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Spike in demand caught us off guard, admits CM

Oppn tables adjournment motion in Assembly on power scenario

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the state has nearly exhausted power generation capacity from its own sources as the huge spike in demand for electricity this year has "caught it off guard".

He said the state government has arranged for procurement of more power to meet the demand at regular rates, while long-term arrangements are being made by entering into pacts with different power generation companies.

Replying to an adjournment motion on the power scenario on the first day of the autumn session of the state assembly, Sarma said the state has witnessed a sudden increase in demand for electricity during peak hours this year.

He said that while the peak hour demand was about 1,600



megawatts in 2018-19, it was at 1,800 megawatts in the next two years and reached 1,970 megawatts in 2022-23.

"For the first time, the state saw such a huge increase in demand, which touched 2,500 megawatts

this year. Even I do not know what happened, it caught us off-guard," he said.

The CM said the state is anticipating the peak hour demand to reach 3,000 megawatts next year and 4,000 megawatts by the time

his government's term ends in 2026.

Sarma said that while the government is analyzing the reasons for the sudden spike, people's prosperity has contributed to it, along with increased business activities.

"As more industries are preparing to open factories in the state, the demand will further increase and the government is preparing to meet it," he added.

The CM said the state currently has installed its own generation capacity of approximately 400 megawatts, which will increase by some amount with the commissioning of a couple of projects from next year onwards.

"We have no more power generation capacity on our own unless we go for a coal-based plant in Margherita. But that is entangled in environmental issues and we have

to look to protect our biodiversity as well," he said.

With Assam heavily dependent on procured power, Sarma said the state government has signed agreements with different power companies, which will ensure improved availability over the years.

He pointed out that power bought from existing agreements ensures a lesser rate per unit against procurement from the open market, which the state has been forced to do this year to meet the gap.

The CM maintained that the gap has been plugged for the time being with help from the central government and there are no more scheduled power cuts anymore.

"There was some load-shedding for three to four days since August 31 when the power demand had suddenly (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Climate experts laud India's balancing act in the face of fossil fuel debate



NEW DELHI, Sept 11: Climate experts on Monday lauded India for its fine balancing act on the language on coal and other fossil fuels and getting the G20 countries to agree to the tripling of renewable energy capacity by 2030 under its presidency.

The New Delhi Leaders' Declaration released after the G20 Summit here on Saturday said the bloc will aim to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030 and expedite efforts to phase down coal power in line with national circumstances, but did not commit to a phase-out of all polluting fossil fuels, including oil and gas.

The language on coal aligns with what was agreed upon in the previous G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia.

According to a key technical report on the first-ever Global Stocktake published on Friday, scaling up renewable energy and phasing out unabated fossil fuels are indispensable elements of just energy transitions to net-zero emissions.

The leaders' declaration reflected significant progress considering the G20 climate and energy ministers in July failed to agree to tripling RE capacity by 2030 and peaking of global emissions by 2025.

However, some experts viewed the RE capacity tripling deal with-

out the backing of fossil-fuel phase-out as a disappointment for India, which relies heavily on coal for power generation and has been calling for a phase-out of all fossil fuels since COP27 last year.

"Reiterating language from the last G20 on efforts to phase down coal just maintains the status quo. Increasing renewables must be backed by phasing down fossil fuels as both are indispensable for just transitions and a net-zero world," said Madhura Joshi, India Lead at climate think tank E3G.

RR Rashmi, distinguished fellow and programme director at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), said: "The absence in the G20 Declaration of language on expansion of the phrase 'phaseout or phasedown of coal' to all fossil fuels is understandable because this needs consensus among all oil, gas and coal producing countries, both of the Global North and the Global South. Moreover, this was the agreed position at Bali (the 2022 G20 Summit) and it would not have been possible to deviate from this in view of the discussions held and positions already taken in the clean energy ministerial."

"India will be happy with the global target of tripling of renewable energy capacity because it has already (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

DYA demands re-transfer of voters to Dhansiri constituency

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 11: The Dhansiri Youth Association (DYA) has demanded that the Karbi Anglong district commissioner (DC) re-transfer voters of five villages to the Dhansiri member of autonomous council (MAC) constituency that have gone to Lumbajong MAC constituency in the last MAC elections.

In a memorandum addressed to the DC, the DYA stated that the voters of five villages namely, Ram Teron, Khorsing Timung, Borsing Timung and Sarthe Terang of Lower Dilaji Nepali Basti and Hemari Bey, whose names were originally included under the Dhansiri MAC constituency were included in Lumbajong MAC constituency.

Members of the DYA handed over the memorandum to additional district commissioner, Tinku

Moni Borah on Monday.

Originally, voters of Lower Dilaji Nepali Basti and Hemari Bey were under Ha-ih-mu polling station (PS), Ram Teron and Sarthe Terang fall under Mathiphang ME School polling station under Dhansiri MAC constituency. The voters of these villages were taken to Lumbajong MAC constituency during the last MLA and MAC elections.

With revision activities to be taken up by the Election Commission of India for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in 2024, the DYA has demanded that the voters of the five villages should be re-transfer to the nearest Semson Sing Engti LP School polling station, which is under Dhansiri MAC constituency. The re-transfer should be done before the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections commence. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Diphu MLA questions on implementation of MoS clauses

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept. 11: On the first day of the Autumn session of Assam State Legislative Assembly, Diphu MLA, Bidyasingh Englung has raised questions regarding implementation of various clauses of memorandum of settlement (MoS) 2021 that was signed between the six armed organizations with the central and state government on September 4, 2021.

Englung has raised the question regarding implementation of clause 2.3 of the MoS 21 for 34 seats reservation and 10 seats open for all in Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

He said, "Clause 2.3 of MoS-21 state that the government of India and state government will take necessary step to reserve 34 seats for ST and 10 seats for other open category for all community out of 44 elected seats in KAAC. When

will this be actually implemented?"

"Secondly, Clause 3.4 of the peace agreement mentions Karbi language to be an associate language in Assam, which should be included in 8th Schedule of the Indian constitution. I want to know whether the state government will take initiative with consultation with KAAC," he said.

Replying to Englung, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "When Karbi peace agreement was made it was mentioned that the present 26 seats of elected members of KAAC will be increased to 34. There are some reserved seats and other seats open for all categories. However, to implement it we need a constitutional amendment in the Parliament. The central government has incorporated it in the 125th constitutional amendment bill, 2019. We will

take up the matter soon with the centre."

The Chief Minister also said regarding Karbi, the agreement has mentioned that the state government will set-up a committee to decide on the demand for notifying the language as an associate language in the state. The Committee will also recommend measures to further popularize Karbi at the national level in consultation with the Karbi Literary Society and other Karbi organizations.

