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Rahul disqualified from LS • Congress to fight legally and politically • BJP terms action 'lawful' BJP finished our democracy: Assam Oppn

GUWAHATI/ NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi was on Friday disqualified from Lok Sabha following his conviction by a Surat court in a 2019 criminal defamation case, an action the party termed an attempt to "silence" his voice as it vowed to fight the battle legally and politically.

Following Rahul's disqualification from Lok Sabha, opposition parties in Assam on Friday slammed the ruling BJP and alleged the saffron brigade has "finished the democracy".

The Congress, the principal opposition party in Assam, asserted that Gandhi has been consistently fighting for people's rights and to protect Indian democracy, both within and outside the Parliament.

"He will continue to do so. Truth shall, must and will prevail. Appropriate legal action will be taken," the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) tweeted. APCC president Bhupen Kumar Borah claimed that the conviction and subsequent disqualification from Parliament is the outcome of speaking for the people of the country.

"BJP has finished our democracy. BJP's conspiracy to silence @RahulGandhi," he said on the micro-blogging site.

Assam MLA Akhil Gogoi termed the disqualification of the Congress MP from the Lok Sabha following the judgement in the 'Modi Surname Case' an aberration for democracy.

"Defamation suit becomes a tool for political vendetta. It's the start of the ruin of the 'Modi Regime'. A repetition of the Emergency era 1975-77," he said.

President of another opposition party, Assam Jatiya Parishad, Lurinjyoti Gogoi, said Gandhi's disqualification from Parliament shows the BJP-led government's desperation and lays bare its attempt to muzzle opposition voices. Criticising the action on the former Congress president, Assam Trinamool Congress leader Dilip Kumar Sarma said the success of India's democracy depends on the independence of executive, legislature and judiciary.

"When everything runs on the instructions of the executive, then the destruction of democracy starts. The Lok Sabha secretariat has done such an act today.



Lok Sabha, which works to uphold democracy, today in a way killed democracy," he added.

The disqualification, which will bar 52-year-old Gandhi from contesting polls for eight years unless stayed by a higher court, saw a shift in the dynamics of opposition ranks with Trinamool Congress and Aam Aadmi Party also expressing strong support for the embattled leader, along with several other opposition parties.

Announcing his disqualification, the Lok Sabha Secretariat in a notification said that it was effective from March 23, the day of his conviction.

"Consequent upon his conviction by the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat...Rahul Gandhi, Member of Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from the date of his conviction i.e. 23 March, 2023," the notification read. This was Gandhi's fourth Lok Sabha term. First elected to Lok Sabha in 2004 from Amethi, he represented that constituency for two more terms. In 2019, he lost the Amethi seat to Smriti Irani but managed to win from Wayanad.

The court in Surat sentenced on Thursday Gandhi to two years in jail in a defamation case, filed on a complaint by BJP MLA Purnesh Modi for his alleged remark, "How come all thieves have Modi as the common surname?" (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

ASSAM BAIBHAV, SAURAV & GAURAV

Governor confers Civilian Awards to 21 personalities

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, March 24: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Friday conferred Civilian Awards namely Assam Baibhav, Assam Saurav and Assam Gaurav on 21 personalities at a solemn function held at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra here in the presence of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The awards were given to those personalities in recognition of their outstanding contributions in the field of health, art and culture, sports, science, agriculture, tourism, entrepreneurship, etc.

It may be noted that the Assam Baibhav Award was presented to Dr

Tapan Kumar Saikia in recognition of his contribution in the field of Health Care (Cancer Care) and Public Service. Dr Tapan Kumar Saikia is a renowned oncologist who hails from Naharkatia in Dibrugarh district. An alumnus of Assam Medical College, he started his career in Tata Memorial Hospital in 1981.

He has served as the head of Medical Oncology and research director at Prince Aly Khan Hospital and is currently the director of Oncology Science at Jaslok Hospital and Research Centre, Mumbai. The Assam Saurav Award was presented to five personalities. They are: Krishna Roy (CONTD ON PAGE-9)



Tax benefits for debt mutual funds removed

LOK SABHA PASSES FINANCE BILL

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTD): The Lok Sabha on Friday approved The Finance Bill 2023 with 64 official amendments including providing tax relief to some taxpayers opting for new tax regime, and removing long-term tax benefit for debt mutual funds to bring them at par with other interest earning instruments.

In a relief to taxpayers opting for deductions and exemption-free new tax regime, individuals earning marginally higher income than no-tax ceiling of ₹ 7 lakh will continue to pay nil tax.

Under the new tax regime with effect from April 1, if a taxpayer has an annual income of ₹ 7 lakh s/he pays no tax. But if s/he has income of ₹ 7,00,100 s/he pays tax of ₹ 25,010. Thus an additional income of ₹ 100 leads to tax of ₹ 25,010.

The amendment provides that the tax payable should not be more than the income that exceeds ₹ 7 lakh. This means, an individual having income up to ₹ 7,27,700 could stand to benefit from this marginal relief. Other amendments include raising the tax rate on royalty and fee for technical services from 10 percent to 20 percent.

The Finance Bill, which includes tax proposals for the fiscal year beginning April 1, was passed without a discussion as parliament continued to remain stalled over demands for a probe into allegations against the Adani group. Lok Sabha, which had on Thursday approved ₹ 45 lakh-crore Budget for 2023-24 fiscal in just 9 minutes, passed the Finance Bill amid placards holding opposition MPs shouting slogans from the well of the House. (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

G-20 RIIG conference held in Dibrugarh



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, March 24: The G20 Research and Innovation Initiative Gathering (RIIG) conference was held in Upper Assam's Dibrugarh on Friday. Delegates from G20 member countries, guest countries, and international organisations, as well as the scientific community, gathered to discuss and explore ways to build a sustainable and circular bio-economy.

A total 103 participants, with 56 foreign delegates from 26 countries were present at the conference.

Led by Dr S Chandrasekhar, secretary, Department of Science and Technology, the conference aimed to bring together key factors responsible for planning, setting up new programs and managing the existing programs related to agriculture, decarbonisation of industry, bio-energy, and bioresource management.

Dr S Chandrasekhar emphasised that the G20 RIIG conclave is dedicated to promoting a sustainable future by educating the public on the importance of zero waste management and the goal of this gathering was to frame the conversation beautifully and inspire people to take action towards reducing waste and preserving the planet.

Dr Rajesh S Gokhale, secretary of the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology stated that the aim of the conference was to bring together key factors responsible for planning, setting up new programs, and managing existing programs related to agriculture, de-carbonisation of industry, bio-energy, and bioresource management. The interactive event was to facilitate active engagement among all key stakeholders, including people, policies, and places.

This was done to promote an inclusive policy-making approach that provides a conceptual framework to mainstream circular bio-economy models across different sectors. "By promoting collaborations and partnerships among G20 members and stakeholders, the conference aims to strengthen global efforts towards a more sustainable and circular (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

HT BRIEFS

Awareness programme

HAMREN: Awareness on 'National Water Mission: Catch the Rain, Where It Falls, When It Falls' was organised by Nehru Yuva Kendra, Diphu, Karbi Anglong under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India on Friday at Adarsh Rastra Bhasha High School, Nawaibill, West Karbi Anglong in collaboration with Social Development Organisation, Kheroni Charali, West Karbi Anglong. The awareness programme was chaired by asst prof of Udali College, Dr Shiv Jee Chauhan. The programme started with an oath taking on judicious use of water, essay writing competition on "scarcity of water and its management" and was followed by speech from resource persons. Asst prof & HOD, Hindi, Kapili College, Chhotelal Chauhan addressed the gathering on the problem of rain water and its judicious use.

Body found

DIPHU: As per information received from local residents, a highly decomposed dead body was found inside an abandoned building of Old Telephone Exchange in the proximity of the Central Range Forest office, Sitlabari, here. An Executive Magistrate, Diphu arrived at the place of occurrence and conducted an enquiry over the mortal remains at the PO observing all formalities. A postmortem was also conducted at Diphu Medical College and Hospital (DMC&H) here. As per order of District Magistrate, Diphu, the mortal remains will be kept at the DMCH morgue house for a period of 72 hours.

AFSPA extended in parts of Arunachal, Nagaland

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): The Union home ministry on Friday extended for six months the "disturbed area" status in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

According to two separate notifications, the decisions have been taken after review of the law-and-order situation in both the states.

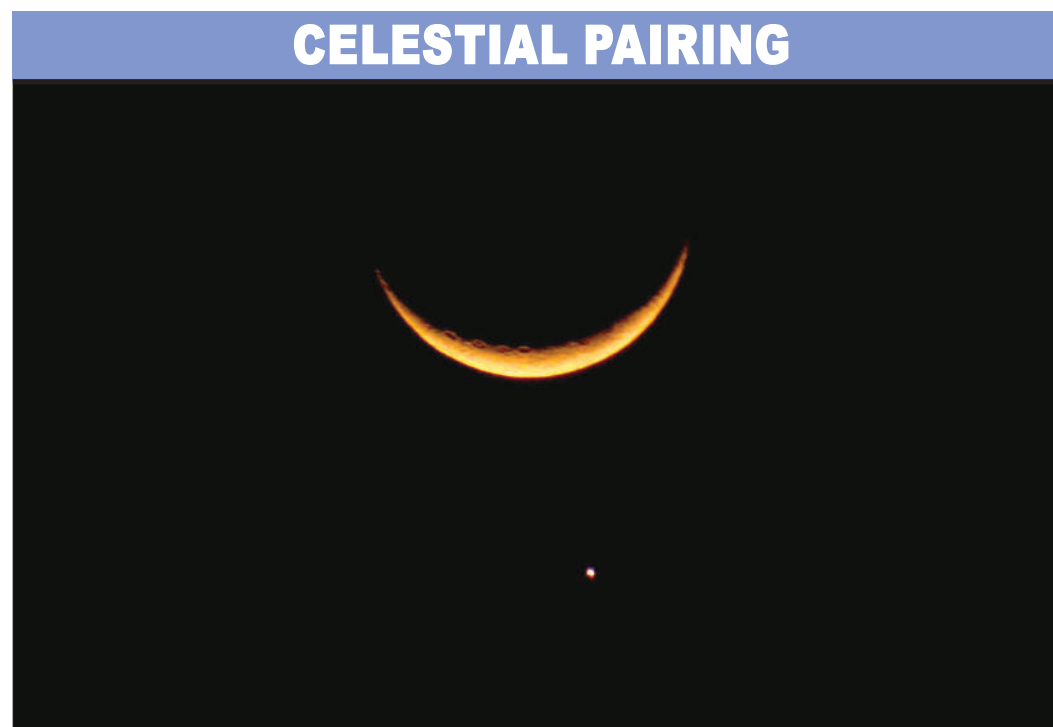
The AFSPA gives armed forces personnel, operating in disturbed

areas, sweeping powers to search, arrest, and to open fire if they deem it necessary for "maintenance of public order".

The home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai and Mahadevpur police stations in Namsai

district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam as 'disturbed area' on September 30, 2022.

One more police station area has been brought under the ambit of the AFSPA through the fresh notification. "And whereas a further review of the law and order situation in the state of Arunachal Pradesh has been undertaken. Now, therefore, Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling (CONTD ON PAGE-9)



Moon and Venus appear close together in the night sky at Guwahati on Friday. UB Photos

BJP's Biswabandhu elected Tripura speaker



AGARTALA, March 24 (PTI): Amidst a walkout by the Tipra Motha, the second largest party in the Tripura assembly, the BJP's Biswabandhu Sen was elected the speaker of the state's legislature on Friday.

Tipra Motha supremo Pradyot Kishore Debbarna in a tweet earlier in the day revealed that after a telephonic conversation with Union home minister Amit Shah, he had held a meeting with Assam chief minister and the BJP's main pointsman in the northeast Himanta Biswa Sarma on the issue of appointment of an

interlocutor to discuss the issues raised by the tribal party. In the speaker election, Sen received 32 votes, while the opposition CPI (M)-Congress candidate Gopal Chandra Roy got 14 votes.

In the Tripura assembly, the BJP-IPFT alliance now has 32 MLAs at present as one legislator, Pratima Bhowmick, who is also a Union minister, had resigned. Sen, a four-time MLA from Dharmanagar in North Tripura district, was the deputy speaker in the previous assembly.

The Tipra Motha, which has 13 members in the assembly, staged a walkout before the speaker election to protest against "improper seat arrangements" and did not take part in the voting.

Immediately after the assembly session started, the leader of the party, Animesh Debbarna, raised objections to seat arrangements and staged a walkout.

Later, Debbarna told reporters that his party would play the role of a "constructive Opposition" in the assembly by raising questions in people's interest. After the Protem Speaker, Binoy Bhushan Das announced the name of Sen as the winning candidate, he thanked all members of the House. (CONTD ON PAGE-9)

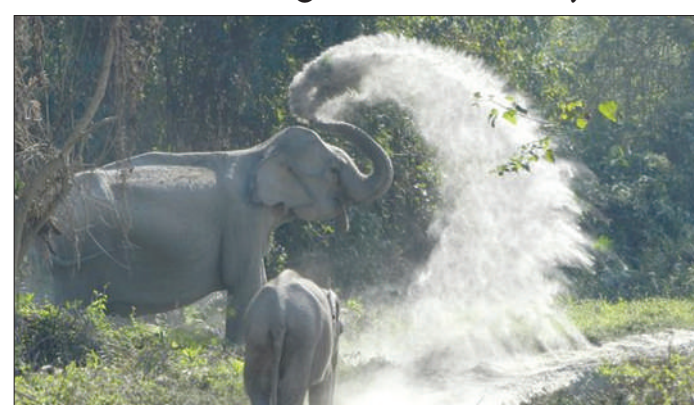
Assam holds the second-largest wild elephant population in India

Prez to launch festival in Kaziranga to mark 30 years of Project Elephant

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): President Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate a two-day "Gaj Utsav" on April 7 in Assam's Kaziranga National Park to commemorate the successful completion of 30 years of Project Elephant and to give more impetus to conservation efforts, Union minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey said on Friday.

India launched Project Elephant in 1991-92 as a centrally-sponsored scheme to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors, prevent human-elephant conflict and to ensure the welfare of captive elephants in India.

"The government has decided to celebrate 'Gaj Utsav' at Kaziranga National Park on April 7-8 to com-



memorate 30 years of Project Elephant. President Droupadi Murmu will inaugurate it on April 7," Choubey told reporters here.

A first-of-its-kind event, the festival will see the participation of Union environment minister Bhupinder Yadav, Assam chief minister

Himanta Biswa Sarma, forest ministers of all elephant range states, principal conservators of forests, chief wildlife wardens, representatives of local communities, civil societies, NGOs, schoolchildren, mahouts, etc.

Elephant is a national heritage animal protected under Schedule I of the Wild Life Protection Act, 1972. India accounts for more than 60 percent of the global wild elephant population. These are distributed majorly in southern and north-eastern India, east-central and northern regions.

Assam holds the second-largest wild elephant population in India and also has a large number of elephants under human care.

Airtel 5G Plus is now available across 500 cities in the country

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 24: Bharti Airtel (Airtel) announced that its ultra-fast 5G service is available to customers in 500 cities in the country. Airtel added 235 cities to its network, making it one of the largest roll-outs to date. As the company continues to augment its network, Airtel 5G Plus is now available in every major city from the upper northern city in Kashmir to the southern tip of Kanyakumari.

Commenting on the launch, Randeep Sekhon, CTO, Bharti Airtel, said, "We are delighted to see the rapid pace of 5G adoption in the country. Airtel was the first to offer 5G services in October 2022, and today's mega launch is our promise to connect every Airtel customer in the country with ultra-fast Airtel 5G Plus. We have already covered 500 cities and are adding 30 to 40 cities every single day. By September of 2023, we expect to expand our 5G footprint to all of urban India."

Further, the company also launched unlimited 5G data for its customers with the view to encouraging them to experience the power of the Airtel 5G Plus network. Customers will now be able to experience ultrafast, reliable and secure 5G Plus services without having to worry about data exhaustion as the company removes the capping on data usage across all existing plans.

Amazon launches new spring-summer fashion collection

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 24: Amazon Fashion unveiled its Spring-Summer 2023 collection featuring the best of fashion and beauty trends of the season. This Spring-Summer Amazon fashion brings chic cuts, bold florals, fit & flare dresses, maxi skirts, summer bralettes, denim dresses, in-vogue accessories, chic watches, trendy handbags, colour-pop t-shirts, casual shirts, fashion forward sneakers, travel must-haves, sustainable skin and hair care, colourful eye palettes and much more.

Further, customers can shop for trendiest collection across top fashion and beauty brands like Van Heusen, Vero Moda, Biba, Jack and Jones, Levis, Adidas, Puma, Giva, Zaveri Pearls, Crocs, Mochi, Tommy Hilfiger, Fastrack, Titan, U.S. POLO ASSN., American Tourister, MyGlam, Forest Essentials, Chopard, Aldo, Davidoff, Genie, among others.

Markets fall nearly 1 pc amid weak trend in global equities; Nifty slips below 17k

MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure for the second straight session to settle nearly 1 per cent lower on Friday as investors pared exposure to the metal, energy and realty stocks amid a bearish trend in Asian and European markets.

Besides, a depreciating rupee against the US dollar and fresh foreign fund outflows also hit investor sentiments, traders said.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 398.18 points or 0.69 per cent to finish at 57,527.10, with 24 of its constituents posting losses. During the day, the index witnessed a high of 58,066.40 and a low of 57,422.98.

The broader NSE Nifty fell 131.85 points or 0.77 per cent to slip below the psychological level of 17,000. The index settled at 16,945.05, with 41 of its scrips ending in the red.

On a weekly basis, the BSE benchmark fell 462.8 points or 0.79 per cent, while the Nifty slipped 155 points or 0.90 per cent.

"Markets inched further lower and lost over half a per cent, in absence of any favourable cues. The first half was dull, however, pressure in the index majors changed the tone and pushed the Nifty index below the 17,000 mark. The fall was widespread wherein metal, realty and energy majors felt the maximum heat," said Ajit Mishra,

Individual taxpayers with income marginally over ₹ 7 lakh to get relief under new tax regime

The Finance Bill 2023, passed by the Lok Sabha, has proposed a marginal relief to taxpayers under new tax regime

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): In a relief to taxpayers opting for new tax regime, individuals earning marginally higher income than no-tax ceiling of ₹ 7 lakh will pay tax only on the differential income after the government amended the Finance Bill.

The Finance Bill 2023, passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday, has proposed a marginal relief to taxpayers under new tax regime.

Explaining the provision, the finance ministry said under the new tax regime with effect from April 1, if a taxpayer has annual income of ₹ 7 lakh s/he pays no tax. But if s/he has income of ₹ 7,00,100 s/he pays tax of 25,010.

Thus an additional income of ₹ 100 leads to a tax of ₹ 25,010.

Hence, marginal relief is proposed to that so that the tax what one pays should not be more than the income that exceeds ₹ 7 lakh (₹ 100 in this case), the ministry said.

Nangia Andersen LLP Partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said the amendment to Finance Bill seeks to provide a marginal relief to individual



taxpayers having borderline income by proposing a deduction of income tax payable in excess of the differential income above ₹ 7 Lakh.

"Working out the math, an individual having income up to (approx.) ₹ 7,27,700 could stand to benefit from this marginal relief," Jhunjhunwala added.

The budget 2023-24 had announced the tax rebate whereby no tax would be levied on those

with annual income of up to ₹ 7 lakh under the new tax regime. The move which experts felt was a push for salaried class taxpayer to switch to new tax regime where no exemptions on investments is provided.

Under the revamped new tax regime, no tax would be levied for income up to ₹ 3 lakh. Income between ₹ 3-6 lakh would be taxed at 5 per cent; ₹ 6-9 lakh at 10 per cent, ₹ 9-12 lakh at 15 per cent, ₹ 12-15 lakh at 20 per cent and income of ₹ 15 lakh and above will be taxed at 30 per cent. Further, a ₹ 50,000 standard deduction was allowed under the new regime.

Now the government has brought in amendments to the Finance Bill 2023, which has given 'marginal relief' to those taxpayers with annual income a little over ₹ 7 lakh.

Although the government has not specified the threshold income which would be eligible for marginal relief, tax experts said as per computation, individual taxpayers with income of ₹ 7,27,777 would be benefited by this relief.

World Bank President nominee Ajay Banga tests Covid positive; India meetings cancelled

He was scheduled to meet PM Narendra Modi and finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman

NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON, March 24 (PTI): US nominee for World Bank president, Ajay Banga, has tested positive for COVID-19 following which the meetings scheduled during his two-day visit to India have been cancelled. According to a finance ministry statement, Banga's meeting with Nirmala Sitharaman would not happen as he is in quarantine.

"During routine testing, Ajay Banga tested positive for COVID-19 but remains asymptomatic. In adherence with local guidelines, he is quarantining in isolation," the US Treasury Department said on Thursday. Besides meeting with the Union finance minister, Banga was sched-

uled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar and top officials during his two-day visit from March 23 to 24. Banga's New Delhi visit is the final stop on his three-week global tour that began in Africa before progressing to Europe, Latin America, and Asia to drum up support for his candidature for the World Bank's top position. India is witnessing a spike in influenza and coronavirus cases in the past two weeks. The country logged 1,249 new coronavirus cases, while the active cases have increased to 7,927, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday. According to the US Treasury Department statement, Ajay Banga

was to discuss India's development priorities, the World Bank, and global economic development challenges with the Indian leaders during his two-day visit. India endorsed Banga's candidacy soon after his nomination was announced. Since then, a diverse coalition of governments has expressed their support for Banga, including Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom. During his global listening tour, Banga met with senior government officials, stakeholders, business leaders, entrepreneurs, and civil society.

India's forex kitty jumps by USD 12.8 bn to USD 572.8 bn



MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): India's forex kitty rose by USD 12.798 billion to USD 572.801 billion in the week ended March 17, the Reserve Bank said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the reserves had dropped by USD 2.39 billion to a three-month low of USD 560.003 billion.

It can be noted that in October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion.

The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global

developments.

For the week ended March 17, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 10.485 billion to USD 505.348 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI on Friday.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves jumped by USD 2.187 billion to USD 44.109 billion, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 98 million to USD 18.219 billion, the apex bank said.

The country's reserve position with the IMF was also up by USD 29 million to USD 5.125 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank showed.

Rupee falls 24 paise to close at 82.44 against US dollar

MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): The rupee depreciated by 24 paise to close at 82.44 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday weighed down by the strength of the American currency and massive selling in the domestic equity market.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened lower by 12 paise at 82.32 as the US dollar rebounded against global currencies. During intra-day trade, the rupee touched a high of 82.20 and a low of 82.49 against the greenback. The domestic unit finally settled at 82.44 (provisional) against the American currency, 24 paise lower against its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee settled at 82.20 against the US dollar. According to Anuj Choudhary -

Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the Indian rupee depreciated due to weak domestic markets and a positive Dollar.



