accessible for the specially-abled ones.

Earlier, the welcome address was delivered by state Social Welfare principal secretary Mukesh Sahu.

## People gear up for Rongali Bihu in Tezpur



**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, April 5:** The people in and around Tezpur town are all set to celebrate Rongali Bihu with much pomp and gaiety despite a number of challenges including post pandemic situation, soaring price rise etc., for celebrating the much loved Assamese festival to the hilt. People here are busy making rice preparations while the Bihu Committees have left no stone unturned to celebrate the festival in a spirit of harmony and togetherness. Perhaps it goes without saying that following the Covid-19 pandemic situation during the last two years, people of the region couldn't celebrate the Rongali Bihu to their heart's content. However, this time as the government has

withdrawn Covid-19 protocols after improvement in the situation, people from every walk of life are ready to enjoy the Bohag Bihu.

The major Rongali Bihu committees in Tezpur town including Ushanagar Rongali Pathar Anchalik Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Uttar Tezpur Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Madhya Tezpur Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Luitpar Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Dakshin-Paschim Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Polo-field Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Uttar Pub Tezpur Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Mazgaon Bihu Sanmilan, Tezpur Central Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Joymati Pathar Bihu Sanmilan among others, which have existed for over 50 years are all gearing up to glorify the festival

in a befitting manner.

Meanwhile, these Bihu committees that have been vibrant since their inception in promoting Assamese culture and heritages, after the halt of their socio-cultural activities in the last couple of years due to the Covid-prompted situation are now seen busy preparing for the upcoming Rongali Bihu, the festival of joy and prosperity.

Upon contacting, president of Ushanagar Rangoli Pathar Anchalik Rongali Bihu Sanmilan, Dilip Kumar Kakati, secretary of their sister organisation Rongali Maina Parijat, Sumi Phukan said that like in the past many years, they have taken initiative on conducting a month long Bihu dance and dhol playing and training workshop to propagate the rich Assamese folk culture among the new generation, who tend to forget the Assamese culture and have adopted many forms of western culture. Around 100 children are participating in the workshop. The organisers mentioned that the workshop is conducted every year with a motto to save the Assamese culture and propagate its high moral values among the children of the new generation. Tezpur AASU is also organising a workshop on Bihu dance and dhol playing at Tezpur Swahid Bakari.

On the other hand, in the Tezpur University campus Dr Biren Das, Registrar, Tezpur University inaugurated a Bihu dance workshop on Tuesday at the university community hall by the Tezpur University Non-teaching Employees Association with a weeklong programme.



## Invitation of Applications for the National Awards for Outstanding services in the field of Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drugs) Abuse, 2022.

Department of Social Justice & Empowerment confers National Awards on 26th June, 2022 on the occasion of International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The applications are invited for the National Awards for the outstanding Services in the Field of Prevention of alcoholism and Substance (Drug) Abuse.

The interested organizations/ persons may refer to the website of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment ([www.socialjustice.nic.in](http://www.socialjustice.nic.in)) and at e-Anudaan (<https://grants.msje.gov.in/ngo-login>) for categories eligibility conditions and other relevant details. The proposals shall be submitted to Shri Rajeev Kumar, Under Secretary to the Govt. of India (Tel No: 011-23385171, email: [rajeev.swati@nic.in](mailto:rajeev.swati@nic.in)) on or before 20.04.2022



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*A thousand words will not leave so deep an impression as one deed. - Henrik Ibsen*

## Lanka eyeing change of guard?

It is not well in Sri Lanka, as the people seem to be losing confidence in their government. After the recent economic crisis, the country has now also plunged into a political crisis. On Monday, news reports said that the entire Sri Lankan Cabinet has resigned. There were also rumours that Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa had resigned or would resign soon but his office denied the rumours. Another rumour that India had sent its military personnel to help the Sri Lankan authorities maintain peace and order was also denied. Various rumours are doing the rounds in an environment where President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has imposed a state of emergency, banned people from coming out of their homes from Friday evening to Monday morning, and briefly suspended social media. Interestingly, Sri Lankan economic crisis and people's protests leading to a general emergency in the country have not found much coverage in the international media, which remains preoccupied with the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict.

As has been widely reported, members of the Rajapaksa family are occupying top positions in the country's political leadership. The President, the Prime Minister, and the finance minister are all brothers. There are more Rajapakshas in the government and the Sri Lankan Parliament. And, they have been there for a long time. For example, current Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa who assumed power in 2019 had been the President from 2005 to 2015. During his tenure as the President, Sri Lanka waged a conclusive war on LTTE. Notably, his regime is marked by gross violations of human rights and infringement of press freedom. So far, the Rajapaksa family has been able to rule the country without much trouble as they were using the China card against India. All in all, the Rajapaksa brothers must share some blame for pushing the country into the deep economic mess that it finds itself today.

Nayib Bukele, president of the fifth-poorest country in Central America El Salvador, last year announced the onboarding of bitcoin as the legal tender. To beat IMF's coercion for a USD 1 billion loan, Bukele announced USD 1 billion worth of bitcoin bonds. The point is a President or a Prime Minister has to act on behalf of the people and if it takes mocking the world or breaking a few taboos and glass ceilings, they are expected to do so, in a style that Bukele has illustrated by adopting bitcoin. What could be the road ahead for Sri Lanka now? The outbreak of Covid has left many countries with serious economic problems. Take, for example, countries whose economies depended on the sale of crude oil. All of them devised new strategies to overcome the odds brought by the pandemic. The Sri Lankan economy needs to be reimagined and the tourism concepts need to be revisited. But does Mahinda Rajapaksa have so much drive and flexibility left in him to imagine these projects and make them happen? More importantly, will the people allow him to continue in power until then? A regime change promises new energy, dynamism, and fresh perspective. Perhaps, sensing this, his son Namal Rajapaksa has sounded a discordant note and protested the ban on social media by his uncle, President Gotabaya. It's about time that the patriarchs in Sri Lanka's ruling family gave way to the new generation of leaders.

# The fall and fall of Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh since 2014 elections

A degenerated ideology will ultimately give rise to a perverse electro-political system and create a deviant political vacuum. Notwithstanding the BJP grabbing the power in Uttar Pradesh in the recent assembly election, the state suffers with an acute political vacuum. An insight into the nature of the political vacuum makes it obvious that there is little possibility getting this repaired in near future.

The saffron leaders claim that the shift of the dalit voters, especially the Jatavs, the committed support base of Mayawati, to the BJP had started in 2019. In this election, they moved in significant number. Though UP has dominance of the upper caste feudal lords, the Dalits and the anti-BJP forces dictated the politics till 2020.

The political decline of these two forces witnessed the resurrection of the feudal and junkers as the new ruling elites. During this period the feudal lords who formed the base of the Congress shifted their loyalty to the BJP. The Dalits too started shifting their allegiance to the BJP. Two antagonistic and inimical forces started coming closer.

During the last five years almost all the founder members of the BSP, those who were handpicked and inducted in the party by Kanshi Ram had to leave or expelled from the party by Mayawati. In 2019 while some joined the BJP, in 2022 at least 12 senior Jatav and Dalit leaders joined the Samajwadi Party.

Throwing out these senior Jatav leaders from the BSP started in 2014 when Mayawati gave the call for united front of Dalits and Brahmins. The person who gave a shape to this slogan was none else than Satish Mishra the close confidant of Mayawati. Her call for unity of Brahmins and Dalits panicked the Dalits.

After dictating the Uttar Pradesh politics for 40 years, BSP was completely washed out in 2022 assembly election. In 2017 it had won 19 seats in the assembly polls and had managed a vote share of over 21 per cent. But in 2022 the BSP was restricted to single digits with a vote share of 12.73 per cent.

It is quite intriguing to comprehend what made the BSP to perform so poor; a party which had bagged 206 seats and a vote share of 30.43 per cent and formed the government in 2007. It is an open secret that since 2014 Mayawati's core vote shifted towards SP and BJP. She failed to protect her vote base from drifting specifically for two factors. The Dalits, core voter of BSP felt that for the first time they have got some benefit from welfare schemes of the saffron govern-



ment, secondly Mayawati refusing to open front against BJP and even demystifying opposition parties as enemies of the dalits, particularly the Samajwadi Party, disillusioned the core voters.

Most of prominent leaders who had strong mass base, like Indrajit Saroj, Lalji Verma, Ram Achal Rajbhar, Om Prakash Rajbhar and Tribhuvan Dutt, who helped shape the BSP, this time left the party for SP.

Experts feel that ED and

CBI framing her brother at the instigation of the BJP scared her to take fight against BJP. Yet another reason for the shifting of loyalty has been her "hasty" step of breaking the alliance with the SP after the 2017 assembly election. Only a couple of days back, Mayawati accused the Muslims of betraying the BSP and no voting for it. But she refrained from accusing the Dalits for shifting their loyalty to the BJP. Nevertheless a question is being put to Mayawati that she must explain the reason why the Dalits and Jatav deserted the BSP, which they formed under the leadership of Kanshi Ram. It is an open secret that Mayawati never supported the Muslims and stood in their favour. She even openly called upon Dalits to vote for BJP.

Her coming to power in 2007 witnessed her political eclipse. Expert feel that if she had not made a tactical shift and evolved the formula of social engineering to attract Brahmins to a party which had a massive Dalit base, she might not have faced the decline. The dalits felt betrayed and alienated. While they were scared of soft attitude towards the BJP, the party diluting its hard dalit ideological line was seen as endangering the existence of the Dalits. Brahmins

have been dominant feudal caste in the state and they are known to perpetrate torture and atrocities on the Dalits.

Uttar Pradesh, particularly the districts Deoria, Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Chandauli, Sonbhadra and Mirzapur located in the eastern region of the state had in the eighties and early nineties witnessed volatile left movement. It was during this period the state witnessed resurrection of Naxalite movement in the state.

The left parties even in this caste dominated state won significant number of seats. But unfortunately the left succumbed to the caste cauldron. As in other states it became the victim of caste and failed to organise a peasant struggle though the eastern UP has been most fertile area. For such movement.

The Left parties had sought to join a broad anti-BJP alliance for the UP polls but that did not happen. Akhilesh Yadav abhorred them. Even a small seat sharing could have brought about significant change. They were left with no alternative. Despite deciding to go it alone now, they fielded candidates on a limited number of seats to avoid a division in anti-BJP votes as such a split would be to the disadvantage of the Opposition parties. CPI state secretary Girish said the Left parties had decided to go it alone after other political parties did not respond to their overtures for the anti-BJP alliance.

The Left movement is said to have become weak in the post "mandal-kamandal" era and the left parties have ceased to make an electoral mark in the politics of the state since then. They failed to send a single candidate to the Vidhan Sabha in 2007, 2012 and 2017 assembly elections though the Left parties have organisational presence in most

of the districts.

The Left is contemplating to revive its dwindling fortunes in Uttar Pradesh. However, past election figures reveal that the Left parties in the state have been on a downward slide since the Ram Temple movement, which had polarised a large section of the Hindu votes. Communist Party of India has been participating in the UP poll since 1951 as a national party, while CPM made its electoral debut in UP in 1967. In 1951, CPI fielded its candidates from 43 assembly seats, and could not win a single seat. As many as 38 of its candidates were forced to forfeit their deposits.

It was 1974 assembly election that the Left parties took a giant leap forward and claimed 18 seats in all. Out of 40 candidates, fielded by the CPI, 16 romped home, and the vote share for the first time crossed 25% mark (25.57%). Udal retained his seat from Kolaslah, while two candidates of CPM out of 36 fielded by it also won. The 1977 assembly poll saw Mitrasen Yadav emerging on the political canvass of UP, as he won from Milkpur assembly seat in Faizabad on a CPI ticket.

The 1993 assembly election was the first to be held after the Ram Temple-Babri episode. The temple movement had polarised the votes in UP, and this was evident on the dipping numbers of the Left parties. While, CPI won three seats, the CPM could manage only a single seat. The CPI emerged victorious at Kolasla (Udal), Mohammadabad (Afzal Ansari) and Milkpur (Mitrasen Yadav). CPM's Ramsroop Singh defeated Rajender Prasad of the BJP by 5,912 votes in Najibabad in Bijnor district.

The downslide of both the parties continued even in 2002 assembly election, as CPI could not win even a single seat, while CPM won 2 seats out of six it contested from. The Left movement is struggling for survival in the face of a stiff challenge posed by communal and casteist politics in the state. The Left movement in the state has been marginalised with none of its members entering the portals of the Vidhan Sabha in 2007 and 2012 elections, as the Left parties faced a total rout.

Notwithstanding the reverses suffered in the last two elections, all the Left parties, including CPI, CPI-M, Revolutionary Socialist Party and Forward Bloc, have together fielded candidates on 140 seats of the total 403 Assembly constituencies in UP this time. Cultural backwardness, lack of understanding of political ideology and failure to identifying the class enemy have been primary reasons for the degeneration of the left forces and BSP in Uttar Pradesh. (IPA Service)

## Doubling farmers' income in the country by 2022 is a distant dream

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

Modi's doubling farmers income by 2022 has miserably failed. There were many hurdles in the way, and chief among them was the faulty and unreasonable policies of the Centre itself. It resulted into a situation in which tomatoes were being sold at ₹ 3 per kg and ginger at ₹ 5 per kg, even leads the farmers not to pluck their produce as the plucking cost will be much more than the selling price.

This sad observation have been made by the Department related Parliamentary standing committee or Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing in its recent report submitted in the Lok Sabha after discussion on the Demand for Grants. The Committee said that the same case happens with onion also. As these foods are the daily requirement of the citizens of the country, the committee felt that the Ministry should immediately establish cold chain by identifying the villages where there was a large production but the benefit of income does not reach the farmers as they are forced to sell at a cost which is very pathetic.

The committee observed that despite the production of large scale agriculture produce in India, Food Inflation and Food Security issue were major concerns since they affect the basic need for the citizen to have sufficient healthy and affordable food. It was pointed out in the report that the Harvest and Post-Harvest losses of major agricultural produce was estimated to be ₹ 92,651 crore at national level as per the study conducted by CIPHET, Ludhiana while most of the population in the country are under-nourished leading to several health issues as they are not able to get the food at affordable prices and this reveals loopholes in Post Production Process and Cold Chain Management.

Though the Food Processing Industry Sector has reportedly been growing at an average Annual Growth Rate of 11.18 per cent and provides 12.38 per cent employment of all the registered factories in the country, the Ministry of Food Processing Industry did not spend the amount it was allocated in the last three years since 2019-20.

The Ministry had proposed an amount ₹ 2,200 crore (against the spending of ₹ 845.54 crore), ₹ 1,232.94 crore (against the spending of ₹ 1,152.68 crore) and ₹ 3,490.07 crore (against the spending of ₹ 862.60 crore), respectively but only an amount of ₹ 1,042.79 crore, ₹ 1,247.42 crore and ₹ 1,304.12 crore were allocated for the years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, respectively. The Committee also noted that for the year 2022-23 ₹ 3,564.92 crore has been proposed whereas only ₹ 2,941.99 crore had been allocated. The committee therefore recommended that the Ministry should chalk out its Plan of Action in advance for cent percent utilization of scarce resources allocated and look into the issues/challenges.

With regard to all the plan Schemes, especially the Food storage and Warehousing and North-Eastern Areas, there has been consistently negative variation for the years 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, respectively, as compared to the previous years. The reason was, as per the reply of the Ministry, receipt of inadequate proposals under mandatory allocations like North-Eastern Region (NER), Schedule Cast Sub Plan

(SCSP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), however the Committee found the reply unacceptable. The receipt of inadequate proposals is a recurring problem appearing year after year and the Ministry of Food Processing Industries is remaining only as a mute spectator, the Committee observed.

Though the Ministry of Food Processing Industries runs several schemes, all States and Union Territories are not covered. It is due to the fact that the schemes of the Ministry are Demand Driven and they are implemented from wherever demand is received. The committee has asked the government to chalk out the Plan of Action and be ever ready to implement its schemes in all States and Union Territories. The committee felt that if all the regions were developed, it would ultimately lead doubling of the farmer's income. Mega Food Park is one of the flagship programmes of the Centre which is being run since 2008. The committee was totally dissatisfied to find that only 41 Mega Food Parks had been sanctioned since its launch, and only 22 of them had become operational. This shows that the response for this scheme is not very much forthcoming in spite of 14 years of its launching and the decision of the Centre to supplant the scheme with Agro Processing Clusters. The Committee observed that the Project has become a white elephant for the Government.

Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure scheme was also launched in 2008. In 2012, Dr Saumitra Chaudhary Committee had estimated that the country required Cold Storage for 61 million tonnes, while the gap was estimated to be 29 million tonnes. Further as per the Study carried out by National Centre for Cold Chain Development (NCCD) in August, 2015 the requirement of Cold Chain for Integrated Pack Houses was 70,000, Refer Trucks 62,000, Cold Store (Bulk & Distribution hub) 35 million tonnes and Ripening Chambers 9,000. The committee noted that the funds allocated for the purpose are underutilized.

The committee also noted underutilization in several other schemes, and many of them are suffering from sluggish implementation. The Ministry should stick to the time schedule and full utilization of funds allocated, the Committee observed. Infrastructure development for Agro Processing Clusters scheme was specifically mentioned in this regard which was launched in 2017. The Centre approved 68 projects but only 12 have been completed since inception of the scheme. This shows non-satisfactory planning by the Ministry as also the non-satisfactory implementation, it was observed. (IPA Service)



## Reawakening of the saffron roots

By: M R Lulu

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) once again proved its uninterrupted and indubitable proximity towards what its political adversaries call an aggressive push of the Hindutva agenda. This time it is about the inclusion of the Bhagavad Gita in the school syllabus in the party ruled state of Gujarat. Karnataka, another BJP ruled state recently witnessed upheavals in the name of Hijab. The Hijab controversy was scoffed at as a deliberate weapon that the BJP consciously brought out from its Hindutva basket, propelling an issue well before its bastion Uttar Pradesh went to polls. The issue remained in discussion for months until the appellants were told by the court to stop unnecessary commotions and directing them to fall in line with the democratic principles of the state. The Karnataka high court candidly made its observation enlightening the minority community, by pronouncing its verdict that the Hijab had never been an integral part of Islam. For the critics it is the BJP's saffron agenda but the party is unaffected by the hubbubs of the liberals on the streets and now it has come out with a different issue. The party steered another controversy by revamping the education system with the inclusion of the Gita which it probably thinks would bring about greater understanding among the children about India and its spiritual heritage. But the writing on the wall is incredibly indicative to a motivated push keeping an eye on the forthcoming state elections in Gujarat. A little dose of dharmic values to the young generation, according to the party, would do greater good to any society but a complexity such as India would reciprocate to everything with a deceptive note as it has deeply been entangled in the intricacies of secularism. And secularism, except for accepting different faiths with equal benchmarks, does everything that it can; to disregard, disorient and disproportionately demean everything that is part of human life. Concerns are genuine as to why the party that is in power is taking strides in the direction of genuinely appeasing a particular community and disregarding the emotions of the other, probably by hurting their sentiments and beliefs.