The CM said, "In India for a language to be included in 8th Schedule, any recognized script should be adopted. It can be a Devanagiri script, Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali or Gujarati. Roman script is not an Indian script. If it is going to use Roman script then it will not be included in 8th Schedule." He said, "On various occasions I have asked (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Assam CM urges MLAs to unitedly prevent religious fundamentalism



GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that all MLAs, irrespective of party lines, must come together to prevent religious fundamentalism from gaining ground in the state.

He urged all legislators to raise matters concerning emergence of such "negative powers", in the house for proper discussion.

Responding to the issue of purported arms training during a Rashtriya Bajrang Dal camp in Mangaldai, raised by AIUDF legislator Aminul Islam, Sarma said police have already registered a case in this regard.

He said legal action was taken by the police although there was no evidence of the use of firearms in the training camp.

"We don't have any evidence of firearms being used. Air guns were used in the training. If the AIUDF has any such evidence, they can submit to the police and due action will be taken," he said.

The CM also clarified that the Rashtriya Bajrang Dal is not linked with the BJP or the RSS in any manner, and it is an independent organization.

Sarma also drew attention to the issue of Al Qaeda trying to expand its network in the state.

"Five modules of the Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) have been busted and four Bangladeshis associated with these activities are still on the run," he said.

"The House should come together and not allow any negative power to fan religious fundamentalism," he said. The Rashtriya Bajrang Dal camp was organized in a school in (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

2 killed, several injured in Dibrugarh road accident

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Sept 11: In a tragic incident, two people were killed and several others injured after their vehicle collided head on with a truck at Leptakatta area in upper Assam's Dibrugarh town on Sunday evening.

The deceased have been identified as- Abu Bakr Dewan and Pushpa Surekha Agarwal (65).

While Agarwal was a passenger, Dewan was the driver of the car. The injured have been identified as- Satish Kumar Agarwal(45), Pompy Agarwal(42), Krishna Kumar Agarwal(25), Nirmal Kumar Agarwal(70), Namal Agarwal and Golo Agarwal.

According to sources, they were travelling in an Innova car bearing the registration number AS-01-JC 3076, which collided head on with a truck coming from the opposite direction. The truck bore a registration number of Haryana.

According to police, one of the deceased and all the injured were members of the same family and hailed from Guwahati.

"Two people were killed in the road accident. Seven family members were travelling in an Innova car, which collided head on with a truck coming from the opposite direction. The accident occurred near the Leptakatta diversion. The other family members are currently undergoing treatment in a hospital," said the officer-in-charge of the Barbaruah Police Station.

Meanwhile, the police have begun their investigations into the unfortunate incident.

"It is a very sad incident. We heard a loud sound. When we came out, we have the damaged vehicle. The injured were taken to hospital. This area happens to be accident prone and many such incidents have occurred at the particular spot due to over speeding,"

said a local resident, who did not wish to be named.

Dibrugarh SP Shwetank Mishra said, "We have seized the truck but the driver of the vehicle managed to flee from the scene. We have started investigations into the matter."

On the other hand, officials from the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited, public works department and other government officials reached the spot to inquire about the accident.

"The accident occurred due to the diversion in the area and no signage. The condition of the road is also pathetic. The accident could have been averted had the driver not got confused in absence of a signage," said a source.

In a similar incident, seven persons died on the spot after the vehicle in which they were travelling collided (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Heroin worth ₹ 21 crore seized in Assam, 3 held

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: The police have picked up three persons in Jorabat on the outskirts of Guwahati after heroin worth ₹ 21 crore was seized from their possession.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team lay seize on a vehicle in which the accused had been travelling on Sunday night. They recovered 2.527 kg of the narcotics from the vehicle, police sources said.

The contraband was reportedly hidden inside 198 soap boxes and the seizure. The arrested persons reportedly are residents of Manipur.

This is the second major seizure of contraband by the police in two days. In a similar incident the police had recovered 21 soap boxes containing heroin worth over ₹ two crore the previous day. (PTI)

Durpai residents threaten to launch agitation if village included in Assam Arunachali villagers not willing to be part of Assam

ITANAGAR, Sept 11: The people of Durpai village in Arunachal Pradesh's Lower Siang district are less than happy. They flatly refuse to be part of Assam and want to continue being part of the picturesque state.

The village apparently has been included in Assam as part of a proposal to resolve the decades-long boundary dispute between the two Northeastern neighbours.

The residents of Durpai village under Kangku circle want to stay in Arunachal Pradesh and have threatened to launch an agitation if their demand is not met soon.

The villagers under the aegis of Durpai Village Development Committee (DVDC) demanded immediate rectification of the looping system and keeping Durpai where it is now.



Though the proposals have not yet been made public, the villagers said they have come to know about it from some officials.

On April 20 this year, Assam and the Arunachal Pradesh governments signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at New

Delhi in presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to resolve their border disputes. Regional committees were formed to look after the inter-state boundary issue.

DVDC President Reli Kena said, "According to the MoU, Durpai has been clubbed with another village in such a way that it will automatically fall in Assam."

He claimed that the villagers had got assurance from various quarters that their village would remain in Arunachal Pradesh.

"But now, it seems that every single assurance has been an eye-wash. The state government should know that such acts will only create chaos in the area. How can the Durpai area have two owners, as stated under the looping system? Every single infrastructure in Durpai is (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Assam Assembly speaker accepts all adjournment motions

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Assam Assembly speaker Biswajit Daimary on Monday admitted an adjournment motion to discuss the power scenario in the state, while allowing 'discussions' on two other such motions and laying of important bills and reports in the house.

Daimary agreed to the adjournment motion as well as the discussions on the suggestion of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on the first day of the autumn session.

As soon as the question hour ended, Daimary said he had received two notices for adjournment motion on the power scenario from the Congress and from two other opposition MLAs.

Another motion for adjournment was brought by AIUDF on a purported arms training camp organized by the Bajrang Dal in Mangaldai some time back, while the fourth one pertained to the risk to river embankments that was brought by Congress MLA Sher-man Ali Ahmed.

After the MLAs spoke on the admissibility of the motions, Sarma requested the speaker to allow the motions.

He maintained that if the motions were disallowed,

the opposition parties would stage a walkout.

"This is the first time that the Assembly is meeting in its permanent hall since the capital of the state moved from Shillong. I don't want it to start with a walkout," said the chief minister.

The new building of the Assam Legislative Assembly was inaugurated on June 30 by Parliament speaker Om Birla. It was earlier functioning from an old tea warehouse, which was converted for the sittings when Dispur became the capital of the state in 1972.

Accepting the chief minister's request, Daimary agreed to allow the motions and called for a business advisory committee (BAC) meeting in his chamber, adjourning the house for 15 minutes, to chalk out the procedure.

When the house re-assembled, the speaker said that it was decided to admit the issue of power scenario as an adjournment motion, allotting one hour time each for the opposition to speak and the minister to reply.

The matters of the two other adjournment motions were taken up for discussion with only the mover speaking and the minister giving the response.

