

DAFFODIL COLLEGE OF HORTICULTURE
DAFFODIL COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & TECHNOLOGY
 Affiliated under Assam Science and Technology University, Guwahati

ADMISSION OPEN FOR
B.SC (HONS) HORTICULTURE
B.SC (HONS) AGRICULTURE
E. Q. - 12th Pass

E-mail: daffodilhortic@ gmail.com / daffodilagricol@ gmail.com
 Visit : www.daffodilhorticol.com
 Khetri, Kamrup (M), Assam : 782403, Ph. +91 98543 23400 / 70020 52356

Assam flood: Over 29,600 affected as rainfall intensifies

Dhemaji, Lakhimpur dists worst affected



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 8: The number of people affected by floods in Assam has risen to over 29,600 in the past 24 hours, as heavy rainfall

continues to wreak havoc in the state.

Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts are among the worst affected areas, with seven districts in total

experiencing floodwaters.

According to a report released by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), Dhemaji has seen over 17,200 peo-

ple affected, while Lakhimpur has reported around 10,260 affected individuals. The report also highlights that several rivers, including Disang at Nanglamuraghat, Dikhou at Sivasagar, and Brahmaputra at Nimatighat, are flowing above the danger level, exacerbating the flood situation.

A total of 122 villages have been impacted by the floods, leading to significant damage to infrastructure. Heavy erosions have been reported in several districts, including Biswanath, Charaideo, Dhubri, Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, and Lakhimpur. Additionally, road damage has been observed in Biswanath, Dhemaji, Goalpara, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, and Kamrup districts.

The flood situation has resulted in the loss of seven lives so far, while approximately 1,263.07 hectares (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Reports of intermittent firing in Manipur: Sources

IMPHAL, July 8 (PTI): A mob of 150-200 people set ablaze two vehicles near the Kangla Fort here and also tried to snatch weapons from the police, forcing the security forces to fire at the crowd, sources said on Saturday. However, there were no reports of any casualties.

Two columns of security personnel -- one each of the Army and the Assam Rifles -- moved to the general area of the Songdo village on Friday night to enforce the cessation of violence. The induction of additional Border Security Force troops was met with interference in the Bishnupur market area, the sources said.

A mob of 150-200 people set on fire two vehicles at Mahabali Road near the Kangla Fort on Friday night, they said.

The mob also tried to snatch weapons from the police, forcing them to fire at the crowd. No casualty was reported so far, the sources said.

Later, Army troops were called in and the mob was dispersed by late night. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP throws LS poll challenge at Cong 'Contest all LS seats in Assam to 'test people's support'

GUWAHATI, July 8 (PTI): BJP Assam unit president Bhabesh Kalita on Saturday dared the Congress to contest all the 14 Lok Sabha seats in the state in next year's general elections to "gauge people's support".

He exuded confidence that the NDA will retain power at the Centre and Narendra Modi will become the Prime Minister for a third time.

"The Congress should contest all 14 seats in the state. The BJP and its allies will also contest all the seats. We can then test with whom the public support is," Kalita told reporters during a day-long party meeting here.

"People have seen the work we have done for them and they will vote for us. The BJP-led NDA and Narendra Modi ji will retain power for the third straight term," he asserted.

On the Opposition decrying the draft delimitation proposal for the state, the BJP leader claimed they

were trying to find faults where there are none to hide their own shortcomings.

He also dismissed Opposition allegations that the draft has been drawn to suit the BJP's agenda.

"The ECI is an independent body, it doesn't work as per anyone's dictate. The Opposition knows it well," he said.

Kalita also made light of 11 Opposition parties, including the Congress, jointly going to the national capital to register their protest before the ECI.

"They don't have any work here anyway, so they perhaps thought of visiting Delhi," he added.

Asked about the BJP's ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) also airing discontent over the draft, Kalita said it was for the party to deal with themselves.

"Atul Bora, the AGP president who is also a cabinet minister, has given a statement welcoming the draft. If any party member says something (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

Heroin worth over ₹ 7 crore seized

AIZAWL: Mizoram Excise and Narcotics Department seized heroin worth over ₹ 7 crore and arrested eight persons in two separate raids, an official said on Saturday. Acting on specific information, officials of the state Excise and Narcotics Department intercepted a vehicle at Selsih village near Aizawl on Saturday and seized 2.6 kg of heroin, the official said. Seven people, including five from Assam, were arrested for possessing the contraband worth around ₹ 7.3 crore, he said. The vehicle used for transporting the heroin was also seized from the accused, he said. In another operation, Excise and Narcotics department officials and volunteers of Central Anti Drugs Squad (CADS) of Central Young Mizo Association (CYMA) seized 56 gm of heroin worth around ₹ 16 lakh from the possession of a woman peddler at Aizawl's Bawngkawn area on Friday.

Excise raid

MARGHERITA: In a coordinated effort, the Margherita and Digboi Excise Party, in conjunction with the Digboi police personnel, conducted a rigorous arm excise search, patrolling, and raid operation on Saturday morning. The targeted locations included Powai Bongaon, Bongaon, and Khaman Pothar, falling under the jurisdiction of Margherita and Digboi police stations in Tinsukia district, Assam. During the operation, a total of 14 cases related to illicit activities were detected. As a result of thorough searches, a significant quantity of illegal items was seized and subsequently destroyed. The confiscated articles included 3,250 liters of fermented wash, 30 kg of molasses, 85 liters of illicit distilled liquor, and 8 pieces of DA sets. The joint operation was aimed at curbing the production and distribution of illicit alcohol in the region, which poses a threat to public safety. The authorities remain steadfast in their commitment to maintaining law and order and safeguarding the well-being of the community.

Pijush reviews river erosion measures in Lakhimpur

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 8: The Singara River, which had been causing erosion in Naoboicha, Lakhimpur district, has been effectively contained, thanks to the proactive measures undertaken by the Water Resources Department under the guidance of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, stated Assam water resource minister Pijush Hazarika on Saturday.

During his visit to the area, minister Hazarika personally reviewed the progress and management of the project. He expressed satisfaction with the efforts taken to address the erosion issue and commended the Water Resources



Department for their diligent work. Furthermore, minister Hazarika has instructed the Water Resources Department to prioritise the embankment repairs of the Panchayat

and Rural Development Department at Punijan, Naoboicha. This directive underscores the government's commitment to ensuring the safety and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta expresses concern over rising road accident cases in state

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 8: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has expressed concerns over the increasing number of road accidents in the state during the month of June 2023 compared to the figures from the previous year. Highlighting the worrying trend, CM Sarma on Saturday shared the statistics regarding accident cases and fatalities on Twitter.

"In June 2023, the total number of road traffic accidents rose to 555, compared to 500 accidents in June 2022. Additionally, the number of fatalities increased to 255, up from 235 reported in the same period last year," the chief minister

tweeted. CM Sarma expressed deep concern over these figures and emphasised the need to address the rising trend of accidents.

Under the leadership of CM Sarma, the state government has been actively implementing various initiatives, including awareness campaigns, aimed at curbing road accidents. Efforts have been made to improve infrastructure and enforce traffic rules and penalties to enhance road safety.

Despite these measures, the recent statistics underscore the importance of individual responsibility in preventing accidents. Sarma urged the public to reflect on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Road mishap claims one

HT Correspondent
BOKAJAN, July 8: A tragic accident occurred on the Dillai-Sarihajan Road on Saturday morning around 10 am, resulting in the death of a man and injuries to six others. The accident involved a tempo auto rickshaw and a stationary bus, leaving the auto rickshaw driver dead on the spot.

The collision took place between the bus with registration number AS 09 AC 5113 and the tempo auto rickshaw with registration number AS 09 AC 1363 at Lakhijan, near Dillai-Sarihajan Road. The driver of the auto rickshaw, identified as Longbir Taro, a resident of Samen Killing Village, Upper Hidipi, tragically lost his life in the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Guv Kataria stresses on importance of Panchayati Raj institutions



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 8: Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria inaugurated the Panchayat Conference 2023 Phase II organised by the Assam Legislative Assembly at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said, "Panchayati Raj institutions, as the pillars of India's grassroots administrative system, hold immense significance in our democratic contour. I am hopeful that this conference presents a platform to the elected representatives of six districts namely Kamrup (Metro), Kamrup (Rural), Nagaon, Morigaon, Darrang and Nalbari to raise their issues and discuss them to find agreeable solutions."

Kataria also said, "India is a country of villages and more than half of the country's population live in rural areas. Therefore, it is important for our villages to go forward and become a catalyst to national development."

The Governor further advocated for creating a robust ecosystem where resources of the rural areas can be utilized to their optimal level for the development of human resources belonging to villages. He also reiterated the need of creating vocations in the villages so that nobody remains unemployed. He stressed on setting goals for rural development and keeping these goals in mind, the gram sabhas should be organized for expeditious (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Violence rocks Bengal's panchayat polls, 12 dead, allegations of strong arm tactics

KOLKATA, July 8 (PTI): Bengal's rural polls drew towards a bloody finish as 12 people died, bombs exploded and all parties leveled allegations of strong arm tactics against their rivals on Saturday.

Twelve people, including eight from the ruling TMC and one worker each of the BJP, CPI(M), Congress and ISF died since midnight in the crucial three-tier panchayat polls, officials said.

The election, which is being seen by analysts as a litmus test for the 2024 parliamentary elections, also witnessed scenes of ballot boxes being stolen and burnt and of public anger against political workers.

Among flashpoints were Murshidabad, Nadia and Cooch Behar districts besides pockets in South 24 Parganas such as Bhanga and in Purba Medinipur's Nandigram.

The polling began at 7 am in 73,887 seats in the rural areas of the state with 5.67 crore people deciding the fate of around 2.06 lakh candidates. Till 3 pm, 50.52 per cent voter turnout was recorded, officials said.

Political parties made accusations and counter-accusations as the day lengthened. TMC's senior minister Sashi Panja said, "Shocking incidents have been reported since last night. BJP, CPI(M) and Congress have

colluded." She also raised questions on the role of the central forces.

Leader of the opposition in the state assembly, Suwendu Adhikari of the BJP, demanded that President's Rule be imposed in the state and threatened to lead a march to Kalighat where chief minister Mamata Banerjee lives against the violence in the panchayat polls.

"A free and fair election under the state administration is a mirage. It is only possible only if elections are held under President's Rule or Article 355," he said.

In a statement, TMC however claimed that if the party was behind the violence, "why would their own workers be targeted and killed? The Opposition has conceded defeat and is now attempting to shape the narrative around how violence affected the election".

It also alleged that there are more than 60,000 booths across West Bengal, however only 60-odd booths have witnessed disruption during the polling process.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Kaustav Bagchi made a representation to the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court seeking an urgent hearing of a prayer seeking that Saturday's panchayat elections in West Bengal be declared null and void on account of violence and killings. Governor CV Ananda Bose (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

IGBIA braces for monsoon

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 8: The Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (IGBIA) in Guwahati is gearing up to tackle the monsoon season with utmost preparedness and safety protocols, as announced in an official statement on Saturday. Recognizing the potential difficulties caused by unpredictable rainfall patterns, recurring floods, and water accumulation in low-lying areas surrounding the airport, the authorities have implemented a range of plans and procedures to mitigate any operational disruptions.

To ensure the smooth functioning of the airport, dedicated manpower has been deployed to clean the drains at various locations within the facility. Additionally, heavy construction machinery is being utilized to create trenches along the perimeter of the boundary walls, facilitating the proper flow of rainwater on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NPCC holds silent protest in support of Rahul

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, July 8: After the Gujarat High Court refused to stay Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's conviction in a defamation case, the Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee on Saturday held a silent protest in front of Congress Bhavan in Kohima to express solidarity with him.

NPCC's communication department, in a release, said senior leaders, leaders of frontal organisations, departments and cells, party workers and supporters of the party took part in the protest in support of Gandhi's fearless and uncompromising fight.

It said not just the Congress Party but the entire na-

tion has condemned Rahul's "erroneous conviction" and "disqualification" and resolved to stand by him.

The Pradesh Congress said in spite of all hardships, Gandhi has been consistent in his unstoppable fight against the misuse of power and in fighting for the truth and raising the issues concerning the people of the country. "His courageous pursuit has forced Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP to resort to crooked measures leading to his conviction and disqualification from the membership of Lok Sabha," it alleged.

"In the present circumstances, we stand together and reiterate that Shri Rahul Gandhi is not alone and that millions of Congressmen (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

AGARTALA, July 8 (PTI): The BJP will organise thanksgiving rallies across Tripura on July 10 for presenting a "pro-people" budget for the current fiscal, a senior party leader said on Saturday.

Tripura finance minister Pranajit Singha Roy on Friday introduced a budget which included a health insurance scheme to cover the marginalised sections of society and another scheme to give free scooters to meritorious girl students as part of a ₹ 27,654-crore budget for the current fiscal.

"The state finance minister has presented a pro-people budget under the leadership of Chief Minister Manik Saha. The budget will benefit all sections of people -- employees, students, youth and poor," the party's state president Rajib Bhattacharjee said at a press conference.



He said the state finance minister has promised to introduce the Chief Minister Jan Arogya Yojana-2023, a health insurance plan, on the lines of the Ayushman Bharat scheme of the Central government.

Under the scheme, the families who are not included in Ayushman Bharat will get health insurance benefits of up to ₹ 5 lakh each year.

"The party will organise thanksgiving rallies in all the ten organisational districts on Monday for

presenting a pro-people budget that ensures fulfilment of our dream of making Ek Tripura Shreshtha Tripura (one Tripura, best Tripura)," the BJP leader said.

Bhattacharjee also criticised the opposition MLAs for creating a ruckus on the first day of the budget session of the Assembly on July 7.

"The people of the state witnessed the way opposition lawmakers had tarnished the sanctity of the Assembly. They (people) will give a befitting reply to the opposition MLAs for their acts inside the House," he said.

The state Assembly on Friday witnessed uproarious scenes as opposition members protested and walked out twice over the Speaker's decision to suspend five MLAs and not to allow a discussion on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India and Tanzania started trade settlements in local currencies: Jaishankar

DAR ES SALAAM, July 8 (PTI): External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Saturday said that India and Tanzania have started trade settlements in local currencies and this new initiative will help in promoting commerce between the two countries.

Addressing industry leaders at a function, the minister said India-Tanzania bilateral trade has seen very strong growth, and stood at USD 6.4 billion in 2022-23.

"Now, bear in mind, this is not only a very substantial bilateral trade, but it's also actually a bilateral trade, which is getting increasingly balanced. Many new products are being added to the trade basket...India remains the biggest destination for Tanzanian exports," he said.

There's also an issue which has been brought up from time to time, which is the possibility of trade settlements in our own currencies, Jaishankar said.

"And I want to share with you that the India central bank has cleared such a possibility. So the



three Indian banks, which are here, have that ability to do trade settlements in each other's currencies.

"I am told few transactions have already taken place in Indian rupees and Tanzanian shillings, and certainly this will provide an additional mechanism to promote trade between our two countries," he said.

Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, and Canara Bank have operations in

Tanzania.

Last year, the Reserve Bank of India and Indian finance ministry asked the top management of banks and representatives of trade bodies to push export and import transactions in rupee. They want banks in India to connect with their foreign counterparts for opening special rupee vostro accounts to facilitate cross-border trade in the Indian cur-

rency rather than the popular mode of the US dollar.

About 18 countries have already opened special vostro accounts with Indian banks.

On India-Africa economic ties, the minister said India's trade is USD 98 billion with Africa.

"India's investments are USD 75 billion, and we are expecting both this trade with Africa and investments in Africa to grow, and I certainly, so agree with what you said, which is that now that there is a pan-African larger continental free trade arrangement in the making, as it unfolds, I think it makes it easier to both trade with Africa and invest in Africa," he said.

Jaishankar also stressed on frequent exchanges of business delegations to promote economic cooperation between the two countries. He noted that in 2022, eight big exhibitions in different sectors took place in Tanzania.

Earlier in the day, Jaishankar inaugurated a bust of Swami Vivekananda at India's cultural centre in Dar es Salaam.

Clone or competitor? Users and lawyers compare Twitter and Threads



WASHINGTON, June 8 (AP): Just how similar is Instagram's chatty new app, Threads, to Twitter? In a cease-and-desist letter earlier this week, Twitter threatened legal action against Instagram parent company Meta over the new text-based app Threads, which it called a "copycat."

Threads has drawn tens of millions of users since launching as the latest rival to Elon Musk's social media platform.