The country had witnessed aggression in the name of cow vigilantism by a bunch of transgressors vandalizing the spiritual ethos that India stood for generations. Dharma or righteousness is the core principle that the Gita exhorts through its seven hundred verses. The central idea of the Gita runs through an intense friendly conversation that happens between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the middle of the battlefield. It envisages and urges the followers to take one among the three paths that it advocates, the Karma yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga which, if simply translated could be termed as the path of sincere work, knowledge and devotion. The paths to liberation or salvation or nirvana, according to Gita, is possible through choosing any one of the above three by following its principles diligently. The plight of Arjuna in the battlefield was terrible and disproportionate to his being, a warrior prince, and the discourse that Lord Krishna puts him through reveals the ways in which life should be lived and critically examines the folly of principles that manipulated

people's mind. India and Hinduism are defined as the essence of plurality and the strength it squeezes to survive is from the unity that the plurality ultimately aims at. The idea of pluralism is directly indicating what monism stands for. Essentially, pluralism in India always maintained the impression that "ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti", which means truth is one and people call it by different names. Semitic religions exhorted that there was one spiritual principle that was capable of awarding salvation, possibly discrediting the multiplicity that India offered with more freedom and liberty- undoubtedly, perplexity and animosity taking centerstage and skepticism becoming the villain.

By including the Gita in the syllabus, does the BJP plan to impose its version of Hinduism on others. Implementation to the level of gaining acceptance from all corners would define its purpose and the intention behind the initiative. As a country or a conglomeration of principalities, India remained and still remains to be one in essence and principle mainly due to the values that we propagated from the great epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Nobody can deny the fact that the spiritual essence that India is gaining acceptance across the globe, is mainly due to the secular spiritual values that the Vedas and the Upanishads and the Epics that we have been handed over through generations. Our existence during the British period remained limited to the country of "Brown Sahibs" that Lord Macaulay wanted Indians to be transformed as. He wanted a new education system based on the English culture and spirit substituting the one that traditionally existed in India which taught the world, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", which means the world is one family. The BJP's experimentation, introducing the Gita in school curriculum should explain the manner in which it might complicate the indispensable cord of distrust that it was successful in tying the country with. The party must take sincere efforts to win the hearts of all the stakeholders convincing them the need of such an exercise through which the constitutional concomitance of multiplicity would be strengthened. This should also help to rediscover the spiritual essence of India which is inclusive-

ness in its purest form which nobody, even the immature standards of politics, should be capable of meddling with. Therefore, the party cannot have an underhanded plan to infuse the social supremacy of a particular religion. This would lead to mistrust and friction further.

With most of the Hindus and all the other Indian religions living together with acceptance in India, the presence of a large population of Muslims and Christians with their semitic credentials should also be seen with greater appreciation. The Hindus believe in Karma, the focal factor that they think would determine the destiny and a key to rebirths. This is one of the main tenets that the Gita elaborates at length and an idea that people across the globe are giving attention to. The Biblical maxim "you reap what you sow" is in line with what Lord Krishna propounded to Arjuna saying that it is the Karma that determines what we are destined to land upon. Going further Krishna makes the point clear. He says if the Karma is performed with dedication, the result is bound to be good. The Gita holds the philosophical depth to transform young minds with clarity of vision and the ability to untie the complexity of life. The saffron political patronage of the BJP should not be jumping into making political dividends out of the initiative that it takes to implement the Gita in curriculum. It should handle a complex philosophy such as the Gita with meticulous care. Before the curriculum is revamped in a haste, there should be preparatory exercises by experts to dilute the philosophy into a digestible fashion for the children. With exam-driven minds, the children need proper guidance to deal with the philosophy of the text while the real secular message of the Gita holds the power to strengthen them. The dilemma and the discord that Arjuna went through could hit anyone's life and the Gita offers a solution to those who sincerely seek. The whole theme of practice by the government should not end as a political gimmick making nothing solid out of it. That would break the cohesiveness in the learning atmosphere of schools, making young minds offensive to the life-giving principles available in the holy text. (The author is a freelance journalist/social worker. He can be reached at mrlulu30@gmail.com)





# Air pollution is worsening reproductive health outcomes for women in India – and around the world

By: Disha Shetty

The pandemic is always on the back of Riya Gupta's mind. As a pregnant commuter in Delhi, one of the world's most densely populated cities, she worries about reports that Covid-19 can result in complications and affect her baby's development. But while the sense of urgency around the pandemic recedes, another source of concern looms larger: air pollution.

If Covid-19 is a "direct killer", Gupta, who works in public health communications, calls air pollution "the slow killer".

"I've been coming across research recently on how [air] pollution, specifically in Delhi, would have direct consequences for my child, both in terms of weight and increasing the risk of prematurity," said Gupta. "Given that I'm in my second trimester right now, all of this does scare me a lot."

## A global problem

Gupta's hometown Delhi is the world's most polluted capital, according to data from IQAir, a Swiss company that collects real-time air quality information. The problem is a truly global one – as much as 99% of the world's population breathes in air with pollution levels higher than World Health Organisation's safe limits. But the highest levels are found in poor and developing countries, where most of the seven million annual deaths linked to air pollution are concentrated.

Public health officials have mostly focused so far on respiratory diseases and the impact on young children. With relatively little research available on the impact of air pollution on women's reproductive health, or the different ways in which men and women are exposed, the issue has mostly slipped under their radar.

"Exposure to air pollution during pregnancy is associated with complications or adverse events during pregnancy [e.g., preeclampsia, miscarriage, gestational diabetes, high blood pressure] and adverse birth outcomes such as pre-term birth, low birth weight or in some cases, stillbirth," said Pallavi Pant, a senior scientist at the Boston-based Health Effects Institute. "Some

studies have also linked air pollution with lower fertility rates or depression among pregnant women."

It is not just outdoor air pollution – women in the densely-populated region are also disproportionately hit by high levels of poor-quality air indoors as they tend to be primarily responsible for cooking, and firewood continues to be widely used as a source of cooking fuel, emerging studies show. In India alone, an estimate finds that 0.61 million deaths were attributable to indoor air pollution, though the data was not segregated by gender.

"Lack of access to clean energy also means that women are often responsible for collection of fuelwood, and this takes time away from other productive or recreational tasks," said Pant, a key contributor to the State of the Global Air report, which provides annual analysis of global trends in air quality and its impact on health.

And as indoor air pollution also affects young children, women are saddled with the dual burden of caring for their own health as well as that of a sick child.

Much of this evidence has only emerged in recent years, as availability of data has improved. Climate gains of improving air quality

Pollution levels are significantly higher in much of the developing world. It is worst in South Asia, where in 2021, 18 of the world's 20 most polluted cities were spread across the Indo-Gangetic plain in India and Pakistan. Four of the 10 worst countries for air pollution according to IQAir are in South Asia: Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Nepal.

Here, most people breathe air with pollution levels several dozen times higher than the WHO safe limits, according to the State of the Global Air report 2020 released this March. And not much appears to be changing. The report found that air quality in India and Nepal in particular had shown very little improvement over the past decade.

Existing research estimates the current air pollution could shave off up to a decade from the life expectancy of people in the region. And some



modeling studies suggest improving air quality in South Asia alone would prevent 7% pregnancy losses in the region.

Many of the particulate pollutants that cause air pollution also contribute to the greenhouse effect and global temperature rise, according to the WHO, whose director for public health and environment Dr Maria Neira has, for the past few years, been making the case that the solutions to cleaning up our air will also have clear climate gains.

## Benefits to women go beyond better air quality

Solutions to improve air quality would also have other benefits. Expanded access to clean cooking fuels reduces the need for time-consuming wood and biogas fuel gathering, usually done by women and girls, thus leading to gains in health and gender equality, said Pant.

More broadly, investments in cleaner house-

hold cooking and lighting solutions, including more renewables such as solar electrification and biogas fuel, go hand in hand with expanding energy access, a key United Nations Sustainable Development Goal.

In the meantime, policy makers need to factor in gender differences in exposure levels, said Azra Khan, a programme manager with the cities and transport team at the think tank WRI-India.

Along with breathing in more polluted air in the home, women are in fact more likely to be exposed to air pollution outdoors, she said. One pilot study in India's Bhopal city found women were more likely to walk to work and hence breathe in higher levels of outdoor air pollution during their daily journeys to and from home.

Women engaged in low-paying jobs such as street sweeping, construction and street vending also face high levels of exposure, said Khan, observing that most data on gender inequalities in

air pollution exposures are mainly focused on household air pollution. "But what beyond that, and how is it [air pollution] contributing to their overall health outside of their caregiving responsibilities?" Khan asked. "That data is not there."

Authorities don't factor gender into solutions.

Authorities do not currently factor gender in their solutions. Tanushree Ganguly, an air quality researcher at the Council of Energy, Environment and Water, and her collaborators examined 102 air cleaning plans for Indian cities. She pointed out that though India's National Clean Air Programme refers to the impact of indoor pollution on women and children, the city-level plans do not explicitly look at gender.

"[If] I'm undertaking actions which are aimed at reducing air pollution, they all impact the residents of the city, which of course includes women and children," Ganguly observed.

One of the few initiatives that targets women is a flagship government program on household air pollution. Called Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, it aims to enable rural and poor households to transition to cleaner cooking fuels by providing them with cooking gas cylinders, but has met with limited success and gaps remain.

In terms of ambient air pollution issues, localised strategies such as the erection of smog towers in Delhi also have failed to make an impact. Large scale initiatives supporting transitioning to renewable energy is promising but so far hasn't helped significantly reduce air pollution as the country still heavily relies on coal fuelled thermal power plants.

While people can limit their exposure to air pollution by using air purifiers when indoors, there is not much they can do when outdoors, said Ganguly. Cities will have to find ways to promote clean transportation, improve waste management and reduce dust.

Gupta, who grew up in Delhi, is resigned to breathing in polluted air, saying that even after installing indoor air purifiers there is only so much control she has over her immediate environment. "I have to travel to work. No matter what I do, I am exposed," she said. (Courtesy: ScrollIn)

## Trauma of Ukraine's women refugees: Rape, trafficking & Poland's sexist laws

By: Deepa Parent

Oleksandra (name changed), a Ukrainian volunteer in Poland's capital city Warsaw, is confident that the cases of rape and sexual assault by Russian soldiers against Ukrainian women are 'massively underreported'.

"We've attended to tens and thousands of refugees in the past four weeks. It's too early to estimate how many of them were subjected to sexual violence but the numbers are high," she tells The Quint, claiming that she has met at least a dozen rape survivors since refugees started coming in.

Narrating a survivor's account, she says, "I met 29-year-old Olga (name changed) at the Hrebennie border crossing between Ukraine and Poland. She opened up to me when I spoke to her in Ukrainian."

Olga was allegedly sexually assaulted at gunpoint by two Russian soldiers at her home on the outskirts of Kyiv.

"As a native of Kharkiv, she spoke Russian fluently. After pleading with them to let her go, in Russian, she was left alone. Fearing they would come back, she left her home within minutes. She spent a harrowing 72 hours at a petroleum station until a group of volunteers helped her reach the Hrebennie border crossing."

She adds that the woman's thighs were still bruised when she first met her.

A single mother, Olga's seven-year-old son is living with her parents in western Ukraine's Uzhhorod.

Trauma faced by Ukraine's women refugees

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, the number of cases of women being sexually assaulted in cities and towns across the country is on the rise.

On 27 March, Ukrainian MP Maria Mezentseva, in an interview

with Sky News, cited a case from the capital city of Kyiv, where a Russian soldier had allegedly raped a Ukrainian woman in front of her child.

It is along the Ukrainian-Polish borders, however, that the stories of sexual assault are coming to the fore. It is important to note that rape, during a war, is considered a war crime.

Julia, a mother of two, and a native of Kyiv, who had fled the country two weeks ago along with her 71-year-old mother, too, narrated a rape survivor's account to The Quint. On 15 March, she arrived at the border and was waiting in the 'priority line', which first let the elderly, people with disabilities, and women with young children across the Polish border.

"I was standing next to a woman for two hours at the Medyka border, crossing between Poland and Ukraine. She did not speak a word till we reached the reception centre. She told me that Russian soldiers had raped her. She was from Irpin, and has two children. She didn't want to accept help from humanitarian groups in Poland because she was too traumatised," says Julia.

"When humanitarian workers tried to help her, she insisted that only female volunteers attended to her, and not the men. The sight of men scared her, not only for herself but also for her five-year-old daughter," claims Julia.

Apart from the trauma that comes with their homes and cities being bombed, staying hidden in bunkers for days and weeks, and leaving behind male members of their families who must fight the war, many Ukrainian women refugees are dealing with the trauma of being sexually assaulted.

Polish doctors, volunteers prescribing morning-after pills to rape survivors

Poland's stringent anti-abortion

laws and the unavailability of morning-after pills along the Ukrainian-Polish border are pushing doctors and volunteers to mobilise and secretly distribute pills to survivors of rape – at the risk of being imprisoned.

In the past few years, Poland has witnessed massive uproars over its near-complete ban on abortions in the country – one of the most restrictive laws in Europe. Doctors who defy the law face a jail term of three years if they perform an abortion with a pregnant woman's consent.

Trauma of Ukraine's women refugees: Rape, trafficking & Poland's sexist laws

"We're taking a colossal risk by making these pills available to survivors of rape. In Poland, these pills are only legal when there's a prescription. It's next to impossible for Ukrainian women refugees to get that prescription. Abortion is illegal in Poland," reveals a Poland-based gynaecologist who works with trusted volunteers to prescribe and distribute the morning-after pills.

"At first, we decided to provide these pills to Ukrainian refugees here in Poland but we've now sent the pills to victims still stuck in Ukraine, surrounded by Russians," he adds.

He confirms that it's getting harder for them to distribute these pills as the border control has tightened. He fears that unless the Polish government makes an exception of making these pills available to survivors of rape, there will be long-lasting consequences for these women.

In an exclusive interview with The Quint, Polish MP Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska, says, "We have received reports of women being raped across the Ukrainian border by Russian soldiers. The women are scared, even after crossing the border, though they

are safe here."

Oleksandra, who has been helping in the distribution of the morning-after pill, says, "In Poland, with abortion not being an option for survivors of rape, it's clear that the lives of women don't matter as much as a cell that hasn't even developed into a foetus yet. It's a huge risk that we're all taking but in the absence of a government that cares for cases like these, the survivors are only left with secret groups like ours who can help."

Polish gov't's inaction apparent, lack of coordination at borders: Volunteers, NGOs

Poland has received at least two million refugees from Ukraine and the country has been reeling under the pressure of handling this influx. With Ukrainian men staying back to defend their country, most of the refugees are women, children, and the elderly.

"You can imagine what will happen when two million people come to Poland. I see two related problems: the first is abandoned children. We are preparing special programmes for them. The second problem is trafficking," Polish MP Kluzik-Rostkowska tells The Quint.

An organisation that is working along the Polish-Ukrainian border is Fundacja Ocalenie, a Warsaw-based NGO. Kalina, a humanitarian worker from the NGO, narrates how when her team went to the border, they saw that there was no system in place.

"All the work to assist the refugees was done by volunteers and NGOs, not the government. I fear that with this lack of coordination between agencies and no plan in place, the risk of human trafficking is growing, especially for single mothers. We are dealing with a multitude of issues, such as sexual violence and racial discrimination, among others," she says.

Polish MP Kluzik-Rostkowska confirmed that the government was working with law enforcement agencies to help Ukrainian victims of rape. She says, "This is not just a Polish problem because some of these women are going to other EU countries, and they need all the help the EU can offer."

Mirroring MP Kluzik-Rostkowska's comments, Kalina says she hopes they would find a solution for the survivors. On the other hand, the gynaecologist, Oleksandra, and the volunteers are working round the clock to procure not only the morning-after pills but also to set up a team that can deliver life-saving medical equipment to the frontlines in the capital, Kyiv.

"If this government poses a problem in distributing the morning-after pills to the victims of rape in Ukraine, we will continue to provide them to women here in Poland, a problem no one is speaking about," says Oleksandra. (Courtesy: The Quint)

## Does the Muslim woman today have the right to chase her dreams?

By: Parveen Talha

I am no scholar of the Quran or the Hadees; I am just an ordinary Muslim woman who had the good fortune of having parents who believed in putting their children, whether male or female, in the best educational institutions they could afford and in allowing them to abide by the prescribed curriculum and uniform (if there was one).

So much for my parents' role, but as a student, I also had the good fortune to have governments in power which never interfered with school uniforms and curriculums. So I don't take any credit for having made, at the end of the 1960s, a career which allowed me to earn my own bread and butter, in addition to leaving a substantial amount for my other responsibilities. But there were girls in co-education colleges and universities, even in those days, who wore full-length Burqas which covered their faces. No one interfered, least of all the university management or the government. Some fellow students may have laughed at them or passed an odd remark, but never in bad taste. Some of these girls reached great heights and many were able to realise their dreams after completing their studies in peace.

I shudder to imagine myself in today's age and times, when governments are putting dress restrictions on girls who wish to go ahead with education; to make a better life for themselves than that of chattel.

I am sure that in the present times, I would not have been able to pursue any education worth its name and would have ended up chained to the commands of some male or other; or left at the mercy of a better-placed woman relative, with no rights over my movements, my dreams and desires, god forbid. And god be thanked that I was born decades earlier.

As a little girl in the early 50s, I remember watching on from my balcony as older girls went to school in thickly-curtained wagons. Educational institutions from the British times – or those set up on their patterns – still existed then, for the education of daughters of middle and lower-middle-class parents. Apart from the missionary schools, there were high-walled schools for girls, both Hindu and Muslim, run by the government and municipalities, with good standards of education.

The wagons with thick curtains covering their windows were arranged by these schools so that Muslim parents, who were particular about their daughters being in purdah, had no excuse to keep them away from school. Many girls from strict Hindu families, too, opted for seats in such wagons. These conveyances were



called thelas and had two kahar men pushing them from the rear and two pulling them from the front. The British – and later, the governments of Independent India – wanted to make education available to girls of all sections of society, while still in deference to their social and religious norms.