Daimary also allowed for laying of important bills and reports in the house, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

India, UK for early conclusion of free trade pact

Deliberations encompassed collaborations to secure inclusive growth and resilience, advancing climate action and forging partnerships through technology and infrastructure partnership

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: India and the UK on Monday expressed their commitment to an early conclusion of the free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries.

Addressing a joint press conference with UK Chancellor of Exchequer Jeremy Hunt, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said both sides intend to expedite the free trade agreement.

"There is definitely some discussion on the FTA, especially the investment aspects, which comes under the finance ministry, and the intention on both the sides to expedite the discussion so that some quick agreement could lead to finally signing," she said at the conclusion of the 12th India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue.

So, the keenness on both sides is to conclude the comprehensive

free trade agreement between India and the UK as soon as possible, she said.

Talking about the meeting, she said the deliberations encompassed collaborations to secure inclusive growth and resilience, advancing climate action and forging partnerships through technology and infrastructure partnership.

The UK has expressed its willingness to further expand its footprint in the IFSC-Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) and foster robust Fin-tech partnership, the minister said.

Sitharaman also said the success of the UK-India Green Growth Equity Fund is a testament to the efficacy of public-private partnerships in channelling large-scale sustainable finance.

Both countries announced the launch of the UK India Infrastruc-



ture Financing Bridge, a collaborative venture co-led by the Niti Aayog and City of London Corporation to harness collective expertise in planning and implementing major infrastructure projects.

The minister said emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelli-

gence, Machine Learning and India's new Digital Personal Data Protection Act offer ample opportunities for both nations to collaborate on frameworks for secure and inclusive financial intermediation.

Post-meeting, the UK Chancellor of Exchequer appreciated the efforts being made for the direct listing of Indian companies on the London Stock Exchange (LSE).

"We are particularly pleased to have made a big step forward with the first confirmation by India that it will explore the LSE as an international destination for the direct listing of Indian companies."

"Alongside that, there is a new Pensions and Insurance Partnership, the establishment of knowledge and expertise-sharing, and the new UK Infrastructure Financing Bridge and a deepened partnership on the developmental GIFT City. So, we can really support each other's plans to strengthen the relationship and the way the next step of this is a comprehensive FTA and Bilateral Investment Treaty," Hunt said.

Hunt also appreciated the successful conclusion of the G20 Summit under India's presidency. (PTI)

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor to make global supply chain more resilient: EEPC India



KOLKATA, Sept 11: The proposed 'India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor' announced during the just-concluded G20 Leaders' Summit in Delhi will prove to be a game-changer project and provide huge impetus to global trade, Engineering Exports Promotion Council India (EEPC India) said on Monday.

The corridor will also make the "global supply chain more resilient", EEPC India chairman Arun Kumar Garodia said.

The project seeks to connect India with Europe via the Middle East by sea and port.

This will redefine the movement of goods and services across the continents as it will bring down logistics costs and ensure quicker delivery of shipments, Garodia said in a statement.

For India's engineering exports sector, both the Middle East and Europe are key markets, and having transport infrastructure of this scale will greatly enhance its competitiveness globally, he said.

Garodia also said the investment in the transformative project will greatly boost economic activities, create jobs, and most importantly, help reduce carbon footprint.

India along with the US and several major economies on September 9 announced the ambitious economic corridor with Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasising on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all na-

tions while promoting connectivity initiatives.

The new economic corridor, which many see as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative, was jointly announced by the leaders of the US, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, Italy and the European Union on the sidelines of the G20 summit.

EEPC India noted that the inclusion of the African Union into the G20 and the announcement of the Global Biofuel Alliance are the other two landmark developments which will positively impact trade and investment, and help chart out sustainable growth paths.

"At a time when the engineering exporting community is looking for new markets, permanent member status to the African Union on the proposal of PM Modi has created significant goodwill for Indian businesses in African countries," Garodia said.

According to EEPC, India's G20 Presidency has sought to structurally transform global policy-making, especially in the areas of trade, investment, and climate and development financing.

"India's G20 Presidency under the leadership of PM Modi has delivered spectacular results. The New Delhi Declaration, which was adopted by members, is a shining example of his decisive and action-oriented leadership," Garodia added. (PTI)

Star Cement felicitates regional transporters for service efficiency

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Star Cement Limited, the pioneer cement brand of East India and winner of several Industry awards, celebrated a transporter meet on last Saturday to felicitate transporters for their dedicated support, engagement and hard work.

The Star Cement Transporter Meet 2023 presented a wonderful platform to applaud these unsung heroes and which saw a ready and enthusiastic turnout and participation from the transporters fraternity. The company awarded as many as 13 transporters with the prestigious Star Samrat, Star Ratna and Star Shree Awards, for their exceptional performance and merit.

Appreciating the transporters for their continuous collaboration and ensuring highest level of service efficiency, Pradeep Purohit, COO, Star Cement stated "Transportation facilitates the development of industries and markets and helps in expansion. Without transportation, globalization would be almost impossible as imports and exports will take longer times. Hence, it becomes our moral responsibility to honour and felicitate these unsung heroes."

"If industry be the backbone of the country logistics, then the transporters are our brain and vein", Purohit added.

The prime objective of this event was to uphold the immensely crucial role that these transporters have been playing in our lives for years, in not just keeping the industry wheels moving, but also contributing to the growth of the nation as a whole.

FCI sells 1.66 lakh tonnes wheat, only 17,000 tonnes rice via 11th e-auction under open market scheme

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: State-owned Food Corporation of India (FCI) has sold 1.66 lakh tonnes of wheat and only 17,000 tonnes of rice from the central pool through 11th e-auction last week as part of the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to control retail prices.

Last month, the government announced it will offload additional 50 lakh tonnes of wheat and 25 lakh tonnes of rice from the central pool in the open market to bulk buyer to contain cereal prices.

The food ministry, in a statement, said in the 11th e-auction held on September 6, a total of 2 lakh tonnes of wheat from 500 depots and 4.89 lakh tonnes of rice from 337 depots were offered from across the country.

"In the e-auction, 1.66 lakh tonne of wheat and 0.17 lakh tonne of rice



was sold," it said.

The weighted average selling price was ₹2,169.65 per quintal for FAQ (fair and average quality) wheat against the reserve price of ₹2,150 per quintal pan-India, whereas weighted average selling price of URS (Under Relaxed Specifications) wheat was ₹2,150.86 per quintal against the reserve price of ₹2,125 per quintal. In case of rice, the weighted average selling price

was ₹2,956.19 per quintal as against the reserve price of ₹2,952.27 per quintal pan-India, it added.

To encourage participation of small retailers to ensure reduction in retail prices, the ministry said FCI is offering a maximum of 100 tonnes of wheat and 1,000 tonnes of rice to a buyer.