Sustained FII outflows also weighed on the domestic currency. Dollar rose on safe-haven appeal amid weak Asian and European currencies and equities. Dollar also gained on upbeat US current account deficit and new home sales data. Bank of England

hiked interest rates by 25 bps to 4.25 per cent, the highest in 15 years, Choudhary said. "We expect the Indian Rupee to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and a positive Dollar. Selling pressure from FIIs and month-end Dollar demand from importers may also weigh on Rupee," Choudhary added.

However, easing crude oil prices may support Rupee at lower levels. Traders may remain cautious ahead of durable goods orders and PMI data from the US, Choudhary said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.67 per cent higher at 103.22.

Canon India launches 16 new advanced printers

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 24: Building on its legacy of innovation, Canon launched a new range of 16 printers in India strengthening its expansive portfolio across the PIXMA, MAXIFY and image CLASS series. With the latest line of printers, Canon India redefines the role of printers and boosts the consumers' imagination by giving them the power to give life and form to their digital expressions.

The PIXMA printers maximize productivity with high print yields and affordable printing. Easy ink refilling and huge ink reservoirs underpin the key benefits of the series, enabling smooth operation for home and small offices, by minimizing the occurrence of ink running out in the middle of printing.

MAXIFY GX series line-up printers achieve low-cost printing and water-resistant printouts combined with a refillable ink tank system which make these printers the ideal choices for small and medium businesses to achieve maximum productivity gains.

For SMB and Enterprise customers: image CLASS LBP121dn, LBP122dw, MF271dn, MF272dw, MF274dn, MF275dw. The all new

image CLASS laser printers are designed to improve productivity with high-speed printing up to 29 ppm, auto-duplex printing and compact size. These printers use an all-in-one cartridge for easy replacement and lower downtimes.

Sharing his thoughts on the big announcement, Manabu Yamazaki, President & CEO, Canon India said, "The fast-changing hybrid landscape across sectors have led to significant infrastructural transformations, fuelled by advancements in technology. Taking cognizance of these evolving market requirements, we are excited to introduce 16 new state-of-the-art printers; which offer a perfect blend of modern technology and cost-efficiency for users, building on Canon's long standing legacy of innovation and customer delight. With this portfolio expansion, we want to fortify the printing culture amongst users by providing them with solutions that add value to their work in this current hybrid working environment, hence giving them more reasons to print. We are confident that our new products will empower our customers in their business journey and thereby help us in clocking a 30% market share in the industry."

Govt to introduce GPS-based toll system in six months to replace toll plazas

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): The government will introduce new technologies including GPS-based toll collection systems in the next 6 months to replace existing highway toll plazas in the country, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said on Friday. The move is aimed at reducing traffic congestion and charging motorists for the exact distance travelled on the highways, Gadkari said.

Addressing an event organised by industry body CII, Gadkari further said state-owned NHAI's toll revenue is currently ₹ 40,000 crore and it is going to soar to ₹ 1.40 lakh crore 2-3 years.

"The government is looking at new technologies including GPS-based toll systems to replace toll

plazas in the country...We will bring new technology in six months," he said. The ministry of road transport and highways is conducting a pilot project of automatic number plate recognition system (automatic number plate reader cameras) to enable automated toll collection without stopping the vehicles. During 2018-19, the average waiting time for vehicles at toll plaza was 8 minutes. With the introduction of FASTags during 2020-21 and 2021-22, the average waiting time of the vehicles has come down to 47 seconds. Although there is considerable improvement in waiting time at certain locations, especially near cities, the densely populated towns there are still some delays at toll plazas during peak hours.

Since joining as interim CEO in October, he has spent time getting to know the company — including earning a barista certification

Starbucks CEO Laxman Narasimhan's new role: To work as barista in stores every month

NEW YORK, March 24 (PTI): Starbucks' new Indian-origin CEO Laxman Narasimhan has said he will work as a barista once a month in stores to stay close to the company's culture, customers, challenges and opportunities. Narasimhan, 55, officially became the Seattle-based coffee giant's chief executive on Monday, taking the reins from Howard Schultz about two weeks earlier than scheduled. He was welcomed as incoming chief executive officer of Starbucks with a coffee tasting in the place where it all began — at Seattle's Pike Place market store. In a letter to the employees on Thursday, the Indian-American business executive said he will always be a "fierce advocate" for the company's partners and its culture.

"With you, I've experienced every aspect of the business to learn what it truly means to wear the green apron. You've welcomed me into our stores, trained me in how to be a barista... all to help me deeply understand what we do, how we do it, and the challenges and opportunities facing us," he wrote.

Barista is a person who serves in a coffee bar. "To keep us close to the culture and our customers, as well as to our challenges and opportunities, I intend to continue working in stores for a half day each month," he was quoted as saying by CNN. "I thought it was very important for me to put myself in the shoes of the partners and really understand what they do and how they do it. There were things I learned through experience in all of this. It taught me a lot," he said in a statement.

Pune-born Narasimhan joined Starbucks as



interim CEO in October and has since spent time getting to know the company — including earning a barista certification, which requires 40 hours of training in stores. He also discussed how he plans to continue the reinvention plan laid out by Schultz over the summer. "As the new CEO of Starbucks, I am confident that I know our business and our people well, but I will continue to learn and I'm excited to continue earning my green apron every day," Narasimhan said. Starbucks has made over USD 1 billion in investments aimed at updating training, improving equipment and raising wages and adding other benefits for non-union employees, among other things, to help modernise the brand and make it more relevant, the report said. "With our reinvention plan introduced last year, we will continue our focus on improving the store, customer, and of course, the partner experience," Narasimhan wrote, using the word "partner" to refer to an employee, as Starbucks does.

"Critically, we will reinvigorate our culture

around what it means to be a partner at Starbucks," he added. Schultz said as he got to know Narasimhan, he was struck by his experience and leadership qualities.

"I know we're going to be in great hands and I can promise you he is going to make us a better company," he said. Narasimhan was most recently CEO of Reckitt, a UK-based consumer health, hygiene and nutrition company that makes Lysol cleaner and Enfamil formula, among other products. Prior to that, he held various leadership roles at PepsiCo, including as global chief commercial officer.

He also served as CEO of the company's Latin America, Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa operations. He takes over a company with significant strengths. Starbucks reported record demand in the April-June period as strong US sales made up for continuing closures in China, the company's second-largest market. But Starbucks also has challenges. It tries to fight off a wave of unionisation. That effort has been ugly at times, casting a shadow over Starbucks' reputation as a progressive company.

Unionised workers are hoping that Narasimhan will be more open to the union than Schultz, who led the company's efforts against the union since becoming interim CEO last year, the report said. "We are hopeful that Laxman Narasimhan will chart a new path with the union and work with us to make Starbucks the company we know it can be," Michelle Eisen, a Starbucks worker and union organiser, said in a statement this week.

RE-DEVELOPMENT AND RENOVATION OF NEW HAFONG STATION

E-Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/18 of 2023; dtd. 23-03-2023. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN.1. Brief Description of Item:** Re-development and renovation of New Hafong (NHLG) station -Improvement of facade, provision of world class toilets, waiting hall/room, landscaping, development of parking area, improvement to passenger circulating area with signages and lighting and other ancillary works etc. in connection with Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (Phase-I). **Tender Value:** ₹22,62,88,522.49; **Bid Security:** ₹12,81,500.00; E-tenders will be closed 15:00 hrs. on 24-04-2023 and opened 15:00 hrs. on 25-04-2023. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 24-04-2023 in website www.irops.gov.in

DRM/Works, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
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RE-DEVELOPMENT AND RENOVATION OF STATIONS

E-Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/17 of 2023; dtd. 24-03-2023. E-tenders (Two Packet System) are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN.1. Brief Description of Item:** Re-development and renovation of Narangi (NNGE), Jagiroad (JID), Chaparmukh (CPK), Hojai (HJ), Lanka (LKA) & Haibargaon(HBN) station-Improvement of facade, provision of world class toilet, waiting hall/room, improvement of platform surface, landscaping, development of parking area, improvement to passenger circulating area with signages and lighting and other ancillary work etc. in connection with Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (Phase-I). **Tender Value:** ₹54,01,13,489.88; **Bid Security:** ₹28,50,600.00. E-tenders will be closed 15:00 hrs. on 25-04-2023 and opened 15:00 hrs. on 26-04-2023. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 25-04-2023 in website www.irops.gov.in

DRM/Works, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
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ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT & SUPPLY AND FILLING OF SAND

E-Tender Notice No. Sr.DEE/LMG/33 of 2022-23 Dated: 23-03-2023. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN.1. Tender No. EL/LM/22-23/30. Name of Work:** Comprehensive annual maintenance contract of 4 nos OTIS makes lift at Lumding, Badarpur, Silchar including routine schedule, preventive breakdown maintenance, etc for 5 years and also repair/replacement of worn out items with minimum downtime and warranty/guarantee of repaired/replaced items. **Tender Value:** ₹21,24,000/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹42,500/-; **Date & Time of closing of E-tender:** 15:00 hrs. of 17-04-2023 & opening at 15:30 hrs. of 17-04-2023. **SN.2. Tender No. EL/LM/22-23/OP/31. Name of Work:** Supply and filling of sand in BG Diesel Locomotive at Badarpur Station and Agartala Station for a period of 03 years. **Tender Value:** ₹57,33,450/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹1,14,700/-; **Date & Time of closing of E-tender:** 11:00 hrs. of 07-04-2023 & opening at 11:30 hrs. of 07-04-2023. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 & 11:00 hrs. on 17-04-2023 & 07-04-2023 on website www.irops.gov.in

Sr.DEE/G&Op, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
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Meleng Balichapori Panchayat in Jorhat Tuberculosis free

World TB Day observed across state

HT Correspondent

JORHAT/SIVASAGAR/HAFLONG, March 24: The World TB Day has been observed across state on Friday. The Jorhat Medical College and Hospital superintendent professor Purnima Barua and BDO, central, Jorhat block, Sumana Das On Friday jointly gave away an appreciation letter to the Number 28 Meleng Balichapori Panchayat, on behalf of the district administration, to GP President Durlav Chetia for the GP's "efforts to make the entire GP completely TB-free and requested to continue the efforts for sustainability of the TB-free achievements."

The World TB Day was observed here with a day-long programme organised by the Jorhat District Health Society under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) at Number 28 Meleng Balichapori Panchayat, on the outskirts here, on Friday.

District TB officer Dr Bhaktimay Bhattacharyya informed that an awareness meeting, anchored by social worker Jagannath Agniborah, was held in the said GP area covering people from 27 villages.

Dr Bhaktimay Bhattacharyya, in his address, spoke about the significance of observing World TB Day, the disease (TB), its causes and treatment available under Government health services, and ways to prevent the spread of the disease.

Dr Bhattacharyya stated that efforts initiated by the health department, involving the GP, Zilla Parishad and villagers since 2016 to make the entire GP completely TB-free and tobacco-free, was moving in right direction with the GP reaching the final stage of officially becoming TB-free GP, which was



likely to be first in the state. WHO consultant Dr Diganta Thakuria, JMCH superintendent professor Purnima Barua among others also addressed the gathering.

The Sivasagar health department on Friday observed World TB Day along with the rest of the world. In the forenoon session, a massive procession was flagged off by Dr Bhupendranath Das, JT director of health; Sivasagar Dr Das said that since Robert Koch formally announced the discovery of the bacteria on March 24, 1882, and since then the world health community has been observing the day.

Manoj Kumar Borthakur, journalist, and a member of the District TB Eradication Committee said that a commitment to fight the disease collectively can yield the result and the Panchayats can play a vital role.

District nodal officer, Dr Udayaditya Rajkonwar said that not just a handful of people from the health department but the whole people of the society need to support the TB eradication programme launched by the gov-

ernment for total eradication by 2025. Rajkonwar said 6000 people are affected every day in India and 40 pc people carry the germ normally but due to immunity, it cannot infect all. He said that the TB eradication programme has improved over the years and the sputum examination centres have been opened in the rural health centres as well.

He also explained the symptoms of the disease. More than 40 pc HIV-positive people die from TB. A total of 188 people per 1 lakh are TB patients. In India, over 24 lakh TB cases have been identified in 2021 and over a million remain unidentified.

Dr Makhana Kalita, superintendent, Sivasagar Civil Hospital, said that every five minutes, three people die from TB in India now but in 2014, one person died every minute. A total of 1223 patients have been identified in Sivasagar and 7 pc TB patients died during the COVID-19 people. Parag Goswami, president SHAPE, a leading NGO working in the health sector said 38 pc TB patients live in a few countries in SE Asia in-

cluding India.

A National Tuberculosis Elimination programme was organised by the district health society, NTEP observing "World Tuberculosis Day" along with the rest of the country at the circuit house conference hall, Haflong on Friday. The theme for World Tuberculosis Day for this year is "Yes! We can end TB!" aims to inspire hope and encourage high-level leadership, increased investments, faster uptake of new WHO recommendations, adoption of innovations, accelerated action and multi-sectoral collaboration to combat the TB epidemic.

The programme was attended by Rebecca Changsan, ACS, deputy secretary, DHAC as chief guest along with Dr Duleswar Gogoi, joint director, DHS as the guest of honour.

Deputy secy Rebecca Changsan during her speech said that there has to be more public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB and to step up efforts to end the TB epidemic in all the sectors of the society to come forward in achieving the goal of a TB-free in the district along with nation by 2025.

In the programme Dr Lina Hakmaosa gave a brief speech on TB. She delivered a brief message about the cause, spread, symptoms of TB, where TB is diagnosed and treated and the fact that TB is curable. She also briefed about the preventive measures and the need to treat TB patients, as anyone who breath air is at risk for TB and everyone need to aware about TB.

The programme was also attended by Dr Lina Hakmaosa, SDM&HO, DHS, Dr Chongjaneng, dist TB Officer, Dima Hasao among others.

Assam accorded National Award for TB cases reduction

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 24: In a major boost to the commitment to eliminate Tuberculosis in the state, the health & family welfare department, Assam was conferred the National Award for reduction in TB cases in 2 districts under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP) by the ministry of health & family welfare (MoHFW) on Friday.

The award was conferred at the One World TB Summit held at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Union minister for health & family welfare, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Governor, Uttar Pradesh, Anandiben Patel, chief minister, Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath among others was present on the occasion.

Gulab Chand Kataria attended the event through virtual mode from

Raj Bhawan and health minister Keshab Mahanta among others attended through virtual mode from Janata Bhawan, Dispur.

Bongaigaon District was

awarded Silver for 40% reduction in TB cases while Kokrajhar District was awarded Bronze for 20% reduction in TB cases respectively in the Sub National Certification for the year 2023. Dr M S Lakshmi Priya, IAS mission director, National Health Mission Assam, Dr Avijit Basu, joint director (TB) cum state TB officer Assam along with other delegates from state WHO was present in the momentous event at Varanasi.

Team Assam has been relentlessly working towards elimination of TB in the State, a PR stated.

It is mentionable here that recently former Governor of Assam, Prof Jagadish Mukhi had adopted 10 TB patients, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had adopted 5 TB patients and health minister of Assam Keshab Mahanta had adopted 4 TB patients as part of the Nikshay Mitra Campaign under the aegis of Pradhan Mantri TB Mukti Bharat Abhiyan (PMTBMA). It is

noteworthy here that the state had diagnosed total 47,926 TB patients in the year 2022 with 88% success rate.

National level workshop on teacher preparation held

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 24: West Guwahati College of Education, Pandu organised three-day long national level workshop on the theme-Teacher Preparation for Next Generation Learners in School Education', in collaboration with Council for Teacher Education Foundation, India. Prof Madhuri Isave from Tilak College of Education Maharashtra and prof N.Pradhan, NERIE, Meghalaya participated as a resource person in the workshop. The workshop started with welcoming speech by the principal of the college Dr Gitanjali Choudhury. Prof Isave showed the students how to use latest ICT such as Chat GPT, Dall.E2, Padlet and Mentimeter.com in teaching learning process. She also focused the application of pedagogy in regarding NEP 2020 which session was totally based on hands-on activities.

Environment workshop held in Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 24: As part of Environment Education Programme (EEP) NGO Jakve Asong, district nodal agency for Mission LiFE under Assam Science Technology and Environment Council (ASTEC) has organised a workshop on the theme 'Save energy' at Dilaji Mithiphang ME School, here on Friday. The workshop is organised under 'A week for life campaign' of Mission LiFE under the ministry of environment, forests and climate change.

Participating in the workshop were students of Rongnighang English ME School, Sunrise Academy and Mithiphang ME School.

The resource person, Dharon Englang, assistant science teacher of Phangcherop LP school spoke on how students and teachers can help use energy in a more environmentally friendly way by conserving power in schools and at homes.



Englang said due to various reasons like over population, increase in the number of vehicles, excessive consumption of power and wastage has lead to depletion of energy. Englang said, "We should use lights and fans when necessary and switch them off. In this way, we can conserve energy."

Englang spoke on the precarious situation that we will face with the depletion of energy.

Coordinator of Eco Club, Ronardson Bey said the EEP workshop on saving energy is organised to educate the students and

the general public on the importance of conservation of energy.

Bey said, "One way we can start conserving energy is by taking public buses instead of driving our cars. In a week, at least on Sundays, as there are no offices, we can keep our cars at home and use public buses to go to the market or other destinations. In this way, we can minimize the use of energy."

The programme was attended by the principal of Mithiphang ME School, Baaroey Rongpi and School Managing Committee member Modhu Mech.

Plant genetic resources conservation awareness held

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 24: An awareness programme on Plant Genetic Resources Conservation was held on March 20 in the village of Japrajan, Bokajan block in Karbi Anglong. The programme was organised by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, New Delhi and Donsuri Agri Farming Cooperative Society, Sariahan and Regional Agriculture Research Station (RARS), Diphu. The programme was attended by Dr Malik, NBPGR, Dr OP Dharwal, NBPGR, Dr Boyamoi Singh RARS, Diphu and farmers.

Environment Education Programme at Morigaon College

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, March 24: A Week for Life Campaign under the Environment Education Programme (EEP) kicked off under the initiative of Assam Science Society, Morigaon supported by Morigaon district administration and Morigaon education department at Morigaon College on Friday.

The week-long programme was formally inaugurated by the deputy commissioner Devashis Sarma in presence of Dr Hemanga Jyoti Sarma, secretary of Assam Science Society Mrinal Kr. Hazarika, principal of Morigaon college Dr Lila Barthakur, Dr Dhananjay Kushrey, secretary of MASS Nirud Kr.Bora and co-ordinator of DNA Imdad Ali. Dr Nilufar Jesmin conducted the inauguration programme. A slogan and poster competition was also organised where leaflets were distributed among the students here.

Two-day long national seminar held

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, March 24: The department of History, Nongong Girls' College organised a two-day long ICHR sponsored national seminar on "The role of women in the freedom movement in North East India: some untold stories" in collaboration with Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti, Assam Prant here at the college premises on Tuesday and Wednesday last.

The seminar began with an inaugural session presided over by Dr Tosheswar Nath, president, governing body of the college. At the very outset, Dr Balin Kumar Bhuyan, principal of the College welcomed all the dignitaries, the research scholars and the participants. In his address, Munin Borah, assistant professor, department of History and the convener of the seminar, mentioned that a total of 35 research papers were received from academicians, research scholars and students of prominent universities and colleges of the region. He also shared the objectives of

the seminar and justified the cause of selecting the theme. Inaugurator Hemanta Dhing Mazumdar, national general secretary, Akhil Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana, New Delhi, highlighted the role of lesser known female freedom fighters of Assam such as Kanaklata Barua, Bhogeswari Phukanani etc.

The keynote speaker, Dr Rajen Saikia, eminent historian and former president of Indian History Congress, highlighted the main objective of studying history is to seek truth. He gave a broad outline of the history of the North East and mentioned that women appeared in the national freedom movement during the 1930s. He said that the Indian national freedom movement was a movement of symbols such as salt, khadi and the national flag which motivated the people for defiance against the British. People know about Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant but the role played by Bhikaji Cama in Indian freedom struggle often goes unnoticed, Dr Saikia asserted further.

Sex racket busted at roadside dhaba

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, March 24: Nagaon police busted a sex racket at a roadside dhaba on NH 37 near Nagaon Borgehat bypass Chariali on Thursday night. Police arrested 17 persons including the proprietor of the dhaba and a woman sex broker on spot, sources said.

Sources claimed that based on a secret input, a police team led by additional superintendent of police (Crime) Rupjyoti Kalita

conducted a raid at the roadside dhaba during which police caught 14 youths red handed while they were being involved in illicit relations with four girls. Police immediately rescued the four victim girls and also arrested the proprietor of the dhaba Ratul Hazarika, a sex broker identified Dulal Ahmed and a woman sex broker on spot, sources said, adding that a case was registered in this regard and further investigation is on.

Chapter on Sudhakantha's life and music demanded



HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, March 24: Dr Bhupen Hazarika is one of the most respected personalities in the socio-cultural field of Assam after Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradeva. His cultural activities were not limited to Assam but were recognised at the National level.

The title song of Gauhati University, the educational heart of Assam was penned down and composed beautifully by Sudhakantha Dr Bhupen Hazarika, the highest national honour Bharat Ratna awardee. The National Human Rights and Crime Control Bureau's (NHRCCB) President Nishant Thard has re-

gretted that at least a chapter based on the songs, literature and artistic life of the fatherly figure of Assamese music has not been included in the undergraduate curriculum of Guwahati University.

The organisation has requested the vice-chancellor of Gauhati University Prof Dr Pratap Jyoti Handique and the chief minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma to include at least one chapter covering the musical works and literary works of the great artist in the undergraduate arts curriculum. The letter to both of them has been sent directly from the organisation.

Mrinmay Kr Nath, the media officer of NHRCCB informed that the copies of the letter are also sent to the chancellor of the university, and the education minister of the state seeking an immediate response on the matter. Further, the National Human Rights and Crime Control Bureau (NHRCCB) has requested the Assam College Principals Council and the Assam College Teachers' Association to raise the issue with the implementation of the move from next academic year.

Transport dept earmarks March 31 for outstanding taxes

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 24: Along with other districts of the state, the district transport department of Kamrup Metro has also taken special initiatives to collect the outstanding vehicle taxes in the district.

Accordingly, public awareness is being created amongst the owners of various vehicles in the district regarding payment of tax by earmarking March 31 as the last day for payment of outstanding taxes. For this, leaflets are being distributed in various places of the district.