By no means did purdah and the seclusion of women enter India through Islam. It had been here since ancient times, though it was intensified with the arrival of Islam in the northern part of our subcontinent.

Burqa was a normal sight during my childhood, but I must admit, I saw no one in a hijab, nor did I hear the word in those years. It is a garment recently evolved; perhaps, after young Muslims got greater exposure due to more travel and job opportunities in other countries.

Immigration has also played a role which, in recent decades, has forced people to enter into unfamiliar regions and live with 'unfriendly' neighbours. Above all, Islamophobia, in India and all over the world, has made young Muslim girls aware of the fact that they can enter the domain of decision-making only through modern education. The Burqa was an unwieldy garment to wear while entering into the arena of competition and success. The dream of these young Muslim women was to attain a higher socio-economic status and prestige, but without having to leave purdah behind.

In my opinion – which many may not agree with – young, ambitious Muslim women opted for the hijab because it is a less cumbersome replacement to the burqa or aba (a gown covering the whole body). The hijab is easy to wear and covers only the head and hair. Haj, where women do not have to cover their face but only their head and hair with a scarf, may have showed the way to women for limiting their purdah to a headscarf.

The word 'hijab' means honour, prestige, dignity and, above all, modesty. For this reason, the scarf covering the head and hair came to be called 'hijab' in the first place and became a symbol of all these things for young, modern Muslim women. It served as a tool for empowerment and as an identity cum admission card, through which young girls could exercise their right to accessibility of public spaces for education and economic independence.

Many hijab-clad women have since proved that they are not just capable of taking giant strides, but leaps towards excellence, like Bushra Mateen, a civil engineer from Raichur. Bushra ran up the podium of her university, headscarf in place, and came back to her seat, her 16 gold medals jingling all the way as the compere went on, breathlessly, reading her extraordinary achievements. And Bushra is just one example.

Modesty in clothes worn by students in a place imparting education creates an atmosphere which is conducive for learning in a smoother and more natural way than uniforms can. If uniformity 'suddenly' acquired greater importance in the eyes of lawmakers, then orders for the colour of the hijab to be exactly that of the uniform could have been issued. Banning the hijab, which a woman wears for her modesty and for dignity, is nothing less than disrobing her. It raises many questions and doubts, and gives occasion for fingers to be pointed at lawmakers.

What were their intentions (of the lawmakers), god knows better. But in the midst of the raging hijab furore, when law and order was put on a long pause and saffron clad louts were let loose, one single young Burqa clad girl, defied their threats all by herself. Television channels helped the world watch, in utter disbelief, the fearlessness and daring of Muslim womanhood. (Courtesy: The Wire)





The apex court adjourns hearing till Wednesday

## Pak's apex court seeks record of NA proceedings on no-trust motion

**ISLAMABAD, April 5 (PTI):** Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the record of the proceedings of the National Assembly conducted on the no-confidence motion filed against Prime Minister Imran Khan before adjourning the hearing till Wednesday, prolonging the political and constitutional crisis in the country.

National Assembly Deputy Speaker Qasim Khan Suri on Sunday ruled that the no-confidence motion was linked with a "foreign conspiracy" to topple the government and hence was not maintainable. Minutes later, President Arif Alvi dissolved the National Assembly on advice of Prime Minister Khan.

The apex court within hours took suo motu notice of it and a five-member bench started hearing the case on Monday. The bench is headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial and includes Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Mohammad Ali

Mazhar, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail.

During the second day of the hearing on Tuesday, the court directed the government to present minutes of the proceedings in the National Assembly after the no-confidence motion was presented by the Opposition.

Chief Justice Bandial said that the court did not interfere in matters of state and foreign policy and only wanted to ascertain the constitutionality of the steps taken by the deputy speaker for the dismissal of the no-confidence motion and subsequent dissolution of the National Assembly.

"Our sole focus is on the ruling of the deputy speaker...it is our priority to decide on that particular issue," Chief Justice Bandial was quoted as saying by the Express Tribune newspaper.

The court, he added, didn't interfere in the state or foreign policy. "We don't want to indulge in policy



matters."

The apex court wanted to see if the ruling of the deputy speaker could be reviewed by the bench, he said, adding that the court will merely decide on the legitimacy of the speaker's action.

"We will ask all parties to focus on this point," he added.

As the hearing resumed, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Raza Rabbani presented his arguments. The PPP is one of the three major Opposition parties that tabled the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Khan.

Rabbani said that the court had to examine the extent of the "immu-

nity" of parliamentary proceedings. "Whatever has happened can only be termed as civilian martial law," he said.

He maintained that the deputy speaker's ruling was "illegal", Dawn news reported.

"The no-confidence motion can't be dismissed without voting on it," he said, citing Article 95 of the Constitution.

Rabbani also said that a deliberate attempt was made to construct a narrative against the no-trust move while a foreign conspiracy was also touted.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's counsel Makhdoom Ali Khan said that the no-confidence motion was submitted to the National Assembly with the signatures of 152 lawmakers while 161 had voted in favour of tabling it. "After that, proceedings were adjourned till March 31."

As per the rules, the counsel for the Opposition party pointed out, a

debate on the no-trust move was supposed to be conducted on March 31. "But a debate was not held," he said, adding that voting was also not conducted on April 3.

The PML-N's counsel argued that the court could judicially review the illegal and unconstitutional move.

The lawyer for Prime Minister Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party Babar Awan said he would argue before the court on Wednesday. Barrister Ali Zafar will represent President Alvi in the case. Imtiaz Qureshi said he will represent Khan.

AGP Khalid Jawed Khan informed the bench he would deliver his arguments on Thursday after the conclusion of the lawyers' arguments. He said he wanted to brief the court in detail as the case pertained to national security.

Justice Ijazul Ahsan said, "Though the time is running out, the court cannot decide the case in haste."

5 people killed as train strikes vehicle in Hungary



**BUDAPEST, April 5 (AP):** A train derailed and overturned after striking a vehicle in southern Hungary early Tuesday, leaving five people dead and others injured, police said.

The accident occurred just before 7 a.m. in the town of Mindszent. Police said a flatbed truck carrying workers drove onto the train tracks and was struck by a train, which derailed from the force of the collision.

Seven men were traveling in the truck at the time of the collision, according to Hungarian state news agency MTI. Five of them were killed and two others taken to hospital with serious head and limb injuries, the police said.

In a statement, Hungarian state railways indicated that all those killed had been traveling in the truck. It said that 22 people were on the train at the time of the collision. Two passengers were seriously hurt and eight others suffered mild injuries.

Ten ambulances and a helicopter were dispatched to the scene, according to a spokesperson for the National Ambulance Service.

The Csongrad-Csanad county police said they had closed the entire width of the road during the on-site inspection and rescue. Traffic was diverted to surrounding streets.

## Covid outbreak 'extremely grim' as Shanghai extends lockdown

**BEIJING, April 5 (AP):** The Covid-19 outbreak in China's largest metropolis of Shanghai remains "extremely grim" amid an ongoing lockdown confining around 26 million people to their homes, a city official said Tuesday.

Director of Shanghai's working group on epidemic control, Gu Honghui, was quoted by state media as saying that the outbreak in the city was "still running at a high level."

"The situation is extremely grim," Gu said.

China has sent more than 10,000 health workers from around the country to aid the city, including 2,000 from the military, and is mass testing residents, some of whom have been locked down for weeks.

Most of eastern Shanghai, which was supposed to reopen last Friday, remained locked down along with the western half of the city.

Officials would reevaluate preventive measures after the results of tests on all city residents are analyzed, Gu said.

"Before that, citizens are asked to continue following the current lockdown measures and stay in their homes except for medical and other emergency situations," Gu said.

Shanghai has reported more than 73,000 positive Covid-19 infections since the resurgence of the highly contagious Omicron variant in March.

Shanghai recorded another 13,354 cases on Monday — the vast majority of them asymptomatic — bringing the city's total to more than 73,000 since the latest wave of infections began last month. No deaths have been ascribed to the outbreak driven by the omicron BA.2 variant, which is much more infectious but also less lethal than the previous delta strain.

A separate outbreak continues to rage in the northeastern province of Jilin and the capital Beijing also saw an additional nine cases, just one of them asymptomatic. Workers shut down an entire shopping center in the city where a case had

been detected.

While China's vaccination rate hovers around 90%, its domestically produced inactivated virus vaccines are seen as weaker than the mRNA vaccines such as those produced by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna that are used abroad, as well as in the Chinese territories of Hong Kong and Macao. Vaccination rates among the elderly are also much lower than the population at large, with only around half of those over 80 fully vaccinated.

Meanwhile, complaints have arisen in Shanghai over difficulties obtaining food and daily necessities, and shortages of medical workers, volunteers and beds in isolation wards where tens of thousands are being kept for observation.

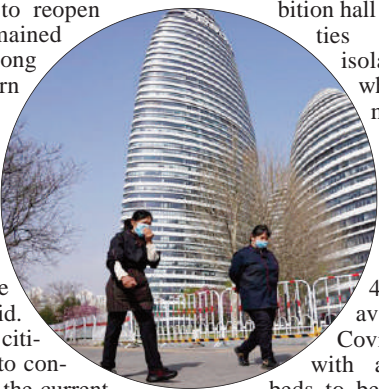
Shanghai has converted an exhibition hall and other facilities into massive isolation centers where people with mild or no symptoms are housed in a sea of beds separated by temporary partitions.

Gu said about 47,700 beds are available for Covid-19 patients, with another 30,000 beds to be ready soon. It wasn't clear how many beds were available for patients placed under observation, who number more than 100,000 according to city health authorities.

Public outrage has been fueled by reports and video clips posted on the internet documenting the death of a nurse who was denied admittance to her own hospital under Covid-19 restrictions, and infant children separated from their parents.

Circulation of footage showing multiple infants kept in cots prompted the city's Public Health Clinical Center to issue a statement saying the children were being well looked after and had been in the process of being moved to a new facility when the footage was taken.

At a virtual town hall Monday, the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai warned of possible family separations amid the lockdown, but said it had an "extremely limited ability" to intervene in such cases.



## Lanka economic crisis: Rajapaksa's grip on power weakens; Fin Min resigns within 24 hrs of appointment

**COLOMBO, April 5 (PTI):** Sri Lanka's ruling coalition headed by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Tuesday faced more trouble after the newly-appointed Finance Minister Ali Sabry resigned even as dissident lawmakers, led by former president Maithripala Sirisena, were planning to quit the government against the backdrop of nationwide protests over the country's worst economic crisis.

President Rajapaksa had appointed Sabry after sacking his brother Basil Rajapaksa, who was at the centre of anger within the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) coalition.

In a letter to the President, Sabri said that he took up the job as part of a temporary measure.

"However, after much reflection and deliberation and taking into consideration the current situation, I am now of the view for Your Excellency to make suitable interim arrangement to navigate the unprecedented crisis fresh and proactive, and unconventional steps needs to be taken including the appointment of a new finance minister," Sabry said in the letter.

He was among the four new ministers appointed by the President on Monday after the resignation of all Cabinet ministers a day earlier.

When the Parliament convened on Tuesday, several government allies expressed their decision to stay neutral. It was the first session since a state of emergency was declared by President Rajapaksa last week.



The ruling coalition, which had won 150 seats in the 2020 general elections and went on to increase its numbers through defections from the Opposition, appeared to lose the support of at least 41 MPs.

It now appears to have 109 seats, five less than the 113 seats required for simple majority in the 225-member Parliament.

The government, however, claimed that it commands the simple majority.

Sri Lanka is currently experiencing its worst economic crisis in history. With long lines for fuel, cooking gas, essentials in short supply and long hours of power cuts, the public has been suffering for months.

The dissidents, led by former president Sirisena's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), would leave the ruling SLPP coalition with its 14 Members of Parliament, party sources said

after their meeting with the President on Monday.

The coalition, which commanded 157 votes out of 225 at the last vote held on the government budget, is bound to lose between 50-60 members, Udaya Gammanpila, a dissident lawmaker told reporters on Monday.

As a result, the government would not only be denied its two-thirds but even the simple majority of 113 members, he said.

However, Rohitha Abeygunawardena, a SLPP lawmaker, said that the government was rock solid with 138 members backing it.

The dissidents said that in addition to 14 members of Sirisena, 16 more from the other 11 members of the coalition would defect to be an independent group. They expect at least 20 from the SLPP to join their ranks.

On Monday, there were storming of houses of many government politicians, including Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa's country house deep southern province, by angry demonstrators. Prasanna Ranatunga, who is a fierce Rajapaksa loyalist, said, "President won't resign due to protests, but he is willing to hand over the government to anyone who could prove 113".

The President had invited the Opposition parties to join a unity Cabinet to tackle the raging public anger against the hardships caused by the economic crisis.

Opposition parties have rejected the offer.

## 6.0-magnitude quake jolts Indonesia, no tsunami alert

**JAKARTA, April 5 (IANS):** A powerful earthquake measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale jolted Indonesia's eastern province of North Maluku on Tuesday, but there was no potential for a tsunami alert, according to authorities. The quake rocked at 8.44 a.m., with the epicentre at 108 km northwest of Halmahera Barat district of the province and the shallow of 10 km under the seabed. Xinhua news agency reported citing the authorities as saying. There were no immediate reports of damages or injuries.

## France pushing for energy sanctions against Russia

**BRUSSELS, April 5 (AP):** French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Tuesday that there is a "total determination" from all 27 European Union countries for sanctions against Russia that could target oil and coal over evidence its troops deliberately killed Ukrainian civilians.

Europe's dependence on Russian oil, gas and coal means finding unanimity on energy measures is a tall order, but the reports of the killings outside Kyiv have increased pressure for tougher EU sanctions.

So far, Europe has not been willing to target Russian energy over fears that it would plunge the European economy into recession.

In some ways, it would be easier for Europe to go without Russian oil than gas because most supplies come by tanker and could be purchased from other suppliers. But talk of a possible boycott of Russian oil has helped push up global oil prices this week.

Asked whether there was a political willingness to impose sanctions on



Russian oil and coal — a move suggested this week by French President Emmanuel Macron — Le Maire said: "We will see what the position of the other member states will be, but I think there is a possibility to have unity on the 27 member states on these new sanctions." He did not mention natural gas, and a consensus on targeting the fuel that is used to generate electricity and heat homes would be even more difficult to secure. The EU gets about 40% of its natural gas from Russia and many EU countries, including Germany — the bloc's largest economy — are opposed to cutting off gas imports.

France holds the presidency of the EU Council, and Le Maire spoke ahead of a meeting of EU finance ministers in Luxembourg, where they will discuss possible new measures to punish the Kremlin.

While the EU has stayed away from sanctioning Russian energy so far, individual countries have announced efforts to draw down their reliance: Poland said it plans to block imports of coal and oil from Russia, while Lithuania said it's no longer using Russian natural gas. The European Union gets about 25% of its oil from Russia, while the EU imported 53% of hard coal from the country in 2020, which accounted for 30% of the EU's hard coal consumption.

While coal and oil may be up for discussion, Teresa Ribera, Spain's Minister for Ecological Transition, said Tuesday that it is "very hard" for the EU to sanction Russian natural gas because some of the bloc's countries are dependent on it for their energy supply and that the EU's strength lies in its unity.

## UK PM Boris Johnson expected to visit India towards month end

**LONDON, April 5 (PTI):** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is planning a visit to India towards the end of this month with a focus on strengthening bilateral ties against the backdrop of the ongoing India-UK Free Trade Agreement negotiations, according to official sources.

The visit, which is expected around April 22, is long overdue after Johnson was forced to cancel planned visits to India twice last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While Downing Street is yet to confirm any details, an in-person meeting was discussed during a phone call between Johnson and Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month.

"The leaders welcomed India and the UK's strong and prosperous relationship, and agreed to continue to build on trade, security and business ties in the coming weeks and



months. They looked forward to meeting in-person at the earliest opportunity," a Downing Street spokesperson said in a readout of the call on March 22.

Last week, Downing Street sources told PTI that Johnson was "very keen" to visit India for talks with his Indian counterpart Modi, though firm plans are yet to be fully drawn up.

The two leaders last met in-person on the sidelines of the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow in November last year, when their bilateral talks during the World Leaders' Summit focussed on the India-UK climate partnership as well as a review of the 2030 Roadmap which they had signed during a virtual summit in May 2021. The Roadmap, which aims to at least double bilateral trade between India and the UK by 2030, is part of Britain's so-called Indo-Pacific foreign policy tilt.

## Pregnant women who were exposed to cannabis products were more likely to have children with increased fat mass and blood sugar levels at age 5

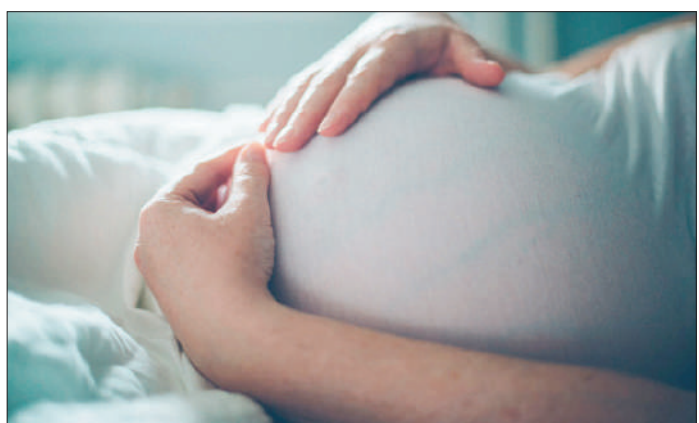
### THC, CBD exposure in womb linked to childhood obesity: Study

**NEW YORK, April 5 (IANS):** Pregnant women who were exposed to cannabis products that contained THC and CBD were more likely to have children with increased fat mass and blood sugar levels at age 5, a new pilot study found.

Study author Brianna Moore, an assistant professor at the Colorado School of Public Health in Aurora, Colorado, said that "there is this misconception that cannabis is safe," reports CNN.

"So some women may use it in pregnancy, thinking that it's a safe alternative to other medicines, even prescribed medications," Moore said.

"Yet studies show connections between marijuana use during pregnancy and low-birth weight in babies and behavioural problems later in childhood, and there may



be links to glucose and weight issues as well," Moore added.

Past studies have shown the use of cannabis during pregnancy is linked to abnormal neurological development, autism and hyperactivity, attention issues, and other

cognitive and behavioural issues in children, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Expectant mothers in the study, published in The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabo-

lism, were recruited in Colorado through Healthy Start, a national programme designed to improve health outcomes before, during and after pregnancy.