This decision was taken to encourage small and marginal end-users and to ensure more participant could come forward and bid for the quantity from their depot of choice, it said. In order to avoid hoarding, big traders were kept out from the ambit of wheat sale under OMSS (D) and regular checks/inspections are being carried out at flour mills of the processors who have purchased wheat under the scheme. (PTI)

Mother's Recipe unveils revamped website

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Mother's Recipe, India's foremost food brand, proudly announced the grand launch of its newly redesigned website. This momentous transformation signifies a significant stride in the brand's ongoing mission to become the premier Indian food brand, offering an extensive range of top-quality products that cater to the diverse needs of its cherished customers.

The newly unveiled website by Mother's Recipe presents a fresh and contemporary look, combined with an enriched shopping experience. The redesigned website features a modern aesthetic that enhances navigation and product

discovery, making it more intuitive and visually appealing for visitors. Customers can now effortlessly explore an expanded array of offerings, resulting in an overall improved shopping experience.

Beyond its sleek appearance, Mother's Recipe's revamped website prioritizes convenience. With a remarkable 99% order success rate, customers can trust that their purchases will be processed swiftly and accurately. The website now accommodates various payment methods, including UPI and digital wallets, catering to diverse preferences. The checkout process has been streamlined, eliminating unnecessary complications and simplifying the path to completing a

purchase. Furthermore, the addition of multilingual capabilities ensures that the website is accessible to a wider audience, embracing diversity and inclusivity. Sanjana Desai, Executive Director of Mother's Recipe, commented on the launch, stating, "Our business naturally evolved into the ever-expanding and rapidly growing eCommerce space due to its increasing acceptance, especially among millennials, for their daily needs. The new digital platform is designed to offer our customers an enhanced buying experience. It aims to combine the speed and convenience of eCommerce transactions with the trust and reliability that the Mother's Recipe brand embodies."

UBI launches interoperability of Central Bank digital currency with UPI

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Union Bank of India, a prominent player in India's public sector banking landscape, announced a groundbreaking development on September 5, 2023. The bank unveiled the interoperability of India's Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) under the supervision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Union Bank of India has been at the forefront of innovation by seamlessly integrating its digital e-rupee with the UPI platform, solidifying its position as a pioneer in this domain. With this exciting integration, Union Bank of India's customers gain the ability to scan any merchant's UPI QR Code directly from the bank's Digital e-rupee Wallet. This allows them to initiate secure payments to the merchant directly into their UPI-linked accounts. This innovative feature empowers merchants to accept payments via both UPI and Union Bank's Digital e-rupee through a single QR Code. This eliminates the need for multiple QR codes for payment collections, streamlining the payment process. Currently, this facility is enabled for Peer-to-Merchant (P2M) and Peer-to-Peer Merchant (P2PM) transactions.

Mahadev Deka inaugurates new dry fruit outlet in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Afghan Baghban Dry Fruit Hub, a renowned name in the world of premium quality dry fruits, marked a significant milestone with the grand opening of its second outlet in Guwahati on Monday.

Located in the bustling Ulubari area, the newly opened store boasts an exquisite selection of premium dry fruits sourced from exotic destinations such as Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey.

While inaugurating the outlet Mr Universe (2009) Mahadev Deka emphasized the nutritional value of dry fruits and stated, "Dry fruits are loaded with nutrients and help boost our immunity.

Everyone must include them in their daily diet. Having a few soaked almonds every morning or munching a handful of walnuts and cashews during the day to beat hunger pangs will surely help us in our journey towards good health."

Aman Khan, the Founder of Afghan Baghban Dry Fruit Hub, shared his enthusiasm at the launch, and said, "We have been in this business for generations and are here to cater to the needs of health enthusiasts in Guwahati by offering organic dry fruits sourced from all over the world. Witnessing the warm reception of our first store in Hatigaon, we decided to establish this second outlet."



Pulses sowing down 8.58 pc so far in this kharif season due to monsoon deficit

Total area sown to paddy remained higher at 403.41 lakh hectares till September 8 of the ongoing kharif season, as against 392.81 lakh hectares in the year-ago period

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: Area sown to pulses remained lower by 8.58 per cent at 119.91 lakh hectares till last week of the ongoing kharif season due to 11 per cent monsoon rain deficit in the country, according to the agriculture ministry data.

Sowing of kharif crops begins with the onset of the southwestern summer monsoons that occur from June through September.

Paddy is the main kharif crop, besides pulses, oilseeds, cotton and sugarcane.

As per the data released by the agriculture ministry, total area sown to paddy remained higher at 403.41 lakh hectares till September 8 of the ongoing kharif season, as against 392.81 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

However in case of pulses, the sowing was lagging and coverage was lower at

119.91 lakh hectares as against 131.17 lakh hectares in the said period a year ago.

Pulses acreage was down maximum in Madhya Pradesh, followed by Karnataka, and Maharashtra.

In Madhya Pradesh, the pulses acreage remained less at 19.72 lakh hectares till September 8 of the ongoing kharif season as against 23.44 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

Pulses coverage remained lower in Karnataka too at 16.70 lakh hectares as against 20.07 lakh hectares, while that in Maharashtra at 16.15 lakh hectares as against 18.89 lakh hectares in the said period.

But the pulses coverage in Rajasthan remained higher at 35.30 lakh hectares so far this kharif season as against 33.99 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

This could compensate slightly the lag



in other major producing states.

As per the data, area under tur was down at 42.92 lakh hectares till September 8 of this kharif season as against 45.61

lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

Urad coverage was also lower at 31.89 lakh hectares as against 37.08 lakh hectares, while moonbean was sown in less area at 31.11 lakh hectares as against 33.67 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

Kulthi was sown in 31,000 hectares, while other pulses in 13.68 lakh hectares till September 8.

The pulses coverage remained lower due to lack of rains at the time of sowing.

As per the MeT Department, there was 11 per cent deficit in monsoon rains in the country between June 1 and September 6.

There was 12 per cent deficit in monsoon in central India and 11 per cent deficit in rainfall in south peninsula during the said period.

According to the ministry data, coarse cereals was sown in 182.21 lakh hectares

so far, marginally higher than 181.24 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

Oilseeds were sown in 191.49 lakh hectares so far, marginally lower than 193.30 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

Among cash crops, area sown to sugarcane increased to 59.91 lakh hectares till September 8 of the current kharif season as against 55.65 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

But area sown to cotton remained marginally lower at 125 lakh hectares and jute/mesta at 6.57 lakh hectares so far in the current kharif season.

Total area sown to all kharif crops remained flat at 1,088.50 lakh hectares till September 8 of the current kharif season as against 1,088.02 lakh hectares in the year-ago period, the data showed. (PTI)



MUMBAI, Sept 11: Benchmark Sensex jumped by 528 points to regain the 67,000 level while Nifty scaled the record 20,000 mark for the first time as robust buying by domestic investors helped equity markets extend the winning run to the seventh straight session on Monday.