It may be noted that a fine will be imposed as a penalty for non-payment of taxes in time. In addition to that, registration of the vehicle may also be cancelled.

Assistant commissioner of transport and district transport officer (registration & licensing) Gautam Das have made a humble appeal to every vehicle owner of the district to pay the tax in time for strengthening the transport system and prove themselves as responsible citizens by contributing towards the development of the state.

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender in F-2 form affixing Court Fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paise) only with a validity period of 180 (one hundred eighty) days are invited from Registered APWD (Building) Contractors for the work as detailed in the table below:-

Table									
Sl. No.	Name of work	Estimated value of work (Approx Rs.)	Bid Security (In Rs.)	Cost of tender paper (In Rs.)	Date of Application	Date of issue of tender paper	Time & date of receiving/ opening of Tender	Time of completion	Eligibility of contractor
1	"Repair & Renovation of Morigaon Sanskritik Sangha, Gandhi Bhawan at Morigaon."	Rs. 17,26,294.00	2% for general and 1% for reserved category	Rs. 600.00	05.04.2023 to 06.04.2023 Up to 4-00 PM	11.04.2023	Receiving up to 2-00 PM of 13.04.2023 and opening at 2-30 PM of 13.04.2023	3(Three) Months	Registered APWD (Building) Class-I (A,B,C), Class-II & III Contractors

Detailed particulars may be seen during office hours of any working days in the office of the undersigned. Contractors will have to submit application for Tender paper along with attested copy of current APWD Registration Certificate, Pan Card, GST, up to date Labour License, EPF Registration and cost of tender paper as detailed above in the form of Bank Draft/Banker Cheque drawn in any Nationalized Bank in favour of **Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Morigaon District Territorial Building Division**. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or to their authorized agents up-to 4.00 PM in working day as mentioned above from the office of the undersigned. Bid security in the form of FDR/CDR duly pledged in favour of the **Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Morigaon District Territorial Building Division, Morigaon** to be submitted along with the tender paper.

Performance Security/Security Deposit Money as per norms and additional Performance Security as per Chief Engineer PWD (Building)'s letter No- BN/12/82/PT-1/84, dt. 15.02.2011 if required is to be furnished by the successful bidder when notified. If for any reason, the last date of receiving and opening of tender is declared as holiday, the same will be received and opened on the next working day.

The undersigned will be the sole authority to cancel any tender without showing any reason.

- N.B.:**
- Prospective bidders are suggested to visit the proposed work site before submission of bids.
 - This Short NIT will form a part of the tender agreement.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer, PWD
Morigaon District Territorial
Building Division, Morigaon

Janasanyog/C/23855/22

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Idealism increases in direct proportion to one's distance from the problem. - John Galsworthy

Rahul gets disqualified from Lok Sabha

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is no longer a Member of Parliament. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla took the decision to disqualify the Gandhi family scion following his conviction in a case of criminal defamation, with two-year jail sentence. Less than two years of jail and he wouldn't have ended up in this mess. But, irony of irony, it was Rahul Gandhi who tore up an ordinance to amend the law drafted by the Manmohan Singh government. The disqualification came the day after a Surat court convicted Rahul Gandhi. The Gandhi family scion was given the option to "apologise", but he refused. The Congress had called the verdict "infirm, erroneous and unsustainable". The defamation case dates back to 2019. The verdict wasn't unexpected, it was on its way coming. Truly, there couldn't have been a better way to tame Rahul Gandhi than by reading him the riot act with a criminal defamation charge.

Rahul Gandhi was asked by the Surat court if he wanted to "apologise", but he refused. Today, Wayanad in Kerala has lost its MP to a court verdict. And Rahul Gandhi might not be able to contest elections for six years, unless a higher court overturns the verdict. The fact that the judge in the case suspended the 2-year jail sentence, the maximum jail-time in a criminal defamation case, for 30 days did not make a difference. There was no margin of error, so to speak. Earlier, the Congress was debating the MP status of Rahul Gandhi. One group, dominated by legal-eagles, was advising Rahul not to go to Parliament, and the second group was urging Rahul Gandhi to head for Parliament and be done with it! For now, Rahul Gandhi is on bail, till a higher court reversed the verdict. Rahul Gandhi has 30 days to appeal in a higher court. Erstwhile Congress leader Kapil Sibal said, "His disqualification is automatic. Legal processes are used far too often for political ends!" He called the verdict "bizarre." Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge called the disqualification was primarily to help Modi-Adani to help get out of the hole the two were in.

On Friday, talks also proliferated that the conviction of Rahul Gandhi has strengthened chances of opposition unity, which had been eluding the opposition parties for months if not years. NCP chief Sharad Pawar was said to be leading the "Allies" against the "Evil Axis". Meanwhile, the BJP did not stop attacking Rahul Gandhi with statements like "cannot blame all Gandhi surnames just because Rahul insulted Indian democracy". Rahul Gandhi was present in the Surat court when the verdict convicting him was read out. To a question from the judge, Rahul said he had nothing to say. Later, he tweeted, "My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God, non-violence is the means to get it -- Mahatma Gandhi." He also paid tributes to freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru in another tweet. For the Congress rank and file, Rahul Gandhi was the epitome of Bhagat Singh, no less. That said, Rahul Gandhi has learned an important lesson. After all the success of Bharat Jodo Yatra, a new period of political struggle has begun. Irrespective of what finally happens, Rahul Gandhi's process of full conversion into a political animal has begun. That is good for the Congress party.

Annual income of poorest 20% of India continuing with its decline

By: Krishna Jha

India has entered one of its darkest phases of deprivation when the annual income of the poorest 20 percent has fallen by 53 percent and still continues to fall from the level of 2015-16. Since last three decades, economy was evolving at the rate of seven percent a year and was going up constantly till the advent of the pandemic years. Per capita income before the Pandemic days had arrived at 2100 dollars a year. It was in the same years that the richest twenty percent were reaping an income growth of 39 percent. It was the result of the Covid days that had impacted the economy splitting the population in a perfect contrast of Haves and Have Nots.

The survey conducted by People's Research on India's Consumer Economy, between April and October 2021, had taken up 200,000 households in the first round and 42,000 households in the second round, spreading it over 120 towns and 800 villages across 100 districts. As the economic activity has been declining to almost zero level, especially in the months of 2020-2021, and caused GDP to contract up to 7.3 percent, the urban poor was also affected hugely as their household income was receding steeply. With erosion, there was also the sharp categorisation, though with very little difference among them except with the top twenty percent. Among the poorest 20 percent, it was the most brutal erosion of 53 percent, for the second lowest, usually called lower middle category, the decline in their household income came down to 32 percent.

In the middle-income category, the decline was found to be of nine percent, while for the upper middle category, it was a rise of seven percent. It also faced decline but it was only nine percent, and then the rise. It was the richest twenty percent that registered the highest rise among the entire population. It rose to 39 percent, when the famine and joblessness had caused big masses to migrate towards their roots. The survey also brought out the fact that the richest twenty percent had earned more in the post liberalisation years including the days of pandemic. In contrast to it, for the most impoverished twenty percent households, especially during and after 2021, their income saw a sharp fall of more than half of what they were getting in 2016. In the last eleven years before pre Covid days, between 2005-2016, the household income for the top rich went up from 20 percent to 34 percent, for the poorest 20 percent, it also saw a hike in the average income growth rate of 9.9 percent. Now in 2021, the share of the poorest 20 percent has dropped to 3.3 percent in the same period.

The survey showed that in contrast to those poorest, the richest 20 percent accounted for a jump of 56.3 percent in 2021. As with pandemic, economy was getting more formalised, and big companies in the top twenty percent benefitted at the cost of smaller ones. The survey brought in the light the fact that while job losses were almost all pervading among small and medium enterprises in the casual labour segment, large companies did not suffer much on this account. It is also noted that there has been a difference in impact between urban and rural regions. Those poorest 20 percent in urban areas got more impacted than their rural counterparts since Covid and the lockdown. They have been facing a worsening curb in economic activities in urban areas. This resulted in job losses and loss of income for the casual labour, petty traders and household workers. The miseries of people in the country caused by the economic policies that have been supportive to the highest twenty, were not thought of worthy to be taken into account. The ruling regime, joining hands with the rule of finance capital, has been reluctant to even list the disastrous consequences of such policies that have brought decline in per capita income of the major section of people, who already suffer from rise in malnutrition, that causes stunting and wasting among children, slipping down to the rank of 94 out of 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index.

In addition, demonetisation has pushed the country to the brinks. Millions of people have been pushed into a state of acute impoverishment. Then there are the MSME who have hardly any support from the system. With chaotic management of the pandemic, there is also refusal to transfer cash to the poor. Then there is growing unemployment, coming down to 7.2 percent, with urban 8.4 and rural 6.4 percent. Also high inflation rate, CPI 5.6 percent, high indirect taxes, indulgent direct taxes; poorly designed GST; profiteering in sale of petrol, diesel and LPG; return of the licence-permit regime; concentration of capital and wealth and finally strengthening of the monopolies; crony capitalism. In these grim days, masses are going through little less than famine times. They are paying back the prices for all decisions that the system is taking. But soon it would be the system that would be made to bear the prices for everything. (IPA Service)

Women as harbinger of educative social change

“We must have perseverance and above all, confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that thing must be attained.”

- Madame Curie

Education is an essential human virtue and one of the most profound forces shaping a good society and ensuring freedom for the last man in the social structure. Expressing his views on education Swami Vivekananda remarked: education is the manifestation of perfection already present in a man. Education not only gives us a platform to succeed, but also the knowledge of social conduct, courage, character and capacity for ennoblement of humanity. Throughout history, humanity had to fight with the vicissitudes of nature and innovate to survive and organize life in the context of the myriad challenges afflicting humanity. Research and Development has been used to create technological options to prevent, eliminate, or lessen threats to life and the environment and to fulfill social needs.

In the ancient era people began as nomadic hunters and gatherers, using as food the animals and plants they found in the environment then they learned how to expand their food supplies by using processing traditional technology, a manifestation of creativity. But now, the improvement in agricultural productivity, transportation, space exploration to artificial intelligence has changed the destiny of mankind in a manner hitherto unprecedented in the history of mankind and has raised the fundamental ethical issues behind Research and Development activities.

The survival of the fittest concept made human beings survive because of the capacity to reason and exude scientific temper, the basis of development of mankind. The essential question which always arose was whether mankind was using science and technology as a tool for human progress or to be a slave of its own selfish passions. The engagement of every section of society, especially women in this onward march towards perfection of humanity has been always a key theme for empowerment of the various stakeholders.

Thus the idea of Research and Development continues to influence human lives in every possible dimension transforming man from a farmer shepherd man to a manipulator of machines backed by inanimate energy. The empowerment of women has myriad dimensions like political, social, economic, education and so on. In every facet of Women's life, research and development plays a cardinal role in unleashing the power within. Further, the engagement of women in research and development develops an attitude of inquisitiveness and scientific temper which ennobles women and mankind.

The empowerment of women is one of the critical aspects of human rights in the 21st century. Development is not sustainable if it is not equal. And equality cannot be achieved if gender differences are not resolved. It is the duty of nations to uphold the human rights and potential of every woman. The empowerment of women starts on the benches of school, with quality education

and access to culture and information. Gender equality includes access to literacy and science. Genuine possibilities for girls to make their own informed choices are integral to it. Gender equality is also a pre-requisite for human rights, health and sustainable development. In India, it was decided as a follow up of the New Educational Policy in 1986 to make science compulsory for all students up to the Tenth standard to ensure that all girls will read science. Thus, the disciplinary choices of women have been significant in the feminist discourse on education and gender. Higher education was entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the constitutional provisions for positive discrimination.

The aspect of empowerment of women through prospects in Higher Education and Research and Development has varied dimensions pertaining to Science & Technology, Human Resource

Development, Health and AYUSH System of Medicines. The father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi is known to be one of the few people who encouraged women's active participation in the freedom struggle-marking him as a rare promoter of women's liberation. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "My contribution to the great problem (of women's role in society) lies in my presenting for acceptance of truth and ahimsa in every walk of life, whether for individuals or nations. I have hugged the hope that in this, woman will be the unquestioned leader and, having thus found her place in human evolution, will shed her inferiority complex."

There are myriad problems which women confront in the contemporary environmental set up. It is important that they come across a non-discriminatory environment in access to higher education, Health and Scientific research and in avenues of research and job opportunities. The felt need to bring back the primary objective to bring women scientists back to the mainstream who had a break in career due to family obligations and other socio-cultural responsibilities. Further, there stands the perceived need of sensitizing the higher education system through policies and procedures which recognize women equity and diversity and facilitate their achievement.

The concern of equity in higher education has also been established as one of the foundational principles of Higher education, Research and Development. Thus, the question of putting human rights at the centre of education and to have balanced human development through programmes of awareness of human rights, human duties and human values gain significance. Taking cognizance of its responsibilities towards Women in Research and Development, the Committee believes it to be a significant issue for policy making and policy implementation to further the goal of Women Empowerment and to envision the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi as he said..." the goal of empowerment he believes, depends on the threefold revaluation: Firstly, to change in their lives; secondly to create a change in their lives; and thirdly, to change the social structure." (The writer can be reached at salilmumta@gmail.com)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Salil Saroj

ICC's arrest warrant against Putin has little impact on Russian actions

By: Raushan Tara Jaswal

In what can be termed a historic move, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against the Russian President, Vladimir Putin and the Russian Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova. This is the first time that an arrest warrant against a head of the State of a permanent member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council has ever been issued, and only the third time that a serving president of a country has been the target of such an arrest warrant. The earlier cases were against Omar al-Bashir (Sudan) and Muammar Gaddafi (Libya). Staying true to the character it has adopted towards international law since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began last year, the Kremlin has refused to acknowledge the ICC arrest warrant. It terms the warrant as "void" since Russia is not a party to the Rome Statute that established the ICC, and does not submit to the jurisdiction of the ICC. Ukraine, on the other hand, has hailed the warrant as a historic decision for Ukraine. It is also pertinent to note that the arrest warrant has been issued for the alleged war crimes of unlawful deportation and transfer of population (specifically children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

Ukraine claims that more than 16,000 children have been illegally deported and transferred to Russia or even Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine. The UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine has taken note of this transfer process. While Russia does not refute the claims of transfer of children, it masks them as a "humanitarian campaign to protect orphans and children abandoned in the conflict zone". Hence, the fact remains that there is a transfer of Ukrainian children across de facto and de jure borders, even though both sides present their own understandings of one of the most heinous alleged

war crimes. The Pre-Trial Chamber II of the ICC has based this warrant against both the individuals on having reasonable ground to believe that they have committed the war crime directly/jointly/through others and even for their failure to exercise control over such people who were under their effective control, considering their superior responsibility. The threshold for command/superior responsibility exists within the Rome Statute for a reason; however, it has been a rarity that a sitting head of State has actually been prosecuted and also convicted of any of the crimes under this principle.

This problem is compounded by Russia's abject disregard for ICC's jurisdiction and failure to comply with any of the proceedings that have taken place thus far. It will also be impossible to carry out the arrest against Putin or Lvova-Belova, let alone on Russian soil, seeing the command that they both seem to have within their nation.

So what remains to be evaluated is the repercussions of this arrest warrant, considering the powers of the ICC, and what such warrants have reaped in the past. It also becomes equally important to evaluate the selective jurisdiction exercised by ICC and how it can be used by the Russian Federation as a valid defence. But the most important question that remains to be answered is whether this arrest warrant can be enforced, or it is simply a measure of empty promise, considering the prolonged war.

The case of al-Bashir, against whom the ICC issued an arrest warrant in 2009 and 2010, is instructive. The case remains in the pre-trial stage, and he has still not been prosecuted due to the lack of arrest and subsequent transfer to the ICC at The Hague in Netherlands. He remains "at large".

The ICC does not try individuals unless they can be present in the courtroom and defend themselves to adhere to basic principles of natural justice — al-Bashir has been in custody since April 2019 (within

Sudan). In a recent development, the Sudanese transitional government agreed to hand over the ex-ruler of the country to the ICC. However, as of date, the ICC has not received his custody, and the prosecution remains in abeyance.

In another instance, after the ICC issued an arrest warrant against Gaddafi in 2011, it had to terminate the proceedings due to his death. Multiple concerns have been raised about the circumstances surrounding the death of the ex-Libyan president; however, no serious steps have been taken to investigate the matter. There have been instances where such proceedings have yielded positive results — such as in the case of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who was successfully convicted and sentenced to 50 years imprisonment by the ICC in 2012 for his crimes in Sierra Leone's civil war. Even in the case of Slobodan Milošević, the ex-president of Serbia who was arrested and transferred to the detention unit in The Hague for his alleged crimes in Kosovo. However, before the conviction, he was found dead in his prison cell in 2006.

Both these cases were heard by special tribunals set up in the wake of civil wars, and were specific in their jurisdiction in terms of the crimes committed as well as the territory where the crime took place. This jurisdiction was given by the UN in tacit compliance with the respective governments. Apart from the Russian Federation's absolute dismissal of ICC's jurisdiction — under the Rome Statute (Articles 12-14), other factors also stack up against the enforceability of these arrest warrants against Putin and Lvova-Belova.

Firstly, it has been rare for the ICC to be able to exercise jurisdiction over individuals, especially in the absence of ratification of the Rome Statute (both Ukraine and Russia are not parties to the Rome Statute — while Ukraine has previously invoked its jurisdiction twice). Secondly, since the begin-

ning of its operation, the ICC has only managed to issue ten convictions, none of which have pertained to heads of States or individuals who yield considerable influence in their respective countries. Thirdly, even if arrest warrants have been issued against heads of States, the ICC has never been able to commence prosecution and yield a conviction. Fourthly, an arrest warrant has never been initiated against a head of a permanent member of the Security Council — who holds veto power at the UN and at the Security Council. Fifthly — which is the biggest and most important criticism of the ICC — the proceedings have disproportionately prosecuted crimes in the African continent and have been issued disproportionately against citizens of African nations. War crimes in the territories of Afghanistan and Syria (both non-signatories to the Rome Statute) obviously highlight the hypocrisy of ICC. There has been a lack of willingness to proceed in these cases. Investigations have been underway for the war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan; however, nothing conclusive has come out of the investigation yet. The situation is much worse in the case of Syria, where even investigations have not taken place yet. The ICC's persistent involvement in Africa has been the source of its criticism, especially with a lack of holistic operation in all nations and any crimes within the scope of its jurisdiction. With 123 signatories, the ICC seems to yield considerable international legal influence, yet it falls short at each stage. This is also due to the fact that many notable countries that command political influence — such as China, Russia, the United States and India — have still refused to sign the Rome Statute, claiming an infringement of their sovereignty by their ability to prosecute its citizens under a separate legal regime.

In fact, the President of the ICC himself stated that the arrest war-

rants are "not magic wands", but can provide a "deterrence effect" by acting as a "sanction" against such individuals. Hence, the question begs to be asked at this stage — what is even the point of issuing such an arrest warrant?

Considering the lack of ICC's own enforcement mechanism, the answer seems to stem from member State cooperation. It depends on member states (123 nations) to fully cooperate with the court — which pertains to their obligation to execute arrest warrants issued by the ICC if the arrestee is found on their soil. After the execution of such arrest warrants, the member States are also obligated to extradite the person(s) to The Hague to await trial. Apart from providing a personal restriction on Putin's movement, it seems like this arrest warrant would not actually result in any substantial outcome, especially pertaining to the war in question. Also, it seems highly unlikely that even these 123 nations would proceed, based on this arrest warrant, and detain and extradite the Russian head of State.

Russia's allies — especially China and India — have not signed the Rome Statute and hence, Putin will be free to travel to these countries apart from the United States as well. At this stage, full-scale prosecution against either of the parties seems highly unlikely. Even if the investigation reveals more crimes committed by either of the parties — the tool of ICC arrest warrant and proceedings over-archingly remains a futile exercise, only to attract international condemnation against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has officially surpassed a year.

Considering precedents, it seems impossible to execute this arrest warrant against Putin or Lvova-Belova. It truly seems that this exercise has been a futile attempt to hold them responsible — especially at the cost of resources that could have been directed to similar war crimes elsewhere. (IPA Service)

India-Japan must act quickly to counter China in Indo-Pacific

By: Dipak Kurmi

In the time of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's recent visit to India, two significant developments took place. Firstly, India and Japan made a commitment to intensify their cooperation in security, trade, and technology. Secondly, the Japanese premier introduced a new plan for a free and open Indo-Pacific, which highlights India's importance as a crucial partner in maintaining a rules-based order and preventing coercion. It is evident that this Indo-Pacific plan, which will be carried out jointly by India and Japan with the support of other regional partners, aims to counter China's expansionist and aggressive behavior. The implementation and effectiveness of this plan in countering China will be closely observed in the future. It is evident that both India and Japan face a significant challenge in countering China's aggressive actions, with Japan concerned about China's territorial claims over the entire South China Sea and India worried about China's assertive activities in the eastern Ladakh sector along the Line of Actual Control.

As China continues to pursue its expansionist agenda in the Indo-Pacific region, India and Japan must act swiftly to implement their Indo-Pacific plan aimed at maintaining a free and open region and addressing the challenges posed by China. Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)



plan, worth \$75 billion, includes measures to prevent debt traps, build infrastructure, and enhance maritime and air security in collaboration with other countries in the region. These steps will involve several partners and contribute significantly to countering China's efforts to trap smaller countries in debt. India and Japan, as presidents of the G20 and G7 respectively, can effectively address the challenge from China in the Indo-Pacific and garner global consensus on the Indo-Pacific plan. India and

Japan are also members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with the US and Australia, and the Japanese premier is expected to coordinate closely with these partners to execute the Indo-Pacific plan. Tokyo seeks greater cooperation from New Delhi, Canberra, and Washington to check China's growing influence in the region.

Japan's strategy to counter China's expansionist agenda in the Indo-Pacific region involves strengthening partnerships with smaller countries in the region by providing

economic infrastructure and military assistance. This approach can broaden India and Japan's efforts to address the challenge posed by China in the region. To achieve this, India and Japan must strengthen their cooperation and leverage their presidencies of the G20 and G7, respectively, to garner greater global support against expansionist activities, regardless of their source. It is crucial that India and Japan accelerate their efforts to ensure the success of the Indo-Pacific plan announced by Prime Minister Kishida during his visit to India. Notably, the concept of the Indo-Pacific region was first proposed in 2007 by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Delhi, calling for greater cooperation between democracies in Asia and unity between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Kishida has now identified India as an essential partner in Japan's new Indo-Pacific plan aimed at countering China's unlawful activities in the region. India is committed to meeting Japan's expectations and effectively executing the entire plan. Noriuki Shikata, cabinet secretary for public affairs in Japan's PMO, emphasized the significance of the two countries' agreement on the importance of maintaining and strengthening the international order based on the rule of law and their shared responsibilities in this context at the G7 and G20. (The writer is a journalist and commentator based in Guwahati, can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

Spreading Happiness as a Career Choice

By: Ranjan K Baruah

We have seen many progresses and changes in the society but still we strive for happiness. It seems that happiness has become one of the costliest things to get but we must know that it is free of cost. Career avenues related to happiness may vary from place to place and region to region and we shall explore a few avenues in today's edition.