Of the 103 women who were tested during pregnancy, 15 per cent had detectable levels of various cannabinoids in their urine, including THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), a chemical in the marijuana plant that has psychoactive properties, creating a "high".

Levels of CBD (cannabidiol) were also found. The chemical CBD is marketed over the counter and online as being "nonpsychoactive" and a safe option for anxiety, depression, sleep, pain, nausea and more. Many CBD products are made from industrial hemp, a type of cannabis plant that has little THC.

## Kuwait's government resigns as political crisis intensifies

**DUBAI, April 5 (AP):** Kuwait's government resigned on Tuesday, just months after its formation, opening up new uncertainty as the tiny country grapples with a worsening political crisis that has blocked critical economic and social reforms.

Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al Hamad Al Sabah submitted the cabinet's resignation to the crown prince, state-run KUNA news agency reported, ahead of a no-confidence vote in Parliament later this week that sought to remove him from office.

It marks Kuwait's third collective government resignation in the past year and a half. A host of new faces, including some picks to appease opposition blocs, had been appointed to ministerial posts as recently as December, with their resignation now reflecting their failure to make reforms. Opposition has been mounting against Sheikh Sabah. Angry lawmakers hauled him in for extensive interrogations last week over his alleged corruption and mismanagement. They publicly declared him "unsuitable" and called for a new prime minister to tackle the country's problems and secure badly needed reforms.

Cabinet's resignation comes after the defense and interior ministers submitted their resignations earlier this year. Exasperated, the two senior ministers decried their inability to make anything happen in oil-rich Kuwait because of Parliament's rowdy opposition. Lawmakers increasingly in recent months have expressed their political frustrations and mistrust by questioning various unpopular ministers and stalling major



projects.

Although soaring oil prices amid Russia's war in Ukraine have recently created a windfall for Kuwait, they've also served as a reminder of the nation's utter dependence on oil revenues and need to diversify. Even if the International Monetary Fund now expects Kuwait to run a budget surplus after years in the red and see its gross domestic product increase by 2.7%, it remains politically stuck.

Years of low oil prices, coupled with the coronavirus pandemic, pushed the country's account deficit to 16.6% of its GDP last year. As financial stress worsened, the government couldn't draw from Kuwait's flush sovereign wealth fund or issue debt because lawmakers have blocked a public debt law.



# Miao-Vijaynagar Road by April this year: Mein

**ITANAGAR, April 5 (PTI):** The ambitious 157.56 km-long road connecting remote Vijaynagar from Miao, in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh will be made motorable by April 25 this year, while the blacktopping on the road would be completed by the end of September.

This announcement was made by deputy chief minister Chowna Mein when he visited the easternmost and one of the remotest administrative circles of the state recently, along with cabinet ministers Wangki Lowang, Kamlung Mosang and Honchun Ngandam, an official communique said here on Tuesday. Addressing a public meeting in the area, Mein said that despite difficult situations and initial delay, the construction work along the road has made remarkable progress.

The work on the road was delayed due to its re-alignment as it



passes through the Namdapha Wildlife Sanctuary. The state government had provided an additional amount of Rs 39 crore for the re-alignment process.

"Both the governor and chief minister have always expressed

their concern about this road and many review meetings have already been conducted in the past few years. We do not need a fair-weather road but an all-weather road for Vijaynagar," Mein said.

The deputy chief minister fur-

ther opined that the strategically important road needs to be handed over to Border Roads Organization (BRO) for maintenance after its completion as it will also be used for the Indian Army's mobilisation. Mein who travelled the entire

157-km-long Miao-Vijaynagar journey on road said, besides inspecting the progress of the road, his visit to the remote circle was also to explore the potential of the area.

"I have also come to explore the potential of Vijaynagar so that the government can bring economic development in the area and help the people who have been living in difficult situations for several decades," he said.

"With roads come development, so start preparing for the days to come as you will witness enormous growth in the field of tourism, agriculture and horticulture," Mein said while lauding the locals for being patient and hard working. The deputy chief minister on the occasion also assured to provide necessary funds for the construction of a multipurpose hall with a seating capacity of 300, a new EAC office complex, officers'

quarters and repair and maintenance of the police station.

He also assured to provide a 4x4 vehicle for the Vijaynagar circle officer, an ambulance for the primary health centre and to start a mini-bus or sumo service under the state transport for the area once the road is completed.

Mein further assured to look into the power requirements of the area with the development of micro hydroelectric projects (MHP) namely the 4x250 KW Dehing MHP at Vijaynagar and 2x250 KW Sirit MHP at Preetnagar and 2x25 KW Preet MHP at Mazgaon.

He informed that the Preet MHP project has already been sanctioned by the government at an estimated amount of Rs 328.73 lakh.

The DyCM, however, said that the feasibility for the 1 MW hydro electric project at Vijaynagar will be properly studied by the departmental experts so that it does not

fail after completion.

Mein also assured to take up with the regional office of State Bank of India, the possibility of setting up an SBI branch at Vijaynagar so that the public can avail the benefits of various government schemes.

Assurance to install 4G mobile towers in various locations of the circle under the USOP Scheme and regular maintenance of the solar lighting systems provided to the people of Vijaynagar and Gandhigram were also given by Mein.

Spread across 8,000 square kilometres, Vijaynagar which comprises sixteen villages has a population of around 4,400 people. The circle is surrounded on three sides by Myanmar and on the other side by a vast and thick forest of Namdapha National Park.

Earlier it used to take around 7 to 10 days on foot through dense forests to reach the isolated region.

## Meghalaya: Two killed, houses washed away in rain-triggered landslides



**SHILLONG, April 5 (PTI):** At least two people have been killed and several houses and vehicles washed away in rain-triggered landslides in Meghalaya, officials said on Tuesday. As many as seven landslides were reported across the state in the last 24 hours, they said. Two people, identified as Rohit Kshir (14) and Dilibon Tangsang (35), were killed in a landslide in Mawlat village in East Khasi Hills district, an official of the state disaster management authority said. Two houses and two shops were washed away in another landslide in Umblai village. A portion of the Thangbnai-Mawlyngot road was damaged and a vehicle was washed away. Work was underway to clear the road, he said. Five houses were destroyed and one person sustained minor injuries in a landslide in Lyingshing village. A portion of the road was eroded due to a landslide near Wahumkhrah River in Wahingdoh. Traffic was affected due to landslides on Mawphlang Balat Road in Mawsynram Block and NH 40 (Shillong-Dawki Road). Students appearing for board examinations were stranded but police assisted them in reaching their centres on time. Officials rushed to the locations and foodgrain, blankets and other essential items were distributed among those affected. Deputy chief minister Prestone Tynsong asked executive engineers to remain alert.

## Runaway arms dealer held in Tripura

**AGARTALA, April 5 (PTI):** A suspected arms dealer who had given the Railway Protection Force (RPF) in Assam the slip two days ago was arrested in Tripura's Khowai district on Tuesday, an officer said.

His two companions were arrested with four pistols and 15 bullets by the RPF from Assam's Badarpur railway station on Sunday night. However, their boss had managed to escape.

A case under Arms Act was lodged against the three persons who hail from Bihar at Badarpur police station on Monday, Khowai superintendent of police Bhanupada Chakraborty said.

Following a request from the neighbouring state, a police team raided a house at Champahower area in Khowai district and apprehended the chief of the arms racket from there.

Chakraborty said 21 kilograms of ganja was also recovered from the house and its owner was arrested.

A case under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act was registered with Khowai police station and further investigation is underway, said the SP.

## Meghalaya HC raps chief secy for inaction against officials involved in illegal coal mining



**SHILLONG, April 5 (PTI):** The Meghalaya High Court rapped the chief secretary on Monday for failing to take action against government officials who "looked the other way" and "actively aided" illegal coal mining in the state. Hearing a suo motu PIL, the three-member full-bench of the high court said the time frame set to dispose of the previously mined coal was not been adhered to, leading to fresh illegal mining of coal, which was attempted to be passed off as coal that was mined earlier. "This could not have happened without the active connivance of the local administration. There has to be accountability and this aspect of the matter has to be immediately focussed so that a message is sent loud and clear that the watchdogs would be proceeded against if anything remiss is found under their watch," the court said. The court said that the report filed by chief secretary RV Suchiang on the issue singularly lacks in indicating actions taken against local officials "who not only looked the other way while the illegal mining thrived, but may have actively aided therein". Maintaining that the PIL is not to inquire afresh into the matter already covered by the Supreme Court, the bench said the present exercise is limited to ensuring that all the directions issued by the apex court and NGT are followed and implemented. The court also suggested that a committee be set up to ensure better compliance with the directions and detect the failures of the administration. In the report filed on April 1, the chief secretary had said that more than 3,500 trucks were seized for violating the NGT order, banning the transportation of coal. On this, the court said there 'appears' to be that some action was taken, though it is not clear from the report as to whether all the directions by the Supreme Court and the NGT have been complied with.

## Torrential rain triggers landslides in Arunachal, throws life out of gear

**ITANAGAR, April 5 (PTI):** Early monsoon rains have triggered landslides in various parts of Arunachal Pradesh, snapping surface communication and disrupting normal life, officials said on Tuesday.

Moderate to heavy rainfall has been recorded at several places in the northeastern state in the last five days, and the weather office has forecast more downpour for the next 48 hours, they said. Arunachal Pradesh received over 15 cm rainfall over the past few days, the Met department said.

The incessant rainfall has triggered a series of landslides at different locations across state capital Itanagar, posing a threat



to vulnerable buildings.

Capital deputy commissioner Talo Porom has urged people living in areas at risk to shift to safety. He also expressed con-

cern over illegal earth-cutting activities that are carried out near the national and state high-

ways.

Several bridges have col-

lapsed due to the torrential rainfall, while roads were washed away by landslides in the strategically located Anjaw district near the China border, the officials said.

Reports of a flood-like situation have been received from Namsai, Changlang and Tirap districts, they said.

The Lohit district administration has also issued a traffic advisory to avoid travelling to Anjaw in the wake of the inclement weather.

It has appealed to people to stay away from river banks and refrain from fishing activities.

Restoration work is underway in the affected areas, the officials added.

## AFSPA will be re-imposed if law and order not under control: Nagaland CM

**KOHHIMA, April 5 (IANS):** Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio on Monday said that if law and order situation in the state cannot be controlled, the Armed Forces (Special Power) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) might be re-imposed in the state. In his address at a crucial consultative meeting with tribal Hohos and organisations on AFSPA, he said that all stakeholders had appealed for abolition of the draconian law and the Central government had finally heard the appeals of the people.

He appealed for co-operation with the government to ensure that no untoward incidents occur and urged all the stakeholders to seriously ponder how to properly maintain law and order in the state.

As the Naga solution is for all the Nagas, he stressed that the Nagas should harbour a sense of unity and oneness and not be selfish in their demands.

Rio thanked the civil society organisations, tribal leaders, and student bodies for cooperating and supporting the government. He said that the state government had formed a 22-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe



the Oting incident in Mon district where 14 people were killed and 30 others were injured by the security forces in December last year.

Congratulating the SIT members for their prompt investigation and submission of their preliminary reports, he said that once the final report is submitted and a case is filed, it would be made known to the public. The Centre had also formed a SIT and they have also submitted their report, he added.

United Democratic Alliance chairman TR Zeliang also appealed for co-operation as the po-

lice would be handicapped without the peoples' support.

State chief secretary J. Alam said that after almost three decades, AFSPA was removed completely in three districts and partially lifted in four other districts and hoped that further progress will be seen in the days to come. Home commissioner, Abhijit Sinha said that out of 72 police stations, AFSPA has been withdrawn in 15 police stations.

Tribal leaders, leaders of apex bodies, Hohos, civil society groups and student bodies would have to

## Nagalim 'invaded' by India, Myanmar, claims NSCN-IM supremo Muivah

**KOHHIMA, April 5 (IANS):** 'Nagalim', the land of Naga tribals, had been 'invaded' by India and Myanmar and the Nagas have neither been a part of either by consent or by conquest, NSCN-IM general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah said, the group announced on Monday.

Addressing the General Assembly of Unrepresented Nations and People's Organisations (UNPO) in Washington DC, he said that the Nagas had been living in their own free country till the British forces occupied a part of it in 1832 while the rest called the free Naga area remained as free as ever.

"On the eve of the departure of the British, the Nagas of the British-occupied Naga territory declared their independence on August 14, 1947 and joined with their brothers in the free Naga area. In 1950, the Indian Constituent Assembly invited the Nagas to join the Union of India, but it was rejected by the Naga people," the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim leader said.

He alleged that with a view to legalising its military occupation of 'Nagalim', the Indian government "imposed its will" upon the Nagas



in the form of the so-called 16-point agreement in 1960. However, it was rejected outrightly by the Naga people. Muivah reportedly delivered the address at the UNPO, a 44-member organisation, last week, but the speech was released to the media by the NSCN-IM on Monday. The Naga leader said that realising that seeking a military solution to the political problem is a futile exercise, the Indian government invited the NSCN leadership for political talks leading to a cease-fire agreement between the government and the NSCN signed in August, 1997.

"After 22 years long intensive negotiations with the government involving six Prime Ministers, the historic Framework Agreement

was signed on August 3, 2015 in the presence of the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi)."

Muivah claimed that the government also recognises the legitimate right of the Nagas to territorial integration of all Naga areas under one political roof. "Since the unique history of the Nagas and the sovereign right of the Nagas are recognised, it is understood that the Naga flag and constitution are ingredients of their sovereignty," he stated. However, the former government interlocutor and then Nagaland Governor, RN Ravi, currently Tamil Nadu Governor, had, on a number of occasions, rejected the separate Naga flag and constitution. On this, Muivah said that in spite of all facts, commitments and agreements, the Indian government has started misinterpreting what has been mutually agreed upon and going back on its word. "In the event of breaking down the current negotiations, we foresee serious human rights violations again in Nagalim." Muivah also told the UNPO "to look into the fragile situation of the Indo-Naga political talks and take a positive role from your end so that the current peace process is brought to a logical conclusion".

## Meghalaya government responds to climate change

**SHILLONG, April 5 (NNN):** The Meghalaya Public Works department, while responding to the climate change, has issued a circular asking all the division executive engineers throughout the state to be alert and also to be ready for any eventuality. Informing this, deputy chief minister in charge of PWD Prestone Tynsong said, "We had a meeting with secretary PWD, I have instructed him to issue a circular to all the division executive engineers throughout the state to be alert and also to be ready for any eventuality." "Now I can see the climate change that has taken place. It's very very unusual as well as the damage, be it landslides, be it disconnecting of the road it may happen any time, any place in the state. Instruction has been given to all the concerned executive engineers to be alert and to be ready for any eventuality," he added.

The deputy chief minister also denied that sand and stone quarrying is the reason for landslides in the Pynursla area, even as he mentioned the construction and widening of Dawki-Shillong road has led to the landslides. "Now the road construction has just started I think you must have seen in few places the road construction started then naturally the landslide will happen, once the rain starts the landslide will happen because it is happening in that portion where the road construction started, so it is not because of the

stone quarry but this is natural during construction of road," Tynsong said. It may be mentioned that a massive landslide reported at Ryngaim, Pynursla is due to widening, however, the Deputy CM said few vehicles were damaged in the landslide, although no one lost their life. Asked if it will affect the construction work of the Shillong-Dawki road, he said, "That will affect, naturally it will affect but we have already instructed NHIDCL to again station and make sure they are available anytime when the stone falls down or when the landslide takes place anywhere to make sure that the machinery is in a place where they can remove immediately the landslide debris."

Special instruction has been given to NHIDCL to remain available in case of any eventualities in the area. On the construction company's being reckless, Tynsong mentioned the formation of the soil in the hilly state of Meghalaya which makes landslides inevitable in case any construction work is carried out. "Question of recklessness by NHIDCL does not arise as I said you know well the formation soil in our state, in any hill station I think you understand, I think you know the formation of the soil here in Meghalaya which is not at all possible for any construction company to be able to reduce the landslide which is happening right now," Tynsong said.

## Manipur CM urges Emas to convince armed outfits to hold talks with government

**IMPHAL, April 5 (NNN):** Manipur chief minister, N Biren Singh has called upon women based organisations to extend support to the government in its efforts to bring the armed outfits to the negotiating table.

Addressing a reception ceremony of BJP MLAs hosted by Nupi Keithel Sinpham amadi Sakam Kanba Lup, Khwairamband Bazar, the chief minister recalled the role being taken by the women in the Manipur society. He reiterated the state government's appeal to the armed outfits to come to the negotiating table, saying that his government would like to bring a political solution to end problems in the state.

The chief minister further recalled the roles that the women of the state took part during crucial times of Manipur. Biren said that women had taken big roles to save the state during the historic Chahi Taret Khuntakpa (seven year devastation). He added that till now women of the state are taking the main role in any crucial issues in the state.

On the occasion, the chief minister also announced various initiatives to be implemented by his government for the welfare of the women vendors of the Ema Market (all-women run market).

Apart from the chief minister and his cabinet colleagues from BJP, the function was also attended by BJP MLAs.

On the occasion, women vendors presented gifts to the chief minister, ministers and MLAs.

## Methamphetamine tablets worth ₹ 30 crore seized

**AIZAWL, April 5 (PTI):** In a major drug haul, a CID team seized one lakh tablets of methamphetamine, also known as party drugs, worth ₹ 30 crore in Aizawl, police said on Tuesday. Acting on specific input, the team raided Zohnuai area at Vaivakawn neighbourhood in Aizawl on Monday night and recovered the contraband from the possession of a woman peddler, a resident of Farkawn village in Champhai district bordering Myanmar, the police said. The seized drug was worth ₹ 30 crore in the international market, they said. Further investigation into the case is in progress, they added. Last week, the state police seized at least 52 gm of heroin worth over ₹ 26 lakh in the international market and five kilograms of Ganja (cannabis) worth ₹ 3.5 lakh. At least five persons, including a Myanmar national, were arrested in connection with the seizures.



# Tit for tat: Haryana Assembly denounces Punjab move on Chandigarh, passes resolution on SYL

**CHANDIGARH, April 5 (PTI):** The Haryana Assembly on Tuesday passed a resolution seeking completion of the SYL canal and the transfer of Hindi-speaking areas from Punjab, while denouncing the neighbouring state for staking claim over Chandigarh. The Haryana government had summoned the one-day assembly session just days after the Punjab House passed a resolution seeking the immediate transfer of the union territory of Chandigarh to the Aam Aadmi Party-run state.