The successful G20 summit and buying in index majors Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank also added to the winning momentum in equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex regained the 67,000 level. The benchmark jumped 528.17 points or 0.79 per cent to settle at 67,127.08. During the day, it rallied 573.22 points or 0.86 per cent to 67,172.13.

The Nifty hit its all-time high of 20,008.15, a gain of 188.2 points or 0.94 per cent, in day trading. The 50-issue barometer closed just below the 20,000 mark at 19,996.35, reflecting gains of 176.40 points or 0.89 per cent.

"Nifty has finally managed to touch the much-anticipated 20,000 mark in the second attempt post-July 2023. Robust flows from local investors amidst mixed/negative flows from foreigners have helped Nifty achieve this landmark."

"Successful achievements recently in space and foreign diplomacy by India has boosted sentiments for Indian stocks generally in an era when the global situation is still shaky," said Dhiraj Relli, MD & CEO, HDFC Securities Ltd.

Among the Sensex firms, Axis Bank, Power Grid, Maruti, State Bank of India, Tata Motors, ITC, Nestle

and Mahindra & Mahindra were the major gainers.

Bajaj Finance and Larsen & Toubro were the laggers.

"The domestic markets began the day on a positive note, bolstered by the historic consensus achieved at the G20 summit, which instilled confidence among investors. Higher-than-expected loan growth data and strong profitability along with lower NPA in PSU banks attracted investor interest."

"Additionally, expectations of easing inflation, driven by a decline in vegetable prices, fueled optimistic sentiment, leading to a market rally," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

India on Saturday pulled off a big diplomatic win after the G20 summit adopted a consensus declaration overcoming major differences on the Russia-Ukraine war, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for ending "global trust deficit".

Modi also announced that African Union was admitted as G20's permanent member.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.20 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.70 per cent.

All the indices ended with gains, with services rallying 3.01 per cent, utilities jumping 2.43 per cent, telecommunication (2.32 per cent), power (2.04 per cent), auto (1.59 per cent), bankex (1.06 per cent), commodities (0.97 per cent), financial services (0.94 per cent) and metal (0.93 per cent).

A total of 2,107 stocks advanced while 1,665 declined and 170 remained unchanged. As many as 370 firms hit their 52-week high while 17 fell to their one-year low.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Shanghai ended with gains while Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower.

European markets were trading in the green. The US markets ended in positive territory on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.23 per cent to USD 90.35 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark had jumped 333.35 points or 0.50 per cent to finish at 66,598.91 on Friday. The broader Nifty advanced 92.90 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 19,819.95.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹224.22 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sri Sarbong Tokbi, S/o Sri Wilson Tokbi, an inhabitant of village Rukasen, P.O. & P.S., Diphu, district Karbi Anglong, Assam, do swear this affidavit before the Notary Public, District Judicial Court, Karbi Anglong, Diphu, declaring that both the names mentioned above as Sri Sarbong Tokbi and Sri Sarbong Tokbi Timung are the names of one and single individual person known by different names, but not different person who is myself and also that from today onwards I shall be known only as Sri Sarbong Tokbi instead of Sri Sarbong Tokbi Timung.

Youngest sister of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong founder passes away

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 11: The youngest sister of late Semson Sing Ingty, the founder of erstwhile Mikir Hills district now Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong district, Maya John Ingty breathed her last this morning around 7:30 am at Bethany Hospital, Shillong. She is 91 years old.

Late Maya John Ingty was born on March 16, 1932 to Thengkursing Ingty and Ruth Madhabi Bezbaruah and brought up at Tika village in West Karbi Anglong district. She graduated from Cotton College, Guwahati in 1950 and did M. Ed. from Al-lahabad University.

Later, she married Shanti Kumar Austin John (Ex Principal Union Christian College, Barapani, Shillong) in 1958. She left behind her three sons Anand David Ingty John, Ashish Josiah Ingty John and Anup Somu Ingty John.

Getting the news of the sudden demise of Ingty the Executive Member (EM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, in-charge Education, Richard Tokbi in his handled facebook page expressing his condolence message wrote, "It gives me an extreme heartache and pain to learn about the sad demise of Maya Engtupi (91 years), daughter of late Thengkursing Engti and the youngest sister of Ru. Semson Sing Engti, the founder of founder of Karbi Anglong district, who passed away this morning from old-age complications. She had helped us in acquiring the land for the construction of Karbi Hemtun in Shillong and



always opened her warm generous door to help others in need. Her inestimable contribution to the society will always be remembered. Prayer for eternal peace to the departed soul and share my condolences with the aggrieved family members"

The mortal remains of late Ingty will be laid to rest at All Saints Cathedral Cemetery in Shillong on Wednesday at 1pm, family sources informed.

Election to KSA regional committees conducted

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 11: Election to four regional committees of Karbi Students Association (KSA – Inglongpho) for the next two year term 2023 to 2025 was conducted at their respective regional committees on Monday.

The four regional committees are Diphu, Bokajan, Hamren and Howraghat. For Diphu regional committee the election was conducted at KSA central executive committee office here at Rongthe-ang.

Soon after the cast of votes was ended and counting of votes took place. Announcing the result by the Polling Officer of the Election Committee former general secretary, Budho Terang announced that Out of 85 votes casted 5 were rejected. Litonsing Timung got 49 votes and was elected for the post of president, while Nelson Timung secured 31 votes and was elected for the post of secretary. The members of 32 KSA branches under Diphu regional committee casted their votes.

The remaining posts and executive members will be formed later, Terang informed. Like Diphu, other regional committees also conducted elections today, he said.

After declaring the result, the newly elected president and secretary of Diphu regional committee Litonsing Timung and Nelson expressed their desire to work for the cause of student's community and fight against various social issues.

World Suicide Prevention Day observed

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Sept 11: Tezpur Medical College observed World Suicide Prevention Day on Monday. Dr Lokendra Sharma from Rajasthan University of Health Sciences addressed the program, discussing the problems related to suicidal events. He emphasized the importance of early detection of depression and anxiety, which can make individuals vulnerable to taking extreme steps. Interventions to prevent suicidal cases should focus on these aspects. Dr Sharma also stressed the significance of communication in preventing suicidal rates. During the event, students of the college interacted with faculty members and shared their experiences, providing an opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts.

Assam Women's University celebrates 10th Foundation Day

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Sept 11: Assam Women's University celebrated its 10th Foundation Day with various events and discussions. Chancellor of Gijrananda Chowdhury University, Guwahati, Professor Alak Kumar Buragohain, emphasized the importance of liberal arts education in today's higher educational institutions during his address as the chief guest. He highlighted that liberal arts aim to liberate one's mind from prejudices, foster critical thinking, and enable individuals to raise important issues in public.

Dr Buragohain also noted that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 does not specifically emphasize women's education, pointing out the need to address this in education policies.