Threads creators pushed back on the accusations, and legal experts note that much is still unknown. For now, "it's sort of a big question mark," Jacob Noti-Victor, an associate professor at Yeshiva University's Cardozo Law School who specializes in intellectual property, told The Associated Press. The people starting to explore Threads, however, are already making their own observations.

"People are calling it a Twitter clone but I think there are some key product differences," said Alexandra Popken, Twitter's former head of trust and safety operations.

One difference, she thinks, will likely be the people who use it. At Threads, "you're essentially taking your audience from Instagram and putting this into a new text-based app, whereas Twitter is a kind of a niche audience for politicians, celebrities and news junkies," she said.

Yet even though Threads makers have said they aren't particularly interested in making it a politics forum, it's likely to attract journalists and politicians, among others, looking for a Twitter alternative.

Instagram's CEO, Adam Mosseri, said Threads isn't aiming to replace Twitter.

"The goal is to create a public square for

communities on Instagram that never really embraced Twitter and for communities on Twitter (and other platforms) that are interested in a less angry place for conversations, but not all of Twitter," he said.

Politics and hard news will inevitably show up on Threads, he acknowledged, "but we're not going to do anything to encourage those verticals."

In a Wednesday letter addressed to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Alex Spiro, an attorney representing Twitter, accused Meta of unlawfully using Twitter's trade secrets and other intellectual property by hiring former Twitter employees to create a "copycat" app.

In a reply to a tweet about the possibility of legal action against Meta, Musk wrote: "Competition is fine, cheating is not."

Meta spokesperson Andy Stone responded in a Threads post Thursday that "no one on the Threads engineering team is a former Twitter employee."

From Spiro's letter, which was first obtained by news outlet Semafor on Thursday, Noti-Victor said it's hard to tell what the trade secrets referred to might be.

Spiro says ex-Twitter employees "improperly retained" company documents and electronic devices — pointing to ongoing confidentiality obligations. There was no explicit reference, however, to a breach of any binding agreement in the letter, and most noncompete clauses, for example, are prohibited in California.

In addition, despite Threads' similarities to Twitter, "just the idea of creating a social media platform involving text (is) certainly not something that would be a trade secret," Noti-Victor added.

He is skeptical of intellectual property violations for similar reasons, noting that companies "can't patent something that's obvious" or copyright a general idea for a social media platform. Copyright can protect source code and the text of a website, but Noti-Victor said he doesn't see that reproduced in Threads.

ReelDrama now available in Tata Play



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 8: Tata Play, a prominent content distribution and Pay TV platform in India, has announced the launch of a new platform service called Tata Play Asomiya Monoronjan. Developed in collaboration with ReelDrama, this service aims to provide a diverse range of engaging and culturally significant Assamese content to viewers. Notably, this partnership represents the first-ever collaboration between an OTT platform and a TV network, bridging the gap between digital and linear TV viewing.

Tata Play Asomiya Monoronjan serves as a dedicated platform for Assamese entertainment on television, offering a wide selection of the latest Assamese movies, original shows, mobile theaters, music, masterclasses on acting and music, as well as devotional content. The lineup features renowned and award-winning Assamese actors such as Jotin Bora, Ravi Sharma, Urmila Mahanta, Barsha Rani Bishaya, Kenny Basumatary, among others. Viewers can expect a diverse range of genres and titles, including Ratnakar, Calendar, Local Kung Fu, Local Utpaat, BornodiBhotia, Goru, Fisaa, AndolitoAkax, Kolorob, Neul, Mitryonjoy, Ou, and more. The service will present ReelDrama's extensive content library to linear TV audiences, showcasing both movies and new original shows. Tata Play's Chief Commercial and Content Officer, Pallavi Puri, expressed enthusiasm about the launch, stating, "Tata Play has had a long-standing association with ReelDrama through Binge, and we are delighted to explore and strengthen this partnership further. Tata Play Asomiya Monoronjan will be showcasing Assam's best content treasures to the TV audiences, thereby taking Assamese entertainment to a wider set of audience to relish and enjoy."

Kuheli Dasgupta, Director of ReelDrama, shared her excitement about becoming the content partner for Tata Play Asomiya Monoronjan, emphasizing their aim to provide a platform for talented Assamese filmmakers to reach a larger section of Assamese-speaking viewers. The partnership with Tata Play will help them expand their reach not only in Assam but throughout the country, bringing Assamese content to the mainstream cinema.

Beloved distillers face pushback over taxes and emission

Whiskey and bourbon business booms

MULBERRY, TENN, June 8 (AP): For decades, the whiskey and bourbon makers of Tennessee and Kentucky have been beloved in their communities. The distilleries where the liquor is manufactured and barrelhouses where it is aged have complemented the rural character of their neighborhoods, while providing jobs and the pride of a successful hometown industry.

Now, the growing popularity of the industry around the world is fueling conflicts at home.

In Kentucky, where 95% of the world's bourbon is manufactured, counties are revolting after the legislature voted to phase out a barrel tax they have depended on to fund schools, roads and utilities. Local officials who donated land and spent millions on infrastructure to help bourbon makers now say those investments may never be recouped.

Neighbors in both states have been fighting industry expansion, even suing distillers. Complaints include a destructive black "whiskey fungus," the loss of prime farmland and liquor-themed tourist developments that are more Disneyland than distillery tour.

The love affair, it seems, is over. "We've been their biggest advocates and they threw us under the bus," said Jerry Summers, a former executive with Jim Beam and the judge-executive for Bullitt County, essentially the county mayor.

Bullitt County has long depended on an annual barrel tax on aging whiskey, which brought in \$3.8 million in 2021, Summers said. The majority goes to schools but the money also is used for



services that support the county's Jim Beam and Four Roses plants, including a full-time fire department.

Many of the new barrelhouses are being built with industrial revenue bonds exempting them from property taxes for years or decades. The counties supported the property tax breaks because they expected to continue collecting the barrel tax. When the state legislature voted to phase it out earlier this year, after intense lobbying by the Kentucky Distillers' Association, county officials felt betrayed.

"Our industry was always a handshake agreement," Summers said. Now, those agreements are being broken.

Once the barrel tax sunsets in 2043, the distillers will pay no taxes at all to Bullitt on some warehouses. The county will still have to provide them with services, protect them and protect the surrounding community from them if anything goes wrong, Summers said.

"Where you have an alcohol-based plant that produces a hazardous material, you need emergency management, EMS, a sheriff's department," he said.

Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear, who signed the bill after passage by Kentucky's Republican-controlled legislature, said several industry

compromises were vital to his support, while the bill will encourage investment.

"I know it was tough. You had an industry that supports so many jobs and calls Kentucky home. At the same time, you've got communities that have helped build that industry. I know there are, right now, probably some difficult feelings," Beshear said in a news conference.

Kentucky Distillers' Association President Eric Gregory noted the compromise bill created a new excise tax to help fund school districts. Another tax helps fire and emergency management services, though it does not apply in all counties.

"Even with this relief, distilling remains Kentucky's highest taxed industry, paying \$286 million in taxes each year," Gregory said in an email.

While the tax changes take place, whiskey is booming.

As a former Beam executive, Summers remembers a time when whiskey was a cheap, "bottom shelf" drink. With small batch products, the liquor slowly became cool. American whiskey revenues since 2003 have nearly quadrupled, reaching \$5.1 billion last year, according to the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. During the same period, the super premium segment rose more than 20-fold to \$1.3 billion.

Now many of the most recognized brands are part of international beverage conglomerates. Jim Beam is owned by Japan-based Beam Suntory. Britain's Diageo owns Bulleit. Italy's Campari Group owns Wild Turkey.

Contd. from Page 1...

Dhemaji, Lakhimpur dists worst

of cropland have been affected, posing a severe threat to the agricultural sector in the region. In the past 48 hours, heavy rainfall has been recorded in various parts of the state, particularly in Lakhimpur district where some areas received over 140 mm of rainfall.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecasted that light to moderate rain is expected in most parts of Assam and other northeastern states over the next four days. Authorities are closely monitoring the situation and taking necessary steps to provide relief and support to the affected population.

Reports of intermittent firing in Manipur

Another mob of 100-200 people, meanwhile, gathered for likely violence during the night at the palace compound here. The crowd was dispersed by troops from the Army and the Rapid Action Force by 12.30 am, the sources said. According to the sources, there were reports of intermittent gunfire exchange near Yaingangpokpi in the Imphal East district till midnight. The situation is being closely monitored.

Four people, including a Manipur Police commando and a teenager, were killed in the ethnic clashes between two communities in the Kangvai area of Bishnupur district on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday.

The areas where people from the two communities live in close proximity witnessed gun fights during the night despite a buffer zone created by security forces to prevent escalation, they said.

More than 120 people have lost their lives and over 3,000 injured since ethnic violence broke out on May 3 when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Around 40,000 central security personnel, besides the Manipur Police, have been deployed to control the violence and bring back normality in the state.

BJP throws LS poll challenge

else, the AGP will deal with it through its own mechanisms," the state BJP chief added. On the day-long meeting with party leaders of different levels, in which chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma was also present for a session, Kalita said the Jansampark Abhiyan was discussed at length.

"The programme has been extended till July 16 and we want to reach out to all sections of the society. We discussed the successful completion of the outreach campaign," he added.

Reacting to Kalita's statement, Congress leader Debabrata Saikia said the grand old party will unitedly contest the Lok Sabha elections with other like-minded Opposition parties.

"As our party has decided to contest the polls unitedly, it will be wrong for us to say at this point in time how many seats we will fight. The BJP will want to divide the Opposition so that they can win even with just 30 per cent votes. But we will not let that happen," the Leader of the Opposition in the state assembly added.

Pijush reviews river erosion

protection of the affected areas. In addition to addressing the Singara River erosion, minister Hazarika conducted an inspection of the recently constructed and repaired embankment in the Ghilamara area of Lakhimpur district. The purpose of this crucial measure is to mitigate the risks of floods and erosion caused by the Changkora River. During his visit, minister Hazarika also directed the officials to install two sluice gates along the embankment. This strategic move aims to enhance the flood management capabilities in the area and explore potential solutions to alter the course of the river. The diligent efforts of the Water Resources Department signify the government's commitment to mitigating erosion and flood-related challenges in the region, said minister Pijush Hazarika.

Himanta expresses concern over rising

their roles in ensuring road safety and to go beyond government actions in reducing the number of fatalities caused by accidents. The chief minister's concerns highlight the need for collective efforts from both the government and individuals to create safer roads and prevent unnecessary loss of lives in Assam.

Road mishap claims one

accident. Additionally, six individuals sustained injuries in the collision and were promptly taken to Bokajan Aarogya Hospital for medical treatment by bystanders at the scene. Among the injured, three are students of Hanjlangso Karbi Traditional Music School, namely Dilison Terang, Mirjeng Enghipi, and Bari Timungpi.

Guv Kataria stresses on importance

development of the villages. Underlining the importance of women empowerment, the Governor said that participation of women in the decision making process under the Panchayati Raj system is important.

He said that apart from motivating them, it is necessary to make use of the unbridled energy of the womenfolk for development. "Information technology should also be used in the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions to lend transparency in the works," the Governor added.

Governor Kataria expressed confidence that the conference would inspire, empower and give new impetus to the people's representatives for the uplift of the people and strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions at the grassroots level.

The Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly, Biswajit Daimary while delivering the welcome address in the conference said that in the parliamentary democracy Panchayati Raj Institutions have vital role to play for effective implementation of government schemes at the grassroots level. This Panchayat Conference is an initiative to strengthen the holistic approach for people's welfare in the state. The issues raised and discussed in the conference will help in empowering the system and serve the people in a better way, Daimary added.

The Speaker further said that the Assam Legislative Assembly would compile a report encompassing the suggestions, issues, etc., raised by the stakeholders in the conference. The report would be submitted to the state government for necessary amendment of the institutions.

State forest minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, health minister Keshab Mahanta, Deputy Speaker ALA Dr Numal Momin, PRI members along with a host of other dignitaries were present in the conference.

Violence rocks Bengal's panchayat

visited different areas in North 24 Parganas district, and met people injured in the violence.

"People requested me to stop my motorcade on the way. There were a lot of tales to tell, they told me about murders happening around them, goons not allowing them to go to polling booths, and also about presiding officers not listening to them. These are stray cases but even one incident of bloodshed should cause concern to all of us," he told reporters.

"This is the most sacred day for democracy. These are stray incidents but there should be a stop to it," he added. Among those killed was BJP's polling agent Madhab Biswas who was allegedly killed in Falimari gram panchayat in Coochbehar district, they said.

The BJP alleged that when Biswas tried to enter the polling booth in the morning he was stopped by TMC supporters, and as the situation escalated, they killed him. The TMC denied the allegations.

An Independent candidate's supporter was injured in the Kadambagachi area in North 24 Parganas district. Superintendent of Police Bhaskar Mukherjee had earlier told reporters that 41-year-old Abdullah Ali died, but later the superintendent of Barasat Hospital said that he was critically injured and on ventilator support but not dead.

Uttar Dinajpur's Goalpokhar witnessed a clash between TMC and Congress workers where the husband of the TMC Panchayat head Shanshah was killed, officials said.

A TMC worker was also killed in Murshidabad district's Kapasdanga area in overnight violence. The deceased was identified as Babar Ali, officials said.

Another TMC worker was killed in the district's Khargram area. He was identified as Sabiruddin Sk.

The TMC also alleged that its booth committee member in Tufanganj 2 panchayat samiti in Cooch Behar, Ganesh Sarkar, was killed in an attack by the BJP.

The brother of a TMC leader was killed in a clash with Congress supporters in Malda district, police said. The incident happened in Jisharattola in Manikchak police station area. The deceased was identified as Malek Sheikh, they said. The TMC also alleged that one of its workers was killed in Nadia's Chapra.

An ISF worker was killed in a clash with TMC in the district's Haringhata area. The victim was identified as 48-year-old Saidul Seikh, police said.

Nadia's TMC president Debashish Ganguli claimed that the incident happened when ISF supporters were hurling crude bombs at TMC workers. "One of the bombs slipped from their hands and exploded," he claimed.

However, Seikh's family alleged that he was killed in an attack by TMC supporters.

A 38-year-old man was killed in South 24 Parganas district's Basanti. The incident happened in the Fulmalancha area, and the deceased was identified as Anisur, police said.

A Congress worker was allegedly killed in Murshidabad's Rejinagar police station area in election-related violence. He was identified as Yasmin Sk.

LGBIA braces for monsoon

the airside of the terminal. Emphasizing the utmost priority given to passenger safety and well-being, the airport authorities have demonstrated their commitment to operational excellence and stakeholder satisfaction through proactive strategies and robust preparedness measures. The collective efforts of the airport staff reflect their dedication to ensuring a seamless and secure experience for all passengers.

As the monsoon season unfolds, Guwahati Airport stands fully prepared to overcome the challenges posed by adverse weather conditions and provide a safe and efficient travel environment for all.

NPCC holds silent protest in

and crores of people, irrespective of their political affiliations, are with him in this fight for truth and justice," the NPCC added.

Tripura: BJP to organise thanksgiving

a ruling BJP MLA allegedly watching a pornographic clip inside the house in the last session.

As the opposition legislators protested in the well, Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen suspended five of them for the day. It prompted the opposition members to stage a walkout.

Sen, however, withdrew the suspension order after some time following a request by chief minister Manik Saha. The five MLAs returned to the House but insisted that action be taken against the ruling party MLA for his "misconduct". When the Speaker refused, the opposition walked out of the House for the second time.

Speaking at a blood donation camp in Agartala on Saturday, former chief minister Manik Sarkar said, "I have not gone through the budget proposals but I am sure the government will fail to deliver because the state is trapped in debt. It is failing to provide salary and pension. Educational institutions are facing acute shortage of teaching staff and erratic power supply," he said.

Leader of Opposition and Tipra Motha MLA, Animesh Debbarma, added PTI, "There is nothing in the budget for job seekers. The roadmap for development for rural areas was not addressed."

Chief secretary interacts with local organisations over bypass issue



HT Correspondent
NAGAON, July 8: The state chief secretary Paban Borthakur visited Uriagaon bypass chariali and took stock about the issues being levelled by local people as well as other local organisations including Uriagaon Anchalik body of Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad, Uriagaon Unnayan Somitee and Uriagaon small scale businessmen association for over months this morning here.