Happiness is a fundamental human goal. The United Nations General Assembly recognizes this goal and calls for "a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes the happiness and well-being of all peoples." In 2015, the UN launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to end poverty, reduce inequality, and protect our planet – three key aspects that lead to well-being and happiness. The General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 66/281 of 12 July 2012 proclaimed 20 March the International Day of Happiness, recognizing the relevance of happiness and well-being as universal goals and aspira-

tions in the lives of human beings around the world and the importance of their recognition in public policy objectives. It also recognized the need for a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes sustainable development, poverty eradication, happiness and the well-being of all peoples.

The resolution was initiated by Bhutan, a country which recognized the value of national happiness over Gross National Product. It also hosted a High Level Meeting on "Happiness and Well-Being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm" during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

International Day of Happiness is a day to be happy, of course! Since 2013, the United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness as a way to recognize the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world. UNESCO's Happy Schools Project was begun in 2014 by UNESCO Bangkok; the Happy Schools Project offers an alternative approach to improv-

ing learning experiences by prioritizing school happiness. By focusing on well-being, engagement, and sense of belonging at school, the Happy Schools Project helps foster a lifelong love of learning. In 2022, a guide and toolkit were developed. The Happy Schools Project is going global with its advocacy for prioritizing well-being and happiness in schools, with renewed focus on better learning experiences.

Before spreading happiness we must follow our passion to be happy in life because we can spread happiness when we are happy. Profession may be working in the development sector to improve basic amenities in life to becoming a motivational speaker or even stand up comedian. There are people who can act well and bring happiness amongst people through their dramatic and acting skills. One needs to be confident enough in his or her job to spread happiness. Following the passion with strategic career planning is important to be happy and also spread happiness. We should be aware that there are many career options but we must know and learn how to spread happiness. There are projects in academic institutions and communities that involve



experts for happiness. Together we can be happy and spread happiness so let us choose any career based on our passion and follow it to bring success and

happiness. (Ranjan K Baruah is a career mentor and skill trainer and can be reached 8473943734 or bkranjan@gmail.com)

SSC Selection Post Recruitment 2023 – 5369 (Phase XI) Vacancy, Online Apply

Last Date: 27/03/2023
Name of post: Selection Post
No of posts: 5369 posts
Category-wise vacancy details:
SC: 687
ST: 343
OBC: 1332
UR: 2540
ESM: 154
OH: 56
HH: 43
VH: 17
Others: 16
EWS: 467
Educational Qualification:
Matric Level Posts: Class 10th or High School pass from any recognised board in India
Intermediate Level Posts: 10+2 or passed Intermediate Exam from any recognised board in India
Graduate-level Posts: Bachelor Degree in any field from any recognised University/Institution in India
Age Limit:
10th/ 12th Level Posts: The minimum age to apply for SSC Selection Post Phase XI exam is 18 years and the maximum age is 25/27 years as on 01/01/2023.
Graduate Level Posts: The minimum age to apply for SSC Selection Post Phase XI exam is 18 years and the maximum age is 30 years as on 01/01/2023.
Application Fee:
UR/OBC: Rs. 100/-
Women/ SC/ ST/ PWD/ Ex Serviceman: Nil
Payment Mode: Online Through BHIM UPI, Net Banking, by using Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, RuPay Credit or Debit cards or in SBI Branches by generating SBI Challan.

APSC Vacancy 2023 – 29 Research Assistant & Inspector Of Statistics Vacancy

Last Date: 29/04/2023
1. Research Assistant
No of posts: 25 posts
Name of department: Planning Services under Transformation and Development Department
Category-wise vacancy:
UR: 16
OBC/ MOBC: 5
SC: 1
STP: 2
STH: 1
Scale of pay: Rs. 22, 000/- to 97, 000/- Grade Pay: Rs. 9,400/-
Educational Qualification: Bachelor Degree in Arts, Science or Commerce from any recognized University with either Statistics, Economics, Mathematics, Agricultural Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Social Anthropology, Social Work, Business Administration, Business Management, Geography or Commerce as one of the subjects. Preference shall be given to Honours Graduates.
2. Inspector of Statistics
No of posts: 4 posts
Category-wise vacancy:
UR: 1
OBC/ MOBC: 3
Name of department: Directorate of Economics & Statistics under Transformation and Development Department
Scale of Pay: Rs. 22, 000/- to 97, 000/- Grade Pay: Rs. 9,700/-
Educational Qualification: At least second class Master Degree in Economics, Statistics or Mathematics from a recognized University or its equivalent.
Other Criteria of APSC Vacancy
Age Limit: The candidates should not be less than 21 years of age and not more than 38 years of age as on 01/01/2023.
Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.
SC: 5 years
ST: 5 years
OBC/ MOBC: 3 years
PwBD: 10 years
For more details pl read the official notification/s.
Citizenship: Candidates must be Indian Citizens as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India.
Residency:
(i) The candidate must be a permanent resident of Assam.
(ii) The candidate must produce PRC issued in Assam for educational purpose/ Employment Exchange Registration certificate / Voter ID card of the candidate or his/her parents will be treated as proof of residency along with the application form.
Application Fee:
General/EWS: 297.20
SC/ST/OBC/MOBC: 197.20
BPL: 47.20
PwBD: 47.20
Payment Mode: Online/ Offline

Bhattadev University Recruitment 2023 - 3 Assistant Professor Vacancy

Walk-in Date: 06/04/2023
Bhattadev University, Pathsala has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 20 Assistant Professor Vacancy in different department of Bhattadev University, Pathsala. Interested and eligible candidates may apply here.
Name of post: Assistant Professor
No of posts: 3
Department-wise vacancy:
English: 1 (STH)
Botany: 1 (UR-PWD)
Physics: 1 (STP)
Educational Qualification:
A Master's degree with 55% marks (or an equivalent grade in a point-scale where the grading system is followed) in a concerned/relevant/allied subject from an Indian University, or an equivalent degree from an accredited foreign university.
Besides fulfilling the above qualifications, the candidate must have cleared the National Eligibility Test (NET) conducted by the UGC or the CSIR, or a similar recognized test (like SLET/SET). Candidates who have been awarded a Ph.D. Degree in accordance with the University Grants Commission (Minimum Standards and Procedure for Award of M.Phil./Ph.D. Degree) Regulations, 2009 or 2016 and their amend-

ments from time to time as the case may, are exempted from NET/SLET/SET etc. provided that the candidates registered for the Ph.D. programme prior to July, 2009, shall be governed by the provisions of the then existing Ordinances/Byelaws/Regulations of the Institution awarding the degree and such Ph.D. candidates shall be exempted from the requirement of NET/SLET/SET etc.

Desirable: Ability to read and write in Assamese language.
Pay Scale: Rs.57700-182400/-
Application Fee: Candidates will be required to pay an amount of Rs. 1500/- (for UR Category) and Rs. 1000/- (for other categories) by a demand draft in favour of "Registrar Bhattadev University" payable at State Bank of India Pathsala Branch .
How to Apply for Bhattadev University Vacancy?
Candidates will be required to send the completed application in prescribed form along with necessary enclosure to the following address latest by 06/04/2023.

The Registrar,
Bhattadev University, Bajali,
Pathsala-781325.

The name of the Post & Department must be written on the envelope of the application.
In all cases two copies of the application with all testimonials (self-attested) need to be submitted.

Any change of address for correspondence should be communicated to the Registrar, Bhattadev University giving reference of the Advertisement No. and post(s) applied for.

Candidates belonging to SC/STP/STH/OBC/EWS/PWD category should submit prescribed certificate as per the proforma of the Government of Assam.

IIT Guwahati Recruitment 2023- 7 Deputy Registrar, Officer & Engineer Vacancy

Last Date: 20/04/2023.
Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IITG) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 07 Deputy Registrar, Senior Medical Officer, Senior Security Officer and Junior Engineer vacancy in IIT Guwahati. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.
IIT Guwahati Recruitment 2023
1. Deputy Registrar
No of posts: 01 (UR)
Educational & Other Qualification: (1) A post-graduate degree with at least 55% marks or its equivalent grade of 'B' in the UGC 7 point scale; (2) Nine years' of experience as Assistant Professor in the AGP of ₹6000 and above with experience in educational administration or comparable experience in research establishment and/or other Institutions of higher education or 5 years of administrative experience as Assistant Registrar or in an equivalent post carrying a scale of pay of Level - 10/ qualifications and experience as prescribed by UGC/MoE from time to time.
Pay Matrix Level: 12 (As per 7th CPC).
Age Limit: Up to 45 years (No upper age limit for regular employees of IIT Guwahati).
2. Senior Medical Officer (SMO)
No of posts: 01 (UR)
Educational & Other Qualification: MD preferably in general medicine with 3 years' experience or MBBS with 7 years' experience, as a medical officer in a reputed hospital.
Pay Matrix Level: 11 (As per 7th CPC) + NPA (as per rule).
Age Limit: Up to 40 years (No upper age limit for regular employees of IIT Guwahati).
3. Senior Security Officer (SSO)
No of posts: 01 (UR)
Educational & Other Qualification: Commissioned Officer of Military/Para-Military Services or Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commandant of Police/Security Force having a Bachelor's degree from a recognized university with at least 10 years' experience in the Police/Security Services.
Pay Matrix Level: 10 (As per 7th CPC).
Age Limit: Not more than 55 years.
4. Junior Engineer
No of posts: 04 UR: 02, EWS: 01 & OBC: 01
Educational & Other Qualification: Bachelor's Degree in Civil or Electrical Engineering or equivalent. OR, Diploma in Civil or Electrical Engineering with 3 years' experience.
Pay Matrix Level: 6 (As per 7th CPC).
Age Limit: Not more than 30 years (No upper age limit for regular employees of IIT Guwahati).
Application Fee:
Applicants will have to make payment of a non-refundable application fee through online mode only. Fee payable by the applicant are as follows:
Posts Sl. No. 1, 2 & 3: Rs 500/- (for General/ OBC/ EWS candidates) and ₹250/- (for SC/ST/PwD candidates).
Post Sl. No. 4: Rs 300/- (for General/ OBC/ EWS candidates) and Rs 150/- (for SC/ST/PwD candidates).
Women applicants are exempted from payment of application fee.

Cotton University Recruitment 2023 – Placement Officer Vacancy
Last Date: 12/04/2023
Cotton University has released an employment notification for the recruitment of Placement Officer (Contractual) post on contractual basis. Interested and eligible candidates may apply here.
Name of post: Placement Officer
No of posts: 01 post
Scale of Pay: Rs. 30,000/- (Fixed) per month.
Mode of appointment: The appointment shall be purely on contractual basis initially for a period of one year; extendable on the basis of performance of the incumbent.
Essential Qualification: Degree in any discipline from reputed institution/ university with 55% marks .
Desirable Qualification:
Possessing BBA-HR from reputed Institution.
Exposure to corporate world in Human Resources.
Experience:
Minimum 2 years of proven experience (desirable) in the relevant field/similar academic Institutions and preference will be given to candidates proficient in liaisons with various industries for placement.
Experience in Assam is desirable.
Required Qualities: The applicant should possess,
Excellent communication skill (oral & written) and interpersonal skills.
Ability to create and build reciprocal relations with plastic and allied industries/manufacturing industries, PSUs, MNCs and other organizations.
Ability to facilitate industry/institute interactions.
Positive attitude, proactive and optimistic nature, ability to work and keep calm under pressure.

Cotton University Recruitment 2023 – Placement Officer Vacancy

Age Limit: Candidate below 65 years may apply; preference will be given to retired persons with experience in the above discipline on 01.01.2023 for Placement and Career Counseling Cell
How to Apply for Cotton University Recruitment?
Interested and eligible applicants may apply in the application form available in the University Website with photocopies of all certificates and testimonials on or before 12th January 2023.
Filled in application may be sent to the following address indicating the post applied for.
Registrar,
Cotton University,
Panbazar, Guwahati 781001, Assam.

Interested and eligible applicants may apply in the application form available in the University Website with photocopies of all certificates and testimonials on or before 12th January 2023.

Filled in application may be sent to the following address indicating the post applied for.

Registrar,
Cotton University,
Panbazar, Guwahati 781001, Assam.

MHRB Assam Recruitment 2023 – 19 Faculty Vacancy

Last Date: 31/03/2023
Medical and Health Recruitment Board (MHRB), Assam has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 19 Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor posts in various departments of Govt. Ayurvedic College & Hospital, Guwahati-14, Assam.
1. Professor; No of posts: 2 posts; Age Limit: 55 years
Educational Qualification:
(i) A Bachelor Degree in Ayurveda from a university or its equivalent as recognized by the Central Council of Indian Medicine or National Commission for Indian System of Medicine under the Act.
(ii) A Post-graduate qualification in Ayurveda in the concerned subject or specialty from a University recognized by Central Council of Indian Medicine or national Commission for Indian System of Medicine under the Act.
(iii) a valid registration with the concerned State Board or Council where he is employed or a valid Central or National Registration Certificate issued by Central Council of Indian Medicine or National Commission for Indian System of Medicine.
Experience: Pl check the official advertisement .
2. Associate Professor; No of posts: 2 posts; Age Limit: 50 years
Educational Qualification:
(i) A Bachelor Degree in Ayurveda from a university or its equivalent as recognized by the Central Council of Indian Medicine or National Commission for Indian System of Medicine under the Act.
(ii) A Post-graduate qualification in Ayurveda in the concerned subject or specialty from a University recognized by Central Council of Indian Medicine or national Commission for Indian System of Medicine under the Act.
(iii) a valid registration with the concerned State Board or Council where he is employed or a valid Central or National Registration Certificate issued by Central Council of Indian Medicine or National Commission for Indian System of Medicine.
Experience: Pl check the official advertisement.
3. Assistant Professor; No of posts: 15 posts; Age Limit: 45 years
Educational Qualification:
(i) A Bachelor Degree in Ayurveda from a university or its equivalent as recognized by the Central Council of Indian Medicine or National Commission for Indian System of Medicine under the Act.
(ii) A Post-graduate qualification in Ayurveda in the concerned subject or specialty from a University recognized by Central Council of Indian Medicine or national Commission for Indian System of Medicine under the Act.
(iii) a valid registration with the concerned State Board or Council where he is employed or a valid Central or National Registration Certificate issued by Central Council of Indian Medicine or National Commission for Indian System of Medicine.
Experience: No teaching experience shall be required.
Application Fee of MHRB Assam Recruitment
Application must be accompanied with required application fee of Rs. 250/- (rupees two hundred fifty) only for General category candidates and Rs. 150/- (rupees one hundred fifty) only for OBC/MOBC/SC/ST (P)/ST (H) candidate.
No application fee is required for candidates having BPL certificate and PWD certificate.

Application fee should be deposited only, through Treasury Challan in the Head of Account "0210-Medical and Public Health-01-Urban Health Services-800-Other Receipt". The fees are not refundable and no other mode of deposit of fee other than through Treasury Challan, shall be accepted.

OR
Fees can be deposited online using Government Receipt Accounting System-GRAS (Website: <https://assamegras.gov.in>). Candidates may pay the requisites fees (as admissible for the category mentioned above). Printed copy of Treasury Challan generated through GRAS should be submitted along with the application form. In Remarks column, candidate may write the post applied for.

How to Apply for MHRB Assam Recruitment?
Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy by visiting at official recruitment portal of MHRB. They may follow below mentioned steps.
Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .
Click on Online Application Form link .
A new webpage will be opened.
Enter all your personal and educational details as required .
Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.

Pay the application fee as per your category and at the end click on submit button.
Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form .
Important Dates of MHRB Vacancy 2023
Starting date of submission of online application: 20th March, 2023
Last date of submission of online application: 31st March, 2023

Reality Public School Kokrajhar Recruitment – 6 PGT Vacancy

Last Date: 31/03/2023.

The Reality Public School, Kokrajhar has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 6 PGT vacancy. Interested and eligible candidates may apply here .

Name of post: PGT
No of posts: 3
Subject-wise vacancy:
Mathematics: 2
Chemistry: 2
Biology: 2
Pay: Salary will be Rs. 37500/- + Rs. 5000/- (Other Allowance) and negotiable for deserving candidates.
Educational Qualification: Candidates must be M.Sc. in respective subject/s with B.Ed. and having 7 years of teaching experience in CBSE School as PGT and along with 3 years of experience in coaching in NEET, JEE & IIT.

How to apply: Interested and eligible candidates may send their updated resume at hrealitypsk@gmail.com or contact us at 8453718881 or 9435293000.
About Reality Public School, Kokrajhar
The Reality Public School came into existence with the aim of bringing high-quality education into this developing town of Kokrajhar. It has been founded by Mr. S. K. Brahma who has recently ventured into this domain.

The School is spread over 12 acres of land and is about 2 kms away from the main town. RPS is committed to providing its students with lush green surroundings that bring serenity to the mind besides stimulating their minds with superior learning. Our students will learn to appreciate their environment, their heritage and culture and at the same time embrace the technological advancements so they fit into the modern world.

North Korea claims 'radioactive tsunami' weapon test at sea

SEOUL, March 24 (AP): North Korea claimed on Friday to have tested a nuclear-capable underwater drone designed to generate a gigantic "radioactive tsunami" that would destroy naval strike groups and ports.

Analysts were skeptical that the device presents a major new threat, but the test underlines the North's commitment to raising nuclear threats. The test this week came as the United States reportedly planned to deploy aircraft carrier strike groups and other advanced assets to waters off the Korean Peninsula.

Military tensions are at a high point as the pace of both North Korean weapons tests and US-South Korea joint military exercises has accelerated in the past year in a cycle of tit-for-tat responses. Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said the new weapon, which can be deployed from the coast or towed by surface ships, is built to "stealthily infiltrate into operational waters and make a super-scale radioactive tsunami through an underwater explosion" to destroy enemy naval strike groups and ports.

The report came hours before South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol pledged to make North Korea pay for its "reckless provocations" as he attended a remembrance service honouring 55 South Korean troops killed during major clashes with the North near their western sea border in past years. The testing of the purported "nuclear underwater attack drone" was part of a three-day exercise that simulated nuclear attacks on unspecified South Korean targets, which also included cruise missile launches on Wednesday. KCNA



said the North's latest tests were aimed at alerting the United States and South Korea of a brewing "nuclear crisis" as they continue with their "intentional, persistent and provocative war drills." It said the tests were supervised by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who vowed to make his rivals "plunge into despair."

The US and South Korea completed an 11-day exercise on Thursday that included their biggest field training in years, and are preparing another round of joint naval drills that will reportedly involve a US aircraft carrier.

Hours after the North Korean report, South Korea's air force released details of a five-day joint aerial drill with the United States that began Monday and concluded on Friday above waters off South Korea's western coast, which included live-fire demonstrations of air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons.

The air force said the exercise, which involved

various South Korean fighter jets and at least one US A-10 attack plane, was aimed at verifying precision strike capabilities and reaffirming the credibility of Seoul's "three-axis" strategy against North Korean nuclear threats — preemptively striking sources of attacks, intercepting incoming missiles and neutralizing the North's leadership and key military facilities.

The North Korean drone is named "Haeil," a Korean word meaning tidal waves or tsunamis.

The North's Rodong Simmun newspaper published photos of Kim smiling next to a large, torpedo-shaped object at an unspecified indoor facility, but didn't identify it. Other photos published with the same article showed sea-surface tracks supposedly caused by the drone's underwater trajectory and a pillar of water exploding up into the air, possibly caused by what state media described as an underwater detonation of a mock nuclear weapon carried by the drone. KCNA said the drone was deployed on Tuesday off the North's eastern coast, traveled underwater for nearly 60 hours, and detonated a test warhead at a target standing for an enemy port. It said the test verified the operational reliability of the drone, which it said the North has been developing since 2012 and tested more than 50 times in the past two years, although the weapon was never mentioned before in state media until Friday.

Kim Dong-yub, a professor at Seoul's University of North Korean Studies, said that it's impossible to verify North Korea's claims about the drone's capabilities or that it had tested the system dozens of times.

Russian strikes in Ukraine kill 10 civilians, wound 20 more



KYIV, March 24 (AP): Russian long-range strikes killed at least 10 civilians and wounded 20 others in several areas of Ukraine on Friday, Ukraine's presidential office said, as a senior Moscow official warned that the Kremlin's forces were prepared for an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive in the coming weeks. Five people died in Kostiantynivka, a town in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province, when a Russian missile hit an aid station. Ukrainian authorities last year established hundreds of so-called "points of invincibility", where residents hard-pressed by the war could warm up, charge their cell phones and get snacks. Local prosecutors said the Russians attacked Kostyantynivka with S-300 anti-aircraft missiles. The civilians who died were refugees, according to Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko.

As the mostly artillery war of the recent winter months stretched into its second spring, Russian forces also used air-launched missiles, exploding drones and gliding bombs in their attacks on several regions early on Friday, Ukrainian air force

spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said.

Two civilians were killed and nine were wounded in the Sumy province town of Bilopililla by a nighttime rocket and artillery barrage and air strikes, the administration of the northeast region said.

In the southern Kherson region, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited on Thursday, Russian shelling killed one person in the main city, also called Kherson, and killed another person and wounded four others in the town of Bilozerska.

On Wednesday, a Russian drone attack struck a high school and dormitories south of Kyiv, killing at least nine people. Kyiv's forces are poised to use the improved spring weather and the arrival of modern weapons supplied by its Western allies, including tanks, to launch a counteroffensive aimed at dislodging Russian troops from occupied areas of Ukraine.

But Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former president and now the deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, said the Russian military was ready to repel a counterattack.

"Our General Staff is assessing all that," Medvedev said. He also said that a Ukrainian attempt to seize Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, could trigger a nuclear response from Moscow.

"An attempt to split part of the state away means an encroachment at the very existence of the state," he said. "Quite obviously, it warrants the use of any weapons. I hope our friends' across the ocean realise that." Though known for his bombastic pronouncements, Medvedev's warning stems from the Russian security doctrine envisaging the use of nuclear weapons in response to a nuclear attack or an attack with conventional weapons that threatens "the very existence of the Russian state".