The event included the hoisting of the university flag by Professor Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar, Vice Chancellor of Assam Women's University. A meeting was organized in connection with the foundation day, where Professor Rajkonwar discussed recent developments in various aspects of the university and acknowledged the contributions of those involved in its inception and growth since 2014.

Students also shared their experiences at the university during the event. Tapan Kr. Gohain, Registrar of Assam Women's University, delivered the welcome address, and the program was moderated by Begum Afrin Zaman, Assistant Professor in the Department of Physiotherapy. Faculty members, staff, students, and research scholars attended the meeting.

Closing session of 90-day child protection campaign held

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 11: The closing ceremony of the 90-day campaign on child protection, titled 'Suroxito Xaishab, Sonali Axom' (Successful Childhood, Golden Assam), was organized by the District Child Protection Unit, Nagaon, in collaboration with the District Administration and with the support of the State Child Protection Society, Department of Women and Child Development, Assam. The event took place at Kiranbala Goswami Balika Vidyapith in Nagaon.

District commissioner of Nagaon, Narendra Kumar Shah, attended the event as the chief guest and emphasized the importance of protecting and nurturing children for a better future and a stronger nation. He reiterated the role of society as a whole in bringing about necessary social change to create a better environment for children and to combat issues such as child marriage, drug abuse, and other related crimes.

The program included a presentation highlighting the various activities conducted by the District Child Protection Unit during the 90-day campaign. These activities included street play performances addressing the issues of child labor, signature campaigns, special drives, and rescue operations related to child labor, which resulted in the rescue of 9 children during the campaign. There were also special activities for the residents of Children's Homes and a presentation on the structure and workings of children's homes in the district.

The closing session featured cultural performances, including chorus and dance by students of Kiranbala Goswami Balika Vidyapith, as well as yoga, dance, and taekwondo by children from the State Home For Women & Children in Nagaon, and a dance performance by the children of Butterfly Children Home in Rangalo.

Several officials were present at the ceremony, including Nagaon superintendent of police Navaneet Mahanta, CEO of Nagaon Zilla Parishad Ananta Kr Gogoi, additional district

commissioner Phyllis V L Hrangchal, joint director of Health Services Nagaon Dr Arupjyoti Mahanta, Nagaon district child protection officer Anjali Arya, and the principal of Kiranbala Goswami Balika Vidyapith, Nagaon. The event was attended by teachers, staff, and students of Kiranbala Goswami Balika Vidyapith, along with officials from the Nagaon district administration. The 90-day campaign on child protection aimed to raise awareness about child rights and protection while engaging the community in efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of children in the district.

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It is for general information to all concerned that edit option is given for the applicants in the HRMS portal (<https://hrmsassam.in>) who opted for transfer to the districts of low PTR viz. Kamrup, Kamrup Metro, Charaideo, Sivsagar and Dima Hasao to mention their desired High PTR districts. But there will not be any provision to opt Block/School preferences to the applicants.

If the server takes time for uploading the edit option, applicants can communicate through email (ttmseditdist@gmail.com).

The last date of verification of Single and Mutual Teacher Transfer applications is 16th September, 2023 in the HRMS portal by all districts.



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QUOTE OF THE DAY

One cannot and must not try to erase the past merely because it does not fit the present. - Golda Meir

Business-govt links in India

In the realm of Indian politics, there has been a recent clamor from the political opposition to establish a connection between businessman Gautam Adani and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, expecting a response from the Prime Minister on such allegations is unrealistic. Business leaders forging links with Indian prime ministers is a time-honoured tradition, and history bears witness to it. Decades ago, the late JRD Tata accused the Indira Gandhi government of stalling the growth of Tata Steel. Indira Gandhi chose not to respond. Similarly, during the tenure of Prime Ministers HD Deve Gowda and Inder Kumar Gujral, civil aviation minister Chand Mahal Ibrahim effectively scuttled the Tata-Singapore Airlines project. No one demanded a statement from Deve Gowda in response. It's worth noting that business-government connections are not unique to any particular government in India. Economic policy decisions have always had a significant impact on business houses. The meteoric rise of the Adani group during the current government's rule is indeed noteworthy, but not unprecedented in India. The Ambanis have benefited from government policies spanning generations, from Indira Gandhi to the present.

Recent allegations of Adani share price manipulation, inflated share prices, and offshore operations in Mauritius have surfaced. However, these allegations do not automatically implicate the Indian government or Prime Minister Modi personally. Inflated share prices can enable promoters to borrow more funds, but it's the responsibility of lenders to assess the true value of stock mortgages. Moreover, the connection between business and government is a natural occurrence in any country with a closely intertwined relationship between the two. The recent government decision to restrict imports of laptops, desktop computers, and tablets raised questions about its potential impact on Reliance's JioBook. While some speculate on a hidden agenda, the opposition has remained surprisingly silent on the issue. Looking back at India's pharmaceutical industry, a handful of local manufacturers managed to gain government support to drive out multinational giants in the 1970s and 1980s. Today, India stands as a top drug manufacturer and exporter. This raises questions about the political opposition's stance on government-industry links in domestic drug price fixing.

The history of business-government ties in India is as old as the country's independence. In the 1950s, the government, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, curtailed the growth of established Indian business groups under the Monopolies Act. However, innovative private investors, like the late Dhirubhai Ambani, gradually transformed the business-government landscape. In the realm of politics, corruption allegations may not be a strong enough issue to challenge the Modi government, especially considering the questionable backgrounds of some opposition leaders. Instead, the opposition could focus on specific governance issues if they hope to gain traction in the lead-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha election. The connections between business and government have deep historical roots in India. While allegations and suspicions may arise, it is essential to approach them with a sense of perspective and objectivity. The political opposition would do well to concentrate on pressing governance issues if they aim to present a formidable challenge to the ruling BJP in the upcoming election. Amid India's complex political landscape, it is imperative that the focus remains on constructive and forward-looking solutions to the myriad challenges facing the nation. India's potential is vast, and it can only be fully realized when all stakeholders work together to build a brighter future for the country.

Nothing new from Stalin's family

By: Er.Rajesh Pathak

Tiruvannamalai is the district of Tamil Nadu where lies the Arunachalam Parvat, whose height is 814 m. In Tamil tradition it is regarded as 'Gyanprakashase deeptparvat' ('The Mountain illuminated with the light of wisdom'). Maharshi Raman chose the same land to spend the life of austerity. Local inhabitants tell that in the mountain once there had been as many as 40 temples of god Vishnu; and, 63 of Mahadeva. But ever since the evil-eyes of Christian missionaries lay on this mountain its cultural landscape has begun to undergo distortion.

Missionary had already encroached upon 5 acres of land and built the Church, 'Carmel Mountain Matha Temple', here sometimes back. But now the encroachment has reported to have extended to the vast area as large as 27 acres! Thus, one needs not to be shocked from Udayanidhi Stalin's recent diatribe against Sanatan Dharma.