During his visit, the state chief secretary Borthakur also interacted with the representatives of those organisations and sort out the demands and other issues of beautification as well as other development of the bypass Chari-ali for which all those organisations were staging serial protest for over months here. Besides, he assured the leaders of those organisations as well as other locals that the district administration as well as the concerned officials of National Highway Authority of India would go ahead to solve all those issues or demands step by step.

He was accompanied by DC Narendra Kumar Shah, SP Navaneet Mahanta, NHA's official Ayush Rana, senior official of road safety department Gaurav Upadhyay, superintendent engineer, PWD (road) Pranab Kumar Rabha, executive engineer Hiten Kalita and other officials from district administration and other line departments.

It's pertinent to mention here that the locals as well as other local organisations are staging protest in demand of street lights for minimum one kilometre on both sides of the NH four lane road, common toilets, waiting tent for passengers, transformation of the Uriagaon playground to a mini stadium with facilities of commercial outlets for the local unemployed youths who are doing business at the temporary tent near the bypass Chari-ali, etc, a release issued by Pragiyotish Bonia, president of district unit, Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad stated here.

School bags distributed



HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, July 8: Sadau Asom Bhojpur Parishad Sivasagar district unit distributed school bags among the students of Luit Poria Mala Basti Primary School Desangmukh on Saturday. The committee felicitated students achieving distinctions in the HSLC and HSSLC examinations, 2023. The felicitation programme was attended by Biplov Bora, OC, Desangmukh out post, journalist Rajanikanta Panging, journalist Munna Agarwal, president of the Bhojpur Parishad Bitu Gupta, secretary Pintu Pathak, Rakesh Sarma, Deven Pandey, Munna Mishra, Dipok Sarma, Rajkumar Mala and others.

JNH letter to ASTC MD for regular bus service in Haflong

HT Correspondent
HAFLONG, July 8: Jadikhe Naisho Hoshom (JNH), apex body of Dimas community, in response to public grievances, has communicated with the authorities concerned through a representation related to bus services under Haflong Station.

JNH in a letter to the managing director, Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC), Paltan Bajar, Guwahati, urged for regular service and upgradation of ASTC bus services with adequate staff at Haflong ASTC station. It states that currently, a single staffer under the rank assistant superintendent following the release of two security assistants in contractual service, is maintaining the ASTC sta-



tion of Haflong. Simultaneously, he has also been running the Diphu ASTC station from Haflong. Surprisingly, the asst superintendent has now been transferred to Silchar ASTC station, it pointed out.

Subsequently, like Diphu

ASTC station, Haflong ASTC station is also going to be an office without staff, it maintained.

Hence, it fears that the ASTC bus services may shut down under Haflong Station if the present situation prevails. It has been learnt that

the Diphu ASTC station is also now like an abandoned bungalow for three months following the transfer of the certain officer who had maintained the station office counter singlehandedly, it has informed. The letter also stated that currently, it has

Despite no vending notice fish-pork market thrive near Temple-Namghar

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, July 8: The National Human Rights and Crime Control Bureau, Assam had handed over a memorandum to the deputy commissioner of Tinsukia district regarding the problems faced by the people from the daily fish market near Shri Bhutnath Temple Gelapukari road on Saturday.

It's president said that it is the responsibility of the people of entire district to maintain the uniqueness of these religious places.

In view of such circumstances, an unusual environment hurts religious sentiments of common people. Visitors to the temple do not get the space they need to park their cars, which often leads to traffic problem there. This leads to the possibility of unexpected accidents at any time. Those passing the road face problem. Despite repeated requests by the priests of the temple, the market continues to operate in the same manner.

Moreover heated disputes relate to water supply almost every day fouling the secrecy of the environment around the temple, left locals resented. Locals mainly complained about the location of the market beside a temple. A foul environment prevailed in the area and it is difficult for people to reside in the area due to the stench. There is also an arrangement of tables for selling pork on the main road in front of the temple as well as in nearby area of Namghar which hurts the religious sentiments. In such a situation, the National Human Rights and Crime Control Bureau has requested the district administration to relocate the shops on the roads as soon as possible. The municipal board was also informed the matter by NHRCCB earlier for the ready action from their end. But no action has been taken till the date today. While an RTI was placed it has come to light that no licence was issued to anybody for businesses in that area, in the reply the municipal office said.

Brilliant artist of Tezpur Bijay Sankar Saikia passes away

Promising talent comes to standstill



HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, July 8: Bijay Sankar Saikia, a brilliant folk artist, actor, director-producer, choreographer and an expert camera personality in both theatre and cinema world and an inhabitant of by lane- 4 in Tezpur Ushanagar area passed away at the age of 39 years old on Thursday night at around 12.30 pm following a cardiac arrest.

Initially he suffered from breathing problem following which he was rushed to Kanaklata Civil Hospital here wherein the attending doctor declared him dead. Born in 1984 the budding talent was the son of Natasurya Phani Sarmah award winning prominent artist of the state Uday Sankar Saikia. He started his acting career from 'Partyabartanor Pisar Saitya' in 2001 followed by his bold performance in the play 'Kaku poril, talu Xaril'. Besides acting in over 40 full-length dramas he acted in several television serials also including 'bah amorabati bah', 'jonali LLB', 'I am jom', 'beharbari outpost', 'logon', 'lahori gaonpanchayat', 'bandhoo', 'dainandin', 'hatura', 'bidhata', 'sapoon' along with a series of web-series like 'krishna-

sura.com', 'mojli', 'duronir nirola poja' etc. Moreover, besides acting in the recently released popular movie Dr Bezbaruah-2 he acted in over 15 Assamese cinemas. He was the founder of well acclaimed folk music group 'Thespian'. An ex-Darrang late Bijay Sankar formed a drama group christening 'Black and White' with the students of the college and this group could bring laurels participating in various drama competitions across the nation. He organised a drama workshop under the banner of National school of drama (NSD) among the students of the college. Honoured with several awards by late Bijay Sankar Saikia representing Tezpur University he bagged the gold medal through his play 'Too late' in the national varsity week in 2021. He leaves behind his wife, a daughter (reading in class III) and a one and half month old son. His death was widely mourned. Besides his artistic quality he was loved and honoured by all for his amiable and loving nature. On receiving information of his untimely demise many organizations including Sonitpur Press Club, Sonitpur Journalist Union, Baan Theatre, Sahitya Sabha among others, individuals connected with cultural fields and common people rushed to his residence and paid their last tribute to the artist. A funeral procession was taken out throughout the town before performing his last rites. Earlier he was taken to Baan Theater and Darrang College wherein the fraternity of both the platforms paid their last honour to the artist. The incident of untimely demise of the brilliant and budding talent has cast a pall of gloom in the Tezpur town.

Lone Mizoram BJP MLA to retire from active politics

AIZAWL, July 8 (PTI): Buddha Dhan Chakma, the lone BJP legislator in the 40-member Mizoram Legislative Assembly, announced his intention to retire from active politics after his current Assembly term ends.

The former minister has successfully contested four elections - twice as MLA and two times as member of Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) - since 2008.

In 2014, when he was a minister under the Congress rule, Chakma had announced that he would retire from active politics at age 50.

"I have decided to retire from active politics as I have attained 50 years. I want to concentrate on my family and other social duties. I also want to give opportunities to youngsters, who are more energetic," Chakma told PTI.

A doctor by profession, Chakma said he will resume his medical practice and also be involved in the education sector.

Although he ruled out quitting the saffron party, Chakma said he will vacate the post of the presidency of BJP Chakma district.

"I have requested our leader to relieve me of my post. However, I will continue to remain in the party (BJP)," he said.

Elections to the 40-member state assembly are due later this year. Chakma joined active politics and contested elections to the CADC in 2008 and won from the Borapansury-II seat on a Congress ticket before being inducted as an executive member.

He was re-elected from the same seat in 2013 and became the chief executive member of the CADC for a short duration and successfully contested the assembly elections on a Congress ticket the same year.

He was inducted as fishery and sericulture minister in the erstwhile Congress government headed by then chief minister Lal Thanhawla. Chakma, however, resigned as a minister of state in protest against the denial of medical seats to Chakma students due to an agitation launched by state apex student body Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZ) in 2017.

Chakma quit Congress and joined the BJP before the assembly polls in 2018.

He contested the elections to become the first candidate to win on a BJP ticket.

Left MPs to raise Manipur issue in Parliament

IMPHAL, July 8 (PTI): Visiting Left MPs on Saturday said they would raise the issue of continuing violence in Manipur in the monsoon session of Parliament while condemning US Ambassador Eric Garcetti's comment on the state.

The delegation of CPI (M) and CPI MPs who were on a three-day visit also said to begin a peace initiative in the northeastern state, what is needed is instilling trust and confidence among all sections of the people.

CPI(M) Rajya Sabha member Bikash

Bhattacharya claimed that the central and state governments have failed miserably in resolving the problem in Manipur. "The PM has not said anything though Manipur is burning for more than two months. This shows his gross carelessness for the people of the state. We will definitely raise the Manipur issue in Parliament," Bhattacharya said. CPI(M) MP John Brittas added, "To start the peace process, we have to instil trust and confidence among all the sections. The present government has lost its legitimacy."

He also demanded that chief minister N Biren Singh should resign. Brittas said, "During the all-party meeting held in Delhi, we said that Biren Singh is part of the problem. So, how could he resolve the issue?"

The Left MPs also voiced their concern about the US Ambassador's comments on the state. "The proposal by the US is a new shift in the Manipur issue. We know that wherever the US intervened in the name of sorting issues, they have complicated matters," CPI MP Binoy Viswam said.

"Tuloni" is called Anni the word which denotes the season of plentiful crops and this festival mend broken relationship and celebrates togetherness, unity and harmony, eating and merry making among all section of people said Kahoto Sema. Shitoni Sema Chairman of Longtong village Council said that like every year Tuloni festival is celebrated at Longtong village which on behalf of all Sema Naga community people residing at Margherita sub division we request Assam chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma to recognise Tuloni festival and declare July 8 as restricted holiday to celebrate Tuloni festival with great enthusiasm and gaiety.



Our forefathers had responded to the call of duty and had moved out from NEFA, NAGA hills to the present locations to work at Assam Railway and Trading Company, oil exploration, brick kiln, land and forest survey, to clear deep reserve forest, to construct historical stillwell road in the year 1942 from Ledo to Pangsau Pass to Kuming in China as we are original inhabitants of our

motherland Assam but then also Sema Naga community people are deprived from their basic rights as many of our land has been illegally encroached said Kahoto Sema.

Tuloni festival is the most sacred and holy festival of Sema Naga community people celebrated every year at Longtong village under Margherita sub division of Tinsukia district as this festival marks the beginning of

NFR: Discount on AC chair car and executive classes of all trains

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 8: NFR has introduced discounted fare schemes in trains with AC sitting accommodation.

It stated that the scheme shall be applicable in AC chair car and executive classes of all trains having AC sitting accommodation including Anubhuti and Vistadome coaches except in special trains introduced as holiday/festival specials etc.

The element of discount shall be upto maximum 25% on the basic fare. Other charges like reservation charge, super fast surcharge, GST, etc., as applicable, shall be levied separately. The discount shall be provided in any or all the classes on the basis of occupancy. The train having classes with occupancy less than 50% (either end to end or in some specified legs/sections depending upon the sections where discount is to be provided) during the last 30 days shall be taken into consideration, it stated.

The discount can be given for the first-leg of journey and/or last leg of journey and/or intermediate sections and/or end to end journey, provided occupancy is less than 50% in that leg/section/end to



end, as the case may be. The discount shall be implemented with immediate effect. However, no refund of fare shall be admissible for already booked passengers.

Such discount shall be initially implemented for a period as decided by the zones corresponding to the originating station of the train, subject to a maximum of six months for the journey dates from when it is implemented. Discounted fare may be given for the entire duration or part duration or month wise or seasonal or for week days/ weekends based on demand pattern of the aforementioned period. Tickets on

PTOs/Difference of fare on Rly passes/Concessional vouchers / M L A / ex - M L A s coupons/Warrants/MPs/Ex- MPs/Freedom fighters etc shall be booked on original class wise fare and not on discounted fare. Tatkal quota shall not be earmarked in such trains for the decided period in case the discount is provided on end to end basis. Further, if discount is provided for part journey of the train, then tatkal quota may not be provided for the part of the journey where discount is given. The discount shall for tickets booked upto preparation of 1st chart and during current booking.

Former Mizoram minister Beichhua to join BJP

AIZAWL, July 8 (PTI): Former Mizo National Front (MNF) leader K Beichhua, who resigned as a minister last year, will join the BJP ahead of the Mizoram assembly polls later this year, a BJP leader said.

The veteran Mara politician said he will formally join the saffron camp after poll dates are announced, BJP media convener Johnny Lalthanpuia told PTI on Saturday.

Beichhua said he will contest the polls from Siaha in south Mizoram on a BJP ticket.

Beichhua, who had held multiple portfolios including social welfare, excise and animal husbandry, resigned from Zoramthanga's ministry on December 13 last year, a day after he was allegedly told to do so by the chief minister.

The ruling MNF expelled him as primary member of the party on January 25 along with the chairman of the Mara Autonomous District Council (MADC) N Viakhlu for 'anti-party activities'.

Beichhua had been elected from Siaha on a MNF ticket for two consecutive terms since 2013.

Copy of order dated 15-05-2023 Passed by
Ld. Civil Judge, Darrang, Mangaldai.
In Title Suit Case no. 74 / 2022
In the Court of Civil Judge, Darrang, Mangaldai.

Parties

Md. Safiqul Islam.....Plaintiff

-vs-

Sri Manij Kumar Patni / ors.....Defendants

T.S-74/22



15.5.23: Both sides are represented.

Seen petition no 1150/23 filed on behalf of the plaintiff for service of summons to defendant no., 4, 5, 16, 34, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55 & 56 to paper publication. It is submitted by the Ld counsel that despite efforts those defendants could not be found which has resulted in filling the present petition. In consideration of the ground shown prayer for publication of summons on news paper is allowed with a direction that the advertisement is to be made in two widely circulated papers one of which must be a vernacular news paper. Perusal of the case record shows that the suit is proceeded ex-parte against defendant no. 56 and so the present order will not be applicable in respect of defendant no 56.

Fix 19-06-2023 for submission of newspaper.

19.06.23: Both sides are represented.

Ld counsel for the plaintiff has sought time for paper publication as per earlier order dtd. 15.05.23 VP No. 1539/23. Prayer is allowed.

Fix 31.07.2023 for submission of newspaper.



Civil Judge
Darrang, Mangaldai

No. SMED/DMCH/AMC&R/2022/107/1792

TENDER EXTENSION NOTICE

Due to unavoidable circumstances the Short Tender Notice vide tender No. SMED/DMCH/AMC&R/2022/107/1567 Dated:-28/06/2023 has been extended and rescheduled the date and time of the submission and opening of the tender.

The new date and time of the submission of tender is till 14.07.2023 at 1:00 PM and the opening of tender is 14.07.2023 at 2:30 PM. Other terms and condition remain same as per the tender document.

This is for information of all concerned and the participants. The tender document can be downloaded from the official website of Diphu Medical College & Hospital (www.dmcassam.in).

Sd/-

Principal-cum-Chief Superintendent
Diphu Medical College & Hospital, Diphu, Assam

Janasanyog /C/6554/23

Editor's pick

Keep an eye on China's ingress in US backyard

By: Harsh V. Pant and Kalpit A Mankikar

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Beijing last month to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping and the mandarins at the helm of diplomatic affairs in a bid to stabilise the US-China relationship. During the talks, Blinken's counterpart, Qin Gang, conveyed a sense of alarm, cautioning that relations were at its nadir since the establishment of diplomatic ties more than four decades ago.

The wheels of engagement began to turn after US President Joe Biden and Xi met in Indonesia during the G20 summit in November 2022, when an understanding was reached about keeping open the channels of communication. The May 2023 G7 summit saw Biden raising the prospect of a thaw in relations, and signalled a shift in the approach from "decoupling" to "derisking and diversifying". The drivers of this recalibration were a dissonance in the ranks as evidenced from European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen's assertion that decoupling from China was unviable and not in Europe's interest. For Xi, the prospect of a rapprochement held out the possibility of a visit to the US on account of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in November 2023. On the outcome of the visit, the devil looms in the details. Biden publicly patted Blinken on the back and said US-China relations were on the right track. But veteran Chinese scholars such as Wu Xinbo, director at Fudan University's Center for American Studies, did not see any silver linings. US treasury secretary Janet Yellen is scheduled to visit Beijing in July, even as Washington's economic bureaucracy is in the process of rolling out financial restrictions that may constrict the flow of American capital into China. This may further cement the Communist Party of China's (CPC) notion of US suppression of its rise.