"This House notes with concern the resolution passed in the Legislative Assembly of Punjab on 1 April, 2022 recommending that the matter for transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab be taken up with the Central government," the Haryana resolution said. "This is not acceptable to the people of Haryana," it said, adding that Haryana continued to retain its right to the joint capital of the two states.



It urged the Centre not to take "any steps that would disturb the existing balance and to maintain harmony till all the issues emanating from the reorganisation of Punjab are settled". The resolution, moved by chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, was adopted unanimously after a three-hour debate. It was backed across parties, in-

cluding the ruling BJP's coalition partner Jannayak Janta Party (JJP), the Congress, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) and independent MLAs as they dubbed the Punjab move "unconstitutional".

Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda slammed the Punjab resolution for being "only a political gimmick". "Punjab's role as an

elder brother is acceptable, but if it tries to play the role of a big brother, that is not acceptable to us," the Congress leader said during the discussion.

Punjab has made similar moves in the past as well, seeking control over Chandigarh. And Haryana has harped on Punjab's reluctance to share the waters of Ravi and Beas through the long-delayed Satluj Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal project.

The tit-for-tat resolutions follow a recent row after Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced that the central service rules would now apply to the employees of the union territory of Chandigarh.

The new AAP government in Punjab saw this as an attempt by the BJP-led Centre to diminish the state's say in the UT, even though the new rule gave additional benefits to the employees in Chandigarh. But like Punjab, the Haryana resolution has raised objections over the recent amendment by the

Central government of rules for the appointment of members of the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB). It said the right of Haryana to share waters of Ravi and Beas rivers by the construction of the SYL canal is "historically, legally, judicially and constitutionally established over time".

"Several agreements, accords, tribunal's findings and judgements of highest judiciary of the nation have all singularly upheld the claim of Haryana to the waters and directed completion of the SYL canal," the resolution said.

"In defiance and contrary to these directions and agreements, legislations were enacted by Punjab to deny the rightful claims of the state of Haryana," it said.

The resolution also urged the Centre to ensure that the proportion of Haryana government officials serving in Chandigarh UT continued as envisaged during the reorganisation of Punjab.

## On BJP foundation day eve, PM Modi asks MPs to dedicate themselves to 'seva'

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Urging BJP MPs to dedicate themselves to 'seva' (service) as the party embarks on a "samajik nyay pakhwada" from April 7, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday laid down a detailed programme for them for every day during the 14-day long exercise.

Speaking at the BJP parliamentary meeting a day ahead of the party's foundation day, Modi cited a number of welfare schemes of the government targeting different segments of society and asked MPs to reach out to people with their details. Modi is also scheduled to address BJP members on Wednesday virtually. BJP president J P Nadda underlined the party's rise in the Northeast, where it is either in power on its own or is part of a coalition government, with the first woman MP from Nagaland, Phangnon Konyak, who was elected recently, attending the meeting.

Sources said Nadda noted that the party has achieved the feat of having 100 MPs in Rajya Sabha for the first time.

Parliamentary Affairs minister Pralhad Joshi told reporters that Modi asked the MPs to actively participate in the programmes. "They should dedicate themselves to service," he quoted him as saying. MPs were given orange caps emblazoned with the party's name or symbol, like the one which was sported by the prime minister recently during his road show in Gujarat. Some MPs were also sporting caps carrying a photo of Modi.

They will sport the cap during Modi's address on the foundation day from Parliament Annexe. Party MPs and other members will be highlighting the impact of health insurance programme 'Ayushman Bharat' and Jan Aushadhi Kendra, where medicines are sold at a subsidised rate, on April 7. The schemes to build houses for the poor and to reach piped water to every household will be at the centre of the campaign on April 8 and April 9 respectively, Joshi said.

## ED attaches assets of family, firms linked to Delhi minister Satyendar Jain

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Assets worth Rs 4.81 crore of the family and companies "beneficially owned and controlled" by Delhi minister and AAP leader Satyendar Jain have been provisionally attached in connection with a money-laundering probe against him, the Enforcement Directorate said on Tuesday. Jain, 57, is the minister for health, power, home, PWD, industries, urban development, flood, irrigation and water in the Arvind Kejriwal-led government. The ED had in 2018 questioned the AAP MLA from Shakur Basti in connection with the case. He had worked in the Central Public Works Department and later quit his job to set up an architectural consultancy firm.

In a statement, the ED said it has issued a provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) for the attachment of the assets. The "attached immovable properties worth Rs 4.81 crore belong to Akinchan Developers Pvt. Ltd., Indo Metal Impex Pvt Ltd, Paryas Infosolutions Pvt. Ltd., Manglayatan Projects Pvt. Ltd., J.J. Ideal Estate Pvt. Ltd., Swati Jain, wife of Vaibhav Jain, Sushila Jain, wife of Ajit Prasad Jain, and Indu Jain, wife of Sunil Jain."

The probe found that "during the period 2015-16, when Satyendar Kumar Jain was a public servant, the companies beneficially owned and controlled by him received accommodation entries to the tune of Rs 4.81 crore from shell (paper) companies against cash transferred to Kolkata-based entry operators through the hawala route."

"These amounts were utilised for direct purchase of land or for repayment of loan taken for the purchase of agricultural land in and

around Delhi," the ED said.

According to the officials, the named persons in the attachment order are associates and family members of Jain.

The money laundering case against the AAP minister stems from an August 2017 FIR filed by the CBI against him and others on charges of alleged possession of disproportionate assets.

The CBI has claimed that Jain purchased 200 bighas of agricultural land in the names of companies controlled by him in Delhi in five years preceding 2018 and "laundered black money" to the tune of several crores of rupees. It had alleged that Jain controlled these companies in the past either in the form of being one of the directors or by holding one-third of shares of these companies in his name or in the names of his family members or others. The laundered funds were allegedly used to purchase over 200 bighas of land in Auchandi, Bawana, Karala and Mohammed Mazvi villages in Delhi between 2010-16, the CBI had said.

The Income Tax department too had probed these transactions and issued an order attaching 'benami assets' allegedly linked to Jain.

Kejriwal in February had said that he has learnt from sources the ED was going to arrest Satyendar Jain just before the Punjab assembly elections and accused the Centre of targeting the Aam Aadmi Party after realising the BJP "would lose" the polls.

The AAP won the Punjab assembly polls in March and has formed its government in the border state with Bhagwant Mann as the chief minister.

## Parliament nod to bill for unification of 3 Delhi municipal corporations



**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Parliament on Tuesday passed the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill-2022 to unify three civic bodies in the national capital, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod through a voice vote after negating all amendments sought by the opposition.

According to the bill, passed by Lok Sabha last week, the unification of the municipal corporations will ensure synergised and strategic planning and optimal utilisation of resources.

Replying to the discussion on the bill, Home minister Amit Shah said it has been necessitated after the AAP-led Delhi government meted out step-motherly treatment to the civic bodies.

Shah said that it was a mistake to trifurcate the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) into three bodies in 2012 but added that they could still have functioned normally, had the AAP-led Delhi government not treated them in such a manner.

"This bill is in no way an attack on the federal structure," Shah said, allaying concerns raised by some opposition members. Delhi is only a Union Territory and not a full state, he said, adding that Parliament has competence to frame laws for Delhi and that is why it has brought this bill.

Dismissing the Opposition charge that the ruling dispensation at the Centre brought in the bill out of fear of losing the civic elections, Shah said the BJP has no such phobia and is ready to contest the polls soon after delimitation.

"It is being alleged that the bill has been brought due to fear of losing elections. But if elections are held after six months, will you lose," he asked Opposition members.

He said the BJP has no fear of losing or arrogance of victory and is fully geared up to contest the polls.

## 4-5 per cent of ₹ 1.25 lakh cr spent on CSR funds in past 7 yrs went to PM Cares: Govt

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Of the total Rs 1.25 lakh crore spent on CSR in the last seven years, only 4 to 5 per cent funds have gone to the PM Cares Fund and that too during the last two years amid Covid-19, minister of state for Corporate Affairs Rao Inderjit Singh told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Replying to supplementaries during Question Hour, the minister also informed the members that there was an attempt initially to include Chief Minister's Relief fund for spending CSR funds but it was disallowed by the government of India.

"Out of the Rs 1.25 lakh crore that have been spent on CSR over the last seven years, not more than 4 to 5 per cent has gone to the PM Cares fund. Most of that money has gone during Covid in two years," Singh said. He said prior to that, companies by themselves have been able to spend on all those activities that have been enumerated under the CSR pattern under Section 135 of Companies Act.

"There were attempts to make CSR funds go to the Chief Minister's Fund, but it was not accepted by the government of India. Because then, in whichever state the chief minister is then the funds from these companies will only go to the direction given by the chief minister. We don't want to have that," Singh said.

"The basic idea of spending



CSR is to do the best you can for the public good. And it cannot necessarily be that only one person can think about and not the chief minister alone," he said responding to a query by Prasanna Acharya (BJD) on whether the chief minister's fund would be included in CSR spending.

Singh said it is a broad-based activity that the Board undertakes and we give general guidelines and the Board implements it.

It is an activity pan-India, no matter where the company comes from, he said.

The minister also said that Section 135 of the Companies Act provides the framework for the CSR spending and the first proviso to this is that where the company is established, it should first endeavour to spend CSR funds.

"But, this is not mandatory, it is directory," he said.

"The broad principle adopted by the government of

India is for companies to not just spend at the place where it exists but also in other areas across the country," he said.

To a suggestion to make CSR funds spending mandatory for improving the backward districts of the country, the minister said, "It is stated that it is not mandatory."

"What happens is that generally companies tend to spend money where they are located. The main beneficiaries thereafter are states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi and areas in the north-east like Nagaland, where there is very little CSR spending," he said.

In this regard he said in the last seven years since CSR funds have been invoked, Nagaland has only been able to get Rs 8 crore out of 1.2 lakh crore spent under CSR by various companies.

Singh also said that there is some sort of guideline for public sector undertakings that

they should look into aspirational and backward districts.

"That kind of thing is already under anvil and has been passed and 60 per cent funds of PSUs are spent in so-called aspirational districts," he said.

To a query by Birendra Prasad Baishya (AGP) on whether CSR funds can be directed to be spent in the north east to help ensure its speedy development, the minister said the idea of the government of India is that it should be a broad-based activity and the responsibility of spending CSR funds lies with the Board of the companies.

"We are trying to ensure that the company through suggestions that it should be made to spend not only in the area of its operation but as broadly as possible throughout the country. That is what is being done."

"We unfortunately cannot direct any company to say that they should spend in the Northeast. It is not directory," he said.

In her written reply to the question, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, "Under the Act, CSR is a board-driven process and the board of the company is empowered to plan, decide, execute and monitor CSR activities based on the recommendations of its CSR committee. The government does not issue any directions to the companies to spend in particular geographical area or activity."

**OFFICE OF THE**  
**ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION::**  
**KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL**  
**DIPHU**

No. AD/E-22/98/314 Dtd. Diphu the 05/09 /2022.

**NOTIFICATION**

On the basis of Written Test Examination held on 29/03/2022 for the post of Lab. Bearer (Grade-IV) of Diphu Govt. College, Diphu under Higher Education Department, the qualified candidates of the following Roll Nos. have been called for Viva-Voice Interview to be held on 12/04/2022 at New Secretariat building of KAAC, Diphu from 11.00 AM onwards.

2	4	6	7
11	17	18	20
21	22	23	24
25	27	29	30

The candidates are informed to attend Viva-Voice Interview as the case may be as scheduled below alongwith the calling letter of written test and testimonials in original.

Authority is not responsible for any printing mistake.

Sd/-  
 Additional Director of Education,  
 Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu.

**OFFICE OF THE**  
**ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION::**  
**KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL**  
**DIPHU**

No. AD/E-22/98/315 Dtd. Diphu the 05/04/2022.

**NOTIFICATION**

On the basis of Written Test Examination held on 27/03/2022 for the post of L.D.A. (Grade-III) of Diphu Govt. College, Diphu under Higher Education Department, the qualified candidates of the following Roll Nos. have been called for Viva-Voice Interview and Computer Test to be held on 12/04/2022 at New Secretariat building, KAAC, Diphu from 11.00 Am onwards.

3	6	7	8	9
11	13	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26
27				

The candidates are informed to attend Viva-Voice Interview and Computer Test as the case may be as scheduled below alongwith the calling letter of written test and testimonials in original.

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Sd/-  
 Additional Director of Education,  
 Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu.



# ED attaches properties of Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut's wife, associates in money laundering case

**NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, April 5 (PTI):** The Enforcement Directorate has provisionally attached assets worth more than Rs 11.15 crore of Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut's wife and two of his associates in a money-laundering investigation linked to certain land deals, the agency said on Tuesday.

Raut, who has been accusing the BJP-led Union government of misusing central agencies against its opponents, alleged that it was an act of vengeance and said the ED's claims against him will fall flat.

The attached properties are in form of lands held by Pravin M Raut, former director of Guru Ashish Construction Pvt Ltd, in Palghar and Thane districts, a flat in Mumbai's suburban Dadar area of Sanjay Raut's wife Varsha Raut and eight plots at Kihim beach in Alibaug jointly held by Varsha Raut and Swapna Patkar, the agency said in a statement.

Swapna Patkar is the wife of Sujit Patkar who, according to the ED, is a close associate of Sanjay Raut. Shiv Sena's Rajya Sabha MP and party spokesperson.

In the Alibaug land deal, apart from the registered value, "cash" payments were made to the sellers, the agency found. It said the total value of the attached assets is Rs 11.15,56,573.

The ED action linked to alleged irregularities in the re-development of a Mumbai 'chawl' and other similar instances, comes in the backdrop of several leaders of the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) also facing the heat from the central agency. The Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress are part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in Maharashtra.

Raut termed the ED action an attack on the "middle-class Marathi man" and asserted he will not be cowed by such moves and resist any act to pressure him.

Talking to reporters in New Delhi, Raut



pointed out that the ED action came on a day when the Mumbai Police formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe allegations of extortion against the central agency's officers.

The MVA government too hit out at the Centre, alleging that the action against Raut was driven by political vendetta.

Maharashtra Home minister Dilip Walse Patil alleged that attempts are being made to destabilise the MVA government in the state.

"There definitely is political vendetta... The action was taken without issuing any notice to him (Raut) and conducting any probe. This shows how the Centre is working," the minister alleged.

"Attempts are being made at all levels to destabilise the MVA government, but the government is stable and there is no threat. It will complete its five-year term," Walse Patil said in Mumbai.

Pravin Raut was arrested by the ED in February as part of a money-laundering probe linked to a Rs 1,034 crore alleged land scam related to the re-development of the Patra 'chawl' in Mumbai's Goregaon area.

He is in judicial custody at present.

Guru Ashish Construction Pvt Ltd was involved in the re-development of this 'chawl' which had 672 tenants in tenements on 47 acres of land belonging to Maharashtra Housing Area Development Authority (MHADA), the ED earlier said.

Guru Ashish Construction Pvt Ltd is a subsidiary company of Housing Development Infrastructure Ltd. (HDIL).

HDIL is under investigation by the ED and a few other agencies in connection with the about Rs 4,300 crore alleged fraud at the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank.

The ED said the company (Guru Ashish) had entered into a "tripartite agreement" with the tenants and MHADA to re-develop the 'chawl'.

According to the agreement, the ED said, the developer had to provide flats to 672 tenants and develop flats for MHADA and thereafter the remaining area to be sold by the developer.

"The directors of Guru Ashish Constructions mislead MHADA and managed to sell the FSI (floor space index) to nine developers and collected about Rs 901.79 crore without constructing the rehab portion for 672 displaced tenants and MHADA portion," it said.

This realty company also launched a project called Meadows and took the booking amount of around Rs 138 crore from flat buyers.

"The total proceeds of the crime generated by directors of Guru Ashish Constructions Pvt. Ltd. through illegal activities was about Rs 1,039.79 crore. Part of the proceeds of crime was further transferred to close associates," it alleged.

## Govt orders blocking of 18 Indian, four Pakistani YouTube-based news channels

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has directed the blocking of 22 YouTube-based news channels, of which four are from Pakistan, alleging that they were spreading fake news that could impact national security, foreign relations and public order.

This is the first time that action has been taken against the Indian YouTube-based news publishers since the notification of the IT Rules, 2021 in February last year, it said. Union minister Anurag Thakur asserted that the government will not shy away from taking such action in the future as well. In an official statement, the ministry said it issued an order on Monday to block 22 YouTube channels, three Twitter accounts, one Facebook account and one news website.

With this action, the ministry has, since December 2021, issued directions for blocking 78 YouTube-based news channels and several other social media accounts on grounds related to national security, sovereignty and integrity of India, public order, etc.

"Out of the 22 YouTube channels which were blocked, 18 are from India and four from Pakistan."

"The total views were 262 crores. They were involved in the misinformation against India which could impact the sovereignty and integrity of the country and also the national security and India's relations with other nations," the Information and Broadcasting minister said.

"They were spreading misinfor-



mation on the Ukraine-Russia conflict, on the Covid-19 news and other such issues which were directly impacting India. As I promised earlier as well, whether the channels are operating from foreign soil or from India, we'll take action. We won't shy away from taking such a decision in the future as well in the interest of India," Thakur said.

The blocked YouTube channels had a cumulative viewership of over 260 crore, the ministry earlier said, adding that they were spreading fake news and coordinated disinformation over social media, on subjects sensitive from the perspective of national security, India's foreign relations, and public order. According to the ministry, multiple YouTube channels were used to post "fake news on various subjects such as the Indian Armed Forces, Jammu and Kashmir, etc."

"The content ordered to be

blocked also included certain anti-India content posted from multiple social media accounts operated in a coordinated manner from Pakistan. "It was observed that a significant amount of false content was published by the Indian YouTube channels related to the ongoing situation in Ukraine, and aimed at jeopardising India's foreign relations with other countries," it said.

The ministry said that the blocked Indian YouTube channels were using templates and logos of certain TV news channels, including images of their news anchors to mislead viewers to believe that the news was authentic.

"False thumbnails were used, title and thumbnail of the videos were frequently altered to increase the virality of content on social media. In certain cases, it was also observed that systematic anti-India fake news was originating from Pakistan," it said.

## Sans hearse, dalit man carries daughter's body on bike

**KENDRAPARA, April 5 (PTI):** In a tragic incident, a dalit man was forced to carry his eight-year-old daughter's body on a bike from a hospital to his village in Odisha's Kendrapara district on Tuesday.