Son simply went on emulating his father, moreover. Just see yourself. MK Stalin was also notably there in the opposition led first meeting in Patna, where he proclaimed before others to be organized to save 'Secularism', to save Christian-Muslim minority. But the reality of the state of TN and Stalin might shock your secular sensitivities.

In the last election of 2020 the Church declared open support to DMK. And since when the Stalin's government formed in the State, the entire government machineries itself have set out to track the path shown by the Church in return. After winning the election Stalin was reported to have paid curtesy visit to a church and said that his government had been formed only by them (Christians). Of late one self-proclaimed woman Chris-



tian activist and writer has created the sensation saying that if the growth of BJP has to check in the state the activities of conversion to be run by missionaries has to be geared up more. The result of all this is there for all to see!

Nagapatanam in particular and many other districts of Tamil Nadu in general are the places where the worship and other rituals in the number of temples have come to stop, and people avoid visiting there. Engaged in the protection of the temples, the Temple Worshiping Society reports that like Tanjavar's historic Shiv temple and Ganesh temple many of the religious sites have either been encroached upon or allotted by the government itself to the different educational institutions, govt. outfits and such others.

On contrary no such courage government tries to show when it comes to Muslims and Christian religious places. Things, more notably, have got to be so worsened that even the lands of Hindu-faith, Kanyakumari and Rameshwaram, are no exception to encroachments and religious conversions today! (Panchjanya) *(The author can be reached at rajeshpathakbpt@rediffmail.com)*

Northeast India's forests: The complex intersection of laws & rights

The Mizoram Assembly, on August 22, unanimously passed a resolution opposing the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, aimed at safeguarding the rights and interests of Mizoram's people. This amendment permits the use of forest land for infrastructure projects near India's international borders without the need for forest clearance, impacting most of India's Northeast. Next week, the Nagaland Assembly will face similar pressure to denounce the Amendment, while Tripura, Mizoram, and Sikkim, governed by the BJP or its allies have already voiced their opposition to the 100km exemption clause.

The application of the Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA) in the Northeast region is contingent upon special constitutional safeguards, like Article 371A for Nagaland and 371G for Mizoram. These provisions prevent the imposition of any Parliament-enacted law that interferes with Naga and Mizo customary practices, land ownership, and resource transfer. Such legislation can only be extended to these states if their Legislative Assemblies pass a resolution in favor of it.

In 1986, Nagaland extended the Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA) to cover "government forests and such other forests and Wildlife Sanctuaries under the control of the State Government," even though government forests constituted just 2.71% of the state's Recorded Forest Area. However, in December 1997, the Home Ministry, in consultation with the Ministry of Law and Justice, affirmed to the Union Environment Ministry that the FCA did not apply to Nagaland since its Legislative Assembly hadn't passed a resolution for its application. This stance was later contradicted in November 1998 when the Environment Ministry informed Nagaland that the FCA did apply, following clarification from the Ministry of Law and Justice. Despite these developments, the Environment Ministry has not granted FCA clearance to forests in Nagaland since 1980.

Unlike Nagaland, Mizoram's legal framework differs. In 1986, it transitioned from a Union Territory to a State through the 53rd constitutional amendment, which introduced Article 371G. This amendment extended all Central Acts, including the For-

est (Conservation) Act (FCA), to the state. Furthermore, the authority of Autonomous District Councils in Mizoram's Sixth Scheduled areas doesn't encompass reserved forests. Consequently, the FCA applies to 84.53% of non-notified forest areas in Mizoram, with 6,630 hectares having obtained FCA clearance to date.

The Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA) is applicable in the remaining Northeastern states, including Meghalaya and Tripura, along with their Sixth Schedule Areas, as well as Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Manipur. Among these states, Arunachal Pradesh leads in FCA clearances with 21,786.45 hectares, followed by Tripura (9,051 ha), Assam (5,261 ha), Manipur (3,604 ha), Sikkim (2,902 ha), and Meghalaya (807 ha).

The term "RFA" refers to Recorded Forest Area, and since 1980, over a million hectares of forest have been diverted across India under the Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA). The FCA is aimed at deforestation under the Indian Forest Act of 1927 and its State variations. In 1996, the Supreme Court's Godavarman case broadened the definition of "forest land" under the FCA to include areas recorded as forest in government records, encompassing unclassified forests - those recorded as forests but not officially designated as such. In the Northeast, more than half of the region falls under the Recorded Forest Area, with 53% being unclassified forests governed by customary law and the remainder being notified forests under the control of State Forest Departments.

The Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA) applies to the entire Northeast region, including Meghalaya and Tripura, as well as their Sixth Schedule Areas. It also covers Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Manipur. Among these states, Arunachal Pradesh leads in FCA clearances with 21,786.45 hectares, followed by Tripura (9,051 ha), Assam (5,261 ha), Manipur (3,604 ha), Sikkim (2,902 ha), and Meghalaya (807 ha).

"RFA" refers to Recorded Forest Area, and since 1980, over a million hectares of forest have been diverted across India under the Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA), which seeks to deforest



under the Indian Forest Act of 1927 or its State counterparts. In 1996, the Supreme Court, in the

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

Godavarman case, broadened the definition of "forest land" in the FCA to include any area recorded as forest in government records, encompassing unclassified forests - those recorded as forests but not officially designated as such. In the Northeast, more than half of the region falls under Recorded Forest Area, with 53% being unclassified forests controlled by individuals, clans, village councils, or communities and governed by customary law and procedures, while the rest is notified forest under the control of State Forest Departments.

Recorded Forest Area (RFA) varies across Northeastern states, ranging from 34.21% in Assam to 82.31% in Sikkim, with Mizoram at 35.48%, Meghalaya at 42.34%, Nagaland at 53.01%, Arunachal Pradesh at 61.55%, Manipur at 78.01%, and Tripura at 60.02%. Among these, unclassified forests, which are not officially designated as forests, range from absent in Sikkim to 97.29% in Nagaland, with percentages of 15.47% in Mizoram, 33.43% in Assam, 42.96% in Tripura, 75.67% in Manipur, and 88.15% in Meghalaya.

In 1996, the Supreme Court's ruling extended the Forest (Conservation) Act's jurisdiction to unclassified forests nationwide. Furthermore, there exist forests beyond the Recorded Forest Area (RFA), which have neither been recorded nor surveyed, comprising 38.5% of Assam's forests, 29% in Nagaland, and 1.5% in Mizoram.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest

Rights) Act (FRA) of 2006 defines "forest land" to encompass various types of forest areas, including unclassified forests, undemarcated forests, existing or deemed forests, protected forests, reserved forests, Sanctuaries, and National Parks. This definition aligns with the Supreme Court's 1996 redefinition, providing recognition and rights to forest-dwelling communities.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA) extends benefits to most Northeastern states, particularly those with substantial unclassified forests. The FRA also includes a provision allowing for the recognition of rights established under state laws, autonomous district councils, regional councils, or customary tribal laws. These states have the flexibility to proactively acknowledge these existing rights and seek Gram Sabha approvals to grant titles. Additionally, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs can issue legally binding directives under Section 12 of the FRA, providing an additional layer of legal protection for traditional community forest tenure rights.