The issue of Taiwan is not out of the woods yet and will continue to be the bone of great power contention. Taiwan figured prominently during Blinken's talks with Wang Yi, who helms CPC's Central Foreign Affairs Office. Wang underlined that national unity was the "core of core interest and that it was also the CPC's national mission". He also underscored that the US must oppose Taiwan's independence. Blinken emphasised the importance of maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait, affirming that there was no change in the American position.

The Taiwan Relations Act mandates the US government to come to the defence of the island, and resist attempts by Beijing to change the status quo. Among the six assurances given to Taiwan are that the US would not ask the island to negotiate with China about its future, and that there would be no cut-off date for ending the sale of arms. Thus, we must evaluate these objections by China in light of Xi's threats that "(On Taiwan) China will not renounce the use of force." Other questions that have the potential to upset the putative China-US thaw are linked to whether incumbent vice-president Lai Ching-te, who earlier took a strong position on Taiwan's independence, wins re-election.

There are other landmines in America's backyard, in the form of China's tightening embrace of Cuba. On the back of reports highlighting the construction of facilities in Cuba that enable Beijing to collect electronic intelligence, it has now emerged that Chinese telecom majors such as Huawei are bolstering snooping facilities. More damaging for the US is China's design to build an installation to house People's Liberation Army personnel on America's door. While the Biden administration has reportedly opened lines of communications with the Cubans, hoping to get the deal nixed, the issue of China's expanding footprint in America's backyard has the potential of snowballing into an important issue ahead of the US presidential election. Meanwhile, neighbouring Honduras was rewarded with a sweetheart trade deal by Beijing for switching diplomatic allegiances a few months ago. If other dominoes continue to fall in America's backyard, it can certainly feed into the US political debate on America's decline.

New Delhi's response to Chinese belligerence has been to partner with the US, Australia and Japan. But given that India is alone in this quartet to share a land border with China, how America counters Chinese ingress in its backyard will be an important touchpoint in crafting its future approach. (Courtesy: ORF)

Centre defaming Mamata government, erecting administrative hurdles

By: Arun Srivastava

It is for the people of West Bengal to decipher the real nature of what the TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee observed about the Governor: "A man of C V Ananda Bose's 'intellect, wisdom and understanding of democratic values and the Constitution' was needed more in Manipur right now and not in Bengal," whether it was a jibe or affront. But it is obvious his remark speaks a lot of the functioning and behaviour of the Governor.

Banerjee also said: "As a person, is extremely competent, wise, intelligent... I should not be commenting on what he should say and not say, what he should do and not do; it would be blasphemy if I advised or suggested something to him." He however instantly added: "He is reaping poll gains and trying to implement whatever orders he has from Delhi to the best of his limited capabilities and duties. Have you seen him going to even one of the homes of the 100-odd people from Bengal who died in the Coromandel disaster? Why not? Only because there was no political dividend there. There was no chance to capitalise it for elections."

There are many instances of Governor Bose favouring the BJP leaders and making decisions at their suggestions. At least two of his recent actions could be cited as examples. The Governor entrusted the former Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court, Subhro Kamal Mukherjee, with the task to perform the duties of vice-chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University (RBU), allegedly bypassing the state government and drawing protests from academics. Mukherjee is accused of expressing "bigoted views" as a judge. His role as Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court was contentious.

Justice Mukherjee served as Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court from February 23, 2016 to October 9, 2017. He had in 2016 questioned the logic behind the decision of then Congress-led government in Karnataka to celebrate the birth anniversary of Tipu Sultan.

It is worth mentioning that the Bar Association of Karnataka High Court had sought action against him for his style of functioning that had hampered the court's administration and dispensation of justice. The hostility of the judicial fraternity towards him could be understood from the incident of Karnataka State Bar Council resolving not to accord customary farewell after his retirement.

Governor Bose's action sends a loud and clear message that like his predecessor Jagdeep Dhankar, he too is on the mission to strengthen and expand the structure of RSS and BJP in Bengal, rather than providing it with guidance for good governance.

The second case is that of the appointment of Rajiv Sinha as the State Election Commissioner of Bengal. While he took his own sweet time to clear the file of Sinha's appointment as the SEC, but he



started goading and coercing him just a few days of his taking over the charge. The first incident took place just after 48 hours of Sinha's appointment. Bose returned Sinha's joining letter. He did not clarify his action. In fact, his action had triggered uncertainty over the continuation of the embattled poll watchdog chief.

The immediate reason for this action was a violent clash, which took place just after 48 hours of Sinha taking charge. Sinha has been under fire by BJP and CPI(M) for failing to rein in the violence that has roiled the state during the nomination filing process, killing eight people.

Bose reacting to the incident said: "I appointed him from a panel given to me by the council of ministers. I expected him to do his duty. What is happening around is for anyone to see. I appointed the commissioner trusting that he would conduct the polls in a free and fair manner. But I find the people are disappointed about the apparent inaction from SEC."

It is the duty of the election commission to protect the voters during the time of elections. He (commissioner) has the power. SEC should not only be impartial but also should be perceived to be impartial. There is bloodshed. The commission is accountable for every drop of human bloodshed in the field. People want action and not an alibi."

None can find fault with Bose for his anger. But he too ought to maintain restraint and resilience. Undeniably, Sinha deserves some space. Moreover, Bose should have realised that electoral violence has been endemic in the state. If he has been so concerned of the violence, he should have cleared his appointment just after becoming Governor. He did not do so. The reason for his dithering is only known to him.

Unfortunately, the leaders of the vertically split state BJP, on the contour of personal loyalty, have formed the habit of frequently approaching the High Court. The saffron leaders have been using this as a tactic to defame the Mamata Banerjee government and win over the trust of the

people. They are least bothered of the impact and consequences of their actions. This has been having a very negative bearing on the morale of the bureaucracy. They are scared that the Modi government at the briefing of the state BJP leaders may victimise them.

This political compulsion and insistence has been clearly manifest in Bose rebuking Sinha and describing the latter as "a failed bureaucrat". Holding elections has been a regular feature. But to assert his whim, Bose only a couple of days back said, "right to vote in the panchayat polls is in peril and that mobocracy is stifling democracy. SEC Rajiv Sinha has failed in his duty and disappointed the people of the State".

Being a former bureaucrat, he ought to have realised the impact of his insinuation against Sinha. Some days back, he organised a press conference and blurted out before the newsmen: "I appointed you, you disappointed the people. My constitutional appointee, you have failed in your duty. You have failed the people. You are responsible for the corpses that fell on the streets. Do your duty: that is what people tell you."

His lashing out at Sinha has drawn flak from the people. Only two days back, he resorted to vitriol: "Who is the killer if democracy is dead in the panchayat election? Will the SEC please raise his hand?" Bose asked, adding: "You are the custodian of the lives of people during elections. You are the repository of all powers to ensure free and fair elections. You are armed with the authority to hold a peaceful election."

The police, magistrates, the state machinery are under you during the election. Why then this gruesome and repeated violence? Mr SEC, Bengal expects you to do your duty. Do you know what your duty is? Will you do your duty?"

He then drew on a host of literary references to spell out the reasons for his "disillusionment": "I was delighted when I came to the land where the mind was without fear and the head was held high. (But

I am disillusioned after visiting the scenes of violence. I saw Gurudev's land transformed, defaced and defiled."

If at all Sinha is so incompetent, Bose can use his discretion to sack him instead of denigrating him publicly. His style of functioning has made the people believe that he is using his position and office to cater to the needs and interest of the BJP and especially its top leaders Narendra Modi and Amit Shah, who are desperate to throw Mamata out of power.

On June 10, just after nine days of appointing Sinha, Bose summoned him and directed him to end the political violence and permanently silence the 'perpetrators'. Undoubtedly, Bose was right in his assertion that violence would not be tolerated. Intensity of Bose's obsession towards Mamata could be gauged from the fact he has been using Sinha to accomplish his mission. Less than 48 hours ahead of the scheduled panchayat elections, Bose has published his "report card" on Sinha and judged the former bureaucrat an "utter failure" in reining in the continuing political violence in the state.

Meanwhile, the TMC leadership has accused Bose of acting like a "BJP agent". The TMC alleged that he held press meet to "influence the people ahead of the polls" instead of complaining against the SEC before the President. "He is making a mockery of his position. After May 11 (when panchayat results are declared), he won't be able to come out in shame," said a TMC spokesperson.

The ugliest development that has been fast emerging as a major potential threat to the social contour of Bengal has been BJP leaders pressing for division of Bengal along ethnic lines. Of course, this issue has been making the rounds for some time, a concerted effort is being made now by the BJP leadership. This issue gaining momentum owes to the internal feud in the BJP. The original pitted against turncoats are using it to broad base and assert their identity.

This move has received the full support of the national leaders of BJP. For providing a major boost to the demand, the party has decided to field Anant Maharaj as a candidate for the Rajya Sabha. Maharaj, President of Greater Coochbehar Vocals Association, for long has been quite vocal protagonist for a separate state consisting of some north Bengal districts. As a Rajya Sabha member, he will be in an enviable position to raise this issue.

BJP fielding Maharaj as the Rajya Sabha candidate will have wider impact at the ground level. Of late, Rajbanshis have been agitating for a separate state. The BJP leadership is quite hopeful this issue yielding enough dividend to the party at the next Lok Sabha election. Otherwise too, the BJP won maximum number of seats in north Bengal.

The original party leaders also nurse the view that victory for Maharaj would inject a new life into the party and would witnessing turncoats losing their space in the organisation. (IPA Service)

Prez Biden's approval rating dips to the dismay of Democrats

By: Arun Kumar Shrivastav

President Joe Biden's approval rating has experienced a decline in recent weeks, approaching the lowest point of his presidency. The findings come from a poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, which indicates modest fluctuations in support for Biden over the past few months. The latest poll shows a 38% approval rating for the president, compared to 45% in February and 41% in January. The lowest point of his presidency, at 36%, was recorded in July last year when the impact of rising costs on American households became apparent.

Biden's approval rating had been hovering above 40% in recent months, but interviews with poll respondents reveal mixed sentiments toward the president. Unlike the extremes of absolute loyalty or aggressive loathing often seen in today's polarized politics, people generally hold a neutral stance toward Biden. President Biden has implemented ambitious measures to bolster the US economy. These include the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package from 2021, investments in infrastructure, support for computer chip plants, and tax reforms targeting corporations and the wealthy to fund healthcare and promote a shift away from fossil fuels.

According to the poll, only 31% of respondents approve of Biden's stewardship of the national economy, a rating that has remained relatively consistent over the past year. The president's handling of the economy has been a weak point, particularly since late 2021 when the administration's assurance of transitory inflation gave way to a more persistent issue affecting businesses and households.

The disparity between Biden's overall approval and his approval on the economy is largely driven by Democrats. While 76% of Democrats approve of his job as president, only 63% approve of his handling of the economy. Few Republicans approve of Biden on either count.

Additionally, Democrats under the age of 45 express less positive views of Biden, which influences his overall approval ratings. Only 54% of this demographic approve of his economic leadership, compared to 72% of Democrats older than 45. Similarly, only 66% of Democrats under 45 approve of Biden overall, compared to 85% of older Democrats.

The poll indicates that only around a quarter of Americans believe the national economy is in good shape or that the country is headed in the right direction. Biden's ratings on foreign policy (39%) and climate change (41%) align closely with his overall approval ratings. Seventy-four percent of Democrats and 9% of Republicans approve of his approach to foreign policy, while 67% of Democrats and 17% of Re-

publicans approve of his handling of climate change.

With President Joe Biden's approval ratings hitting a new low, questions are arising about his ability to spearhead the Democratic campaign in the upcoming 2024 presidential elections and seek a second term.

The political landscape on the Republican side is witnessing a resurgence of former President Donald Trump, who has been rapidly gaining momentum and establishing a significant lead over his closest contender, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

Data provided by FiveThirtyEight indicates that Donald Trump is maintaining a substantial lead in early Republican primary surveys, boasting a national support of 51.9 percent.

In comparison, his closest rival, Governor Ron DeSantis, lags far behind with a mere 23.8 percent. If the current trend persists, it is increasingly likely that we may witness a potential rematch between Donald Trump and Joe Biden in the upcoming presidential elections. As Trump's Presidential campaign gathers steam, the sleaze content which was a quintessential characteristic of his previous campaign is once again on display.

In a forthcoming book by Miles Taylor, the former Trump administration official who previously wrote an anonymous op-ed criticizing the former president, shocking claims about Donald Trump's behaviour towards women have come to light. Taylor, the former chief of staff at the Department of Homeland Security, details several incidents that made women within the Trump administration uncomfortable.

According to an exclusive extract obtained by Newsweek from Taylor's book, titled "Blowback: A Warning to Save Democracy from the Next Trump," aides alleged that Trump made lewd comments about his daughter Ivanka's appearance and discussed explicit scenarios involving her.

One of the most disturbing claims made in the book is regarding Trump's alleged lewd comments about his own daughter, Ivanka. Aides are said to have reported that Trump made remarks about Ivanka's breasts, backside, and even speculated about what it would be like to have a sexual relationship with her. Taylor reveals that John Kelly, former White House chief of staff, expressed his disgust at these comments, referring to Trump as "a very, very evil man."

The book suggests that Taylor believes Trump remains unchanged as he leads the race for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, and he fears the potential consequences of a second Trump term. The revelations in the book highlight the deeply concerning nature of the alleged behaviour and raise questions about the implications for Trump's political future.

However, many of Trump's fans supported him on Twitter, saying it's natural to fantasize about someone. We all do it! (IPA Service)

From Balaji to Bengal: Tell-tale tresses

By: Girish Linganna

Indian hair is lustrous, wavy, bouncy and lightweight, making it so popular for wigs and hair extensions. Each month, lakhs of devotees at the Tirupati Balaji temple donate their hair to the service of the Lord. At a rough estimate, devotees from all over the world donate 500-600 tons of human hair is donated at the Tirupati temple each year.

The finest quality of Indian hair, known as 'remy hair', is collected from the temples in southern India where women shave their heads as it is popularly believed that donating hair helps get rid of ego and sins. Remy hair has the cuticles still intact, which makes it look more natural and last longer. But much of the hair India exports is not of the finest quality... It is leftover hair that is often scavenged from beauty parlours, or bought, or bartered from poorer women in exchange for cash, utensils, or trinkets.

At Habi Chak village, in East Midnapore district of West Bengal state, a woman named Hasina, 35, works for five hours a day to untangle human hair. She sorts the hair into strands and makes balls with the pieces that are longer than 6 inches. She throws away the rest of the hair. She earns 7,500 rupees (US\$92) per month for untangling about 25kg of hair. Hasina had never thought she could make money from waste human hair. But now, she sells waste hair to collectors and earns a stable income.

Many poor women in West Bengal state of India work in the human hair industry. They collect and sell waste hair to make money. The waste hair industry is worth about \$1 billion and West Bengal accounts for almost half of India's human hair exports.

Hair traders collect hair balls from people like Hasina, then wash, split and arrange them by size at small workshops. The hair in the balls can be from 4 to 40 inches long. Straightening the hair involves using strands of the same length and thickness from root to tip. The processed hair is then exported to such destinations as China, the US and Europe, where it is used to make wigs and other hair products. These countries are the largest buyers of Indian hair.

In the past, Chinese companies bought hair from Indian businesses for about \$200 per kilogram. They used the hair to make wigs, extensions, eyelashes, paint brushes and fake beards and mustaches for the global market.

Chinese companies now hire local agents to buy bundles of hair from Indian traders for

a much lower price—anything from US\$60 to US\$70 per kilogram. The hair is then smuggled into Bangladesh, where it is sold for a higher price. This is causing India to lose out on tax revenue. In 2021 alone, border forces seized almost 400 kilograms of smuggled hair. After the hair balls are smuggled into Bangladesh, they are processed in local workshops and then sent to China. Sometimes, the hair balls are transported to China through Myanmar. Unscrupulous traders smuggle hair to avoid paying duties and taxes of around 30% on the import value.