Pak receives USD 2 billion rollover deposits from China to get IMF bailout: Report



ISLAMABAD, March 24 (PTI):

Cash-strapped Pakistan has received a rollover of USD 2 billion in deposits for a period of one year from its all-weather ally China to help Islamabad get a much-required bailout from the IMF to stabilise its economy, a media report said on Friday.

The rollover, which basically is not a loan but a financial deposit to be kept at Pakistan's central bank for a period of one year, is one of the requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in meeting its external financing needs in order to move towards inking the staff-level agreement, The News International reported.

Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar confirmed the development.

"Yes," Dar was quoted as saying in a brief response when asked about getting a rollover of USD 2 billion SAFE (State Administration of Foreign Exchange) deposits from China.

Pakistan and the IMF have been negotiating the release of a USD 1.1 billion loan since February but so far without any success due to the tough conditions by the donor which Pakistan is slow to fulfil.

Pakistan is scrambling to increase its forex reserves which are estimated to be at USD 4.8 billion after China refinanced USD 500 million last week. Earlier, a Chinese bank provided USD 700 million to Pakistan.

Despite a slight improvement in the reserves, the situation is still grim as the country needs to pay USD 7 billion till June this year, making further borrowing necessary.

Efforts to secure a loan from the IMF have been unsuccessful so far, which is expected to open avenues for further borrowing from the international market or getting loans from friendly countries.

There are nine tables under the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) that are required to be filled, the report said.

One of the tables is related to the Net International Reserves (NIR) as an indicative target, which cannot be fulfilled without incorporating the external financing needs of the program period till the end of June 2023.

Separately, Geo News reported on March 7 that Pakistan communicated to the IMF that it requested China to roll over USD 2 billion SAFE deposits by a year.

The total Chinese SAFE deposits stood at USD 4 billion and the remaining maturity would become due in a few months.

According to the report, the Ministry of Finance and State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) shared their external financing plan during virtual parleys with the Washington-based IMF, saying that it plans on raising its dwindling foreign exchange reserves to the USD 10 billion mark by end of June.

US launches airstrikes in Syria after drone kills US worker

BEIRUT, March 24 (AP): A strike on Thursday by a suspected Iranian-made drone killed a US contractor and wounded five American troops and another contractor in northeast Syria, the Pentagon said.

American forces said they retaliated soon after with "precision airstrikes" in Syria targeting facilities used by groups affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guard, with activist groups saying they killed at least four people.

The attack and the US response threaten to upend recent efforts to de-escalate tensions across the wider Middle East, whose rival powers have made steps toward détente in recent days after years of turmoil.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement that the American intelligence community had determined the drone was of Iranian origin, but offered no other immediate evidence to support the claim. "The airstrikes were conducted in response to today's attack as well as a series of recent attacks against coalition forces in Syria" by groups affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard, Austin said.

Iran relies on a network of proxy forces through the Mideast to counter the US and Israel, its arch regional enemy. The Pentagon said two of the wounded service members were

treated on-site, while three others and the injured contractor were transported to medical facilities in Iraq. Overnight, videos on social media purported to show explosions in Syria's Deir el-Zour, a strategic province that borders Iraq and contains oil fields.

Iran-backed militia groups and Syrian forces control the area, which also has seen suspected airstrikes by Israel in recent months allegedly targeting Iranian supply routes.

Iran and Syria did not immediately acknowledge the strikes, nor did their officials at the United Nations in New York respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

The activist group Deir Ezzor 24 put the death toll from the American strikes at four people. Deir Ezzor 24, which covers news in Deir el-Zour province, said the strikes hit the city of Deir el-Zour as well as militiamen posts near Mayadeen and Boukamal.

It said the strikes also wounded people, including Iraqis.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, reported that the American strikes killed six Iranian-backed fighters at an arms depot in the Harabesh neighborhood in the city of Deir el-Zour.

The Observatory, which relies on a network

of local contacts in Syria, said US bombing at a post near the town of Mayadeen killed two fighters.

A separate American strike hit a military post near the town of Boukamal along the border with Iraq, killing another three fighters, the Observatory said.

The AP could not immediately independently confirm the activist reports.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been suspected of carrying out attacks with bomb-carrying drones across the wider Middle East.

In recent months, Russia has begun using Iranian drones in its attacks on sites across Ukraine as part of its war on Kyiv.

Iran has issued a series of conflicting denials about its drones being used in the war, though Western nations and experts have tied components in the drones back to Tehran.

The exchange of strikes came as Saudi Arabia and Iran have been working toward reopening embassies in each other's countries.

The kingdom also acknowledged efforts to reopen a Saudi embassy in Syria, whose embattled President Bashar Assad has been backed by Iran in his country's long war.

Biden's Canada agenda stacked: NORAD, migration deals likely

OTTAWA, March 24 (AP): President Joe Biden arrived in Canada on Thursday for talks with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on several of the world's most difficult challenges: the war in Ukraine, climate change, trade, mass migration and an increasingly assertive China.

Two important agreements appeared to be in hand before Biden even departed Washington. Canada will escalate its timeline for military upgrades to the North American Aerospace Defense Command and the two nations have reached an agreement to update rules for migrants seeking asylum, according to U.S. and Canadian officials. The officials were not authorized to comment publicly and requested anonymity.

The migration deal eliminates a loophole under existing rules that will allow both countries to turn away asylum seekers at the countries' borders. The loophole resulted in thousands of migrants annually crossing into Canada from the U.S. at a non-official checkpoint, enabling them to stay in the country as they seek asylum instead of letting the process play out while staying in the U.S. As part of the agreement, Canada is expected to announce that 15,000 migrants from the West-



ern Hemisphere will be given slots to apply to enter the country, according to a Canadian official. The new policy applies to people without U.S. or Canadian citizenship who are caught within 14 days of crossing the border between the two countries. The White House declined to comment on the agreement, which is expected to be formally announced Friday.

The visit comes as the Biden administration has made strengthening its relationship with Canada a priority over the past two years. Both sides see the meetings in the capital of Ottawa as an opportunity to set plans for the future.

National security and air defenses are top of mind after a Chinese spy balloon last month traversed North America. Canada plans to update its radar systems and has agreed to an accelerated

timeline for spending billions more on military upgrades for NORAD, which monitors the skies above the continent, according to the senior Canadian government official.

Canada announced last year it is investing \$3.8 billion (Canadian \$4.9 billion) over the next six years to modernize NORAD radar systems and billions more years later, but David Cohen, the U.S. ambassador to Canada, has said the current threat climate calls for quicker investment. The loophole in the U.S.-Canada migration rules allowed thousands of migrants to cross into Canada from the U.S. at a non-official checkpoint, enabling them to stay in the country as they seek asylum instead of letting the process play out while staying in the U.S. A quirk in a 2002 agreement between the U.S. and Canada says people seeking asylum must apply in the first country they arrive in. Migrants who go to an official crossing are returned to the U.S. and told to apply there. But those who arrive in Canada at a location other than a port of entry are allowed to stay and request protection, as has been happening on Roxham Road between Champlain, New York, and Quebec.

UK demonstrators protest Israeli leader's visit to London

LONDON, March 24 (AP): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak welcomed Benjamin Netanyahu at his official residence in London on Friday as protesters shouted "Shame!" In Hebrew demonstrated against the Israeli leader's right-wing policies and his plans to overhaul the country's judiciary.

Netanyahu had to pass by hundreds of protesters waving Israeli flags and waving signs calling for the defense of Israeli democracy as he arrived for talks that are expected to focus on concerns about Iran's nuclear programme. "We are Israelis and Jews living in the UK demonstrating against Prime Minister Netanyahu, who is leading a judicial coup turning Israel into a dictatorship," one placard read.

Netanyahu arrived in London as protesters in Israel blocked roads and clashed with police over his right-wing government's plans to overhaul the judicial system. The proposals have ignited the biggest protests in



the country's history amid rare dissent from people throughout Israeli society, including military reservists, navy veterans, high-tech businesspeople and former officials. Netanyahu's proposals would give his government more control over judicial appointments, weaken the Supreme Court by limiting judicial review of legislation and allow Parliament to overturn court decisions with a simple majority vote. The Israeli government has also been criticised for its hard-line policy toward Palestinians, including recent comments by a government minister who denied the existence of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination.

King Charles III's triumphal state visit hits French hurdle

LONDON, March 24 (AP): King Charles III's first state visit as monarch was scaled back on Friday, dashing hopes for a triumphal tour to win hearts and minds abroad just as his mother did so successfully during her 70 years on the throne.

The visit by Charles and his wife, Camilla, to France was postponed amid mass protests in the country over President Emmanuel Macron's plans to reform the pension system. The German leg of the trip will take place as planned.

Charles' initial plan to visit France and Germany, the two biggest countries in the European Union, was meant to rebuild ties with Britain's closest neighbours after six years of squabbling over Brexit. But French domestic troubles put paid to that.

"The king and queen consort's State Visit to France has been postponed," the British prime minister's Downing Street office said in a statement.

"This decision was taken with the consent of all parties, after the president of France asked the

British government to postpone the visit." Buckingham Palace said another date would be found.

"Their Majesties greatly look forward to the opportunity to visit France as soon as dates can be found," the palace said in a statement.

French labour unions have called for a day of nationwide protests and strikes on Tuesday in protest at Macron's proposal to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64. That is the day when the king had been due to travel to the western city of Bordeaux, with much security and ceremony, and the protests would have complicated his travel.

Charles and Camilla will now start their first state visit on Wednesday in Germany, where they will be welcomed with military honours by President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at Berlin's landmark Brandenburg Gate.

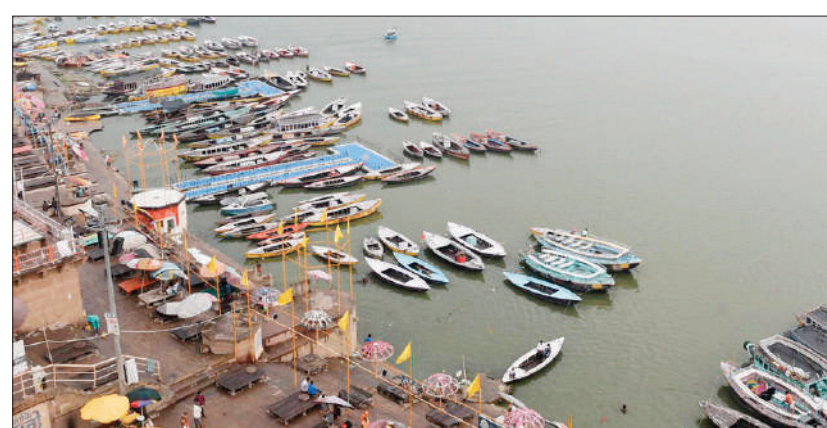
On Thursday, the British king is set to give a speech to the Bundestag, meet German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and talk to Ukrainian refugees and military.

'Putting water central to our work, we can achieve a healthy environment, justice in our society' UN delegate describes India's 'Namami Gange' mission as 'beacon of hope'

UNITED NATIONS, March 24 (PTI): India has high ambitions for improving its water sector and the 'Namami Gange' mission for the rejuvenation of the country's longest river is a "beacon of hope" and an inspirational story, a UN delegate highlighted at the ongoing water conference here. The UN 2023 Water Conference — formerly known as the 2023 Conference for the Midterm Comprehensive Review of Implementation of the UN Decade for Action on Water and Sanitation (2018-2028) — is currently underway at the UN Headquarters.

Co-hosted by Tajikistan and the Netherlands, the March 22-24 conference will result in a summary of proceedings from the UN General Assembly (UNGA) President Csaba Korosi that will feed into the 2023 session of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The Ganga river is one of the iconic and vital streams in society that "help us understand the importance of how we deal with the critical resource," said Special



Envoy for International Water Affairs for the Netherlands and Sherpa of the UN 2023 Water Conference Henk Ovink. He was speaking at a session on 'Namami Gange - An integrated and holistic approach towards conservation and rejuvenation of River Ganga and its ecosystem.' Ovink said the Ganga river also "shows

us how vulnerable water can be in the context of our growing societies. And, if we invest in that river and that resource, we can survive."

Minister for Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat also addressed the session organised by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN on Thursday on the margins of

the ongoing Water Conference. Ovink said the 'Namami Gange, Mission for Clean Ganga', is giving an inspirational story on how to change course at a time when the world is grappling with the challenges of the water crisis. "The Clean Ganga mission, the mission of India and the way it deals with water are a beacon of hope," Ovink said.

"By putting water central to our work, we can achieve a healthy environment, justice in our society, opportunities for women and girls, build resilience, curb biodiversity loss, combat climate change and forge partnerships... I take a lot of inspiration in the partnership that we have with India," he said. Minister Shekhawat stressed that people's participation was the most critical factor in ensuring the success of the ambitious initiative.

"People of the cities and rural areas, living on the banks of the Ganga, have come together, joined hands for the success of this mission and for restoration of this pristine river," he said.

Apart from delivering the national statement at the General Debate, Shekhawat spoke at key events hosted by the Permanent Mission of India to the UN on the margins of the Water Conference. He highlighted India's initiatives on WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) at an event 'WASH as a driver of improved health'. He also addressed members of the Indian-American community at a diaspora reception hosted at the Consulate General of India in New York.

Denmark's minister for environment Magnus Heunicke also spoke at the event and highlighted his country's cooperation with India regarding sustainable and reliable water.

"It is a great honour for Denmark to work together with India on the green agenda and on the important topic of water," he said.

Heunicke noted that in 2020, India and Denmark joined forces in their green strategic partnership, with water as one of the key pillars.

Nagaland Dy CM tells DGP to take action against police personnel found under influence of intoxicants

KOHHIMA, March 24 (PTI): Nagaland deputy chief minister Yanthungo Patton on Friday asked the state police chief to reduce the number of personnel posted as bodyguards and also to initiate stern action against personnel found under the influence of intoxicants. Patton, who holds charge of the Home Department said this during a meeting with senior police officers and unit commanders in presence of DGP Rupin Sharma and Additional DGPs R P Kikon and Sandeep Tamgadge at police headquarters here.

Pointing out that almost 3,000 personnel of Nagaland Police are attached either as bodyguards or for non-police duties, he stressed on the urgent requirement to reduce such deployments and attachments so that more manpower is available for policing and law and order works.

Maintaining that police personnel are the eyes and ears of the department and the guardian of the citizens in terms of safety and security, he said people have high expectations from the force.

However, the Dy CM said many police personnel are found under the influence of alcohol or drug abuse and said such misconduct or



indiscipline behaviour of the personnel should be checked sternly and necessary punitive action be taken.

Appreciating the police department for the security measures during the just concluded state Assembly elections, he said some stray incidents of poll related violence were witnessed but the situation in the state was peaceful.

After the unfortunate December 2021 incident at Oting in Mon district, the Committee set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs had lifted AFSPA from 15 police station jurisdictions of Nagaland and the primary role of maintaining

law and order and tackling of insurgents has fallen on the shoulders of the police, he said.

Maintaining that Nagaland Police has grown from 1,000 strong force in 1980s to about 26,000 in 2023, he said there is an urgent need to improve the efficiency of the department, which can be done by re-organization and restructuring the police force so that better and optimal utilization of manpower and resources can be undertaken. The quality and thoroughness of investigation and investigation work needs an immediate uplift, he said.

He also asked for proper propos-

als with appropriate justification for budgetary allocations to deal with new age crimes like cyber-crimes, cyber frauds, economic offences and breaches of cyber security.

Speaking in the meeting DGP Rupin Sharma said that the state police has prioritised the 'War On Drugs' as number one priority.

"We realized the need for a multi-pronged approach to combat this menace and decided that we need to educate our police personnel too about the ill-effects of the menace and the seriousness of the problem," he said.

The DGP appealed to his personnel addicted to liquor or drugs to voluntarily come forward so that they would be rehabilitated, if not they would face suspension or termination from service if caught by the department.

Nagaland Police would perhaps be the first police force in the country to administer this anti-Narcotics pledge to all its personnel, he said. The DGP asserted that Nagaland Police would leave no stone unturned towards maintaining a better, peaceful and fear-free environment in the state which would help in ushering a new era of development and progress in the state.

Amit Shah has assured to appoint interlocutor: Pradyot Debbarma

AGARTALA, March 24 (PTI): Tipra Motha supremo Pradyot Kishore Debbarma on Thursday claimed that Union Home Minister Amit Shah has assured to appoint an interlocutor for a 'constitutional solution' of the indigenous people of Tripura.

Tipra Motha, a regional tribal-based party is led by royal scion Pradyot Kishore Debbarma.

Debbarma claimed that the union home minister called him on Thursday to enquire about his health and then assured him of appointing the interlocutor by March 27.

Debbarma took to Twitter and shared the message that Union Home Minister Amit Shah assured him to appoint the interlocutor.

"Woke up to an early morning call from home minister Amit Shah to enquire about my health. He also

categorically assured me that by the 27th of this month an interlocutor will be announced for our talks regarding the constitutional solution for our indigenous people of Tripura. I hope the home minister will understand the sentiments of the tiprasa and honour the commitment he has given to me", Debbarma tweeted.

Earlier on March 8, Debbarma told reporters that the union home minister assured to appoint an interlocutor for the 'constitutional solution' of the indigenous people of Tripura.

Debbarma had a meeting with Shah and BJP president JP Nadda, Assam chief minister and NEDA convenor Himanta Biswa Sarma and Tripura chief minister Manik Saha shortly after the oath-taking ceremony of the BJP government.

Nagaland observes World Tuberculosis Day

KOHHIMA, March 24 (PTI): Nagaland on Friday observed World Tuberculosis Day under the theme "Yes We Can End TB". The state also committed to be part of the national goal of eradicating the killer disease by 2025. Commissioner and secretary, health, Y Kikheto Sema said every year World TB Day is commemorated on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic. He urged the people to renew their commitment and rededicate themselves in the fight against TB and also unite to work towards the elimination of TB which is an infectious disease and leading cause of death worldwide. The deadline fixed for eliminating TB across the world as per the Sustainable Development Goal is 2030 but India has committed to end TB by 2025, five years ahead with the clarion call given by the Prime Minister, he said. The campaign calls

for a social movement focused on patient-centric and holistic care driven by integrated actions for TB Free India, so aligning with the National Strategic Plan, the State Strategic Plan to eliminate TB in Nagaland by 2025 has been drafted, he informed. He said that the involvement and support of line departments such as administration, municipality, Social Welfare, Rural Development, Labour, Tribal Affairs, IPR, etc to fight against TB and for effective functioning of the programme and the Churches, NGOs, Private Practitioners, Families, and Individuals will further strengthen the programme initiatives and to achieve the goals in eradicating TB. National Health Mission Nagaland Director Dr Ritu Thurr said a strong political and administrative commitment is required along with uninterrupted supply of TB drugs, and better sensitization to achieve the goal of eradicating the killer disease.

NDDP-BJP govt has accepted 'letter of support' from all political parties: Rio

The state government requires support, cooperation and assistance of all political parties in the interest of the Naga people: CM

KOHHIMA, March 24 (PTI): Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio on Thursday said the newly formed NDDP-BJP alliance government has accepted the 'letter of support' of all political parties in the state Assembly, making it an 'opposition-less' government.

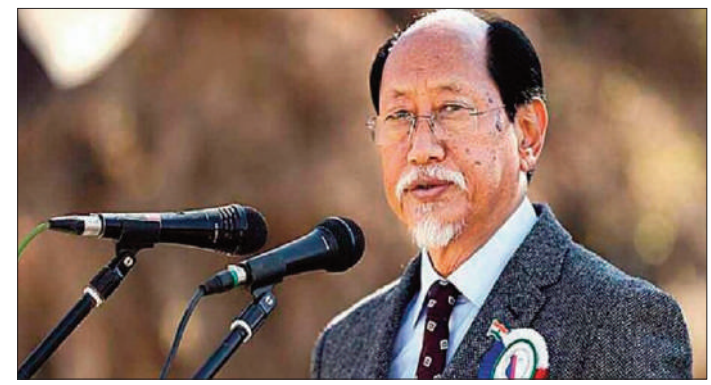
While NDDP-BJP had won 37 out of the 60 seats in the just concluded state Assembly elections to form the second Peoples' Democratic Alliance (PDA), the remaining 27 members from six other political parties, including Independents extended 'unconditional support' to the Rio government.

Following Naga Peoples' Front (NPF) MLA, Kuzholuzo Nienu raising queries on the floor of the Assembly about whether their 'letter of support' has been accepted or not, chief minister Rio said, "I welcome the support extended to my government by NPF party and also all the parties who have been gracious in extending the support".

He said the state government requires support, cooperation and assistance of each and every member of all political parties in the interest of the Naga people for an early solution to the Naga Political Issue and various other issues confronting the state. Rio also informed the House that he has already met the BJP central leaders and informed them about the acceptance of the support extended by other political parties and they have also accepted it. "The support extended by other political parties cannot be refused," he said.

Heartily accepting the support of other parties, Rio expressed confidence that "the coming together of all political parties in support will help the state in reaching even higher levels of development, progress and for early solution of Naga Political Issue which is what we aspire and look forward to".

However, Rio did not say anything on the nomenclature of the



opposition-less House.

This is the third time that the 60 members of the Assembly have come together to form an 'opposition-less' government in the state.

The first opposition-less government was in 2015 after eight Congress MLAs merged with then ruling NPF-led Democratic Alliance of Nagaland (DAN) government under the leadership of T R Zeliang. The second all party government coined as United Democratic Alliance was formed in September 2021 of the last House under Rio. He said the newly formed state Assembly has 29 new members out of the 60 while 33 members of the previous House could not be re-elected. Saying that there is an underlying message in this verdict, he said "people want positive change and performance".

The duty of elected representatives is to deliver the goods to their citizens, he said, adding that, "We have taken the decision to serve the public and we must never undermine the mandate which the people have placed upon us."

Reminding that the top most priority of the legislators is to ensure that the people always come first, he wished all members a successful tenure and also looked forward to their support in the collective endeavour to elevate the status of the state and fellow citizens.

On NPF MLA Nienu's allega-

tion that the recent election was based on money power, Rio said, the electorates have spoken and to say that money power was the determining factor is disrespect to the fellow citizens including the very electors who voted for the two NPF MLAs. Participating in the debate on motion of thanks to the Governor's address delivered on Tuesday in the Assembly, NPF MLAs Nienu and Achumbemo Kikon reiterated their party's stand and Naga Political Issue and requested the government to form a Joint Legislators Forum to start pressing for an early solution to the prolonged issue from day one of the new Assembly and not at the fag-end of the tenure.

They also reiterated the party stand on the proposed conduct of elections to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and urged the government to seek the consensus of the tribal organisations and civil societies before holding the elections so that the 2017 episode is not repeated.