Baisakhi, the daughter of Sunakar Kandi of Chhachina village in Derabish block, around 75 km from Bhubaneswar, was bitten by a snake on Monday night. She later died in hospital.

With a 'Mahaprayan' van remaining out of bounds, the girl's father and uncle were forced to carry the body from the district headquarters hospital in Kendrapara to his village, a distance of around 20 km, on a bike.

The incident occurred even after the introduction of 'Mahaprayan' scheme in 2016 by chief minister Naveen Patnaik for providing free vehicles to carry bodies of the deceased from hospitals.

"I pleaded. But the hospital authorities did not pay any heed," bemoaned Kandi, a daily wage earner.

Chief district medical officer Anita Patnaik said the matter is being inquired into.

"The additional district medical officer has been asked to submit a detailed report about the incident. If found true, strict action will be initiated," the official said.

The 'Mahaprayan' scheme was launched in Odisha soon after a man named Dana Majhi had to walk 10 km with his wife's body in Kalahandi.

## Road ahead for Congress more challenging than ever before: Sonia Gandhi

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday called for unity at all levels of the organisation, while noting that the road ahead for the party is more challenging than ever before and the spirit of resilience of party workers is under severe test.

Addressing a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP), she also hit out at the BJP, saying the ruling party's "divisive agenda" has become a regular feature of political discourse in all states and that history is being "mischievously distorted" to add fuel to its agenda.

Referring to the party's performance in recent assembly elections, she said she is aware "how disappointed you are" as they have been both "shocking and painful".

She said the CWC has met to review the performance and received many suggestions on how to strengthen the organisation, many of which are pertinent and the party is working on them.

Gandhi stressed that holding a 'Shivir' is also very necessary as views of a larger number of colleagues and party representatives will be heard and they will contribute to put forward a clear roadmap on the urgent steps to be taken by the party on how best to meet the challenges we are confronted with.



"The road ahead is more challenging than ever before. Our dedication and determination, our spirit of resilience is under severe test. Unity at all levels of our vast organisation is of paramount importance," she said adding that she is determined to do whatever is needed to ensure it.

"Our revival is not just a matter of importance to us alone. It is, in fact, essential for our democracy itself and indeed for our society as well," Gandhi said.

The Congress chief has been under attack from the G-23 within, who have demanded an overhaul of the organisation and have stressed on collective leadership after the party's recent debacle in assembly polls.

She expressed concern over MSMEs being in a "most precarious condition" and no sign that

commitments made to farmers are going to be fulfilled in any significant manner. Noting that prices of cooking gas and oil, petrol, diesel, fertilizers and other essential commodities have risen to unbearable limits and continue to rise, she said the nationwide "Mehngai-mukt Bharat" campaign must be sustained. She said in matters of governance, it is inevitable that some do the real work and lay the foundations while others claim the credit.

"I am glad that at least two landmark initiatives of the Congress-led UPA government much criticised by no less a person than the prime minister have turned out to be saviours for crores of our people in the last two years," she said referring to the National Food Security Act and Mahatma Gandhi NREGA.

"The divisive and polarising agenda of the ruling party and its leaders has now become a regular feature of the political discourse in state after state. History, not just ancient but also contemporary, is mischievously distorted and facts are maliciously invented to add fuel to this agenda. It is for us all to stand up and confront these forces of hate and prejudice," she charged.

"We will not allow them to damage the bonds of amity and harmony that have sustained and enriched our diverse society for centuries," she told party MPs of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

Accusing the ruling establishment of targeting the opposition, its leaders and workers, she said the full might of the state machinery is unleashed against them.

"Maximum governance to those in power clearly means spreading maximum fear and intimidation," she charged and added such blatant threats and tactics will neither frighten or silence us nor will we get cowed down.

The meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party, the first one being held after the party's debacle in recent assembly elections in five states, was attended by former prime minister Manmohan Singh and former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, besides all party MPs in both houses of Parliament.

Contd. from Page 1...

## Himanta asks DCs to connect

understand people's problems & ensure attendance of doctors & teachers in hospitals & schools respectively," Sarma added.

The chief minister also said the DCs conference under is a curtain-raiser to another such meet at Tezpur next month.

## Two ex-NLFB cadres killed

shifted to Gauhati Medical College & Hospital (GMCH) for treatment. Two pistols were seized from the encounter site.

"Valiant action by additional SP Prakash Medhi. Despite receiving bullet injury, he and his team neutralised two criminals after heavy exchange of fire in Runikhata, Chirang early this morning. @Assam Police is proud of you," special director general of police (Law and Order) G P Singh tweeted.

Around the same time, a group of suspected dacoits barged into a house in Kamarpara in Dhaligaon police station area, and when the residents raised an alarm, they shot dead a family member, identified as Raja Bodo, and left the place.

Police officers reached the spot and launched a combing operation to nab the killers. According to police, a group of dacoits entered Manaranjan Narzary's house around 11:30 pm and they threatened Manaranjan Narzary by showing their arms. The dacoits left Manaranjan Narzary's house after the family members started screaming. Narzary informed the development to his brother-in-law Raja Boro (19) who rushed to Narzary's house. While coming the dacoits met Raja Boro and killed him mercilessly. BTR CEM and UPPL president Pramod Boro visited the house of Raja Boro on Tuesday at Kamarpara village. Terming the incident unfortunate, the CEM said that the police administration would take stern action against the perpetrators of the crime. (With PTI inputs)

## Not an inch of land ceded

in the border areas was wrong. "The Modi government is changing that policy and our borders are secure. My state Arunachal Pradesh is also 100 percent safe and secure," he asserted.

## Kathar accuses CEM of disrupting

joined BJP had taken the lead to disrupt the APHLC meeting. Engti also termed the CEM as a coward. "All development schemes are implemented in Bithung Rengthama and the rest of 25 MAC constituencies are left with nothing. If elections are fair and peaceful, without money power then he is not going to win. He has no courage to contest from Lumbajong or from other constituencies as there is no sign of development."

Engti also said as the CEM is perpetrating gunda raj and terrorising people, is not worthy to receive the honorary doctorate degree.

It may be mentioned here that in November last the CEM was conferred with the honorary doctorate degree for peace and education by a Bangalore based Bharat Virtual University. "You are doing gunda raj and terrorising people and by your character you are not worthy to receive the honorary doctorate degree. You should return your doctorate degree," Engti demanded. On Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Karbi Anglong on April 28, the APHLC spokesperson said that whenever any BJP leader from either Centre or the state comes, there is no gain for the people of Karbi Anglong.

"When Union Home minister, Amit Shah came to Dengaon last year it was arranged on an open paddy field. After the meeting the paddy field was polluted with empty water bottles, polythene bags, empty food packets and other garbage. It has hampered the soil and was unfit for cultivation. There was no compensation for it. His visit was a loss for the people of Karbi Anglong as the BJP has given away 10 seats in the open for category in the later signing of MoS by the six-armed organisations with the Central government," Kathar said.

On the visit of chief minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma in the 30th Karbi Lamet Amei general conference at Dongka Sarpo on March 26, he has declared that in order to include Karbi language in the 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution, Karbis should opt for Devnagiri script. His visit has rather created controversies. Now the Prime Minister is coming to Karbi Anglong at Loringthei near Bakulia, but what will the people of Karbi Anglong get from his visit, Kathar asked.

## Dibrugarh to host Inland

from the Ministry of Commerce, Inland water Transport, IWT and customs and all those connected with transport and logistics," Singh informed.

Union minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways AYUSH Sarbananda Sonowal and Union minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari are likely to attend the conclave.

## 2 bodies, car fished out

The cause of this incident is yet uncertain," said Anjan Kalita, a former leader of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU). Meanwhile, local people have demanded a proper probe into the incident.

## Crimes by Russia no different

anyone who has given criminal orders and carried them out by killing "our people will be brought before the tribunal which should be similar to the Nuremberg tribunals." After his address, he asked for a video to be played in the Security Council that showed horrific images of corpses lying on the streets, charred bodies and pictures of mass graves across various Ukrainian cities. Some of the dead had their hands tied behind their backs and mouths gagged, including children. In his nearly 20-minute video address to the Council meeting on Ukraine, being attended by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Zelenskyy questioned that where is the security that the Security Council needs to guarantee. "It's not there, although there is a Security Council" but where is the peace, he said. He demanded maximum access for journalists and involvement of the International Criminal Court for complete truth and full accountability to ensure that the war crimes do not go unpunished. "Those who consider themselves privileged and believe that they can get away with anything," he said, adding that all the other potential war criminals in the world should be shown how they will be punished. "If the biggest one is punished, then everyone is punished."

Demanding reform of the Council, he said it is obvious that the key institution of the world that must ensure international peace and security "simply cannot work effectively." He said if the war and brutality continues, then nations will rely only on the power of their own arms to ensure their security and not on international law and institutions. "The United Nations can be simply closed. Are you ready to close the UN? Do you think that the time of international law is gone? If your answer is no, then you need to act immediately. The UN Charter must be restored immediately," he said. He said the massacre being witnessed in Bucha is "unfortunately only one of many examples of what the occupiers have been doing on our land for the past 41 days."

The Ukrainian leader said he knows that Russia will "blame everyone just to justify their own actions" and even say that the videos showing corpses strewn across the streets in Bucha are "staged" but this is 2022 and there is "conclusive evidence, satellite images, and we can conduct full and transparent investigation." He asserted that it is time to transform the system, the United Nations and proposed to convene a global conference in Kiev "to determine how we are going to reform the world security system." "It is now clear that the goals set in San Francisco in 1945 for the creation of a global security international organization have not been achieved, and it is impossible to achieve them without reform," he said. Zelenskyy asserted that "we need decisions from the Security Council for peace in Ukraine."

## Parliament passes accountancy bill

has witnessed rapid changes in the way the economy is being profiled, the finance minister said, "at this time, the sanctity of the audited financial statement which is where the role of CAs come into play has got to be maintained, has got to be given its due position and we need to have audit and certification quality. We also need to have a favourable investment climate being brought in." Citing the examples of Satyam and the IL&FS scandals, she said, "we have repeatedly been questioned about the number of failings of the CAs who did not deliver as per the expectations." Reiterating the need to bring the bill, Sitharaman said the corporate governance system needs to be robust in order to meet the global investment expectations. Besides, she said there is a need to bring greater robustness and accountability in India's standards of audit and how audit certificates are being given. Dispelling apprehensions expressed by certain members regarding the autonomy of the three institutes, she said their functioning continue to be governed by their respective three Acts.

"This one Act which is going to have an impact on each of these Acts only to a limited extent of bringing in greater transparency in the disciplinary processes with which these institutes function," Sitharaman asserted.

The three institutes - Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), Institute of Cost Accountants of India (formerly known as ICWAI), and Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) -- will continue to have the authority for qualifying and licensing of people and regulation of their conduct as was done before, she said. The finance minister said that in the last few years, there has been an increase in the number of entities wanting to register as LLPs after steps taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to promote startups and smaller entrepreneurs across the country. With this, she said these firms are "bringing a new kind of environment and we also see that the requirement for regulating them also needs to be robust". The bill amends the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949, the Cost and Works Accountants Act, 1959, and the Company Secretaries Act, 1980. Among other things, the bill provides for the setting up of a coordination committee headed by the Secretary of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. It will have representations from the three institutes. The bill also provides for registration of firms with the institutes and it will help in paving the way for Indian accountancy firms to grow big, she said. It also proposes to enhance the quantum of fines for partners and firms found guilty of misconduct. The legislation also seeks to appoint non-Chartered Accountant (CA), non-cost accountant and non-company secretary as the presiding officer of the disciplinary committees of the respective institutes. The Congress, TMC, DMK, CPI (M) and YSRCP opposed the bill, citing "infirmities" and alleging that it was a blatant attack on professional autonomy. Neeraj Dangi of Congress accused the government of trying to control everyone, be it businessmen, doctors, industrialists, teachers, government employees or students and the bill is one such example of doing it to control chartered accountants.

## India generates 3.5 million

attended by Minister of State Ashwini Kumar Choubey and senior officials of the government. To tackle the challenge of plastic pollution, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's pledge to phase out single-use plastics by 2022. "Taking the momentum forward" and stressing on the need for active public participation, Yadav also administered 'Swachh Bharat Harit Bharat Green Pledge' to the gathering. He appreciated the innovative solutions developed by start-ups, entrepreneurs and students in the India Plastic Challenge-Hackathon 2021, highlighting the immense talent and potential of India's youth. Yadav said India sends a message of hope and optimism that humanity can meet the challenges posed by climate change and will be a part of the solution to climate change.



## 'Squid Game' director working on film 'more violent' than global hit series

LOS ANGELES, April 5 (IANS): 'Squid Game' director Hwang Dong-hyuk has announced that he's developing 'Killing Old People Club', a new film inspired by a novel penned by Umberto Eco, the revered Italian intellectual and essayist, reports 'Variety'.

Speaking during a session at MipTV along with his producer Jun Young Jang at February Films, Dong-hyuk revealed he had already penned a 25-page treatment note about the project, which will surely be "another controversial film", as he put it. "It will be more violent than 'Squid Game'," teased Dong-hyuk, adding that he might have to hide from old people after the film comes out. The project has the working title 'K.O.'



Club', according to 'Variety'.

The critically acclaimed creator said he will now return home to South Korea to write the second season of 'Squid Game' and hopes to have the show stream on Netflix by the end of 2024.

Dong-hyuk said the biggest praise he got about his superhit Netflix show came from Steven Spielberg, who told him he wanted to "steal (his) brain".

Dong-hyuk said he had met Spielberg during the AFI Awards Luncheon last month. "Steven Spielberg told me, 'I watched your whole show in three days and now I want to steal your brain!'," the Korean director recounted, according to 'Variety'.

"It was like the biggest compliment I ever got in my life because he's my film hero. I grew up watching his movies."

## Jasleen Royal: 'Mitra Re' is about the times you feel lost in life

MUMBAI, April 5 (IANS): The first song from the Ajay Devgn and Amitabh Bachchan-starrer 'Runway 34' titled 'Mitra Re' promises an intense and intriguing journey. It conveys the turbulent mind state of the protagonist, Captain Vikrant Khanna, whose flight takes a mysterious and uncharted course in the skies because of circumstances beyond his control.

'Mitra Re', the first number of 'Runway 34' displays the conflict of a man who is rendered helpless on his journey back home with a planeload of passengers.

Composed by the young music sensation Jasleen Royal, sung by Arijit Singh and Jasleen Royal and it has been written by Aditya Sharma.

Talking about the number and why she thought this song is apt for 'Runway 34', Jasleen says: "Mitra Re is about the times you feel lost in life but you know in your heart whatever happened you tried your best. It's about having faith in your intention and believing that the universe has got your back. I believe in the power of Intentions and every action and thought has energy. It's a reminder to oneself that you do what is in your control and the rest will be taken care of."

Inspired by true incidents, 'Runway 34' features the legendary Amitabh Bachchan, Ajay Devgn and Rakul Preet Singh in pivotal roles along with an exciting ensemble cast which includes Boman Irani and YouTube craze Carry Minati.

Directed by Ajay Devgn, 'Runway 34' is produced by Ajay Devgn Films. It is co-produced by Kumar Mangat Pathak, Vikrant Sharma, Sandeep Harish Kewlani, Tarlok Singh Jethi, Hasnain Husaini and Jay Kanujia. Watch out for 'Runway 34' releasing around Eid on April 29.

## SHREYAS TALPADE TO PLAY MAJOR ATUL GAJRE IN 'THE LAST FLIGHT'

LOS ANGELES, April 5 (IANS): Actors Shreyas Talpade and Deepti Lele will be seen in a web series titled 'The Last Flight', releasing on April 9.

The web series, which will release in Hindi and Marathi, is an anthology of stories dealing with the aspects of line-of-duty, the glorious victory and struggles at the battle field.

Shreyas said: "I am honoured to be playing the role of Major Atul Gajre in The Last Flight. The series is based/inspired from his life. It's an inspiring true story & is a reminder of their love, sacrifice & their heroic struggles which I believe are timeless. I had a great time working on sets with Deepakji and the entire cast and crew."

The web series goes live on the 9th of April. Shreyas Talpade plays the role of Major Atul Gajre, who sac-



rificed his life saving thousands of innocent lives, while he was on his last flight with his co-pilot, Capt Bhanu Pratap.

Director Deepak Pandey said: "The objective behind the story line of The Last Flight is to inspire youth, understand our heroes and idolize them. These brave courageous heroes never die, though they sleep in dust, their legacy serves a thousand living men. We are excited to be showcasing the stories of unsung heroes."

Producer Falguni Shah, on why they created this show: "The stories of their courage and passion are larger than life and need to come to the forefront. These heroes too have families and the bond, the ties and support they get from their families goes a long way in their journey."

"These people are also in a way making a huge sacrifice, we want to show the world such beautiful and poignant stories so that people can truly be grateful to our heroes and their families."

## Harrison Ford joins Jason Segel in comedy series 'Shrinking'

LOS ANGELES, April 5 (IANS): Harrison Ford will be seen starring opposite Jason Segel in the comedy series 'Shrinking' for the streamer Apple.

The show was first announced in October 2021. Segel will write the series alongside 'Ted Lasso' co-creator Bill Lawrence and 'Ted Lasso' star, writer, and co-executive producer Brett Goldstein, reports 'Variety'.

'Shrinking' follows Jimmy (Segel), a grieving therapist who starts to break the rules and tell his clients exactly what he thinks. Ignoring his training and ethics, he finds himself making huge, tumultuous changes to people's lives, including his own.

Ford will play Dr Phil Rhodes, described as a down-to-earth, sharp as a tack "blue collar shrink," blunt but with an ever present twinkle.