Human hair was smuggled from India into Myanmar as early as in 2012. In the past five years, Chinese importers have set up processing plants in Bangladesh using cheap local labour. This has led to an increase in the

smuggling of hair into Bangladesh. Over the past three years, 561,000 Indians have lost their jobs due to smuggling. This is because numerous small hair-processing workshops have shut down in West Bengal, New Delhi, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Human hair smuggling is a new challenge for India's border security forces. They are already struggling to intercept cattle, gold and narcotics traffickers along the 4,096 km border with Bangladesh. Border security officials have seized 350 kg of human hair on the borders of West Bengal so far this year, while 1,104 kg was impounded last year. A 55-year-old woman in Kolkata sells her waste hair for ₹ 5,000 (US\$61) a kilogram to female hair collectors who regularly come to her door. The price of hair increased from ₹ 2,000 per kilogram in 2018 to ₹ 5,000 per kilogram currently due to increased demand.

Local traders often make deals with agents working for Chinese importers who pay in cash or through the hawala network, an informal system for transferring money that is illegal in India. Local traders can smuggle drugs and gold into India because they pay in cash or through the hawala network. On the other hand, Indian exporters pay only through bank transfers for larger transactions.

India is expected to miss out on a large

share of the global market for wigs and human hair, which is estimated to reach US\$13.3 billion by 2026. This is due to rampant trafficking of hair in the country. Corrupt Chinese traders are able to sell Indian hair at lower prices than Indian exporters because they evade taxes. Smaller Chinese importers are more likely to smuggle hair to bypass taxes. Most large importers are legitimate businesses.

China's hair trade relies on India's supply. While Indian exporters have been losing money, Bangladesh's official hair exports have increased. Bangladesh exported US\$113 million worth of wigs and human hair between July 2022 and May 2023. This is an increase from the US\$95.5 million exported over the same period in 2022.

China is selling products made of Indian hair in the global market, which is taking profits away from India. Chinese companies make more profit from wigs and hair extensions because they use advanced machines. Indian companies make less profit because their products do not match Chinese standards. China's profit margin is about US\$300 per kg, whereas India gets only a margin of US\$200 per kg.

The Indian hair industry could be boosted by using state-of-the-art technology and employing wig and extension experts from Europe and South Korea. Because of Indian government regulations, it has now become mandatory for all human hair exporters to get a trading licence, but some trafficking history-sheets still manage to get the paperwork they need done.

Members of the hair industry association have urged the government to instruct village councils to collect hair balls from households and sell them only to Indian exporters. The money from the sales would be used for local development and sanitation. The border forces are struggling to stop smuggling on their own. The Border Security Force has a zero-tolerance policy towards trafficking, but they need to upgrade the border fences with CCTV cameras to ensure that nobody escapes notice. Meanwhile, Hasina spends her days untangling piles of waste hair for very little money. She does not know who will eventually wear the hair or how it will get to them. (IPA Service)



UNAPOLOGETIC EXPRESSION

The 'Bra strap' as a Symbol of Feminist Resistance

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar

DISCLAIMER

"I am not a feminist, nor do I intend to be one. The Article is a result of my own 'crude', 'unforgiving' and unbiased observations, examinations, contemplations and understandings. I do not conform to labels or ideologies, for I am guided by my own observations and experiences. As an observer, I seek to understand the intricacies of the world, to question and challenge the status quo as and when necessary. I believe in the power of individuality and the importance of critical thinking. My actions and behaviours are a reflection of my independent thoughts and deeply rooted personal values, not dictated by any particular 'ism', 'emotion', 'theory' or 'holy book'. I embrace the freedom to navigate through life with an open mind, guided by my own moral compass as well as scientific lenses, and strive to make a positive impact in this eternally burning, infinite 'universe' based on my deep observations, examinations and understanding of our mortal world."

In the realm of feminine rebellion,
A symbol emerges with unwavering conviction.
The Bra strap, once concealed and shy,
Now proudly on display, catching the eye.

It defies societal norms and expectations,
A proclamation of autonomy and declarations.
No longer confined by modesty's chains,
Women embrace their bodies, freedom remains.

With each visible strap, a battle is waged,
Against the patriarchy that has long engaged.
In strength, sensuality, and self-expression,
Women rise, reshaping societal perception.

Let their audacious display inspire the fight,
To dismantle oppressive structures with might.
For the Bra strap symbolizes liberation's call,
A testament to the power of one and all.

As I sat at a restaurant in Half-Nagarjan, Dimapur, savouring my favourite Cheese Masala Dosa with a generous serving of Coconut Chutney and a bowl of 'Sambar', my attention was drawn to an intriguing sight - a visible bra strap. It seemed to be a common occurrence, as girls and women of all ages, sizes, and backgrounds confidently displayed their bra straps. This seemingly mundane fashion statement sparked my curiosity, leading me to question the societal constructs that shape our perception of femininity

and its expression. Does the visibility of a bra strap truly diminish a woman's dignity, or should we instead view it as an assertion of her autonomy and right to choose?

In a society that has long perpetuated strict norms and taboos surrounding female bodies, the emergence of the visible bra strap challenges the status quo. It symbolizes a departure from the conventional expectation of hiding undergarments and signifies a rebellion against the societal pressure to conceal aspects of femininity. It is a silent act of defiance, asserting that women have agency over their bodies and the freedom to make their own choices. The visible bra strap becomes a symbol of empowerment as women confidently display a part of themselves that was once deemed inappropriate or shameful.

By deliberately exposing this seemingly insignificant garment, women are reclaiming their bodies, acknowledging and celebrating their inherent sensuality without shame or hesitation. It is an act of self-assuredness, where women proudly proclaim, "This is my body, and I have the right to express it as I please."

The visibility of the bra strap also raises questions about feminism and its evolving narratives. At its core, the feminist movement seeks to dismantle patriarchal structures and create a society that values gender equality and equity. Feminism champions the equality and empowerment of women, giving them the freedom to make choices for themselves in their personal lives, careers, and even in the way they present themselves.

The visibility of a bra strap becomes a powerful manifestation of this feminist ethos. It signifies a woman's unwavering belief in her own agency and a refusal to be silenced or shamed for her choices.

The visible bra strap challenges the notion that a woman's worth is solely determined by her ability to conform to societal expectations. It celebrates the diversity of female experiences and serves as a reminder that feminism encompasses the freedom to express oneself authentically, even in the most subtle ways.

However, beyond the realm of feminism, the visible bra strap holds deeper significance. It is a testament to the strength of a woman, both physically and emotionally. It embodies the struggles and triumphs that women face daily, battling societal pressures and overcoming obstacles. It speaks to the resilience and unwavering spirit that resides within each woman, reminding society of the power that sacred femininity possesses.

Furthermore, the visible bra strap invites contemplation on the subject of sensuality. It challenges the notion that sensuality is something to be hidden or repressed, highlighting the beauty and allure that lies within each individual. It acknowledges that sensuality is not synonymous with ob-

jectification but rather a celebration of the human body in all its forms. The visible bra strap becomes an embodiment of self-acceptance and self-love, encouraging women to embrace their sensuality without shame or fear.

In our quest to understand the deeper meaning behind the visible bra strap, we must also acknowledge the power of personal choice. The decision to display one's bra strap is an individual expression of identity, style, and self-confidence. It is a reminder that every person possesses the autonomy to make choices about their appearance and how they present themselves to the world. The visible bra strap becomes a small yet significant manifestation of personal freedom and self-expression.

As I reflect on these observations and delve deeper into my own contemplations, I am reminded of the complexities and nuances that surround the visible bra strap. It is not simply a fashion statement but a symbol of personal strength, feminism, choice, sensuality, and the power of the human body. It challenges societal norms and invites dialogue on topics often considered taboo.

In a world suffocating under the weight of judgment and societal expectations, the visibility of a bra strap becomes a defiant battle cry. It is a symbol of rebellion, a daring act that challenges the oppressive norms that seek to confine and control women. Modern women rise above the confines of modesty and embrace their bodies as a powerful declaration of self. The audacity to proudly expose a bra strap is not an invitation for scrutiny or condemnation but a proclamation of autonomy and choice. It is a resounding "no" to the patriarchy that seeks to dictate how women should dress, behave, and exist in this world.

In this act of defiance, I witness women reclaim their bodies, transforming them into vessels of strength, sensuality, and unwavering resilience. Modern women refuse to be silenced or shamed into conformity. They refuse to be mere objects for others' gaze or approval. They reject the notion that their worth is determined by their ability to hide and diminish themselves. Modern women of the 21st century break free from the suffocating chains of society's expectations and celebrate the beauty, power, and complexity of womanhood.



The world may tremble as women challenge the boundaries that confine them. Their visible bra straps serve as a rallying cry for all women, a call to action to dismantle the oppressive structures that hold them back. Bra straps emerge defiantly, carrying within them a powerful message of liberation. Women's bodies are not objects to be hidden but canvases upon which women of today paint their stories, dreams, and desires without fear or shame. Women of the 21st century have forged a path of authenticity and self-expression, defying societal norms and carving out a space where every woman can exist on her own terms.

The visible bra strap becomes a battle flag, a symbol of women's refusal to be silenced, and their rebellion against the shackles that seek to bind them. Women wear their bra straps with pride, letting the world bear witness to their unapologetic defiance.

In collective rebellion, women dismantle oppressive systems, redefine narratives, and empower future generations of women to rise, rebel, and claim their rightful place in a world that can no longer ignore their strength, sensuality, desires, and power.

So, as I continue to enjoy my Cheese Masala Dosa while lost in deep thought at the restaurant in Half-Nagarjan, Dimapur, I do so with a newfound appreciation for the visible and courageous display of bra straps and the rich tapestry of meaning they represent. It is a reminder that beneath the surface of seemingly ordinary moments, there are profound reflections to be made, contemplations that push us to challenge societal norms and embrace the power and beauty that resides within us all. It is a reminder that through the visibility of a bra strap, we can accelerate the evolution of mankind. (The author is an academician in the Dept of Political Science, Tetso College, Nagaland)

American Independence Day 2023 celebration in professional hands

By: Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

In the fall, America is known for its stunning cherry blossoms, but year-round, it is hailed as the land of professionals. Even the celebration of Independence Day is entrusted to the management of hardworking experts. This year, after a two-year break due to the Covid pandemic, I find myself in the United States once again, specifically in Virginia, for my assignment at Virginia Commonwealth University. It's a wonderful opportunity for me to spend a sizzling July 4th with my granddaughter, Renee, who missed out on the Independence Day fireworks for the past two years.

We were incredibly excited to witness the festivities in Virginia, particularly in Chesterfield County. However, we soon learned that the Chesterfield Fire Department had urged residents to leave the fireworks to the professionals. Captain Joe Harvey emphasized that all permissible fireworks were illegal to store, sell, possess, and use. The authorities simply wanted to ensure the citizens had a fun-filled Fourth of July while keeping everyone safe.

As we made our way from our residence in Richmond to Chesterfield, we encountered many closed lanes and witnessed a strong police presence on the roads. Eventually, we reached our destination, but had to park our car quite a distance away. Despite this inconvenience, everything was organized with commendable discipline - a trait not commonly observed during our own Indian festivities. However, being in America, we embraced the American way of doing things. My four-year-old granddaughter, Renee, adorned herself as an American Princess, proudly waving the American flag and wearing princess shoes on her little feet. It was her first celebration of American Independence in Virginia, where her parents are working and settled, even though she was born in our New Jersey home.

During the journey, Renee anxiously worried about her "Babi" (Dad) and gave us instructions to reach the venue quickly. Meanwhile, we focused on finding a parking spot, unaware of the wonderful arrangements for free parking. Chesterfield County was adorned with lush greenery, and the natural surroundings were enhanced by beautiful flowers. The leaves were beginning to change colors in the summer, creating a sight resembling a forest. We noticed many people leisurely strolling through the dense trees, seemingly unfazed by the scorching sun. Finally, after half an hour, we arrived at the spot.

However, there was strict security at the gate, with police officers reminding everyone that in Chesterfield County, all fireworks, including sparklers, were illegal. Being caught with illegal fireworks could result in a Class 1 misdemeanor, leading to a fine of up to \$2,500 or even a year in jail. Captain Harvey expressed his disappointment, stating that many people were unaware of the fireworks' illegality in Chesterfield.

Over the past five years, Chesterfield Fire has responded to 27 fireworks-related incidents from July 3rd to July 5th, with nine of those incidents resulting in some form of structure fire. The safety measures put in place were praiseworthy, and the police highlighted that sparklers were just as dangerous as aerial fireworks. They explained that the wire handle of a sparkler, when ignited, could reach temperatures of up to 1,800 degrees. While children may perceive sparklers as innocent, a single misstep could result in severe burns or start a fire. Firefighters and police had confiscated numerous illegal fireworks throughout the county, and the police cautioned that most fireworks marketed towards children were deceptively portrayed as innocent and safe. Parents often purchase these items without fully understanding the potential dangers they pose when ignited.

We spent nearly two hours at the event and began to feel hungry. My daughter brought pizza and burgers, which were delicious and satisfied our appetites. We captured pictures and recorded videos, cherishing the memories. On the stage, musical performances enthralled the audience throughout the evening. The crowd was manageable, and we comfortably sat on the grass. Parents brought wagons for their children, while the elderly had folding chairs and mats for seating. The event organizers ensured there were numerous temporary toilets, along with tissue papers and handwashing facilities. The hygienic arrangements were truly commendable.

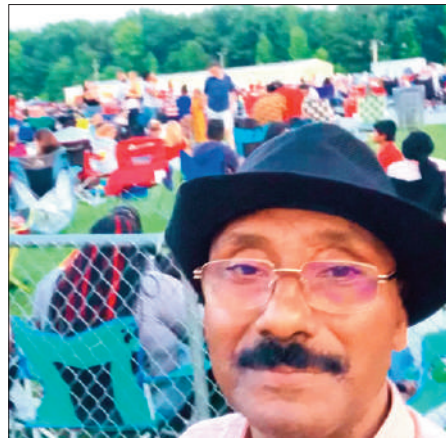
Finally, at the stroke of 9:15 pm, the fireworks began with an exhilarating countdown. The night sky lit up with a

breathtaking display of firecrackers, all closely monitored by two drones gracefully gliding through the air. The fireworks spectacle continued for thirty minutes, transforming the entire area into a magical wonderland. As visitors from India, we were fully captivated by the show, marveling at the artistically arranged pagantry. With all lights turned off, the ground was enveloped in darkness, allowing the mesmerizing lights from the fireworks to take center stage. It was a sight to behold—children waving American flags in awe and silence.

Apart from Chesterfield County, there were also popular Independence Day parades and celebrations in Dale City and the Manassas Visitor's Center. Families brought their lawn chairs and blankets to enjoy the festivities at George Washington's Mount Vernon, where an unusual daytime fireworks show was held. In the City of Fairfax, the Independence Day Parade delighted attendees, featuring high school marching bands, inflatable parade balloons, floats, and clowns. The Fourth of July Fireworks on the National Mall were equally enjoyable, as were the firework displays in Herndon, Ferry Farm, and Bready Park.

All across America, including Historic Downtown Manassas and Ripley, West Virginia, vibrant celebrations took place, each one a testament to the spirit of independence. From morning naturalization ceremonies to daytime fireworks displays, Americans came together to honor their nation's founding. The festivities featured rides for children, face painting, live music, food concessions, and an array of vendors, creating an all-American experience.

As the fireworks show came to an end, we felt a sense of awe and gratitude for being able to witness such a remarkable celebration of American independence. The memories we created with our granddaughter, Renee, on that special July 4th in Virginia will forever hold a cherished place in our hearts. (The author at present is an affiliate faculty of English in Virginia Commonwealth University and a columnist; he may be reached at profratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)



Unraveling femininity: Postmodern warrior's plight

By: Karan Chetri

In this postmodern world, where fragments collide,
I'll weave a verse, where women's struggles reside.
From patriarchal shackles, they yearn to break free,
And dance in the chaos, where truth isn't decree.

They march on, warriors, in the battlefield of norms,
Defying expectations, weathering societal storms.
Their bodies, objectified, caged in perceptions' mesh,
They seek liberation, beyond society's flesh.

Beneath the veils of gender, expectations persist,
Suffocating dreams, restraining the feminist fist.
Labels and binaries, confining their worth,
They challenge the boxes, reclaiming their birth.

In shattered narratives, their voices rise,
Untangling tales spun by oppressive lies.
Their stories unfold, defying the linear line,
Creating new meanings, where power intertwines.

In the postmodern labyrinth, they navigate,
Through twists and turns, their voices resonate.
They question the norms, the language they dismantle,
Deconstructing systems, no longer to be trampled.