Senior minister G Kaito Aye, first time MLA and BJP Minister P Bashangmongba Chang, Advisor and BJP MLA Imkong L Imchen, NDDP MLA and Advisor Mhathung Yanthan and first time LJP (Ram Vilas) MLA Dr Sukhato A Sema also participated in support of the motion of thanks, which was adopted unanimously by the House.

No.KOK/BLDG/Tech-50/Pt-II/2016-17/6008

Date:-23-03-2023

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Separate sealed tenders affixing Non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 (One hundred eighty) days which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed F-2 Form are invited from the intending Registered contractors of Class-I (A, B, C) and II category of the Assam PWD (Bldg.) for submitting tender for the works stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up-to 1-30 pm of 01-04-2023 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.00 P.M.

Sl. No.	Name of work	(Approx.) Estimated value of work)	Earnest money 2% for GNL & 1% for ST/SC/ OBC/MOBC	Cost of tender document	Time of completion
1	Construction of Community Hall at Balajan Tinali under Kokrajhar Dev. Block	Rs.8,95,450.00	Rs. 18000/- & Rs. 9000/-	Rs.500/-	6 (six) months
2	Construction of Boundary Wall at Tilapam M.E. School	Rs.4,75,573.00	Rs.9600/- & Rs. 4800/-	Rs.500/-	6 (six) months

Detailed NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up-to 1.30 P.M. in all working days from 31-03-2023 to 01-04-2023 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Banker cheque/Demand draft duly pledged in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC. The contractor should submit up-to date Registration Certificate of contractor, latest clearance certificate of Income Tax and GST etc. along with the tender paper. In case the office is remain closed/bandh for any circumstances on tender paper issuing/ receiving/opening date, then the same will be received/opened in the next working days.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer, PWD,
Kokrajhar District & Chirang District
Territorial Building Division, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-1418/2022

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER (PHE)

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL::DIPHU

The office of the Additional Chief Engineer (PHE), KAAC zone, invites application for walk in interview to fill up the following position

SL No.	Name of Post	No. of Vacancy	Place of Vacancy	Remuneration	Required Qualification & age	Experience	Date & Time of walk in interview	Venue
1	District Coordinator (FM)	1 (One)	Office of the Executive Engineer (PHE), Howraghat Division	Rs. 32,000.00 (Inclusive of all incentives & perks)	1. Two (2) years full time M. Com. in Accountancy / Finance or MBA (Finance) from a recognised University / Institution. 2. Age minimum 21 Years maximum 40 years as on 01/01/2023	At least Two years experience in relevant field.	05-04-2023 at 10.00 AM	Office of the Additional Chief Engineer (PHE), KAAC Zone, Rongmirjeng Near AGCC Colony, Diphu, Karbi Anglong.
		1 (One)	Office of the Executive Engineer (PHE), Ulukunchi Division					
2	District Coordinator - IMIS	1 (One)	Office of the Executive Engineer (PHE), Howraghat Division	Rs. 32,000.00 (Inclusive of all incentives & perks)	1. B.E.B. Tech in computer science / Engineering or MCA, M.Sc.(IT), DOEACC-B level from a recognized university / institution. 2. Age minimum 21 Years maximum 40 years as on 01/01/2023	At least Two years experience in relevant field.		

For further details and Terms of reference, please visit the website of Jai Jeevan Mission. Assam (url:<https://jjmassam.in/index.php/main/pg/Recruitment>) and Website of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu (url:<https://karbianglong.co.in/notification>)

Sd/-

Additional Chief Engineer (PHE)
KAAC Zone, Diphu, karbi Anglong

Rahul's disqualification result of court order: BJP leaders



NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as an MP by the Lok Sabha Secretariat is a result of a court order and not a political call, BJP leaders said Friday, stating that everyone is equal before the law.

Union minister of State for law and justice SPS Baghel termed the disqualification "lawful" and asserted that everyone is equal before the law.

He noted that a BJP MLA was recently disqualified in Uttar Pradesh following his conviction in a criminal case.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi said the decision was a legal one and alleged the Congress was questioning the judiciary. "It was a legal decision and not a call taken by the political party. It was taken by a court. The Congress should clarify who they are protesting against," he said.

Senior BJP leader Bhupendra Yadav said Gandhi had got enough opportunities to explain himself, provide evidence and all rules have been followed leading to his disqualification.

"When the order has come now the Congress is protesting against

the order. They are abusing the legal system. In this country, the system runs according to the law and prior to this similar action has been taken against other public representatives.

"Not just Gandhi, but the Congress party should apologise for insulting the OBC community. They should work towards the development of the country instead of defaming the country's democracy in London," he said.

BJP MP from Kaushambi, Vinod Kumar Sonkar said Gandhi had insulted an entire community and he should be punished.

"This is a decision of the court and the way he defamed a community he should be punished. This disqualification is a good message that no one is above the law," he said. A day after he was convicted by a Surat court in a 2019 criminal defamation case, Gandhi was disqualified as MP from Wayanad by the Lok Sabha Secretariat on Friday.

Following his disqualification, Gandhi would not be able to contest elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction and sentence.

Oppn holds protest march alleging 'democracy in danger'

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): Over 30 opposition MPs, including those from the Congress, were detained on Friday as they took out a protest march from Parliament House, alleging that democracy is in "danger" and demanding a JPC probe into the Adani issue.

Prominent leaders, including K C Venugopal, Adhir Chowdhury, K Suresh, Manickam Tagore, Imran Pratapgarhi and Mohammed Javed, were stopped by the police and detained at Vijay Chowk here for violating prohibitory orders, the opposition said.

"Over 30 MPs from opposition parties had to be detained for violation of Section 144 (prohibitory orders)," a senior Delhi Police officer said.

The Delhi Police said those detained have been taken to a nearby police station.

Earlier addressing the media at Vijay Chowk, several leaders, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, also raised the issue of Rahul Gandhi's conviction in a 2019 criminal defamation case by a Surat court and alleged that the government was targeting the opposition with cases to suppress their voices.

After a protest inside the Parliament House complex, a host of opposition leaders from parties such as the CPI, CPI(M), Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray), JD(U) and Aam Aadmi Party, marched to Vijay Chowk, holding placards like 'We demand JPC' and 'Save LIC' and a huge banner in front of them with 'Democracy in Danger' written on it.

"We're fighting for JPC into Adani issue for months. They have a majority but the BJP is scared as there's something fishy. We'll keep fighting unitedly for it," Kharge said.

He also hit out at BJP chief J P Nadda over his allegation that Rahul Gandhi compared OBC communities to thieves and accused the BJP of indulging in "caste politics".

AAP's Sanjay Singh said Gandhi's conviction shows that the government wants to finish off the opposition by slapping cases on them. Security was stepped up around Parliament House and Vijay Chowk area to ensure that no untoward incident takes place, a senior police officer said.

Rajya Sabha proceedings adjourned over Rahul's remark

Opposition leaders continue to call for a JPC probe into claims of dispute against the Adani Group

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned till 3:30 pm in the post-lunch session on Friday as ruling BJP members demanded an apology from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his "democracy in danger" remark in the UK. When the Upper House of Parliament reassembled at 2:30 pm after an earlier adjournment, Deputy Chairman Hariyansh tried to take up private members' business on further discussion on a resolution.

However, treasury bench members created uproar and demanded Gandhi's apology.

The resolution, moved by IUMML's Abdul Wahab, was regarding the need to implement the recommendations of the Sachar Committee to help Madras to modernise and enact a legislation to prevent atrocities against minorities.

The deputy chairman asked the members to maintain order but ruckus continued, and he adjourned the House till 3:30 pm.

In the pre-lunch session, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said the House is in "disorder from both sides", amid sloganeering by ruling BJP and Opposition members over Gandhi's "democracy in danger" remark and a demand for a probe into allegations against the Adani Group. MPs from both sides shouted slogans in support of their demand after Dhankhar rejected 14 notices under Rule 267, seeking discussion on issues being raised after setting aside the business of the day. The Chairman tried to restore order but as members continued to shout



slogans, he adjourned proceedings till 2:30 pm.

Dhankhar had read out the notices received under Rule 267. Congress MPs Kumar Ketkar and Syed Nasir Hussain wanted to discuss the need to constitute a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to investigate charges of corporate fraud, political corruption, stock market manipulation and financial mismanagement against the Adani Group.

Their colleague Pramod Tiwari wanted a discussion on the government's failure to constitute the JPC to investigate the allegations made by US short-seller Hindenburg Research against the conglomerate. Congress MPs Rajneet Ranjan and Jebi Mather Hisham wanted a discussion on the government's alleged role in promoting interests of the group, including through inaction

on serious charges, illegal coal mines allocation, and amending rules and regulations to allow bidding of six airports. K C Venugopal, also of the Congress, wanted to discuss the government's silence on serious charges against the conglomerate and promotion of its business interest through negotiations with foreign countries for big budget projects. Congress' Amee Yajnik and Neeraj Dangi wanted a discussion on the government's failure to constitute a JPC and the government's role in promoting business of the Adani Group. While IUMML's Wahab wanted a discussion on the Adani issue, Sanjay Singh of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) sought a debate on allotment of coal mines to the group in violation of Supreme Court rules resulting in "loss of lakhs of crores of rupees to the exchequer" and alleged fraud committed through shell companies opened in Mauritius.

AAP's Raghav Chaddha wanted to discuss government failure to put a strong case before the Interpol leading to withdrawal of Red Corner Notice against fugitive Mohul Choksi.

CPI (M) member Elamaram Kareem wanted a discussion on allegations made by Hindenburg against the Adani Group, while Binoy Viswam of the CPI sought the constitution of a JPC. CPI's Sandosh Kumar P demanded a discussion on government failure to constitute a JPC. The Chairman went on to state that there was only "part compliance" of the requirements to admission of notice under Rule 267.

Amritpal tried to incite Sikhs through speeches: Officials

The radical preacher's brazen activities evinced his methodical efforts to undermine the fabric of society

CHANDIGARH, March 24 (PTI): Khalistan sympathiser Amritpal Singh, before escaping a Punjab Police crackdown on his outfit and supporters, attended five events in 10 days, and in these, he tried to radicalise Sikhs, coaxing 800-1,000 individuals to remain prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, officials said.

The radical preacher's brazen activities evinced his methodical efforts to undermine the fabric of society; they claimed and added that he during his speeches and sermons alleged that the government was leaving no stone unturned in its quest to disarm Sikhs by revoking their weapons licences.

Amritpal Singh, who took over as 'Waris Punjab De' chief after its founder actor-activist Deep Sindhua's death last year, is on the run after police launched a massive crackdown on March 18 in the state and arrested several of his supporters.

It began weeks after the preacher and his supporters stormed the Ajnala police station near Amritsar on February 23 to secure the release of an arrested associate. The episode raised fears over the possibility of the return of Khalistani militancy to Punjab that borders Pakistan.

The officials said the preacher allegedly implored youngsters to unify for securing "Khalsa rule" for the coming generations of Punjab, proclaiming that the division within the Sikh Panth made them "vulnerable to the enemy's onslaught".

The Ajnala incident had reignited fears of a resurgence of Khalistani militancy in the state, they said and pointed out that Amritpal Singh had ulterior motives to sully the peaceful ambience of Punjab, and this was exemplified by the abduction and assault on Barinder Singh.

Barinder Singh, in his complaint, had told police that Amritpal Singh's associates had abducted him from Ajnala and took him to an unknown place



where he was brutally thrashed.

In February, Dubai-return Amritpal Singh's supporters stormed the police station to get Toofan Singh, the accused, released.

During the Ajnala incident, he openly defied authorities and did not refrain from injuring policemen in the process, according to officials.

Amritpal Singh had showed no qualms in engaging in sacrilege and vandalising gurdwaras in Kapurthala and Jalandhar, and stoking communal tension by delivering provocative speeches targeting other religions, they claimed.

He also brazenly encouraged violence and gun culture, exploited youth for his pernicious agenda, and described his private militia as the 'Anandpur Khalsa Fauj', the officials alleged.

Earlier, they had said the fugitive preacher had been targeting drug addicts and rogue ex-servicemen to help him build a gang that could be easily transformed into a terrorist outfit.

The officials emphasised that had action not been taken under the National Security Act (NSA), members of 'Waris Punjab De' would have gone scot-free.

Amritpal Singh, on another occasion, allegedly threatened 'Dera' followers to eschew those who swindled their money, lied to them and bombed them, and instead love the Gurus who selflessly fought for their motherland and sacrificed their own children, they said.

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NIA charge-sheets gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi, Goldy Brar

The NIA has earlier carried out raids in this case and seized a huge cache of nine illegal and sophisticated weapons

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday filed a fresh charge sheet against jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar, the alleged masterminds in the murder of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, and a dozen others, charging them with criminal conspiracy to unleash a wave of terror and carry out targeted killings of high-profile people. The prosecution complaint has been filed against these gangsters who, the federal anti-terror agency said, had "links" with the proscribed Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and several other pro-Khalistan terrorist outfits. The charge sheet came in the second of the three terror-gangster nexus cases that are being investigated by the NIA.

"All the 14 accused have been charged with criminal conspiracy to unleash a wave of terror and carry out targeted killings of well-known social and religious leaders, movie stars, singers and businessmen."

"Besides having links with conspirators in Pakistan, the accused were also in contact with pro-Khalistan elements based in Canada, Nepal and other countries," the NIA said. Apart from Bishnoi and Brar (alias Satwinderjeet Singh), the other accused who were charge-sheeted were Jagdeep Singh alias Jaggu Bhagwani, Sachin Thapan alias Sachin Bishnoi, Anmol Bishnoi alias Bhanu, Vikramjeet Singh alias Vikram Brar, Sandeep Jhanjariya alias Kala Jathari, Virender Pratap Singh alias Kala Rana, Joginder Singh, Rajesh Kumar alias Raju Mota, Raj Kumar alias Raju/Raju Basodi, Anil alias Chippi, Naresh Yadav alias Seth, and Shahbaaz Ansari alias Shahbaaz. Bishnoi, who continues to remain in jail after his arrest in 2015, has been operating his terror-crime syndicate from prisons in different states, along with



Canada-based Goldy Brar, who is an accused in the killing of 'Dera Sacha Sauda' follower Pradeep Kumar at Faridkot (Punjab) in November, 2022.

"The Lawrence Bishnoi terror-crime-extortion syndicate was also responsible for providing killers for the RPG attack case on Punjab state intelligence headquarters at Mohali, which was carried out on directions of Harwinder Singh alias Rinda, a Pakistan-based BKI terrorist," the NIA said. Brar was found to have "direct links" with Lakhbir Singh alias Landa, another BKI operative working closely with Rinda, it said. Landa is also an accused in the Mohali RPG attack, as well as the December, 2022 RPG attack on police station Sirhali in the Tarn Taran district of Punjab. The NIA has earlier carried out raids in this case and seized a huge cache of nine illegal and sophisticated weapons, 14 magazines, 298 rounds of ammunition and 183 digital devices and other "incriminating" material at 74 locations in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chandigarh and Delhi.

Corrupt Cong wants to make K'taka its ATM, says Shah

BENGALURU, March 24 (PTI): Union home and cooperation minister Amit Shah on Friday said the Congress is degenerating across the country, and has now set its eyes on Karnataka to make the state its ATM and fill its coffers at the national level.

Speaking in the poll-bound State, he appealed to people of Karnataka not to give a "half and incomplete government", and to form a BJP government with full majority and thereby strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief minister Basavaraj Bommai. "Congress party is degenerating across the country, the Congress people don't have any state with them that can fill the Congress' central treasury, and they want an ATM.... They want Karnataka to become Congress' ATM, and

the corrupt Congress' eyes are now set on Karnataka," Shah said.

Addressing a beneficiaries' meet organised by Karnataka Cooperative department and other departments, he asked people whether they will form a BJP government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership in Karnataka or a Congress government with Rahul Gandhi at the helm.

"Wherever the Congress has formed the government, their history is corruption, humiliation of Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis, and strengthening anti-national forces," he alleged.

Bommai, veteran BJP leader B S Yediyurappa, Karnataka Co-Operation Minister S T Somashekar among others were present at the event.

Highlighting that the Modi government banned Popular Front of India (PFI), Shah said, "Siddaramaiah's Congress government (earlier), used to withdraw cases against PFI, but Narendra Modi government by banning PFI has secured the entire South India, and also the entire country."

Claiming credit for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, he said, the Congress party was 'delaying, obstructing and misleading' for 70 years, but Modi has laid the foundation for the temple and it will be ready very soon.

He also said that PM Modi, by abrogating Article 370, has put a bridge on terrorism in the entire country. "Modi's mission is to make the entire country prosperous, take forward every state including Karnataka."

Uddhav calls Rahul's disqualification 'murder' of democracy

MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): Uddhav Thackeray, who heads the Shiv Sena (UBT) party, on Friday dubbed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as "murder" of democracy and said this is the beginning of the end of "dictatorship". In a statement, Thackeray said it has become a crime to call a thief a thief, while those "looting" the country are out. "This is the murder of democracy. All agencies are under pressure. This is the beginning of the end of the dictatorship...the battle only needs a direction (now)," Thackeray said.

Earlier in the day, the Lok Sabha Secretariat said Gandhi has been disqualified from the Lok Sabha, a day after a Surat court convicted him in a 2019 criminal defamation case. Announcing his disqualification, the Lok Sabha Secretariat in a notification said that it was effective from Thursday, the day of his conviction. "Consequent upon his conviction by the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat...Rahul



Gandhi, Member of Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from the date of his conviction i.e. 23 March, 2023," the notification read.

The Surat court on Thursday sentenced Rahul Gandhi to two years in jail in a defamation case, filed on a complaint by BJP MLA Purnesh Modi for his alleged remark, "How come all thieves have Modi as the common surname?"

PM Modi launches several initiatives to eliminate tuberculosis

'Country is working to eliminate tuberculosis by 2025 as against the global target of 2030'

VARANASI, March 24 (PTI): India's ideology of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam" is giving the modern world an integrated vision and solutions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday, as he launched a series of initiatives to eliminate tuberculosis.

Addressing the 'One World TB Summit' on World TB Day, Modi said the country is working to eliminate tuberculosis by 2025 as against the global target of 2030.

"India's image reflects in its ideology of 'Vasudheva Kutumbkam' (whole world, one family). This old thought is giving the modern world an integrated vision and solutions," he said. As G20 president, India chose the theme of 'One Family, One World, One Future' based on such beliefs, Modi said. India is forwarding the vision of 'One Earth, One Health' in the world, he said while underlining that India is realising the resolutions of global good with the 'One World TB Summit'.

The Prime Minister asserted that the thought and approach with which India worked against tuberculosis after 2014 is



"incredible". "This effort of India should be known to the whole world today because this is a new model in the global fight against TB. "In nine years, India has united in this fight against TB on many fronts such as public participation, special campaigns for nutrition, new strategies for treatment, intensive use of technology and promoting good health through campaigns like Khelo India and Yoga," he said.

Another major resolution of India is to eliminate tuberculosis by 2025 as against the global target of 2030, Modi said.

Referring to the capacity and health infra-

structure enhancement during the Covid pandemic, Modi underlined the high use of trace, test, track, treat and technology in the fight against the disease.

There is massive global potential in this local approach of India, said the Prime Minister. Noting that 80 per cent of tuberculosis medicines are made in India, he said, "I would like that more and more countries get the benefit of all such campaigns, innovations and modern technology of India."

Modi said the country launched a unique campaign to fight the disease.

"We had called upon the people of the country to make 'Ni-kshay Mitra' to join the campaign of TB-free India. After the campaign, 10 lakh TB patients have been adopted by the common citizens. You would be surprised to know that in our country even 10-12 year old children are taking forward the fight against TB by becoming Ni-kshay Mitra," he said.

"There are many such children who broke their piggy banks and adopted TB patients. The financial support of these Ni-kshay

friends for TB patients has reached above one thousand crore rupees," he said, adding Indians living abroad have also become a part of this effort.

The Prime Minister said since 2018, about ₹ 2,000 crore has been sent directly to the bank accounts of tuberculosis patients and about 75 lakh patients have benefited from it. "It is difficult to get new results by following the old approach. Started working on a new strategy to ensure that no TB patient is left out of treatment. For testing TB patients, the number of labs has been increased and special plans are made for those where TB patients are more," he said.

The Prime Minister said it is a matter of pride that the summit is being organised in Varanasi, which he represents in the Lok Sabha. No matter the obstacle, Kashi has always proved that new ways are created with 'Sabka Prayas' (everyone's effort), he said while expressing confidence that Kashi will usher new energy towards global resolutions in the fight against a disease like tuberculosis.

'Conman' posed as PMO official faces 4 FIRs in Gujarat

Ahmedabad crime branch lodged a case under IPC section 420, 406, 120-b, and 170 against the alleged conman

AHMEDABAD, March 24 (PTI): Alleged conman from Gujarat Kiran Patel, held in Jammu and Kashmir for posing as a top official of the Prime Minister Office (PMO), has been booked by the Ahmedabad cops on cheating and criminal conspiracy charges for trying to usurp a senior citizen's bungalow here using the same tactic, an official has said. Patel, a resident of the Ghodasara area of the city, was arrested by the Jammu and Kashmir police earlier this month from a five-star hotel in Srinagar after the authorities grew suspicious about his activities. On Wednesday, the Ahmedabad city crime branch lodged a case of cheating (Indian Penal Code section 420), criminal breach of trust (406), criminal conspiracy (120-b) and personating a public servant (170) against the alleged conman, said Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime, Chaitanya Mandlik, on Thursday.

Patel's wife Malini Patel has been shown as a co-accused in the FIR (first information report), he said.

"As per our information, four FIRs related to cheating have been registered against Kiran Patel in different police stations of Gujarat in the past. Since he is in judicial custody, we will try to bring him here through a transfer warrant," Mandlik said. In the latest FIR, it is al-



leged that Patel tried to grab a bungalow in a posh locality in Ahmedabad by winning the trust of its owner through false claims of being a "Class 1 officer in the PMO" and having close relations with politicians. The complainant, 63-year-old Jagdish Chavda, owns a bungalow in the Shilaj area but wanted to sell it because of personal reasons. Patel approached Chavda in February 2022, claiming to be a real estate agent, and told the owner his property would fetch a good price if it was renovated.

To win Chavda's trust, Patel then identified himself as a "Class-1 officer in the PMO" as well as a partner in a cafe chain. When Chavda agreed for the bungalow's renovation, Patel, his wife Malini and an interior designer started the work and took Rs 35 lakh in instalments from him, the FIR said. As renovation was underway, Chavda shifted to his friend's residence in the Shela area. After some time, Chavda learnt that

Patel and his wife had put their own name plate outside the bungalow and also did a housewarming ritual as if they were the owners.