Phil is a pioneer in Cognitive

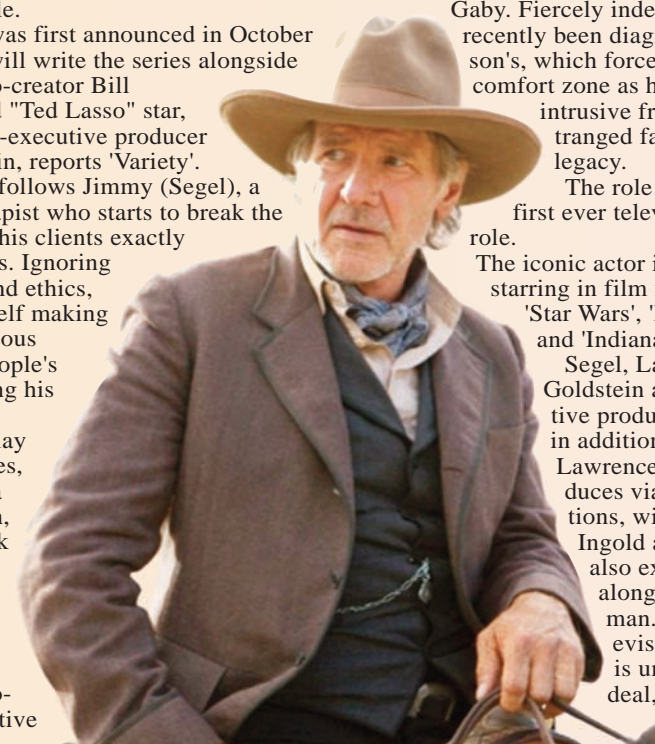
Behavioural Therapy who has built a successful practice over the years that he shares with his two young proteges, Jimmy and Gaby. Fiercely independent, Phil has recently been diagnosed with Parkinson's, which forces him out of his comfort zone as he grapples with intrusive friends, his estranged family and his legacy.

The role will mark Ford's first ever television starring role.

The iconic actor is best known for starring in film franchises like 'Star Wars', 'Blade Runner', and 'Indiana Jones'.

Segel, Lawrence, and Goldstein all serve as executive producers on 'Shrinking' in addition to writing.

Lawrence executive produces via Doozer Productions, with Doozer's Jeff Ingold and Liza Katzer also executive producing alongside Neil Goldman. Warner Bros. Television, where Doozer is under an overall deal, is the studio.



## Jason Momoa to star in, write Hawaiian history drama series 'Chief of War'



LOS ANGELES, April 5 (IANS): Hollywood star Jason Momoa is set to star in, write, and executive produce the drama series 'Chief of War' for streamer Apple.

The series follows the story of the unification and colonisation of Hawaii from an indigenous point of view. Apple has given the show an eight-episode order, reports 'Variety'.

Momoa will write alongside Thomas Pa'a Sibbett. Both also serve as executive producers, as will Francis Lawrence, Peter Chernin, Jenno Topping, Erik Holmberg, and Doug Jung. Jung is also attached to serve as showrunner. Justin Chon is in negotiations to direct the first two episodes. Endeavor Content and Chernin Entertainment will produce. 'Chief of War' is now the second Apple series led by Momoa. He currently stars in 'See',

about a post-apocalyptic future in which nearly all remaining humans have lost their sense of sight. The show aired its second season in 2021 and has already been renewed for a third. This will also mark the first time Momoa, who is of Hawaiian descent, has written for television. He previously co-wrote, directed, and starred in the film 'Road to Paloma', which was released in 2014. He and Pa'a Sibbett also co-wrote the story for the upcoming feature 'The Last Manhunt', with Momoa appearing on screen in a supporting role. Momoa starred in the feature 'Braven' in 2018, which was co-written by Pa'a Sibbett.

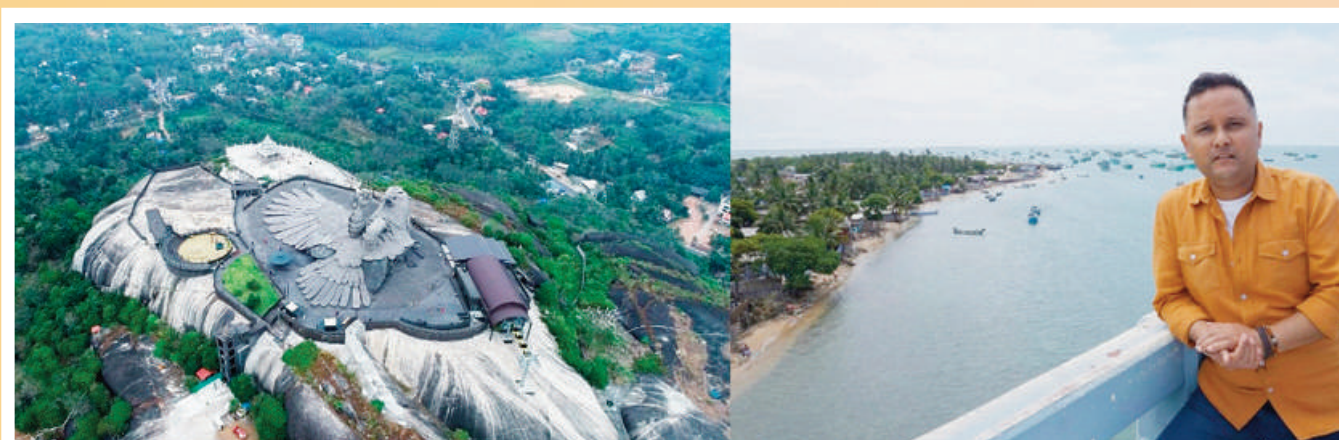
Momoa is known for his roles in shows like 'Game of Thrones', 'Frontier', and 'See' as well as for films like 'Aquaman' and 'Justice League', 'Dune', and 'The Bad Batch'.

## 'Legends of The Ramayana with Amish': Fascinating educational series

There are many versions of the 'Ramayana' in Indian languages, apart from its Buddhist, Sikh, and Jain adaptations. Also, there are Cambodian, Indonesian, Filipino, Thai, Lao, Burmese and Malay versions of the tale. It is the Sanskrit version, written by Maharishi Valmiki, which is considered the original, but there is no proof of when it was written.

We are given to understand that there is about a 2,500-year gap between the actual events of the 'Ramayana' and the writing of the epic, it is debatable whether it is a myth, or a slice of history, or a bit of both.

The text of the 'Ramayana' centres around the narrative of Rama, crown prince of Ayodhya, deliberating upon his victory over evil, in reality, we're



told: "It is a symbol of the battle of the soul that takes place within as much as it does on the battleground." This three-episode docu-series streaming on discovery+, hosted by the renowned author Amish Tri-

pathi (of the Shiva Trilogy fame), does not tell us the story of the 'Ramayana' or its philosophy. Instead, he indulges us with ancient, unexplored stories and myths around the 'Ramayana' by literally taking us

on a 5,000-plus-kilometre pilgrimage to all the places in India and Sri Lanka where Ram had left his footprints.

In the first episode, 'The Sacred Journey', Amish tells us about Ram's lineage, his elder

sister Shanta and what made their father Dashrath exile him, and why for 14 years.

Amish then takes us to Ayodhya and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh, Chitrakoot in Madhya Pradesh, Bastar in Chhattis-

garh, and Lonar Lake and Panchvati in Maharashtra. The episode is also peppered with information correlating the continental drift, defining the importance of the number 11, the Ramnami community, and how Ravana kidnapped Sita.

The second episode titled 'The Search of Sita' takes us from Panchvati to Hampi, to Anegundi, and lastly to Danushkodi in Rameshwaram. It also tells us stories of Jatayu, Sabri, Sugriva, and Hanuman and how they helped Ram in his endeavour. 'The Many Faces of Ravana' is the final episode. The narrative mainly takes place in Sri Lanka and explores the island in-depth in connection with the epic. Overall, at each location Amish shares interesting information that bridges the mythology

with geography, thereby reinforcing the story as a historical tale.

With comments from 13 personalities, who include authors, scholars, a hydrogeologist, a descendant of the Vijayanagar Dynasty, a temple trustee, a speleologist (a specialist in caves and cave systems), and an ex-bureaucrat, the narrative reinforces the premise of the series. The production quality of the documentary is of a high standard.

The 2D animation seamlessly meshes with cinematographer Prakash Simwal's live-action frames, which capture the locales beautifully, making it a delight to watch the series. Also, the script and editing seem effortless and natural, making the series fascinating and a delight to watch. IANS



## World No. 2 Medvedev could be banned from playing in Wimbledon this year: Report

LONDON, April 5 (IANS): Wimbledon could ban Russian tennis player and current world No. 2 Daniil Medvedev from competing in the tournament this year over fears that a win could "boost" (President) Vladimir Putin's regime amid the invasion of Ukraine," according to a report in mirror.co.uk.

While Russian players are allowed to compete without flags or anthems in the wake of Russia's aggression in Ukraine, the report said that the All England Club could likely impose stricter measures on Russian tennis players, including Medvedev.

The report added that the All England Club had been advised that its independent tournament status means it

"could implement a ban on Russian players that fail to condemn the actions of Putin -- and not face legal repercussions".

As with other tournaments on the tour, including the three other majors, which have remained neutral "due to fears they could be taken to court", Wimbledon can take stricter measures as the tournament "possesses a different status", the report added.

A spokesperson for the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (AELTC) appears to have confirmed the Championships may ask Russian athletes to go a step further and maybe sign a form condemning Putin's action in order to compete at Wimbledon, according to the report.



"Private member clubs have more freedom as to who to allow in or not, so they wouldn't be subject to the same

discrimination laws as the tours," the spokesman was quoted as saying in the report on Monday evening.

"If you are running the main tennis tour, you have the freedom to ban players -- if they have been found guilty of match-fixing or doping, for instance -- but you have to be able to show that this course of action is reasonable.

"In this instance, if the tours took strong action, Russians players could argue that they are being prevented from making a living through no fault of their own. That is not so much of an issue for Wimbledon, however," the spokesman said.

The AELTC will likely release their policy next month before the deadline for the entries ends, said the report. "It would allow impacted players to know what is expected of them if they hope to play at the grass-court grand slam,"

added the report.

UK sports minister Nigel Huddleston recently declared that Putin must not be allowed to take political advantage of any Russian athletes and their achievements in Britain, according to the report.

He has suggested that "Medvedev and Belarusian world No. 5 Aryna Sabalenka should only be allowed to participate in major sporting events in the UK as long as they sign a form denouncing Putin and his actions".

"We wish to get assurance in a written declaration that they are not receiving money from Putin, Russia or Belarus (and) that they will not be making supportive comments of Putin, Russia or Belarus," Huddleston said.

### I-LEAGUE

## FERNANDES, MENDIGUTXIA ON TARGET AS NEROCA EDGE PAST KENKRE FC

NAIHATI (WEST BENGAL), April 5 (IANS): Sweden Fernandes and Sergio Mendigutxia Iglesias were on target for NEROCA FC as they defeated Kenkre 2-1 in the Hero I-League here on Tuesday.

With this, NEROCA have moved up to fourth place in the Hero I-League standings with their fourth victory of the season. Meanwhile, it was Kenkre's seventh defeat of the season.

NEROCA and Kenkre kicked-started the first match of the day with high intensity as they looked to control the ball in the midfield early in the game. A couple of chances were created inside 10 minutes, including Dhananjay Singh's efforts to set the ball for Mendigutxia in the ninth minute through a cross from the left side.

NEROCA thoroughly dominated their bottom-placed opponents and looked like favourites to break the deadlock with their high pressing and tackles. They were almost awarded for their efforts as Sweden Fernandes came close to opening the scoring in the 18th minute. The ball was set up by Mendi after receiving a left side cross from Khaiminthat. However, Sweden failed to connect with the



header. Two minutes later, Khaiminthat almost found the back of the net but Tenzin Samdup denied him the goal by outstretching his foot and after that, it was just a matter of time before NEROCA score the opening goal, through Sweden Fernandes as the winger netted an outstanding goal after beating the goalie at the near post.

Kenkre created the first chance of the match in the 42nd minute through Ranjeet Singh Pandre after NEROCA defenders fumbled but the striker was not able to put it past the goal line. Three minutes were added at the end of first-half regulation time and it was all Kenkre needed to level the contest, courtesy of Pandre's perfect finish in the 45th

minute. Following Mendigutxia's goal, the game gathered pace as Kenkre players were not ready to bow down without a fight. Khaiminthat made two back-to-back attempts in the 63rd minute but his efforts went in vain as he failed in penetrating Tenzin's wall.

Mendi looked to double his side's league in the 68th

minute but his strike went over the bar. Kenkre players upped the ante as they frustrated their opponents with their precise stroke play.

Khaiminthat took a late attempt in the 88th minute but his shot deflects for a corner. Five minutes were added in the end but it was not enough to change the scoreline of the match.

## Alcaraz leapfrogs to second in ATP Race To Turin after Miami title triumph

MIAMI, April 5 (IANS): Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz's title triumph at the Miami Open -- an ATP 1000 event -- has seen the 18-year-old move up five spots to second in the ATP Race To Turin.

The ATP Race To Turin determines which eight players and doubles teams make it to the elite Nitto ATP Finals in Turin, which is tennis' grand finale. The Nitto ATP Finals this year will be held from November 13-20.

After last year's Miami Open, Alcaraz was 110th in the Race. But the Miami champion already has 1,950 points, thanks to his title on Monday (IST) along with an ATP 500 trophy at the Rio Open and a semifinal run at the BNP Paribas Open among other impressive results. He is 18-2 on the season and pursuing his first berth into the season finale in Turin.

Spanish stalwart and winner of 21 Grand Slams, Rafael Nadal, is currently leading the ATP Race To Turin with 3,350 points. The 35-year-old Nadal enjoyed the best start to a season of his career by winning his first 20 matches, which also included the Australian Open. Nadal has a 1,400-point lead over Alcaraz leading into the clay-court season. American Taylor Fritz, who ended Nadal's perfect start to



2022, is fourth in the Race with 1,520 points after winning his first Masters 1000 title at Indian Wells. Like Alcaraz, the American is also trying to qualify for the Nitto ATP Finals for the first time.

Russian tennis player and the current world No.2 Daniil Medvedev, who is recovering from a surgery on a hernia injury, is No.3 on the Race to Turin with 1,900 points.

The fifth-to-eighth spots in the Race currently belong to 2019 Nitto ATP Finals champion Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece (1,440), Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada (1,420), Andrey Rublev of Russia (1,390) and Casper Ruud of Norway (1,020).

The top two Italians in the Race are ninth-placed Matteo Berrettini (945) and Jannik Sinner (800).

## Alyssa Healy, Nat Sciver the new No. 1s in ICC ODI rankings

DUBAI, April 5 (IANS): Australian opener Alyssa Healy and England's Nat Sciver have moved to the top of the ICC ODI Rankings for batters and all-rounders respectively following their Women's World Cup final heroics at Christchurch, New Zealand recently.

The 32-year-old Healy has climbed to the top of the rankings for batters after her phenomenal 170 in the final, which Australia won by 71 runs to claim their seventh World Cup title. Healy's superb knock sent her soaring into the No.1 spot, ending South African opener Laura Wolvaardt's brief stay at the summit.

Healy smashed 509 runs -- including two hundreds and two half-centuries -- across her nine matches at the World Cup, and at an amazing strike rate of 103.66. The haul meant Healy finished

just ahead of compatriot Rachael Haynes as the tournament's top scorer.

Four Australians remain in the top six in the latest ODI Rankings, with Beth Mooney, Meg Lanning and Haynes joining Healy among the world's top-ranked batters.

The latest rankings see a completely new-look top-10, with no single player remaining in the same spot after the conclusion of the World Cup.

Sciver's unbeaten 148 in England's unsuccessful reply in the final saw her jump into second in the batting rankings. The England star's brilliant effort also saw her claim the illustrious top spot in the all-rounder rankings, displacing Ellyse Perry.

Sciver's century in the final was her second of the tournament, with the English all-rounder scor-



ing 436 runs at an average of 72.66 in her eight innings in New Zealand. The 29-year-old also picked up four wickets while returning economical figures

through the World Cup with her medium pace bowling.

English spinner Sophie Ecclestone remains at No. 1 in the bowler rankings, with South Africa pacer Shabnim Ismail moving up into second after a terrific tournament.

The pair occupied the two top spots in the wicket-taker column at the end of the World Cup, with the threatening Ismail taking 14 across seven innings. But Ecclestone was well clear as the stand-out bowler of the tournament, finishing with 21 wickets to her name at an average of 15.61 and with an economy of just 3.83.

Veteran swing-bowler, England's Anya Shrubsole is the big mover in the latest bowling rankings, jumping five places to enter the top-10 after her figures of 2/27 in the semifinal and 3/46 in the final.

## Inaara Luthria, Sophia Andhyarujina secure top positions

MUMBAI, April 5 (IANS): Inaara Luthria and Sophia Andhyarujina secured top positions in their respective competitions in the Children II Dressage event of Regional Equestrian League at the Mahalaxmi Race Course here on Tuesday.

Inaara performed on two horses Nashy and Equinox in turns securing 64.84 per cent and 61.25 per cent by winning first and second place. In the same event Shaira Khanna and Hayden Hussain positioned third and fourth place as they able to secure 60 per cent and 57.96 per cent respectively. Shaira rode on Roxy and Hayden on Rachel in the competition.

In the Children I Dressage Sophia Andhyarujina wins number

one and two positions while performing on her two horses Velocity and Lioness in turns. Sophie secured 62.97 per cent with Lioness and 61.39 per cent while riding on Velocity. Annika Kjeldsen positioned third place while riding on Roxy and secured 58.45 per cent.

After securing top position, Inaara Luthria said, "I couldn't believe the result when I heard it. I had worked really hard with my coach for this event and was very nervous in the days leading up to it. Both the horses I rode, Nashy and Equinox went really well, but I was not expecting to come first as well as second. I am delighted and a big thank you to the organisers and the judges."

## Thailand Open: Indian boxer Sumit advances to semis, Gaurav exits



NEW DELHI, April 5 (IANS): India's Sumit put up a dominating performance to enter the semifinals while Gaurav Chauhan suffered a defeat at the 2022 Thailand Open International Boxing Tournament in Phuket on Tuesday.

Playing his first match after having received a bye in the opening round, Sumit looked in good touch throughout the match as he comfortably secured a 5-0 win over Kazakhstan's Timur Nursetov in the men's 75kg Last-8 bout.

On the other hand, Gaurav (91kg) gave his all against another Kazakh opponent Aibek Oralbay, the 2018 Youth Olympics champion. However, his campaign ended with a 1-4 loss in the quarterfinals.

Sumit became the fourth Indian semifinalist at the on-going tournament, which has been witnessing high-voltage competition in presence of 130 top boxers, including 74 male and 56 females, from Asia, Europe, Oceania and Africa. Monika (48kg), Ashish Kumar (81kg) and Manisha (57kg) are the other three Indians who have already progressed into the Last-4 stage. Six Indian pugilists will be seen in action on Wednesday. While Bhagyabati kachari (75kg), Amit Panghal (52kg) and Rohit Mor (57kg) will play in the quarter-finals, Govind Sahani (48), Varinder Singh (60kg) and Ashish Kumar (81kg) will fight for a place in the finals. In the last edition of the Thailand Open, held in 2019, the Indian contingent signed off with eight medals-one gold, four silver and three bronze.