No longer silenced, their words emancipate,
Shattering the glass ceiling, they emancipate.
Their experiences diverse, intersectional blend,
In solidarity, their struggles, they comprehend.

They strive for equity, for a just society,
Where gender's not confined to binary decree.
Challenging the structures, they yearn to reframe,
For every woman's worth, unburdened by shame.

In the margins, they reside, embracing the cracks,
Reconstructing narratives, mending the tracks.
Postmodern warriors, forging their way,
Redesigning the world, with every word they say.

Through hardships and trials, they carve their own fate,
Claiming spaces, they've long been denied access to date.
With fierce determination, they redefine,
A postmodern reality, where liberation will shine.

So let's celebrate their journeys, each step they take,
For women's struggles, postmodernism shall wake.
In the tapestry of chaos, their resilience persists,
A testament to their strength, in a world that insists.



Emotion

Original: Assamese:
Mawsam Hazarika
Translated by:
Dr. Birendra Kumar Sarma

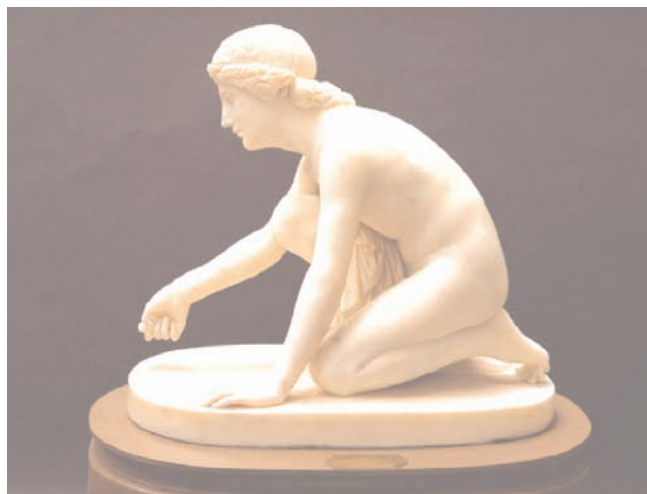
There is sea of emotion
in the mist of my bosom.
Sometimes it manifests as waves
and sometimes it ebbs.

I look at from the bank
and also count.
Waves of sea
Waves of emotion.

My mind's boat goes on
somehow floatingly.
My life boat is hidden
in the unknown horizon.

Now and then
in the sea of emotion
Sometimes tide comes up
Sometimes it comes down.

Sometimes it is full of waves
And sometimes it is still.
Can you be able to break
this covert riddle?



Ukraine's president hails country's soldiers from a Black Sea island



KYIV, July 8 (AP) Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy marked the 500th day of the war Saturday by hailing the country's soldiers in a video from a Black Sea island that became the symbol of Ukraine's resilience in the face of the Russian invasion.

Speaking from Snake Island, Zelenskyy honoured the Ukrainian soldiers who fought for the island and all other defenders of the country, saying that reclaiming control of the island "is a great proof that Ukraine will regain every bit of its territory."

"I want to thank — from here, from this place of victory — each of our soldiers for these 500 days," Zelenskyy said. "Thank you to everyone who fights for Ukraine!"

Russian forces took control of the tiny stone island on February 24, 2022, the day Moscow launched its invasion, in the apparent hope of using it as a staging ground for an assault on Odesa, Ukraine's biggest port and the headquarters of its navy.

The island took on legendary significance for Ukraine's resistance to the Russian invasion, when Ukrainian troops there reportedly received a demand from a Russian warship to surrender or be bombed. The answer supposedly came back, "Go (expletive) yourself." Ukraine has celebrated the story with patriotic fervour, issuing a postage stamp in commemoration. The island's Ukrainian defenders were captured by the Russians but later freed as part of a prisoner exchange. After the island was taken, the Ukrainian military heavily bombarded the small Russian garrison there, forcing the Russians to pull back on June 30, 2022.

The Russian retreat reduced the threat of a seaborne Russian attack on Odesa and helped pave the way for a deal to resume Ukrainian

grain exports. "Let the freedom that all our heroes of different times wanted for Ukraine and that must be won right now be a tribute to all those who gave their lives for Ukraine," Zelenskyy said. "We will definitely win!"

Intense battles continued to rage Saturday in the country's east and south as Ukrainian forces pressed their attacks against multi-layered Russian defences in the initial stages of their counteroffensive.

Pavlo Kyrylenko, the governor of the eastern Donetsk region, said that a Russian rocket strike on the city of Lyman killed six civilians and wounded another five early Saturday. The UK Ministry of Defence said in its latest intelligence update that the eastern town of Bakhmut was captured by the Russians in May has seen some of the most intense fighting along the front during the last week.

It said that Ukrainian forces have made steady gains to both the north and south of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region, noting that "Russian defenders are highly likely struggling with poor morale, a mix of disparate units and a limited ability to find and strike Ukrainian artillery." The Russian military has insisted that it has successfully fended off Ukrainian attacks in various sections of the front and inflicted heavy losses on the attackers. The Russian Defence Ministry on Saturday released footage of Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu visited firing ranges where volunteer soldiers are being trained.

Pitched battles along the front line are raging as NATO leaders are set to meet in Vilnius for a two-day summit next week to offer more help in modernising Ukraine's armed forces, create a new high-level forum for consultations and reaffirm that it will join their alliance one day.

Oppn lawmakers wasted no time in calling for fresh elections even before Rutte formally confirmed his resignation

Dutch PM announces resignation after ruling coalition fails to agree on migration policy

THE HAGUE, July 8 (AP) The Dutch government has collapsed because of irreconcilable differences within the four-party coalition about how to rein in migration, a divisive issue that has split nations across Europe.

The resignation of Prime Minister Mark Rutte, the longest-serving premier of the nation, on Friday means the country will face a general election later this year. Rutte and his government will remain in office in a caretaker capacity until a new ruling coalition is chosen.

"It is no secret that the coalition partners have very different views on migration policy," Rutte told reporters in The Hague. "And today, unfortunately, we have to draw the conclusion that those differences are irreconcilable. That is why I will immediately ... offer the resignation of the entire Cabinet to the king in writing."

Opposition lawmakers wasted no time in calling for fresh elections even before Rutte formally confirmed his resignation.

Geert Wilders, leader of the anti-immigration Party for Freedom, tweeted, "Quick elections now." Across the political spectrum, Green Left leader Jesse Klaver also called for elections and told

Dutch broadcaster NOS: "This country needs a change of direction."

Rutte had presided over late-night meetings Wednesday and Thursday that failed to result in a deal on migration policy. At one final round of talks Friday evening, the parties decided unanimously that they could not agree and, as a result, could not remain together in the coalition.

The decision underscored ideological divisions that existed from the day the coalition was sworn in just over 18 months ago between parties that do not support a strict crackdown on migration — D66 and fellow centrist party ChristenUnie, or Christian Union — and the two that favour tougher measures — Rutte's conservative People's Party for Freedom and Democracy and the Christian Democrats.

Similar discussions are going on across political divides elsewhere in Europe as migrants fleeing conflict or seeking a better life make perilous sea crossings from northern Africa to reach the continent. Hundreds of thousands of people have also fled the grinding war in Ukraine.

Migration is set to be an essen-



tial theme of European Union parliamentary elections next year, but the issue hit early in the Netherlands, a nation that has long been torn between a welcoming international outreach and increasing resistance to foreign influences.

Rutte's coalition tried for months to hash out a deal to reduce the flow of new migrants arriving in the country of nearly 18 million people. Proposals reportedly included creating two classes of asylum — a temporary one for people fleeing conflicts and a permanent one for people trying to escape

persecution — and reducing the number of family members who are allowed to join asylum-seekers in the Netherlands.

Last year, hundreds of asylum-seekers were forced to sleep outdoors in squalid conditions near an overcrowded reception centre as the number of people arriving in the Netherlands outstripped the available beds. Dutch aid agencies provided assistance.

Just over 21,500 people from outside Europe sought asylum in the Netherlands in 2022, according to the country's statistics office.

Tens of thousands more moved to the Netherlands to work and study.

The numbers have put a strain on housing that already was in short supply in the densely populated country.

Rutte's government worked for a law that could compel municipalities to provide accommodations for newly arrived asylum-seekers, but the legislation has yet to pass through both houses of parliament.

The prime minister also promoted European Union efforts to slow migration to the 27-nation bloc. Rutte visited Tunisia last month with his Italian counterpart and the president of the EU's executive commission to offer more than 1 billion euros in financial aid to rescue the North African nation's teetering economy and to stem migration from its shores to Europe.

Rutte's coalition government, the fourth he has led, took office in January 2022 following the longest coalition negotiations in Dutch political history.

The election for the lower house of the Dutch parliament later this year will take place in a polarised and splintered political landscape — there are 20 parties in the 150-seat lower house.

Japanese leaders mark one year since the assassination of former PM Shinzo Abe

TOKYO, July 8 (AP) Japanese political and business leaders on Saturday marked one year since the assassination of Japan's former leader, Shinzo Abe, with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida pledging to tackle pressing political goals as a way of honouring Abe's wishes.

At a Buddhist temple Zojoji in Tokyo, Kishida and his governing Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers, as well as representatives from opposition parties and business leaders, attended a closed memorial service hosted by Abe's widow Akie Abe and the family. Tables were set up at the temple for flower laying by the public later on Saturday.

Kishida, speaking to reporters Friday as he renewed his tribute to Abe, said he has tackled policies that could not be delayed, "as a way of honouring Mr Abe's last wishes." "I will keep working at it to fulfil my responsibilities."

Amid a national outcry over a botched



security, police have tightened their protective measures following a subsequent investigation that found holes in how Abe was guarded.

In Nara, near the site of Abe's assassination, dozens of people lined up from early Saturday to lay flowers.

The suspect, Tetsuya Yamagami, was arrested at the scene and has been charged with murder and several other

crimes, including violating the gun control law. A starting date for his murder trial has yet to be set.

Yamagami has told investigators that he killed Abe, one of Japan's most influential and divisive politicians, because of the former prime minister's apparent links to a religious group that he hated. In statements and in social media postings attributed to him, Yamagami said he developed a grudge because his mother had made massive donations to the Unification Church that bankrupted his family and ruined his life.

The investigation into the case has led to revelations of years of cozy ties between Abe's governing Liberal Democratic Party and the church since Abe's grandfather, former Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, helped the church take root in Japan in the 1960s over shared interests in conservative and anti-communist causes.

Pak assures IMF of USD 8 billion external payments: Report

ISLAMABAD, July 8 (PTI) Cash-strapped Pakistan has provided the IMF with a financing plan for external payments, in which it has informed the global lender that it will arrange USD 8 billion for the purpose instead of USD 6 billion, according to a media report on Saturday. The Pakistan government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reached a long-awaited staff-level agreement on June 29 to inject USD 3 billion Standby Arrangement (SBA) into the ailing economy after months-long negotiations that pushed the country to the brink of default.

The Executive Board of the IMF will meet on July 12 to review the SBA for Pakistan. According to sources in the finance ministry, the IMF had asked Pakistan for assurances of USD 6 billion for external payments, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

However, the sources added that Pakistan had given the IMF assurances of USD 8 billion for external payments. The sources said China would provide USD 3.5 billion to Pakistan of which Islamabad would keep USD 2 billion in deposits, while the commercial banks of Beijing would provide the country with USD 1.5 billion.

Besides, Saudi Arabia and the UAE will provide USD 2 billion and USD 1 billion to Pakistan, respectively. Pakistan will also receive USD 500 million from the World Bank in addition to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank's USD 250 million.

The finance ministry officials said the USD 350 million pledged during the Geneva Conference would also come to Pakistan. The government has set a target to raise a record-high debt-financing of ₹11.10 trillion from domestic commercial and Shariah-compliant banks in the first three months of the current fiscal year. The funds will primarily be used to pay off maturing old debt and partially finance the large fiscal deficit. This marks the third consecutive month that the government has set record-high domestic borrowing targets, indicating its heavy reliance on debt to finance budgeted expenditures.

However, this approach raises concerns as the debt has reached unsustainable levels, both domestically and externally, and calls for restructuring. To address the situation, the government needs to either reduce non-development expenditures, including cutting parliamentary budgets and curbing excessive spending or increase revenue collection. The provisional revenue collection for the previous fiscal year stood at ₹7.14 trillion, falling short of the set target of ₹7.64 trillion.

Bullied Indian-origin employee wins Royal Mail compensation in UK

LONDON, July 8 (PTI) In what is believed to be one of the largest compensation settlements for the UK's Royal Mail, an Indian-origin employee has been awarded more than 2.3 million pounds after her bullying claim was upheld.

Kam Jhuti had claimed before an employment tribunal dating back nearly eight years that she had been intimidated and harassed by her boss after she raised concerns that a colleague had secured their bonus illegitimately. The tribunal went on to find that there had been a "catastrophic" impact on her over her boss' treatment of her. "The Daily Telegraph" reports. "The tribunal makes a total award of GBP 2,365,614.13, payable by the respondent to the claimant," reads an official remedy decision added to the long-running case this week.

"Subject to the paragraph below, payment of the award is stayed pending the outcome of the respondent's (Royal Mail) appeal against the tribunal's original judgment on remedies which was sent to the parties on October 3, 2022. Both parties have the liberty to apply to lift this stay," it reads.

"Of that total award, the respondent (Royal Mail) will, however, make payment of the sum of 250,000 pounds gross to the claimant; the stay does not, therefore, apply in relation to this sum. The parties agreed that the respondent will pay this sum to the claimant within 14 days of the date of this hearing," it adds. Earlier, the tribunal had concluded that the postal service had been "high-handed, malicious, insulting and oppressive" in how it had conducted the case. A 2019 SC hearing was told that Jhuti started work as a 50,000 pounds per year media specialist at the Royal Mail's MarketReach unit based in London in Sept 2013.

However, the following month, while shadowing a colleague, she began to suspect they were not following watchdog Ofcom's guidance and also breaching the company's policy in relation to bonuses known as Tailor-Made Incentives (TMIs), which she said helped the colleague to hit performance targets and directly securing a bonus for herself and "in effect defrauding the company", the newspaper reports.

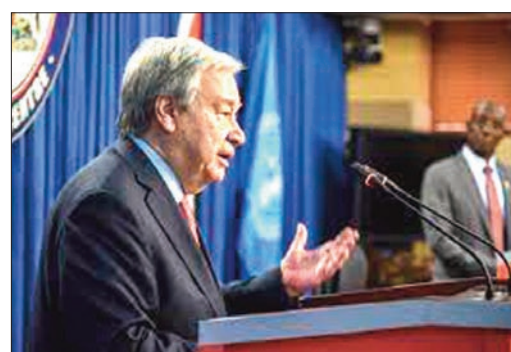
UN to keep pushing for extension of food and fertilizer exports from Russia and Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS, July 8 (AP) Top UN officials have vowed to keep working for an extension of the deal that allows food and fertilizer exports from Russia and Ukraine despite their war, pushing back at Moscow's pessimism about a renewal before the July 17 expiration.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged both countries to make global food security a priority and "help ensure that these products can reach global markets smoothly, efficiently and at scale". UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said on Friday, "Together, the agreements are contributing to sustained reductions in global food prices, which are now more than 23 per cent below the record highs reached in March last year."

Turkey and the UN brokered a breakthrough accord with the warring sides last July, which has enabled Ukraine to ship over 32 million tonnes of grain from Black Sea ports to global markets.

Moscow, however, complains that the separate UN-Russia memorandum on facilitating shipments of



Russian food and fertiliser still faces serious obstacles.

UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said Friday that the United Nations has heard repeated statements from Russia "saying that there's been no advantage to them and time's up". But as the secretary-general made clear, "this doesn't deter us from doing every-

Police have offered a \$25,000 reward for information leading to an arrest

An Afghan man who spent years helping US forces in Afghanistan is shot and killed in Washington

WASHINGTON, July 8 (AP) At 31 years old, Nasrat Ahmad Yar had spent most of his adult life working with the U.S. military in Afghanistan before escaping to America in search of a better life for his wife and four children.

He found work as a ride-share driver and even managed to send money back to Afghanistan to help family and friends. He liked to play volleyball with friends in the Washington suburb where many Afghans who fled their country now live. At 6 feet 5 inches, he had a powerful serve.

On Monday night, worried about making rent, he went out driving and was shot and killed in Washington. No suspects have been arrested, but surveillance video captured the sound of a single gunshot and four boys or young men were seen running away. Police have offered a \$25,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.