When confronted, the Patel couple left the bungalow without finishing the renovation work, following which Chavda and his family moved back into the house, according to the police. In August 2022, Chavda learnt through a court notice that Patel had filed a civil suit claiming ownership of the property, said the FIR. In August 2019, a city-based decorator had lodged a complaint in Vadodara against Patel and two others for allegedly duping him of ₹ 1 crore. As per the FIR registered at the Raopura police station in 2019, Patel along with two event organisers - Dipesh Sheth and Dhara Sheth - had approached the complainant, Paritosh Shah, to decorate Navlakhi ground in Vadodara for a Navratri event held in October 2018.

While the trio paid nearly ₹ 50 lakh to Shah in various instalments for the work done, they started giving excuses to clear the remaining bill of Rs 1 crore, as per the FIR. At one point, Patel even threatened Shah with dire consequences claiming he was politically well-connected. When the trio refused to pay the pending money, Shah lodged a complaint with the Raopura police in August 2019.

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): Nearly a dozen students protesting against the debarment of two students for allegedly participating in a screening of the BBC documentary on Delhi University campus were detained on Friday from the Arts Faculty.

The students have alleged that they were manhandled by the police and university security inside the North Campus premises.

According to police, 11 students demonstrating near the Vivekananda statue were removed to maintain peace and tranquillity in DU North Campus. Meanwhile, the university has said that the students did not seek permission before the protest and added that such indiscipline will not be tolerated.

The students were sitting on an indefinite strike to protest against the "draconian" action by the university authorities. There was no immediate reaction from the varsity authority and the police. The students have claimed that heavy police and paramilitary forces were deployed inside the Arts Faculty ahead of the protest. "Students who gathered for the indefinite strike against debarment of two students from DU have been beaten and detained by Delhi Police and DU Guards. As many as 25 students have been detained," All India Students' Association (AISA) Delhi president Abhigyan told PTI.

According to sources, several students have been taken to Burari police station. "Students gathered at Arts Faculty against the arbitrary notice debarment two students have been brutally beaten, manhandled and detained. This exposes the Nexus of the police, BJP-RSS backed college administration. We will not be si-



lenced by such measures, protest to protect our campus democracy, dissent will continue until this notice is withdrawn!" AISA DU Secretary Anjali said.

In a video shared by the AISA activists, security forces of the university were seen dragging, removing and pushing students from the spot.

DU proctor Rajni Abbi claimed that many of these protesters are not even from Delhi University.

"They have started protesting inside the Arts Faculty. They did not even inform the police. We have asked them to at least inform the police before such gatherings. And now they have started protesting under the Vivekananda statue just to prevent the wrath of the police. This will not be tolerated. Many of these people are not even DU students," DU Proctor Rajni Abbi told PTI.

Amruta case: Court sends designer Aniksha to 14-day judicial custody

MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): A court here on Friday sent Aniksha Jaishinghani, arrested for allegedly offering a bribe to Maharashtra deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis's wife Amruta and also threatening her, to 14-day judicial custody, turning down the cops' plea to extend her police remand.

Aniksha was arrested by the city police on March 16 based on a case filed at Malabar Hill police station on February 20 on the complaint of Amruta Fadnis. She is

also accused of demanding extortion of ₹ 10 crore from the latter.

The police produced Aniksha before sessions court judge DD Almale at the end of her previous remand. The police, represented by special public prosecutor Ajay Misar, sought her custody for three more days to confront her with a witness.

Aniksha's lawyer Manan Sanghai submitted that no new ground was made out for extending the police remand. The court, after hearing both sides, rejected the investigators' plea

and remanded the accused in judicial custody. Police have also arrested her father and suspected bookie Anil Jaishinghani and their relative Nimal Jaishinghani in connection with the case. The duo is in police custody till Monday. They have been booked under Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections for conspiracy and extortion and provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act. As per the FIR, Aniksha was in touch with Amruta for the past 16 months and also visited her residence.

Delhi court reserves order on bail plea of former Dy-CM Sisodia

NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): A Delhi court on Friday said it will pronounce its order on former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia's bail plea on March 31 in the excise policy case lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Special Judge M K Nagpal reserved his order on the Aam Aadmi Party leader's plea seeking regular bail in the case after the CBI handed over a short note regarding its contention in the case.

Cong will come out stronger against 'dictatorship': Gehlot

JAIPUR, March 24 (PTI): Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot hit out at the BJP following the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi as an MP on Friday, saying that the Congress leader is the voice of the nation and he will come out stronger against "dictatorship".

"The disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha is another example of dictatorship. BJP should not forget that they had adopted the same method against Indira Gandhi also and had to face the consequences," Gehlot said in a tweet.

"Rahul Gandhi is the voice of the country which will now be stronger against this dictatorship," he added. The chief minister said during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Gandhi raised the issue of price rise, unemployment, corruption and violence. Instead of paying at-

tention to them, the BJP government is taking repressive steps against him.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi was disqualified from Lok Sabha on Friday, a day after he was convicted by a Surat court in a 2019 criminal defamation case. Announcing his disqualification, the Lok Sabha Secretariat in a notification said that it was effective from March 23, the day of his conviction.

"Consequent upon his conviction by the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat...Rahul Gandhi, Member of Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from the date of his conviction i.e. 23 March, 2023," the notification read.

Contd. from Page 1...

Governor confers Civilian

for his contribution in the field of art and culture (mobile theatre), Gilbertson Sangma for his contribution in the field of sports (football), Nayan Moni Saikia for her contribution in the field of sports (lawn bowls), Dr Binoy Kumar Saikia for his contribution in the field of science, Dr Sashidhar Phukan for his role in the field of healthcare and public service. He is one among few healthcare specialists who had a major impact in improving healthcare in Majuli.

Moreover, Assam Gaurav was given to 15 personalities in recognition of their outstanding services.

They are Dhritimala Deka, for her contribution in the field of public service. She has helped with more than 300 cremations to earn the moniker of 'Smashanbandhu'.

She rendered exemplary service during the Covid pandemic. Debajit Barman was conferred Assam Gaurav for his contribution in the field of agriculture and allied Composite Farming. Third is Rustom Basumatary for his role in the field of tourism. Fourth is Manje La for his contribution in the field of Tourism (Agrotourism). Fifth is Binanda Hatibaraah for his contribution in the field of environment and forest.

Sixth is Group Captain Atul Chandra Barua for his role in the field of social work. He set an example of compassion when he started the Bhavada Devi Memorial Philanthropic Trust in 2011 and opened 'Seneh', a home for abandoned, sick and oppressed old women in his plot at Kahilipara.

Seventh is Kalyani Rajbongshi for her contribution in the field of entrepreneurship (SHG Worker). Eighth is Sila Gowala for his contribution in the field of Public Service (ASHA Worker). Ninth is Dr Jogesh Deuri for his contribution in the field of Agriculture and Allied (Sericulture). Tenth is Dr Panjaj Lal Gogoi for his contribution in the field of entrepreneurship (Poultry).

Eleventh is Sarbeswar Basumatary for his contribution in the field of Agriculture (Progressive Farmer). Twelfth is Manthang Hmar for his role in the field of Agriculture and Allied (Pineapple Farmer and Exporter). Thirteenth is Dr Dhruva Jyoti Sarma for his role in the field of Agriculture and Allied (Horticulturist and Entrepreneur). Fourteenth is Dayal Goswami for his contribution in the field of Mask Making and Mask Acting and the last is Dr Syed Ifthikar Ahmed for his contribution in the field of Anti-AIDS and anti-drugs campaign.

The privileges of the awards include free medical treatment in government hospitals and stay in paid cabins wherever available, free accommodation in state government circuit houses, guest houses and Assam Bhawans, regular invitations to official functions as distinguished guests, Rs 2 lakh as medical expenses for treatment of critical diseases and free travel in ASTC buses, provided a 24 hour prior information of journey is given.

On this occasion, a cultural programme was organised where dances showcasing the colourful culture of Assam were performed.

Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly Biswajit Daimary, council of ministers, senior government officers and several distinguished personalities from different walks of life were present on the occasion.

BJP finished our democracy

Following his disqualification, Gandhi would not be able to contest elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction and sentence. Hours before the notification was issued, Gandhi attended Lok Sabha proceedings in the morning session. Before the proceedings commenced, he also participated in a meeting of party MPs in the Parliament complex. Incidentally, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government, in 2013, had attempted to circumvent a Supreme Court ruling to set aside an RP Act provision under which a person sentenced to imprisonment of two years or more shall be disqualified "from the date of such conviction" and remain disqualified for another six years after serving time. Gandhi himself had opposed the ordinance at that time and tore the ordinance in a press conference as a token of protest.

Reacting to Gandhi's disqualification, the Congress said it was "a black day for Indian democracy" and asserted that the battle will be fought both "legally and politically".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the BJP made all efforts to get him disqualified as he was speaking the truth. "He has been removed from the House for speaking the truth, fighting for the Constitution and for people's rights," Kharge alleged. "This was not a question of backward class, Lalit Modi and Nirav Modi are not of backward class. They are trying to build a perception that Rahul Gandhi spoke against the backward class. Gandhi was putting forward the truth before the country so they were not liking it," he said in an apparent reference to BJP chief J P Nadda's remarks that Gandhi had compared OBC communities to thieves.

The BJP would be thinking that their problem is solved by ousting him from Lok Sabha but it is not so as the demand for Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) would continue to be raised, he said. Opposition leaders have been demanding a JPC probe into the Adani issue. "We will keep fighting to protect democracy and even if we have to go to jail, we will do so. Our people are ready to fight," Kharge said. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said in a tweet, "We will fight this battle both legally and politically. We will not be intimidated or silenced. Instead of a JPC into the PM-linked Adani Maha Mega Scam, Rahul Gandhi stands disqualified. Indian Democracy Om Shanti." Congress general secretary in-charge organisation K C Venugopal also lashed out at the government and said the day Gandhi raised questions about the Adani issue against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP planned a "conspiracy" to silence the voice of Gandhi. "This is a clear case of anti-democratic, dictatorial attitude of the BJP government," Venugopal said in a video statement.

In a tweet later, he said, "Rahul Gandhi ji's disqualification is the final nail in the coffin. This is a black day for Indian democracy. It is a well-orchestrated move of the Modi government to silence his voice in Parliament. We will fight this legally and politically on every front, the truth will prevail." Defending Gandhi's disqualification, Union Minister of State for Law and Justice S P S Baghel termed it as "lawful" and asserted that "everyone is equal before law". He also noted that a BJP MLA was also recently disqualified in Uttar Pradesh following his conviction in a criminal case.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi said the decision was a legal one and alleged the Congress was questioning the judiciary. "It was a legal decision and not a call taken by the political party. It was taken by a court. The Congress should clarify who they are protesting against," he said.

Senior BJP leader Bhupendra Yadav said Gandhi had got enough opportunities to explain himself, provide evidence and all rules have been followed leading to his disqualification. The disqualification also saw many opposition parties rallying in support of Gandhi with Trinamool Congress, AAP, the Left parties, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray), and NCP, among others, backing the former Congress chief. West Bengal chief minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee in a tweet highlighted how the BJP is targeting leaders of the opposition.

"In PM Modi's New India, Opposition leaders have become the prime target of BJP! While BJP leaders with criminal antecedents are inducted into the cabinet, Opposition leaders are disqualified for their speeches. Today, we have witnessed a new low for our constitutional democracy," she said in a tweet. Shiv Sena (UBT) leader, Priyanka Chaturvedi questioned the state of democracy in the country. "Vindictive and shameful action against Rahul Gandhi. This disqualification yet again proves that we are living in the times of caged democracy," she said in a tweet.

Tax benefits for debt

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved the Bill and the 64 amendments which were all approved by voice vote. These will now go to Rajya Sabha and will become law once the President gives assent. From April 1, investments in debt mutual funds will be taxed as short-term capital gains, stripping investors of the long-term tax benefits that made such investments popular.

Currently, investors in debt funds pay income tax on capital gains according to the income tax slab for a holding period of three years. After three years these funds pay either 20 percent with indexation benefits or 10 percent without indexation. After the amendment, such gains from transfer of units of specified mutual funds will be treated as short term and taxed at slab rates. This is in addition to taxation of market linked debenture proposed in the original bill.

Specified mutual funds have been defined to include funds where not more than 35 percent of proceeds are invested in shares of domestic companies. This may include debt mutual funds and gold ETFs where investment in domestic companies is less than 35 percent of proceeds of the fund.

The move will bring taxation of such mutual funds on par with bank deposits which are taxed at slab rates. Finance secretary T V Somanathan said the move was aimed at bringing parity with instruments which are of a similar nature. The government in 2014 had changed the taxation of debt mutual funds (period of holding for short term gains was increased to 3 years and tax rates were increased to 20 percent). Also, credit card payments for foreign travel will be brought under the purview of the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) of the Reserve Bank to ensure that such expenses do not escape TCS (Tax Collection at Source).

The Union Budget 2023 proposed a TCS for foreign outward remittance under LRS other than for education and medical purposes of 20 percent applicable from July 1, 2023. Before this proposal, the TCS of 5 percent was applicable on foreign outward remittances above ₹ 7 lakh. Tax Collected at Source (TCS) is an income tax, collected by the seller of specified goods, from the buyer. TCS is a concept where a person selling specific items is liable to collect tax from a buyer at a prescribed rate and deposit the same with the government. The LRS, introduced in 2004, initially permitted outflow of USD 25,000. The LRS limit has been revised in stages consistent with prevailing macro and micro economic conditions.

LRS permits Indians to freely remit up to USD 250,000 (about ₹ 2.05 crore) per financial year for current or capital account transactions or a combination of both. Any remittance exceeding this limit requires prior permission from the RBI. Moving the Bill, Sitharaman also announced a committee under the finance secretary to look into pension issues of government employees. "I propose to set up a committee under the finance secretary to look into the issue of pensions and evolve an approach which addresses the needs of employees while maintaining fiscal prudence to protect common citizens," she said. "The approach will be designed for adoption by both the central government and state governments."

The move comes in the backdrop of several non-BJP states deciding to revert to the DA-linked Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and also employee organisations in some other states raising demand for the same.

The state governments of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh have informed the Centre about their decision to revert to the Old Pension Scheme and have requested a refund of corpus accumulated under the NPS. With the increase in tax rate on royalty and fee for technical services, foreign companies will be required to avail tax treaty shelter to reduce the withholding tax rate. The proposal to tax the income other than interest, dividend, rent and capital gains, by unit holders of REIT/InvIT has been further amended in the latest round of changes in the Finance Bill. The government has allowed the benefit of cost against the return of capital component for the unit holders and the tax exemption has been extended to other income arising from sovereign wealth funds/pension funds as unit holders of business trusts.

Also, an amendment approved provides for setting up of the GST Tribunal, which is expected to help streamline pending litigations. As of December 31, 2022, assets under management for debt oriented products stood at ₹ 12.42 lakh crore. MUDRA loans for

micro units/enterprises set up under Joint Liability Group (JLG) framework (individually or jointly) are now eligible for guarantee coverage under Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU) as per the amended Finance Bill.

Finance Bill proposed to tax distribution from business trust which has income from other sources at applicable rate. This is now proposed to be treated as return of capital i.e., reduction from cost of acquisition, till the cost at which the unit was issued.

However, any amount in excess of the issue price would be taxable as income. Thus, the change would benefit the unitholders vis a vis the earlier proposal.

The amended Finance Bill also deferred the angel tax to April 1, 2024. Exclusions, as already provided to domestic venture capital funds etc, shall also be considered for similar overseas entities. Two other key changes proposed in the Finance Bill are in relation to taxation of Business Trusts. The government has allowed the benefit of cost against the return of capital component for the unitholders and the tax exemption has been extended to other income arising for sovereign wealth funds/pension funds as unitholders of business trusts, Naveen Aggarwal, Partner, Tax, KPMG in India, said.

As per the Budget proposals, capital gains earned on redemption of market linked debentures (MLDs) would be deemed to be treated as short-term capital gains taxable at slab rates without any indexation benefit, irrespective of the holding period. As the Finance Act, specified mutual funds where at least 65 percent investment are in equity shares of domestic companies are also included in the scope of the above deeming provision (along with MLDs), Alok Agrawal, partner, Deloitte India.

Sitharaman said one amendment is for the GST Council which is establishing the Tribunal. The amendments proposed in Section 109 of the CGST Act would not merely help the government in setting up of GST tribunals in a time-bound manner but would also enable the Principle Bench to take certain important decisions such as distribution of cases amongst the state benches, referring of case to other members in case of difference in views within the same bench or otherwise, etc.

This would help in streamlining the litigation process, Saurabh Agarwal, Tax Partner, EY said. Also, Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on options sale has been hiked to ₹ 2,100 on a turnover of ₹ 1 crore from ₹ 1,700 earlier.

AFSPA extended in parts

within the jurisdiction of Namsai, Mahadevpur and Chowkham police stations in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam, are declared as 'disturbed area' under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 for a period of six months with effect from April 1, 2023, unless withdrawn earlier," one of the notifications said. In the other notification, the home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA, 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared nine districts and 16 police stations in four other districts of Nagaland as 'disturbed area' for a period of six months with effect from October 1, 2022.

It said, now the disturbed area status will be applicable in eight districts and 21 police station areas falling under five other districts.

"And whereas a further review of the law and order situation in the state of Nagaland has been undertaken. Now, therefore, Dimapur, Nuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek and Peren districts in Nagaland and the areas in Nagaland falling within the jurisdiction of i) Khuzama, Kohima North, Kohima South, Zubza and Kezocha police stations in Kohima District; ii) Mangkolemba, Mokochung-I, Longtho, Tuli, Longchong and Anaki 'C' police stations in Mokochung District; iii) Yanglok police station in Longchong District; iv) Bhandari, Champang and Ralan police stations in Wokha District; and v) Ghatashi, Pughoboto, Satakha, Suruboto, Zunheboto and Aghunato police stations in Zunheboto District, are declared as 'disturbed area' under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 for a period of six months with effect from April 1, 2023, unless withdrawn earlier," the notification said.

G-20 RIIG conference held

bio-economy," informed Dr S Chandrasekhar. The conference was divided into four sessions, which included Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities, Industry towards Decarbonisation, Bio-Energy, and Bio-resource Management.

BJP's Biswabandhu elected

"I would like to assure you that I will conduct the House impartially. I also seek cooperation from all members, irrespective of their party affiliation," he said. Chief minister Manik Saha expressed hope that Sen would maintain the dignity of the post. CPI (M) legislative party leader Jiten Chowdhury congratulated the new speaker, assuring him of all cooperation in running the House.

Gopal Chandra Roy, the Congress MLA who also contested the election for the post, also assured him of cooperation. The Tipra Motha supremo said earlier in the day that he met BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance chairman and Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday, after talking to the Union home minister.

"In a follow up to yesterday's conversation with the home minister regarding the appointment of an interlocutor, I met Shri @himantabiswa last evening and he will be briefing the Home Minister regarding the urgency of this matter.

"We are interested in an honourable constitutional solution to the problem of our indigenous people of Tripura and hope that this process starts as promised within the next few days," Debbarma said in a Twitter post. Debbarma, a scion of the former royal family of the state, on Thursday said Shah had called him up and assured him that an interlocutor will be appointed by March 27 to work out a "constitutional solution" to the problems raised by the indigenous people of Tripura.

The Tipura Motha chief had a meeting with Shah, BJP president JP Nadda, Sarma and the Tripura chief minister shortly after the oath-taking ceremony of the government earlier this month.

ROBERT DOWNEY JR eyes lead role in remake of Hitchcock's cult classic 'Vertigo'

LOS ANGELES, March 24 (AGENCIES): The rights for the late filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 cult classic psychological thriller 'Vertigo' have been secured by Paramount Pictures.

'Iron Man' star Robert Downey Jr is reportedly in the talks for playing the lead. The actor is producing the project with his wife Susan Downey through their Team Downey production company, along with John Davis and John Fox via Davis Entertainment, reports Variety.

'Peaky Blinders' creator Steven Knight is set to write the script, hot on the heels of his commitment to write an untitled 'Star Wars' movie for Lucasfilm, as Variety re-

ported on Wednesday.

Downey has kept a low profile as an actor since the release of 2019's 'Avengers: Endgame', which is one of the highest grossing movies ever made, and 2020's 'Dolittle'. He produced and appeared in the documentary 'Sr.', about his father, and he's next set to appear this July in Christopher Nolan's historical epic 'Oppenheimer' opposite Cillian Murphy.

As per Variety, the original 'Vertigo' starred James Stewart as John Scottie Ferguson, a San Francisco police detective who retires due to a paralyzing fear of heights brought on by a severe case of vertigo. After he's hired to tail an acquaintance's wife,

Madeleine (Kim Novak), Scottie becomes obsessed with her, but his fears render him powerless to save her when she climbs the tower of a Spanish Mission and plunges to her death. And then things get truly strange.

'Vertigo' was not a smash success when it was first released in theatres, and it divided critics. But by the 1980s, it started to gain recognition as a masterpiece. In 1982, in a survey of the best movies ever made by the British Film Institute's Sight and Sound publication (conducted every 10 years), 'Vertigo' cracked the top 10, and continued to climb the list, reaching the number one slot in the 2012 survey.



SHILADITYA BORA'S 'BHAGWAN BHAROSE' to be screened at UK Asian Film Festival



NEW DELHI, March 24 (PTI): Shiladitya Bora's directorial debut movie 'Bhagwan Bharose' is set to make its world premiere at the UK Asian Film Festival. The Hindi-language coming-of-age drama, based on a story by Sudhakar Neelamani, will serve as the closing film at the festival on May 13 at the Kiln Theatre in North West London, a press release stated. The story follows two impressionable kids (Satendra Soni and Sparsh Suman), struggling with their understanding of God and religion in 1990s India.

"Bhagwan Bharose" takes audiences on an emotional journey as they witness the family's struggle to

hold on to their beliefs while facing challenges that threaten to tear them apart, as per the official description. "I feel blessed that a long cherished dream was made possible by a passionate and hardworking group of people, the best cast and crew one can have. This film is a labour of love, and I cannot wait for audiences to experience the story and the incredible performances from our talented cast. We're thrilled to start our journey with the prestigious UK Asian Film Festival in its silver jubilee edition, and hope to bring it back home to India soon," Bora said in a statement.

"Bhagwan Bharose" also stars

Vinay Pathak, Masumeh Makhija, Manurishi Chaddha, Shrikant Verma, Sawan Tank and Krishna Singh Bisht. "Bhagwan Bharose" is a sweet and special story, and I've been fortunate enough to be a part of Shiladitya's first directorial venture. May this wonderful news be the start of his long illustrious cinema journey," Pathak said.