## Root deluding himself by talking about positives in West Indies series: Cook

LONDON, April 5 (IANS): Former England opening batter Alastair Cook feels Test skipper Joe Root and interim coach Paul Collingwood are deluding themselves by talking about the positives in the team's recent 0-1 away defeat to the West Indies in the three-match series.

Following two draws, England -- already reeling under the criticism of a 0-4 Ashes thrashing in Australia -- lost the third and final Test at St George's, Grenada by 10 wickets with the tourists scoring 204 and 120 in the two innings.

Cook, a veteran of 161 Tests and nearly 12,500 runs in the longest format of the game, said he was a "bit bored" of Root speaking about the positives after



Cook, a veteran of 161 Tests and nearly 12,500 runs in the longest format of the game, said he was a "bit bored" of Root speaking about the positives after the series loss in the Caribbean

the series loss in the Caribbean. While Root had said in the wake of the defeat that there were "many good things" for his side, Collingwood -- who replaced Chris Silverwood as interim coach following the Ashes debacle -- said he was surprised people were questioning Root's position as captain.

"I am a bit bored with all the positive chat because I don't

think it was a sense of reality in that changing room," Cook was quoted as saying by dailymail.co.uk on Tuesday.

"I don't know what's being said behind closed doors but I'm struggling to see as many positives as they are. And is that slightly deluded? The word's been put out there," the former England skipper opined.

Cook also felt that pace-bowl-

ing stalwarts, Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad, who were omitted from the Test series in the West Indies following the Ashes drubbing, deserved fitting Test send-offs, although he added that neither was looking at retirement yet.

"They're right up there with the best bowlers ever to play the game. Hopefully, they do get that chance, but tell that to Jimmy and he'll say, I'm not thinking about retiring, I'm still playing until I'm 75". "He's thinking, 'I want to get back in that Test side and prove they shouldn't have left me out. But if you're talking about deserving a send-off, of course they deserve it. It makes it an interesting summer, doesn't it?" said Cook.



# Winless Mumbai Indians face uphill task against KKR

**PUNE, April 5 (PTI):** Mumbai Indians' domestic bowlers will look to step up as they take on a buoyant Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL here on Wednesday, looking to turn things around after back-to-back defeats.

MI have so far looked like anything but IPL's five-time champions, losing both their opening games – first against Delhi Capitals by four wickets and then against a resurgent Rajasthan Royals by 23 runs.

And skipper Rohit Sharma will seek improvements on multiple fronts to effect a turnaround when they face KKR, who come into the game after beating Punjab Kings by six wickets.

For MI, pacer Basil Thampi and spinner Murugan Ashwin have proved to be weak-links as they yielded 73 runs in 3 overs during RR's innings and the duo will need to produce a better show on Wednesday.

In fact, Australian seamer Daniel Sams too went for runs and remained wicketless in the last two matches. The trio will have to quickly recover from their forgettable outing against RR and bowl in the right areas if they have to contain the KKR batters.

Jasprit Bumrah, with his three-for, however, showed why he is the best in the business, particularly at the death and MI would be hoping for another stellar show from him.

For a turn-around, Rohit himself will have to be at his brutal best and hammer his favourite opposition, against whom he has a formidable record.

Opener Ishan Kishan has been rock solid, smashing a brilliant 81 in the lung-opener followed by a gusty 54.



If Mumbai have to post score or chase a big total, which is likely at the MCA stadium in Gahunje, Rohit and Kishan would need to fire on all cylinders.

MI has badly missed the services of Suryakumar Yadav, who is known for playing many a match-winning knocks for the franchise. Yadav has recovered from his finger injury but it remains to be seen whether he plays or not with Rohit remaining non-committal about his availability.

While the emergence of unheralded N Tilak Verma, who smashed 61 off 33 balls to take MI to 81 in 8 overs against RR, was a big positive, the team still couldn't chase down a total of 193.

And the likes of Anmolpreet Singh, Tim

David and West Indian Kieron Pollard will need to shoulder responsibility. While Singh scored in single digits, David too didn't look comfortable on Indian tracks and it needs to be seen if MI brings in South Africa's U-19 star Dewald Brevis, known as 'Baby AB'.

For Kolkata, the biggest asset is star all-rounder Andre Russell coming back to form. His six-hitting prowess was on display against Punjab Kings and he would be keen to continue from where he left.

But their top-order, comprising Ajinkya Rahane and Venkatesh Iyer, faltered against Punjab and the duo would want to give the side a good start.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer has been getting

starts, but a big score is due. Ditto for Sam Billings. Nitish Rana too has been far from his best and needs to go all guns blazing.

KKR pacer Umesh Yadav has been impressive and could pose a potential threat to MI batters but he would need support from Tim Southee and Shivam Mavi, while the eight overs from Varun Chakravarthy and Sunil Narine can change the match situation.

Mumbai have won 22 times against KKR, while KKR has been victorious only seven times, and they would want to add a win to their tally.

**Teams (From):**

**Kolkata Knight Riders:** Aaron Finch, Abhishek Kumar, Ajinkya Rahane, Baba Indrajith, Nitish Rana, Pratham Singh, Rinku Singh, Shreyas Iyer, Ashok Sharma, Pat Cummins, Rasikh Dar, Shivam Mavi, Tim Southee, Umesh Yadav, Varun Chakravarthy, Aman Khan, Andre Russell, Anukul Roy, Chamika Karunaratne, Mohammed Nabi, Ramesh Kumar, Sunil Narine, Venkatesh Iyer, Sam Billings, Sheldon Jackson.

**Mumbai Indians:** Rohit Sharma (Captain), Anmolpreet Singh, Rahul Buddhi, Ramandeep Singh, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Verma, Tim David, Arjun Tendulkar, Basil Thampi, Hritik Shokeen, Jasprit Bumrah, Jaydev Unadkat, Jofra Archer, Mayank Markande, Murugan Ashwin, Riley Meredith, Tymal Mills, Arshad Khan, Daniel Sams, Dewald Brevis, Fabian Allen, Kieron Pollard, Sanjay Yadav, Aryan Juyal and Ishan Kishan.

**Match starts at 7.30 PM**

## Three wushu players bring laurels for Sivasagar district

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, April 5:** The 21th National Sub-Junior Boys-Girls National Wushu championship was held in Tamil Nadu Nur Islam University from March 25 to March 31 where three Wushu Players of Sivasagar district won Gold, Silver and Bronze medals and brought laurels for Sivasagar district as well as for Assam.

Abhijit Buragohain won Gold medal in the 56 kg boy's category, Munna Mili wins Bronze medal in 60 kg boy's category and Tulika Chetia won Silver medal in 36 kg girl's category in National Wushu championship.

The three Wushu players were accorded warm welcome in Demow of Sivasagar District on Tuesday by the local people and felicitated three wushu players with phulam gamosa.

The Sivasagar District Wushu Sports Association had also given warm welcome to three Wushu Players in Demow and also organized a felicitation programme at Demow Jyoti Bishnu Building on Tuesday.

## Oil India Ekadash enter semis

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, April 5:** Oil India Ekadash entered semifinals in the ATPA Shield Football Tournament on Tuesday. Oil beat Charabahi Sports Association by 4-1 goals in the third quarter final match played in the ground of Jorhat Stadium. Swarg Chetry scored 2 goals and Anurag Narzari, Cirandeep Moran, Milan Basumotari scored one goal each. BIJU Moran netted one goal in favor of Charabahi Sports Association.

## Boxing: Sumit storms into Thailand open semifinals

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Indian boxer Sumit (75kg) entered the semifinals of the Thailand Open with a comfortable win over Timur Nurseitov in Phuket, Thailand on Tuesday.

Sumit, who received bye in the opening round, looked in good touch throughout the bout. He notched a 5-0 win against Kazakhstan's Nurseitov in the quarterfinal clash. Sumit became the fourth Indian to enter the last four stage. Monika (48kg), Ashish Kumar (81kg) and Manisha (57kg) are already through to the semifinals.

However, it was curtains for Gaurav Chauhan (91kg), who went down 1-4 to 2018 Youth Olympics champion Aibek Oralbay of Kazakhstan in the quarterfinals. Six Indian pugilists will be seen in action on Wednesday. While Bhagyabati Kachari (75kg), Amit Panghal (52kg) and Rohit Mor (57kg) will play in their quarterfinal, Govind Sahani (48), Varinder Singh (60kg) and Ashish Kumar (81kg) will fight for a place in the finals.

## Real Kashmir look for win against rejuvenated Churchill Brothers

**KOLKATA, April 5 (PTI):** Real Kashmir FC will look to bounce back from their 1-1 stalemate with Indian Arrows but for that, they will need to improve their finishing against Churchill Brothers in an I-League match here on Wednesday.

Churchill Brothers are coming off a 4-2 win over NEROCA FC. After three draws in as many matches, Indian Arrows are expected to face a tough challenge from RoundGlass Punjab in the day's other game in Naihati. In another match, Rajasthan United FC will face their biggest challenge in the league so far when they take on table toppers Mohammedan SC.

The newly-promoted team is coming to the match, high on confidence following a comprehensive victory over TRAU FC while the Black and White brigade is fresh after a break in the previous week.

Talking about the previous match, RKFC head coach David Robertson said, "We had probably

over 20 shots in the last game and the Indian Arrows had probably 2-3 shots on target, out of which they converted one."

"It's disappointing that we did not take our chances, as much as we have created them. We will try to rectify the same in the next game and hopefully, we can score some goals."

Moving on to the opponents, Robertson believed that this won't be an easy match to play, considering Churchill Brothers' fine win over NEROCA.

"Churchill Brothers have certainly found their form and would be a very difficult team to play against as we've seen in the last match how ruthless they can be. We have to be at our best to get something and hopefully we will get a win."

Churchill Brothers will be looking to continue on the same path. Head coach Antonio Rueda is very happy with the performance of the team in the last game.

"It was a very good game, I am very happy

with the team. If we play the way we played the last game, we can win more games. I've told the team, this is what we have to do moving forward and forget whatever happened in the past," Rueda said.

Indian Arrows drew their previous game against Real Kashmir FC while RoundGlass Punjab notched up a nerve-wracking 3-2 comeback win against Sudeva Delhi FC.

RoundGlass Punjab are fresh from their first win under new Dutch head coach Ed Engelkes. Engelkes has managed just one match in the league and is new to the conditions in Indian football.

On the other hand, the head coach of the Indian Arrows, Shanmugam Venkatesh, while assessing his team's performance in the previous few weeks, said, "In football, the most important thing is how is one going to handle the pressure."

"The boys are now getting more ideas on how to handle the pressure."

## Sen, Bansod enter second round of Korea Open



**SUNCHEON, April 5 (PTI):** World championships bronze medallist Lakshya Sen and fast-rising Malvika Bansod progressed to the second round of the men's and women's singles competitions respectively after registering gruelling three-game wins at the Korea Open Super 500 badminton tournament here on Tuesday.

While Sen staved off a spirited challenge from local hope Choi Ji Hoon 14-21 21-16 21-18 in just over an hour in his opening round match, Bansod rallied her way to notch up a stunning 20-22 22-20 21-10 win over world no 24 Han Yue of China.

Sixth seed Sen, who has been in sensational form in the last six months with back-to-back final finishes at German Open and All England Championships, will next meet Indonesia's Shesar Hiren Rhustavito.

Unseeded Bansod, who had reached the finals of Syed Modi Super 300 tournament in January, will face

sixth seeded Thai Pornpawee Chochuwong in the second round.

However, it was curtains for Swiss Open finalist HS Prannoy as he went down meekly to Malaysia's Cheam June Wei 17-21 7-21 in 41 minutes.

In doubles, men's pairing of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnuvardhan Goud Panjala lost 14-21 19-21 to Pramudya Kusumawardana and Yeremia Erich Yoche Yacob Rambitan of Indonesia, while Bokka Navaneeth and B Sumeeth Reddy went down 14-21 19-21 to sixth seeded Malaysian pair of Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi. Earlier, Sen found the going tough against Choi, who kept things under control for most part of the opening game and even though the Indian clawed back to 14-14, the Korean reeled off seven points on the trot to take a 1-0 lead.

The 20-year-old from Almora, however, got his bearing back in the second game as he opened up a 11-7 lead at the interval and kept his nose ahead to take the match into the decider.

In the third game, Choi took a 8-3 lead early on but Sen made his way to make it 16-13 in his favour and stayed ahead in the crucial moments to shut out the match.

Bansod had enjoyed the lead for better portion of the opening game and also held four game points but she squandered it as Han earned the bragging rights.

After the change of sides, Bansod once again dominated the proceedings with a 11-4 advantage at the break and went to pocket three game points this time but Han once again caught up. However, the Indian didn't let it slip this time to take the contest to the decider.

In the third game, Bansod was more alert as she broke at 7-7 and then went on to score nine straight points to comfortably close out the match.

## Fit-again Rani returns, Savita to lead India women vs Netherlands in Pro League

**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** Star striker Rani Rampal on Tuesday returned to the national side after a lengthy injury lay-off as India on Tuesday named a 22-member women's hockey squad for the upcoming FIH Pro League tie against world no 1 Netherlands.

The squad also includes two new faces in midfielder Mahima Choudhary and striker Aishwarya Rajesh Chavan, who will make their senior team debut in the double leg tie to be held at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar on Friday and Saturday.

Rani, who led India to a historic fourth place finish in the Olympics last year, has not played for the national team since the Tokyo Games due to several injuries, mainly hamstring problem. Since then Rani has been undergoing rehabilitation at the SAI south centre in Bengaluru but she is now fit to take the field again.

Goalkeeper Savita will continue to lead India and will be assisted by Deep Grace Ekka.

India, though, will be without the services of Tokyo Olympians Salima Tete, Sharmila Devi and Lalremliam who are representing India in the Junior Women's World Cup in South Africa.

The national selectors also named three standby players -- Upasana Singh, Preeti Dubey and Olympian Vandana Katariya. "It's great to be back on the field for our Hockey Pro League games vs the Netherlands after the disappointment of England not being able to visit. With our juniors playing the World Cup we have the chance to use the depth of our core group and I am excited to potentially see some new faces on the field," chief coach Janneke Schopman said.

"Rani has also worked hard to be back in contention and if this training week goes well I hope we can play her in one of the games."

The coach said India would look to take confidence from their performance against Germany in the previous tie.

"Netherlands is a formidable opponent,



they have shown last weekend against the USA that they score goals easily and play

from a tight defence.

"We are looking to build on our own

## GLTA felicitates Riniki Bhuyan Sarma



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, April 5:** A delegation of Guwahati Lawn Tennis Association (GLTA), led by its president Kalyan Kumar Das and general secretary Bhaskar Sarma felicitated noted social worker, chairperson and managing director of M/s Pride-East Entertainment Private Limited and a former tennis player who had represented the state in various national level tennis tournaments Riniki Bhuyan Sarma at her residence on Wednesday. The felicitation was offered as a humble recognition to Riniki Bhuyan Sarma for her invaluable help and support to GLTA's overall development activities since its inception. The GLTA's delegations presented Riniki Bhuyan Sarma a Cheleng Chadar, a bouquet among other gift items. Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, on accepting the felicitation, expressed her happiness and assured to extend all possible help and cooperation to the GLTA for its growth in the future.

In IPL, it is very important to handle pressure as a bowler: Avesh

Navi Mumbai, April 5 (PTI): Young pacer Avesh Khan feels bowlers hardly have any respite in a tournament like the IPL, and the key to success for him lies in handling the pressure.

Avesh, the most expensive uncapped Indian player in the ongoing IPL after LSG paid 25 times more than his base price of ₹ 20 lakh to avail his services, picked up four big wickets conceding just 24 runs against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

He also bowled a brilliant 18th over to help his side beat SRH by 12 runs here on Monday.

"In IPL as a bowler there will be pressure on you in every match and how you handle that is very important. I never think that I am the main bowler of the team. I always try to take wickets for the team," Avesh said at the post-match virtual press conference.

"If I start thinking that I am the main bowler, I will take pressure upon myself, which is unnecessary."

Avesh said as a bowler his main job is to pick up wickets for his side.

"I am very happy to contribute to the winning cause. In the first match I got an opportunity to save 11 runs in one over which I couldn't. Today I was focused on taking wickets," he said.

Avesh's performance helped LSG defend 169 for seven, limiting SRH to 157 for nine, and register their second win out of three games in debut IPL season.

## ARA FC defeat YWC 4-3, qualify for IWL 2022



**NEW DELHI, April 5 (PTI):** ARA FC continued their winning streak in the ongoing Indian Women's League qualifiers, defeating YWC 4-3 in the final here on Tuesday to qualify for the main event. The IWL will be held in Bhubaneswar from April 15.

The side from Gujarat needed a win from the final match to secure the IWL berth. The result means that ARA FC maintain their winning streak in the qualifiers, having notched up nine points from three matches.

Meanwhile, YWC did not earn any points in their last match having six points from three matches.

Shreya Oza's early brace in the 9th and 16th minutes raised the tempo of the match, giving the upper hand to ARA FC.

ARA FC continued to dominate the match but failed to make the most of their chances. In the 27th minute however, a goal from Salam Rinaroy Devi from a distance rattled the bar and went in to break the deadlock for YWC as the half time scoreline read 2-1 in favour of ARA FC.

YWC came out all guns blazing in the second half, and it was Honeihat, who scored to put the side from Manipur on level terms in the 53rd minute.

It did not take ARA too long to reclaim their lead, as Anju netted a 68thminute goal. The match came to a frantic end, as Remi Thokchom of YWC scored for her side before Kiran finally made it 4-3 for the Gujarat club in the dying minutes to ensure ARA's victory and qualification to the IWL.

performance since our last games vs Germany and am excited to hopefully show our progress against a strong opponent," Schopman said.

The Indian women's team is currently placed fourth in the FIH Pro League standings with 12 points from six games.

Netherlands, on the other hand, are atop the table with 17 points from six matches.

**Team:**

**Goalkeepers:** Savita (captain), Rajani Etimaru.

**Defenders:** Deep Grace Ekka (vice-captain), Gurjit Kaur, Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Rashmita Minz, Sukman Devi Thoudam.

**Midfielders:** Nisha, Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Jyoti, Navjot Kaur, Monika, Namita Toppa, Sonika, Neha, Mahima Choudhary.

**Forwards:** Aishwarya Rajesh Chavan, Navneet Kaur, Rajwinder Kaur, Rani Rampal, Mariana Kujur.

**Standbys:** Upasana Singh, Preeti Dubey, Vandana Katariya.