"He was so generous. He was so nice. He was always trying to help the people," said Rahim Amini, a fellow Afghan immigrant and longtime friend. He said

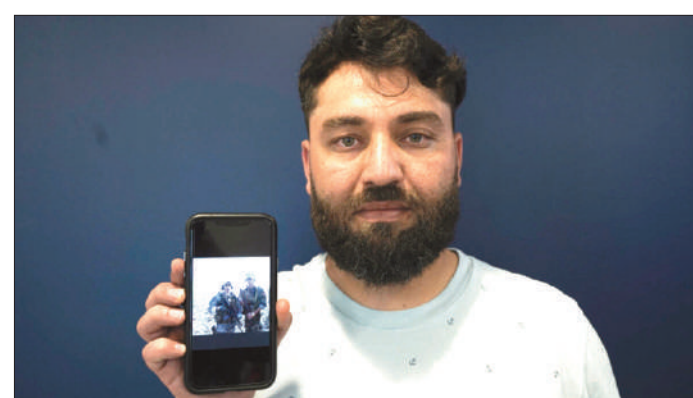
Ahmad Yar always reminded him, "Don't forget the people left behind." Jeramie Malone, an American who came to know Ahmed Yar through her volunteer work with a veteran-founded organization bringing former Afghan interpreters to safety, also was struck by his generosity.

"He always wanted to be giving more than he was receiving and he was just really extremely kind." In America, Malone said, "all he wanted was a chance."

Amini said Ahmad Yar had worked for the U.S. military for about a decade as an interpreter and doing other jobs, seeing it as a way to help pave the way for the next generation in Afghanistan to have a better life.

While the U.S. has had a Special Immigrant Visa program for Afghans who worked closely with the U.S. government to come to America since 2009, Amini said his friend didn't want to apply right away, preferring to stay in Afghanistan, where he felt needed.

He remembered Ahmad Yar saying: "I have guys here I need to support. ... When I feel that they



don't need my support then I can go to America."

Then, in August 2021, the U.S. pulled out of Afghanistan and the Taliban took over.

Mohammad Ahmadi, Ahmad Yar's cousin, was already in America after also working for the U.S. military. The two talked on the phone about how to get Ahmad Yar and his family out of Afghanistan. Ahmadi said his cousin could see the Taliban soldiers walking through the streets of Kabul and was worried they would discover he'd been an interpreter for the

U.S. military. "He said, 'I don't want to get killed in front of my wife and kids,'" Ahmadi said. When he wasn't able to get out of the crowded Kabul airport, Ahmad Yar went to northern Afghanistan in hopes of getting into Uzbekistan. When that didn't work, he and his family went to the northwestern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, where he and his family were able to get on a flight to the United Arab Emirates and then eventually travel to America.

Even when laying low in Mazar-e-Sharif, Nasrat would go out of

his way to assist other Afghans who also had come to escape the Taliban — greeting them on arrival to the strange city, bringing their families to stay with his, and feeding them, while all waited for flights out, Malone said.

"Nasrat was very different, because even though he was needing help, he was always helping me," she said. While waiting at the interim transit camp in the United Arab Emirates, he asked for writing supplies for the children so he could teach them English before they arrived in the U.S., Malone said. "It was really important for him for his kids to get an education and for them to ... have opportunities they never would have had in Afghanistan."

His eldest child, a girl, is now 13, and the others are boys, ages 11, 8 and just 15 months old.

The family went first to Pennsylvania, but Amini said his friend was robbed there and decided to move to Alexandria, in northern Virginia just outside Washington. Amini said Ahmad Yar told him he'd fled to the U.S. "to be safe and unfortunately I'm not safe

here." In northern Virginia, they both ended up being ride-share drivers and lived about two miles (three kilometers) from each other. Like many in the Afghan diaspora there, they chatted throughout the day in a WhatsApp group text. And they played in a weekly volleyball game. Ahmad Yar was really good and no one could block his serve, Amini said. Amini said they spoke Monday evening and the next thing he knew he was woken up by another Afghan friend who'd somehow heard that Ahmad Yar had been killed. In disbelief, Amini began frantically calling his friend. But it was the police who finally answered the phone: "The police officer said: 'I'm sorry. Unfortunately he's not alive anymore.'"

The police said in their report that they responded to a call about an unconscious person and found Ahmad Yar's body. They rushed him to the hospital, where he was declared dead. On the surveillance video they released, one of the four suspected attackers shouted, "You just killed him." Another answered, "He was reaching, bro."

Pilot buries the hatchet with Gehlot

'Collective leadership only way forward' going into polls

NEW DELHI, July 8 (PTI): Congress leader Sachin Pilot made it clear on Saturday that he has buried the hatchet with Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on the advice of party president Mallikarjun Kharge, saying collective leadership was the "only way" forward going into the assembly polls.

In an exclusive interview with PTI just days after the crucial Rajasthan polls strategy meeting of the party, Pilot said Kharge advised him to "forgive and forget" and move forward. "It was as much an advice as a directive."

"Ashok Gehlot ji is older than me, he has more experience. He has heavy responsibilities on his shoulders. When I was the Rajasthan Congress president, I tried to take everyone along. I think that today he is the chief minister (Gehlot), so he is trying to take everyone along."

"If there is a little back and forth, then it is not a big issue because the party and the public are more important than any individual. I also understand this and he also understands it," the former Rajasthan deputy chief minister said.

Asked about Gehlot calling him names in the past and his criticism of the Gehlot government over inaction on issues such as corruption in the previous Vasundhara Raje government, Pilot said that in a meeting with him, Congress chief Kharge said that time that has gone by will not come back and one has to look at the future.

"He (Kharge) said forgive and forget and look forward and that is applicable to everybody. I believe in that, we now have to move forward and meet new challenges. This country needs the Congress to do well. We need to seek blessings of the people of Rajasthan and in order to do that we have to work unitedly and move forward in a way that is acceptable to the people and to the party workers," Pilot said.

"So who said what, at which time, there is no point talking about it as it does not mean anything. I have always refrained from using any word or language that I feel is unpleasant or is something that I would not want to hear about myself. In public life and politics, it is always good to maintain certain dignity of discourse," Pilot said. "Next challenge for us is to win elections, neither individuals nor statements matter, those are by-gones," he said.

His remarks come after Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, AICC in-charge for Rajasthan Sukhjinder Randhawa, Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee president Govind Dotasra, he and several MLAs and ministers from the state attended a polls strategy meeting at the AICC headquarters here. Gehlot, who is recovering from injuries to his toes, attended the



meeting via video conferencing.

Following the meeting, the Congress on Thursday asserted it can win the Rajasthan assembly elections provided there is unity and warned of strict action against those not maintaining discipline and speaking outside the party forum. The party also indicated that it may not declare a chief ministerial face for the polls due later this year.

Asked about Congress general secretary in-charge organisation KC Venugopal's remarks that the party never announces the chief ministerial candidate, Pilot said, "I think what Mr Venugopal ji said is not incorrect. Every time we go to polls, it is not an individual that fights elections. So in 2018, I was the state party president and when we fought the elections unitedly we never said X, Y, Z will be the CM face. That is a decision that happens post elections."

Pilot asserted that the Congress government in Rajasthan is not about A B C, but is about the party, and the leadership of the party, national and state leadership, is a collective unit.

"Our performance and policies are not individualistic. They are based on the ideology of the Congress party, the cabinet is there, the CM is there, all of us are there... Victory and loss is not about an individual, it is about a team," he asserted.

"I don't want to add anything to what Mr Venugopal said but he is absolutely correct that the Congress party has traditionally never announced any names of individuals who would head the government because ultimately it is a parliamentary democracy where elected MLAs, leadership sit and make a decision as to who will lead the government," he said.

Pilot stressed that right now the challenge is to buck the anti-incumbency trend that has existed for about 25 years. "It is a cause of concern as to why we form the government and then we lose rather badly in the next polls," he said. Pressed further on whether collective leadership was the way to go in Rajasthan, Pilot

said, "It is the only way to go."

"I have said earlier, no one individual can actually say or claim that he or she can do the magic of winning elections. It is always a team effort. More than leaders, it is the workers, we have to enthuse the workers, they need to feel committed and involved, and as Rahul Gandhi has said that the party workers must feel involved in decision-making," he said.

Asked about his concern over anti-incumbency, Pilot said there is anti-incumbency in Rajasthan as there is in other places with every government having a certain amount of unaccomplished work.

"I believe the people understand the intention of our party and government. Every scheme the government has launched has been well received by the people. It is up to us to take those schemes to the grassroots," he said.

Pilot also batted for winnability being the sole criterion for choosing candidates for the polls and not which faction he or she belongs to.

He also called for younger leaders being encouraged and given a chance to prove their mettle at the hustings.

On what role he would play going forward, Pilot said he has always discharged his duties with utmost dedication in the past and any decision on it taken by the party high command would be acceptable to him.

He, however, added that his heart is in Rajasthan and he has never shied away from saying that.

Pilot also took a jibe at the BJP and alleged that it was grappling with infighting and confusion within its ranks.

"We are on our way to making history. It is quite possible that we will get more seats than we got last time," he said.

Gehlot and Pilot have been engaged in a power tussle since the Congress formed government in the state in 2018. In 2020, Pilot led a revolt against the Gehlot government after which he was removed from the posts of the party's state unit president and deputy chief minister.

Last year, an attempt by the high command to effect a leadership change in Rajasthan had failed after Gehlot loyalists dug their heels in and did not allow a legislature party meeting to take place.

Pilot had last month defied a warning from the party and went ahead with a day-long fast targeting Gehlot over his "inaction" on alleged corruption during the previous Raje government.

Chhattisgarh liquor revenue went up in more than four years, no scam: CM Baghel

RAIPUR, July 8 (PTI): Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday said liquor revenue in the state has gone up in the last four-and-a-half years and there is no question of any scam. Baghel told reporters that the state excise department has issued notices to three distilleries regarding the allegations about the use of fake holograms on (liquor) bottles.

A day earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a scathing attack on Congress during a rally in Raipur saying the party had promised a liquor ban in Chhattisgarh, but in reality, crores of rupees of liquor scam went into the account of the party. Queried on PM Modi's remarks, Baghel said, "Under Raman Singh's government in 2017, liquor revenue of the state stood at ₹ 3,900 crore which is now increased to ₹ 6,500 crore. There is no question of any scam."

The Congress government assumed office in Chhattisgarh in December 2018 after dislodging the BJP from power in elections.

Baghel said holograms are pasted (on bottles) in factories. "If the factory owner and any person are involved (in any irregularity), they should be investigated but the factory/distillery owners are free. "The state Excise department has issued notices to three distilleries asking if they have not used (genuine) holograms or used a duplicate hologram, then why recoveries shouldn't be made from you," the chief minister said.

TMC considers 'murders' its guarantee to power: BJP on WB panchayat poll violence

NEW DELHI, July 8 (PTI): The BJP lashed out at the TMC government in West Bengal over the violence in Panchayat polls on Saturday, saying it considers "murders" as its guarantee to power and that the state's "bomb culture" is shaming India and its democracy the world over.

Hitting out at chief minister Mamata Banerjee, union minister Anurag Thakur said she cannot preside over an election in the state "without killings and chaos". "How low will she stoop to establish her party's dominance in the panchayat polls," he asked.

In a statement, Thakur said law and order has crumbled in the state as "over 12 people" have been killed during the polls. "Under Mamata Banerjee, the TMC believes that murders are its guarantee to power. Bengal's bomb culture is shaming India and its democracy the world over," the Information and Broadcasting Minister said.

He also slammed the use of ballot boxes instead of EVMs in the polls and noted the sight of goons running away with these boxes. "Rigging is taking place and people being killed to establish dominance," he alleged.

Blaming the TMC for violence, Thakur said she should explain as to why every poll in the state is full of violence and accused the regional party of passing its accountability by apportioning blame on others.

"Democracy is being murdered in West Bengal but everyone is silent," he said, targeting the critics



who often attack the BJP on the issue of democracy.

Targeting the TMC over violence during the panchayat elections, BJP spokesperson and Rajya Sabha MP Sudhanshu Trivedi told reporters that the state used to be a centre of art, culture and science. "Now, it is known for crimes, anti-national activities and dangerous appeasement".

He alleged that the Banerjee-led government has been using criminals for violence during the elections by giving them protection.

Members of the BJP and the Left-Congress combine have been killed and such a situation has emerged that different factions of the TMC are attacking each other, Trivedi alleged.

"Violence has been going on in Bengal for years. It is not only continuing but gradually rising," he said.

Taking a swipe at the BJP's critics, Trivedi said they cannot see these murders in their opposition to the party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The situation in Bengal is a lot

like in Bihar of the 1990s, Trivedi said, accusing the TMC of tainting the polls with blood. "The state government's actions have been exposed through constitutional means," he said.

The BJP leader also praised the judicial intervention in the polls, saying things could have been worse but for these measures, including the deployment of central forces.

In a swipe at the State Election Commission, he said it had itself demanded security forces for carrying out elections but cannot decide what kind of forces there should be.

While opposition parties in the state such as the BJP have pitched for the extensive use of central forces, accusing the state police of supporting the ruling party, the TMC has often labelled similar allegations against the central forces.

Around 5.67 crore voters are likely to exercise their franchise to choose representatives for nearly 928 seats across 22 zilla parishads, 9,730 panchayat samitis and 63,229 gram panchayats.

Jharkhand MNREGA scam

SC grants protection from arrest to husband of suspended IAS officer

NEW DELHI, July 8 (PTI): The Supreme Court has granted protection from arrest to Abhishek Jha, the husband of suspended Jharkhand cadre IAS officer Pooja Singhal, in a money laundering case arising out of the alleged MNREGA scam in the state.

The court's decision came after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said he may be given the relief to look after the medical needs of his daughter.

Singhal, a 2000-batch IAS officer, is the main accused in the alleged scam involving embezzlement of public funds of Rs 18.07 crore when she was the deputy commissioner of Khunti district.

A bench of justices S K Kaul and Sudhanshu Dhulia noted that Singhal, who was earlier released in view of her daughter's medical needs, is already in custody.

"Since the petitioner husband was available to look after the medical needs of the child, this court, for the time being, asked the wife to surrender and she has surrendered," the bench said.

"ASG (additional solicitor general appearing for the ED) fairly submits that in view of the custody of the wife, in order to look after the medical needs of the daughter who requires medical attention, the petitioner (Jha) may be protected against arrest, more so, as he is also running a speciality hospital.



We take the aforesaid statement on record and dispose of the petition," the bench said in its order passed on July 5.

The top court passed the order while hearing Jha's plea challenging the May 18 order of the Jharkhand High Court denying him anticipatory bail in the case.

"Needless to say that the petitioner (Jha) will be appearing before the court where the complaint has been filed," the bench said, while disposing of the plea.

On June 23, his plea had come up for hearing before a vacation bench of the apex court which had refused to grant him anticipatory bail and posted the matter for hearing on July 5.

On May 18, the high court had dismissed his anticipatory bail plea and asked him to surrender before the court in four weeks.

"As held by the Supreme Court, in offences under PMLA rigors of

Section 45, will apply. Considering the magnitude of crime involving proceeds of crime to the tune of crores with evidence of it being carefully layered and laundered through investments, materials on record, risk of flight and for the plea taken on behalf of the ED, I do not find this a case fit for grant of anticipatory bail," Justice Gautam Kumar Chaudhary of the high court had said while rejecting his bail application.

According to the prosecution, Jha's fortunes soared after his marriage to Singhal, and ill-gotten cash, allegedly the proceeds of crime generated by the officer through corrupt practices, began flowing into his bank accounts.

Jha has claimed the money was his legitimate income from his job in Australia.

The high court had noted in its order that Jha got married to Singhal in June 2011.

Nagged to have kids, neighbour kills 3 of family in Ludhiana

LUDHIANA, July 8 (PTI): A 46-year-old man has been arrested from the Salem Tabri locality here for allegedly killing three of a family with a hammer over being pestered to have a child, police said on Saturday.

The Ludhiana Police said the accused Robin alias Munna was a neighbour of the family and the incident took place on Thursday.

Commissioner of police (CP) Mandeep Singh Sidhu told reporters here that the victims were a woman, her husband and her mother-in-law. The incident came to light on Friday morning.

Munna, an e-rickshaw driver, was annoyed as Surinder Kaur used to pester him about having a child and seeking treatment. He was offended as Kaur used to raise the issue in front of his wife, the officer said.