The movie is co-Produced by Sri Lankan filmmaker Prasanna Vithanage along with Bora and Shilpi Agarwal of Platoon One Films, Milapsinh Jadeja and Sanyukta Gupta of Lighthouse Innomentures, and Sri Sathya Sai Arts' KK Radhamohan.

'Parineeta' director Pradeep Sarkar dies at 67

MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): Filmmaker Pradeep Sarkar, best known for his movies 'Parineeta' and 'Mardaani', passed away at a hospital early on Friday, his wife Panchali said. He was 67.

The director was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) of Lilavati hospital in suburban Bandra following a fever.

"He passed away between 3.10 am and 3.30 am at Lilavati hospital," his wife told PTI. The filmmaker had viral fever on March 22. After administering some medicines his fever subsided but not completely. So he was rushed to the hospital, she said.

"By the time we reached the hospital, his vitals started dropping. He was put on a ventilator in the ICU and was diagnosed with pneumonia. The infection attacked his lungs.

"According to doctors, he had many comorbidities which weakened his immunity. His blood pressure was fluctuating. Since COVID-19 hit him in July 2022, he was quite weak," Panchali said.



Sarkar's last rites will be held at Santacruz Hindu Crematorium at 4 pm.

The filmmaker initially began as ad-film maker, directing several advertisements for prominent brands across the country. He also directed music videos, which included Shubha Mudgal's 'Ab Ke Saawan', Euphoria's 'Dhoom Pichak Dhoom' and Sultan Khan's 'Piya Basanti'.

He turned to direction with 2005's period drama 'Parineeta', adapted from author Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's 1914 Bengali novella of the same name. The filmmaker won the National Award for best debut film of a director for the Vidya Balan-Saif Ali Khan starrer.

Some of his other directorial ventures were 'Laaga Chunari Mein Daag' (2007), 'Lafangey Parindey' (2010), 'Mardaani' (2014), and 'Helicopter Eela' (2018).

The news of Sarkar's death shocked his colleagues in the film industry.

Actor Rani Mukerji, who had worked with the director on 'Laaga Chunari Mein Daag' and 'Mardaani', said the news of Sarkar's death came as a shock to her this morning.

Rani Mukerji on Pradeep Sarkar's death: It's like losing a member of family



MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): Bollywood star Rani Mukerji, who had collaborated with filmmaker Pradeep Sarkar on 'Laaga Chunari Mein Daag' and 'Mardaani', said the director's death this morning came as a shock as they had planned to meet soon.

Sarkar, best known for directing 2005 feature film 'Parineeta', died at Lilavati hospital in suburban Bandra here, his wife Panchali told PTI. He was 67. Mukerji, who worked with the director on 'Laaga Chunari Mein Daag' and 'Mardaani', said she interacted with Sarkar a few days ago when he called to congratulate the actor for her latest movie 'Mrs Chatterjee vs Norway'.

"I'm very very shocked by the news of Dada's passing away. I, in fact, spoke to him just the other day when I had gone to Amritsar, to the Golden Temple where he had called me telling

me about my film so we had a long chat, he was insisting to do a facetime call but that day the network was not good so I was unable to video call with him.

"We were planning to meet this week when I got back but it is just so unexpected. His wife (Panchali boudi) called me at 4 am when this happened, it is really sad and shocking that dada has passed away like this," the 45-year-old actor said in a statement. Mukerji said Sarkar's death is a great loss to his family as well as the film industry.

"He was also shooting these last few days so I don't know how it all transpired in just a matter of a few hours. I'm sure everybody who knows Dada will feel his loss deeply the way I'm feeling it. I had a great connection with him, we've done a lot of work together over the years, so it's literally like losing a family member.

"My heart goes out to Boudi, Ronno and Raya as they were a very close-knit family and to all the people who worked in Dada's production house and those who have been attached to him over the years. It's going to be a great loss for them," she added.

Mukerji said she is saddened that she could not meet the director before his demise.

"So I'm really very saddened by this because I was meant to meet him soon so I feel terrible about it. You never realise how life is so unpredictable, you speak to a person and the next thing you know is that the person is not there.

"I will hold on to my last memory of him being so happy and excited for me as he had called me to share the feedback that he was getting for my film and me from all over," she said.

VOCALIST BOMBAY JAYASHRI STABLE AFTER HEALTH SETBACK IN UK



CHENNAI, March 24 (PTI): Well-known Carnatic musician Bombay Jayashri Ramnath suffered a "health setback" while touring the United Kingdom, her spokesperson said on Friday.

According to the statement posted on the renowned singer's Instagram Stories, Jayashri Ramnath, who is in the UK for a music tour, received "timely medical intervention" from the National Health Service (NHS) and is currently "stable".

"Bombay Jayashri had a health setback in the United Kingdom where she is currently touring for her concerts. She received timely medical intervention thanks to the capable staff at the NHS and her accompanying artistes.

"She is currently stable and recovering well, she requires rest for a couple of days," the statement read.

The Padma Shri-awardee's family requested privacy and urged her fans to ignore the "messages circulating on social media platforms".

Sources close to her family said Jayashri Ramnath, who is currently in her 50s, underwent a surgical procedure for an aneurysm, which occurs when an artery's wall weakens and causes an abnormally large bulge.

Jayashri Ramnath is known for singing songs in multiple languages including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi.

Some of her most memorable songs include "Partha Mudhal" from 2006 Tamil movie "Vettaiyaadu Vilaiyaadu", "Yaaro Manathile" from 2008's "Dhaam Dhoom", "Zara Zara Behakta Hain" from the movie "Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein" and "Pi's Lullaby" from Ang Lee's film "Life of Pi".

AMITABH BACHCHAN IS BACK AT WORK DESPITE 'INCONVENIENCE OF DAMAGED BODY'

MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): Megastar Amitabh Bachchan on Friday said he has resumed working even though he continues to recover from an on-set injury earlier this month.

The 80-year-old actor took to his official blog to share an update on his health.

"So despite the inconvenience of damaged body .. there must be desire and effort to repair .. which is being done with care and comfort of the Ef (extended family, his fans) and well wishers, and for which there is repeated gratitude and love," Bachchan said.

"Work schedules have been done and the charts start filling up again .. to the joy of the 'moi' .. for there is no better pastime than work .. Yes the rib and toe are in a state of revolt .. but revolts must be tendered with and a solution to be found," he added.

In the March 5 post on his blog, the industry veteran said he injured himself while filming an action sequence on the Hyderabad set of his upcoming movie "Project K".

"In Hyderabad at the shoot for Project K, during an action shot, I have got injured .. rib cartilage popped broke and muscle tear to the right rib cage .." he said.

Before flying back to Mumbai, Bachchan said the doctor at a Hyderabad-based hospital, where he underwent a CT scan, advised rest. The shooting on Nag Ashwin's "Project K" and other commitments Bachchan is involved in are on hold. Also starring Prabhas and Deepika Padukone, the film will hit the screens on January 12, 2024.

Messi mania grips Argentina in 1st match as WC champs

BUENOS AIRES, March 24 (AP): Messi mania gripped Buenos Aires as the Argentina national team led by Lionel Messi beat Panama 2-0 in a friendly match that was essentially a celebration of their World Cup victory last December. Although the world champions dominated the game, they didn't get a goal until the 78th minute of the second half, when Thiago Almada scored after a free kick by Messi hit the goal post.

Ten minutes later, it was Messi's turn and he scored the 800th goal of his professional career with a perfectly executed free-kick. He is now one short of the 100-goal mark for the national squad.

After the match, the celebrations got into full swing and Messi took center stage, smiling from ear to ear as he received awards and accolades.

"I want to thank you for all the love we've been receiving... We told you we were going to do everything possible to win this," a visibly emotional Messi said as he was handed the microphone.

"Let's enjoy this because we went a long time without winning it, and we don't know when we'll win it again."

When it was coach Lionel Scaloni's turn to speak, the first thing he did was lead the packed stadium on a chant praising Messi. "Eternally grateful to this group of players," Scaloni said as

tears streamed down his face and he thanked fans for their support.

The players' families later joined them in the pitch and each of the players proceeded to lift a replica of the World Cup trophy in celebration. The players then walked around the pitch waving to fans as fireworks lit the night sky.

Earlier in the day, news channels carried live images of the players travelling to the stadium with a police escort as excited fans waited to see the team's first game since it beat France in a thrilling final in Qatar.

Outside the Monumental Stadium there was a party-like atmosphere from early in the afternoon as somebody imper-

sonating Pope Francis blessed a World Cup replica, children almost universally donned Messi's No. 10 jersey and street sellers hawked Messi dolls.

Amid the celebrations there were also recriminations as many fans lamented they'd bought tickets for several times their face value from resellers that ended up being fake.

The frustration led to scuffles with law enforcement that fired tear gas to disperse the angry fans.

"This World Cup was a miracle," Marcelo Saracho, 49, said while dressed up like the pope, an Argentine, but with his cheeks painted in the light blue and white colors of the national flag.

Messi, the Paris Saint-Germain star who only last week was whistled by a group of fans of the French club that had been knocked out of the Champions League, received a massive ovation when he and his Argentina teammates entered the stadium filled with 83,000 fans.

When the anthem played the cameras zoomed in on Messi, who looked to be holding back tears as fans sang along triumphantly. "I can't believe I'm here," Sofia Clavero, 12, said as her eyes welled up with tears while describing how she was eager to see her "idol" for the first time on the field.

The match culminated a week in which Messi, 35, was widely

celebrated as a hero after helping Argentina win its third World Cup title, a marked change for the player who once suffered the indifference and even apathy from many Argentina fans who blamed him for the team's failings in previous championships.

It all started Monday night when hundreds of fans mobbed a steakhouse in the Buenos Aires neighborhood of Palermo when word spread that Messi was inside having dinner. He needed a police escort to leave but was all smiles as people shouted "Messi I love you" and "Thank you, Leo."

The next day, a group of fans realized the car next to them on the highway was carrying the

man who is often described as the world's best soccer player. They immediately started shouting, "I love you, Messi!" and "Let's go, Messi!"

That's when Messi proceeded to roll down his window and wave. The brief video of the encounter quickly went viral.

On Wednesday, the hosts of a morning network TV show went wild when they received an audio message from Messi.

"Good morning everyone," Messi said in the message that the hosts huddled to hear. "I'm happy to be here, to enjoy everything we keep experiencing after what happened in December, and excited to enjoy tomorrow's game."

RONALDO NOW MOST-CAPPED PLAYER IN MEN'S INT'L SOCCER

Ronaldo, Kane break records in wins for Portugal, England

LONDON, March 24 (AP): It was a record-breaking night for Cristiano Ronaldo and Harry Kane as qualifying for the European Championship in 2024 got underway. Already the leading scorer in men's international soccer, the 38-year-old Ronaldo now has more international appearances than any other male player after racking up No. 197 in Portugal's 4-0 win over Liechtenstein.

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United striker marked the occasion by converting a penalty and adding another second-half goal to move onto 120 in international matches.

Kane, meanwhile, became England's outright leading scorer of all time by netting a first-half penalty in a 2-1 win at Italy. It lifted Kane to 54 goals for his country, one more than Wayne Rooney.

Qualifying for Euro 2024, which will take place in Germany, started three months after the World Cup finished. Call it belated revenge for England. The meeting with Italy in Naples was a repeat of the Euro 2020 final won by the Azzurri at Wembley Stadium. The teams have met since then — twice, in fact,



with Italy gaining a win and a draw in Nations League qualifying last year. This time, England held on after first-half goals by Declan Rice and Kane, who tucked away a spot kick awarded following a VAR review after it was determined that Italy defender Giovanni Di Lorenzo touched the ball with his hand while attempting to prevent Kane from reaching a corner.

Argentina-born forward Mateo Retegui, who has Italian citizenship through his maternal grandmother, pulled a goal back on his debut and England played with 10 men from the 80th after left back Luke Shaw collected two yellow cards in the space of 54 seconds.

North Macedonia beat Malta 2-1 in the other match in Group C, which also contains Ukraine.

Roberto Martinez enjoyed a comfortable start to his tenure as Portugal coach after handing Ronaldo a start against Liechtenstein. The striker was left out of Portugal's last matches at the World Cup but was selected up front alongside Joao Felix — and repaid the faith shown in him by Martinez, who left his role as Belgium after the tournament in Qatar.

Joao Cancelo and Bernardo Silva scored before Ronaldo's double in Lisbon. Also in Group J, Bosnia-Herzegovina beat Iceland 3-0, while Slovakia and Luxembourg drew 0-0. There was a sense of poignancy when Denmark and Finland met for their opening Group H qualifier at Parken Stadium.

The last time the teams met was at Euro 2020 and it was the game — and same venue — when Denmark playmaker Christian Eriksen collapsed with cardiac arrest.

Nearly two years later, Denmark won 3-1 thanks to a hat trick from striker Rasmus Hojlund in his first start for his country.

Slovenia beat Kazakhstan 2-1 and Northern Ireland defeated San Marino 2-0.

For the first time since the country's invasion of Ukraine, Russia played a soccer match against a nation from outside the borders of the old Soviet Union. A 1-1 draw with Iran in Tehran was played in front of 78,000 spectators and comes after months of Russia seeking closer ties with the Asian Football Confederation. Russia is banned by UEFA from competing in qualifying for Euro 2024.



CAPE TOWN, March 24 (AP): Antoine Semenyo scored the winning goal in the sixth minute of injury time to see Ghana edge Angola 1-0 in African Cup of Nations qualifying and stay atop its group.

Ghana remained unbeaten in the final qualifying stage with two wins and a draw and on course to qualify for next year's African Cup in Ivory Coast.

The result at the Baba Yara Sports Stadium in Kumasi also gave Chris Hughton a winning start as coach. Hughton, the former Newcastle and Brighton manager, was a technical advisor with the Ghana team before succeeding Otto Addo as head coach last month.

Semenyo struck right at the end against Angola when he smashed a loose ball high into the net from close range after a Ghana free kick wasn't cleared.

Halfway through the qualifiers, Ghana leads Central African Republic by three points at the top of Group E.

South Sudan also found a late winner in a chaotic finish against Republic of Congo. South Sudan was leading 1-0 when it had Peter Maker sent off, conceded an equalizer through a penalty by Theivy Bifouma in the 90th minute, and then won 2-1 after Tito Okello scored,

also in the sixth minute of injury time.

It revived South Sudan's hopes of finishing in the top two in its group and qualifying for its first major tournament. South Sudan is ranked 165 out of FIFA's 211 teams, just below Vanuatu.

Zambia came back from 1-0 down to beat Lesotho 3-1 and avoid an upset and Gabon stayed in contention in Group I after beating Sudan 1-0.

The latest round of qualifying games began Wednesday with a pair of draws. Sierra Leone and Sao Tome and Principe finished 2-2 and forward Steve Mounie scored a late equalizer for Benin in a 1-1 draw with Rwanda, which had Hakim Sababo sent off with 30 minutes to go.

Senegal continues its qualifying campaign against Mozambique on Friday, when Sadio Mané is expected to make his return for his country after missing the World Cup in Qatar with injury.

World Cup semifinalist Morocco, the new star of African soccer, doesn't play again in the qualifiers until June after its two games against Zimbabwe were canceled while Zimbabwe is banned from internationals by FIFA because of troubles with its national federation.

GUWAHATI OPEN JUNIOR TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIP

Parthiv wins double crown; Naman, Devanshi, Soni, Namrata win titles

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 24: Parthiv Kalita of Northeast Tennis Foundation, Guwahati bags double crown by winning the Boy's Singles — under 14 and years titles respectively in the sixth Guwahati Open Junior Tennis Championship — 2023, a flagship tournament of the state, organised by the Guwahati Lawn Tennis Association (GLTA) at the RG Baruah Sports Complex, Nehru Stadium played here on Friday.

In the Boy's Singles — Under 14 years Parthiv defeated Samvid Borah 7-6, 6-0 while in the Boy's Singles — Under 18 years Parthiv beat Ritik Rout 6-2, 6-2 in finals respectively. In the Boy's Singles — Under 12 years Naman Borah won the

title beating Rik Kumar Rout 7-5, 2-6, 10-8 in the final.

In the Girl's Singles — Under 12 years Devanshi Tamuly clinch the title defeating Utpalakshree Saikia 6-2, 6-4 in the final while in the Girl's Singles — Under 14 years Soni Prajapati won the title beating Naodita Sukla 6-2, 6-1 in the final. In the Girl's Singles — Under 18 years Namrata Das bag the title defeating Anshita Sukla 6-1, 6-3 in the final. Earlier yesterday, Sayyam Agarwal won the Boy's/Girl's (combined) — Under years defeating Aarav Kandoi 4-0, 4-1 in the final.

All the distinguished guests were felicitated by the organiser. The distinguished guests distributed the prizes to the winners and finalists of the championship.

Rudranksh wins Bronze as China extend golden run

BHOPAL, March 24 (PTI): Reigning world champion Rudranksh Patil won bronze in the men's 10m air rifle, his second of the tournament, even as China extended their golden run at the ISSF World Cup by winning both gold medals on offer for the second consecutive day here.

Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Sheng Lihao of China won gold in the men's 10m air rifle while compatriot Huang Yuting, a double gold medalist at the Cairo World Championships last year, won the women's event.

China maintained their top position on the medal tally at the end of competition day three with five gold, one silver and two bronze in their kitty. India lay second with three bronze medals to go with a gold and silver each.

Playing back-to-back matches can never be easy, especially in a home World Cup, but the champion shooter that he is, Rudranksh delivered yet again, clinching bronze from what at one

point seemed a lost cause.

He shot a solid 631.0 in qualification to finish fourth after leading in the initial stages. In the 25-shot top eight ranking round, he was well outside the medal positions till the third five-shot series, before a fantastic fourth series, where he shot the highest score of 53.5, brought him back into contention.

Meanwhile the three Chinese qualifiers — Sheng (who led throughout the ranking round), silver medalist Du Linshu and Yu Haonan — were on course to make it a Chinese 1-2-3 till the 20th shot.

Rudranksh went into the fifth series 0.8 behind Yu. He then shot a strong 52.6 in the series as Yu faltered, posting 51.5 to finish fourth, as the Indian confirmed his second medal in two days and his fourth ISSF World Cup podium overall.

He finished with a score of 262.3 as Sheng and Du moved into the gold medal match with scores of 264.2 and 263.3 respectively.

The all-China gold medal con-

test was also a close one with Sheng prevailing 17-13 in the end.

India had only one top eight finisher in Ramita in the women's 10m air rifle as she shot 632.3 to finish second among the medal contenders in the 52-strong field. The top eight had two Chinese, two Americans and one shooter each from Romania, Israel and Kazakhstan, besides hosts India.

China's Huang Yuting was in ominous form, topping the qualifications with a score of 632.8, while Tokyo Olympics silver medalist in the mixed team air rifle, Mary Tucker of the USA, also made it through in seventh place. In the top eights, Huang was a cut above the rest, finishing on top again with a score of 265.7 as Mary shot 261.2 for a shot at gold.

Kazakhstan's Alexandra Le pipped India's Ramita to bronze, shooting 261.2 to the Indian's 260.5. Huang then maintained her form on the day to defeat Mary 16-4 for China's fifth gold of the competition.

Hardik Pandya similar to MS Dhoni as captain, says Gujarat Titans spinner R Sai Kishore

MUMBAI, March 24 (PTI): Having watched both of them from close quarters, Gujarat Titans spinner R Sai Kishore feels that his franchise skipper Hardik Pandya is very similar to legendary MS Dhoni in terms of leadership traits.

Sai Kishore, before joining Gujarat Titans, was with CSK for a couple of years.

"Hardik and Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni) are pretty similar in the way they handle things, they both are pretty calm," Sai Kishore told the media during a virtual interaction session on Friday.

"One thing that I really admire about Hardik is his ability to handle success and failure equally — that is something very unique about him. He is a level-headed guy and that works (for him)," he added.

The 28-year-old said Gujarat Titans, who won the IPL last year in their debut season, will have to replicate their performances from last season in order to be successful. "The tag of being defending champions is up to us whether to take it or not. We played well last year and that is why we won. I think if we can do that (then) the tag won't matter much," he said.

Sai Kishore said the new rule of having an 'Impact Player' in IPL will make it more manageable than what it was in domestic circuit. "It is more like the super-sub rule where we can either use a bowler or a batsman. It is basically like playing with 12 people. We have already played with this (rule) in domestic (cricket). The only change is that we can use it till the 20th over, in domestic it was restricted to the 14th over. In



20 overs, it should be a lot easier to handle," he said.

The Tamil Nadu left-arm spinner said he is eyeing a place in the Indian side via strong performances in the IPL.

"Yes, there are a lot of left-arm spinners in India and this (IPL) is a very good opportunity but I would like to be here now in the present and play well for Gujarat. In the last five years, my skill-set

has gone up and I want to keep improving. If it happens that I do very well in the IPL, I am going to play for India," he said.

However, Sai Kishore admitted that he has to improve his batting to come into national reckoning. "It is a work in progress. I have done well in domestic (cricket) also. I know the areas where I am good at and areas where I need to work on. I am trying to put in hours into my batting and fielding," he said.

"In the IPL and higher you go, you want to bat at the top. In Tamil Nadu, I have had the luxury of batting at the top in a few games. The death overs batting needs more work and attention. Finding a pattern or formula to score quick runs is what I am working on," Sai Kishore concluded.



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, March 24: A month-long "Under-17" Hockey training camp got underway at SAI centre stadium in Kokrajhar from Friday.

Station director of SAI centre, Kokrajhar Pradip Brahma inaugurated the training camp in presence of Kokrajhar district Hockey Association Bibhuti Borgoyary which was organised by Kokrajhar District Hockey Association to impart training on hockey among the young hockey enthusiasts with an opportunity to enhance their skills and prepare for competitive matches.

The training camp has been con-

ducted by experienced coaches and trainers who are imparting comprehensive training on all aspects of the game, including physical fitness, technical skills, and game strategy.

Notably, the training camp is a great initiative by Kokrajhar District Hockey Association to promote and nurture the talent of young hockey players in the region.

"We are hopeful that such initiatives will inspire more youngsters to take up the sport and help in the growth and development of hockey in the region," said a Hockey association member in Kokrajhar.









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22-28 March 2023

Adopt Sustainable Food Systems



Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

DAY 4

25th March






To do list

- Create kitchen gardens, terrace gardens at homes, schools, offices
- Prefer locally available and seasonal foods
- Compost food wastes at home
- Preparation and publication of leaflets on vermicompost and its importance

- Documentation and preparation of Hand Book on locally available fruits and their nutritional values
- Hands on activity for preparation of plates from leaves
- Use smaller plates for daily meals to save food wastage

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