On Thursday morning, in a fit of rage, Munna attacked



Kaur (aged around 70), her husband Chaman Lal (75) and her mother-in-law (aged around 90) with a hammer and bludgeoned them to death, Sidhu said. Police said after his arrest, Munna did not show any sign of remorse. He also pleaded that his wife be arrested, as after him there was nobody to look after her, they said. Munna has confessed to having committed the crime, the CP said.

To make the crime look like an accident, police said, Munna opened the valve of a cooking gas cylinder and lit an incense

stick so that the room catches fire and all evidence is destroyed.

Police have seized a bag containing a camera and a mobile-phone belonging to one of the victims from Munna. The weapon used in the crime has also been seized, they said.

The hammer when examined under UV light had blood stains on it, police said.

The incident came to light on Friday morning when a milkman alerted neighbours about the victims' house being locked from inside and no one responding, they said.

Rajnath to visit Malaysia on July 10, 11



NEW DELHI, July 8 (PTI): Defence minister Rajnath Singh will undertake a two-day visit to Malaysia beginning Monday to explore ways to further consolidate the bilateral defence and strategic partnership.

Besides holding wide-ranging talks with his Malaysian counterpart Dato' Seri Mohamad Hasan, Singh will call on Prime Minister YB Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim during the visit, the defence ministry said on Saturday.

Malaysia is among a handful of countries showing keen interest in procuring India's indigenously-developed Tejas aircraft.

Tejas is a single-engine multi-role fighter aircraft capable of operating in high-threat air environments. Singh will pay an official visit to Malaysia on July 10 and 11 with focus on further consolidating bilateral defence cooperation and enhance strategic partnership, the ministry said.

"The defence minister will hold bilateral talks with defence minister of Malaysia Dato' Seri Mohamad Hasan, during which both the ministers will review defence cooperation between the two countries and explore new initiatives to further strengthen the engagements," it said in a statement.

It said two sides will also exchange views on regional and global issues of shared interest.

Regional rapid transit system depot in Ghaziabad gets its own solar power plant

NEW DELHI, July 8 (PTI): The Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) depot in Duhai, Ghaziabad will be powered by solar energy with the inauguration of a solar power plant, officials of the National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) said on Saturday.

The plant has an installed capacity of 585 kilowatt-peak (kWp), where solar panels have been installed at several depot buildings including on the workshop, they said.

As per the NCRTC, the solar plant, during its estimated lifespan of 25 years, is projected to generate approximately 6.66,000 units of solar energy per year.

The plant is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 615 tonnes annually, contributing to a reduction of 15,375 tonnes of emissions over its lifetime.

"The solar energy produced through the solar plant will be monitored and optimised

by a cutting-edge cloud-based application which will track the output on a regular basis. This advanced technology ensures transparency, efficiency, and seamless management of the solar energy infrastructure," NCRTC said.

Solar power generated by this plant will not only meet the energy requirements of the depot in its entirety but will also have surplus to use in other RRTS operations, the officials said. The solar plant positions the Duhai depot as a 'green depot'.

NCRTC had adopted a solar policy in March 2021 and as per the policy, it will increase the share of renewable energy by generating about 11 MW peak in-house solar power on the rooftop of stations, depots and other buildings for non-traction purposes, in the next five years.

"We will also optimise the energy mix to increase the share of renewable energy for



traction purposes as well. It will also strive to put in place an appropriate investment climate, that would leverage the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Renewable Energy Certificate (REC)," NCRTC said.

The RRTS is a project by the central government and four state governments -- Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan -- aimed to decongest the national capital, re-

duce vehicular congestion and air pollution, and ensure a balanced and sustainable development of the region.

As per the NCRTC, the first RRTS corridor alone is expected to reduce vehicular congestion with more than one lakh vehicles going off the roads and will help reduce air pollution by cutting down the vehicular emission by more than 2.5 lakh tonnes.

South Zone edge out North in intense finish, face West in repeat of 2022 final

BENGALURU, July 8 (PTI): Tamil Nadu's R Sai Kishore came up with a splendid all-round show as South Zone trumped North Zone by two wickets on a rain-interrupted but thrilling last day of the Duleep Trophy semifinal here on Saturday.

In the final, South will take on defending champions West Zone in a repeat of the 2022 title clash.

Chasing 215 in overcast conditions, South Zone were in the driver's seat with Mayank Agarwal (54; 57b) and skipper

Hanuma Vihari's (43; 42b) playing counterattacking knocks.

But the pace trio of Harshit Rana (3/84), Baltej Singh (2/47) and Vaibhav Arora (2/46) gave their side timely breakthroughs, while North skipper Jayant Yadav grabbed the prized scalp of Agarwal.

There were two rain interruptions, the longest was for about two hours just before the final session, when South required 32 runs with Ricky Bhui (34; 29b) and Tilak Varma (25; 19b) going great guns.

With five wickets intact, South had one foot in the final but they faced some anxious moments as they were aware that North would make the cut by virtue of their three-run first-innings lead, if there was no further play.

But play resumed and more drama followed when Rana and Baltej's twin bursts pushed South in a precarious 213/8, after they lost four wickets for just 22 runs.

However, spin-bowling all-rounder Sai Kishore, who grabbed a tidy 3/28 to dismiss

North for 211 in their second essay, played the finisher's role with an unbeaten 15 that included two sixes under pressure.

Resuming the final day at 21 for no loss, South started on a brisk note with Agarwal racing to 24 off 19 balls.

Desperately looking to break the opening partnership, North skipper Yadav brought in Arora, and the change in bowling worked as he accounted for Sai Sudharsan (17) after a 44-run opening stand.

The dismissal stopped the

run-flow as Agarwal slowed down with the strike-rate going below 100 for the first time in his innings.

Arora struck again when he trapped Samarth R for five to keep North Zone's slender hopes alive.

But what followed was a counterattacking approach from skipper Vihari and Agarwal who added 59 runs in 40 deliveries.

Rain, then, added some drama to the run-chase.

With South at 68 for two and Agarwal on 35, rain interrupted

for the first time ahead of the lunch break.

Drizzle continued as they took an early lunch break, with South still needing 147 runs.

Rain stopped and in post-lunch session, Vihari and Agarwal continued from where they left. Just when it looked like Agarwal and Vihari were in firm control, Yadav dismissed the former immediately after he had completed his half-century.

In the space of 23 runs, South skipper Vihari also followed suit, failing to capitalise

on his good start.

On a high after his maiden national call-up for the West Indies T20I series, Varma came in and took on the attack.

With dark clouds looming, Bhui and Varma's aggressive intent was expected and the duo in no time reduced the target under 50.

Just before the tea break, there was another rain stoppage with South needing 32 runs to win. Looking at the fickle weather, Rana employed some game-delaying tactics, even as South had the upper hand.

CANADA OPEN SUPER 500 BADMINTON TOURNAMENT

SINDHU, SEN ENTER SEMIFINALS OF CANADA OPEN



CALGARY, July 8 (PTI): Commonwealth Games champions PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen notched up contrasting wins to advance to the semifinals of the Canada Open Super 500 badminton tournament here.

Sindhu, a double Olympic medallist, stamped her authority over Fang Jie to register her first victory in four meetings against her opponent with a dominating 21-13 21-7 margin in the women's singles quarterfinals late on Friday night.

Later, Sen staved off a spirited fight from German qualifier Julien Carraggi 21-8 17-21 21-10 in the men's singles quarterfinal.

Sindhu will now face world number one Japan's Yamaguchi and Sen is pitted against fourth-seeded Japanese Kenta Nishimoto.

The 28-year-old from Hyderabad has a favourable 14-10 head-to-head record against the top seeded Japanese, who had beaten the Indian in their last meeting at Singapore Open this year.

Sen, on the other hand, has a

1-1 record against Nishimoto, having last played him at the 2022 Japan Open.

Sindhu looked more alert as she zoomed to a 5-1 lead early on. Her trademark smashes and drops troubled Fang Jie, who also committed lot of unforced errors. The Indian entered the break with a 11-6 lead.

Sindhu was quick on her feet and covered the court well, returning everything thrown at her with ease. With the shuttle going to net a few times, Fang Jie reduced the deficit to 10-14 and then 12-16 but Sindhu finished things with two whipping smashes.

The second game started on an even keel with Fang Jie managing a slender 5-3 lead at one stage but Sindhu quickly turned things around, reaching the interval at 11-5 with her opponent finding the net.

It was mostly a one-way traffic as Sindhu made her opponent work hard, dominating the rallies to keep moving ahead. Looking for precision, the Chinese missed the lines and soon handed over the match to the Indian with two net errors.

MIRPUR, July 8 (PTI): The Indian women's cricket team will be expecting the fresh faces to grab the opportunity with both hands and finishers to flourish in the three-match T20 series against Bangladesh beginning here on Sunday, its first international assignment in four months.

The T20 series will be followed by three ODIs beginning July 16.

The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side was last in action at the T20 World Cup in South Africa where it endured a narrow loss to Australia in the knockout phase.

In an era where most male cricketers live out of a suitcase due to a relentless schedule, the members of the Indian women's team has had a lot of time to reflect and work on their game.

The last competitive event for the Indian players was the inaugural Women's Premier League in March. India, who now have all the resources at their disposal, have not been able to take their game to the next level and match the mighty Australia on a regular basis. The team needs to improve on various aspects including fitness, bowling and the lack of finishers which come at a premium in the shortest format.

The star performers of the team over the past 12 months — pacer Renuka Thakur and wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh — are not part of this side due to injury and

fitness issues respectively, providing an opening for the rookies to impress.

The seasoned Deepti Sharma will be expected to play the finisher's role in Ghosh's absence with Pooja Vastrakar and Amanjot also needing to chip in with quickfire knocks towards the end of the innings.

Yastika Bhatia and the uncapped Uma Chetry are the two wicketkeeping options in the side.

Yastika is expected to start on Sunday and needs to bat a lot quicker than her current strike rate of 85.38.

Bangladesh should not pose a lot of problems to India but pressure will be on opener Shafali Verma who has often been found wanting against the short ball since making her international debut in 2019.

The absence of left-arm spinners Radha Yadav and Rajeshwari Gayakwad can hand maiden caps to 20-year-old Anusha Baredy and Rashi Kanoojiya. The series will also be a comeback for pacer Monica Patel and Meghna Singh will be eager to cement her place in the side after warming up the bench for the most of the last season.

Nooshin Al Khadeer, who guided India U-19s to the World Cup title and more recently the U-23 unit in Hong Kong, has been named interim coach for the tour with Amol Muzumdar's full-time appointment yet to be formalised.



Inter District Open Chess C'ship concludes



HT Correspondent

DONGKAMUKAM, July 8: 46th edition of Inter District Open Chess Championship concluded at Dongkamukam, Waisong Indoor Stadium in West Karbi Anglong. The tournament was organised by West Karbi Anglong Chess Association. The tournament started on July 4.

The Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Dr Tuliram Ronghang gave away trophies and cash prizes to the winners.

The champion was Soram Rahul Singh of Cachar with Abhash Roumya Saikia of Dibrugarh as the first runners-up and Santanu Borpatra Gohain of Sivasagar as the second runners-up. The awards were given in memory of Keshav Terang.

MP Horensingh Bey, MLA and president, West Karbi Anglong Sports Association, Rupsing Teron and Executive Member (EM), KAAC Lunsing Teron were present in the prize distribution ceremony.

West Zone storm into Duleep Trophy final



ALUR, July 8 (PTI): West Zone on Saturday entered the Duleep Trophy final on the back of a crucial first innings lead after their semifinal clash against Central Zone ended in a draw. The summit clash between West and either South Zone or North Zone will be held at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium from July 12.

Chasing an improbable 399 to win, Central could only manage 128 for 4 when the skies opened up to force the closure at tea during the Duleep Trophy semifinal at the KSCA Oval.

West, perhaps, could have gone hunting for the remaining six wickets had the weather remained clear. But eventually West were not in need of that because they had a 98-run first innings lead in the bank to garner a favourable result.

Starting the fourth and final

day from 292 for 9, West Zone could add only 5 more runs before getting bowled out.

Openers Vivek Singh and Himanshu Mantri returned to the hut without offering much fight, reducing Central to 17 for 2.

Dhruv Jurel started off well in the company of Amandeep Khare but left-arm spinner Dharmendra Jadeja had him stumped by Het Patel as Central further slipped to 55 for 3.

Rinku Singh provided some artificial excitement to the proceedings, slamming a 30-ball 40. Rinku put the West bowlers through the wringer in the last hour before lunch.

Target was bordering on impossible alright, but Rinku, who had hammered 5 sixes for Kolkata Knight Riders against Yash Dayal of Gujarat Titans in IPL 2023, would have none of it.

Jadeja suffered the brunt of his aggression, getting hammered for two sixes and one of them even landed in the KSCA (2) grounds.

Mckenzie, Athanaze earn maiden call-ups to West Indies squad for first Test against India

ROSEAU (DOMINICA), July 8 (PTI): West Indies have handed maiden call-ups to left-handers Kirn McKenzie and Alick Athanaze while bringing back burly all-rounder Rahkeem Cornwall for the opening Test against India beginning here on July 12.

The selection panel on Friday named a 13-member squad and two travelling reserves players for the series opener of the two-match series.

McKenzie and Athanaza, who has played an ODI, are in line to make their Test debut.

Besides Cornwall, who played his last Test in November 2021, left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican has been named. Warrican was in the squad which toured Zim-

babwe but missed the last tour of South Africa in February. He has played 13 Tests.

Left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie was unavailable for selection as he is undergoing rehabilitation from injury.

"We were very impressed with the approach to batsmanship of McKenzie and Athanaze on the recent 'A' Team tour of Bangladesh. These are two young players who got good scores and played with great maturity, and we believe they deserve an opportunity," said lead selector Desmond Haynes.

"We are without Motie, who is doing his rehabilitation, and this has created an opportunity for Warrican and Cornwall in the



spin bowling department. They have both played at Test match level before and are capable of doing the job.

"Kyle Mayers was also consid-

ered but he has some niggles, and the precaution is not to have him in the rigors of a five-day match at this stage."

The series will mark the start of

a new WTC cycle for both India and West Indies.

West Indies squad will travel to Dominica on Sunday following their ongoing pre-series camp at Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua. They will have training sessions on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning in the build-up to the match.

Squad: Kraigg Brathwaite (Captain), Jermaine Blackwood (Vice Captain), Alick Athanaze, Tagenarine Chanderpaul, Rahkeem Cornwall, Joshua Da Silva, Shannon Gabriel, Jason Holder, Alzarri Joseph, Kirk McKenzie, Raymon Reifer, Kemar Roach, Jomel Warrican

Traveling Reserves: Tevin Im-

ROSEAU (DOMINICA), July 8 (PTI): West Indies have handed

maiden call-ups to left-handers Kirn McKenzie and Alick Athanaze while bringing back burly all-rounder Rahkeem Cornwall for the opening Test against India beginning here on July 12.

The selection panel on Friday named a 13-member squad and two travelling reserves players for the series opener of the two-match series.

McKenzie and Athanaza, who has played an ODI, are in line to make their Test debut.

Besides Cornwall, who played his last Test in November 2021, left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican has been named. Warrican was in the squad which toured Zimbabwe but missed the last tour of South Africa in February. He has played 13 Tests. Left-arm spinner Gudakesh Motie was unavailable for selection as he is undergoing rehabilitation from injury.

"We were very impressed with the approach to batsmanship of McKenzie and Athanaze on the recent 'A' Team tour of Bangladesh. These are two young players who got good scores and played with great maturity, and we believe they deserve an opportunity," said lead selector

Desmond Haynes.

"We are without Motie, who is doing his rehabilitation, and this has created an opportunity for Warrican and Cornwall in the spin bowling department. They have both played at Test match level before and are capable of doing the job.

"Kyle Mayers was also considered but he has some niggles, and the precaution is not to have him in the rigors of a five-day match at this stage."

The series will mark the start of a new WTC cycle for both India and West Indies.

West Indies squad will travel to Dominica on Sunday following their ongoing pre-series camp at Coolidge Cricket Ground in Antigua. They will have training sessions on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning in the build-up to the match.

Squad: Kraigg Brathwaite (Captain), Jermaine Blackwood (Vice Captain), Alick Athanaze, Tagenarine Chanderpaul, Rahkeem Cornwall, Joshua Da Silva, Shannon Gabriel, Jason Holder, Alzarri Joseph, Kirk McKenzie, Raymon Reifer, Kemar Roach, Jomel Warrican

Traveling Reserves: Tevin Im-