Most Northeastern states, with the exception of Assam and Tripura, have not implemented the FRA. This is attributed to the perception that the FRA is irrelevant due to the predominant ownership of land by communities, clans, chiefs, and individuals, who already enjoy their rights, as well as the limited presence of forest-dwelling communities entirely dependent on forests.

Mizoram's Legislative Assembly initially decided on October 29, 2009, to extend the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and its Rules to the state, effective from De-

cember 31, 2009. However, on November 19, 2019, it reversed this decision, stating that the FRA was not relevant to the state due to the absence of rights claims. This decision was also influenced by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs refusing to allocate Rs.10 lakh for FRA implementation.

The Nagaland Assembly, mandated by Article 371A, has yet to determine its stance on this particular law, and a committee has been examining the matter for an extended period.

To protect forests, the Environment Ministry introduced measures in 2009, requiring Forest Rights Act (FRA) implementation and the prior informed consent of the Gram Sabha before considering a forest diversion proposal. The responsibility for this process was assigned to the District Collector, who interestingly also led the District Committee responsible for granting FRA titles. The Collector's certification of FRA compliance was moved from the initial Stage I forest clearance to the final Stage II clearance.

In 2022, the Ministry of Environment's Forest Conservation Rules made a significant change by completely removing the requirement for compliance with the Forest Rights Act (FRA) before granting final approval. Instead, the rules state that State governments must issue orders for diversion, lease assignment, or dereservation only after fulfilling and complying with the FRA, which includes ensuring the settlement of rights.

States have the opportunity to enact legal measures ensuring the mandatory fulfillment of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) before recommending any forest diversion proposal. They can also establish protocols for securing Gram Sabha consent prior to transferring forest land. Additionally, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs can issue legally binding directives under the FRA or even introduce a separate law to acknowledge and settle forest rights when forests are diverted for non-forest purposes and forest-dwellers are relocated. Such actions align with the Ministry's Business Rules, offering a means for states and the Tribal Affairs Ministry to enhance tenurial security for forest-dwellers and safeguard forests simultaneously. *(The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)*

In Bengal, Trinamool Congress is main India, Congress and CPI(M) are fringe parties

By: Satyaki Chakraborty

The victory of the Trinamool Congress candidate Prof. Nirmal Chandra Roy at the Dhupguri assembly constituency by poll in Bengal by defeating the BJP candidate Smt. Tapashi Roy by around 4,000 votes, vindicates TMC supreme Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's claim that the TMC is the main INDIA alliance party in Bengal and TMC will be deciding the seat sharing formula for 2024 Lok Sabha elections as the prime anti-BJP party in the state.

The by election was held on September 5 along with six other constituencies in other states, following the death of the BJP MLA Bishnupada Roy who won the seat in 2021 assembly polls. He won the seat by around 4,000 votes defeating the TMC candidate. Dhupguri belongs to the Jalpiguri district in North Bengal which is the bastion of BJP. In both 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the 2021 assembly polls, the BJP did exceedingly well in this district as also in the region as a whole.

For BJP, the by poll was the last testing ground before the coming Lok Sabha elections. The party gave nomination to the wife of Pulwama attack martyr who belonged to that area, to get sympathy votes. Apart, the entire BJP state leadership was involved in campaigning in the last two weeks. But still, the BJP lost the seat sending signals that the BJP's support base in its so called bastion is eroding fast and in the next seven months, TMC will cover up the gap more making it difficult for the BJP to retain even one third of the existing Lok Sabha seats from North Bengal.

As regards, the two India constituents CPI(M) and the Congress which fought in alliance against both the BJP and the

TMC, the political scenario is far grimmer. The CPI(M) candidate Ishwar Chandra Roy lost his deposit by just getting 6.52 per cent of the votes as against 46 per cent by the TMC winning candidate and 44 per cent by the defeated BJP candidate. What is pathetic for the CPI(M) is that its nominee's total left plus Congress votes were around 12 per cent in the panchayat elections in Dhupguri just two months ago on July 8 this year. This means that instead of increasing, the votes of Left-Congress alliance nosedived to about half of the votes received by the combine in the panchayat polls.

What do all these signify for the Lok Sabha elections scheduled for April/May 2024. At the last meeting of the opposition parties in Mumbai on August 31 and September 1, the joint statement mentioned of the resolve of the INDIA constituents to work on one on one formula as far as possible. It is now decided that the talks will start at the state level and the INDIA alliance high command will be involved only when the state leaders of the constituent parties fail to arrive at an understanding on the seat sharing.

Bengal has 42 Lok Sabha seats, presently 23 belonging to the TMC, 17 to the BJP and only two to the Congress. The Left Front got no seats in 2019 Lok Sabha elections. After that in the Asansol Lok Sabha by poll following the resignation of the member Babul Supriya from BJP, the CPI(M) candidate lost heavily against the TMC candidate Satrugna Sinha. BJP candidate stood second. Since then, there has been no by election in Bengal in any Lok Sabha constituency.

In 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP got its highest vote share ever in Bengal at 40.32 per cent. But in July 2023, eight months



before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP vote share in rural polls went down to 22.88 per cent, as against 51.2 per cent of the Trinamool Congress. There has been a steep decline down the line, covering all strongholds till 2021 assembly polls, including the constituency of three BJP central ministers. This development has ominous signal for the BJP's performance in 2024 polls. Dhupguri by poll result has only confirmed the trend.

Taking the coming battle for Lok Sabha elections in view, the results of the rural polls as also Dhupguri by poll are nothing but disaster for the BJP. Home Minister Amit Shah held a top-level meeting in Kolkata two months back with the senior leaders and set a target of 35 seats as against the present 17. Nobody believed in the 35 seats possibility, but serious discussions took place about maintaining the present figure 17. Then, at the level of the central leaders, the target came down to 12 as they took into account the organisational capacity of the state BJP at the booth level. Now, sources say, that the final tally of BJP may not cross six in 2024 polls if there is no massive resurgence in BJP preparations.

Now, both the state BJP and the central leadership have started reviewing the results and it is found that there is not a single safe seat for the BJP in the coming Lok Sabha polls in Bengal. All the 17 seats are within winning distance of the Trinamool Congress. The BJP could not mobilise cadres in all the booths in the panchayat polls despite tall assurances given to the Home Minister. The reason was not TMC terror, but the absence of the requisite number of party workers.

As regards the CPI(M) and the Congress, there was some improvement in their vote share in July polls. In 2023 rural polls, the Left Front, mainly the CPI(M), got 13.69 per cent votes and the Congress got 6.42 per cent. So together, the Left-Congress combine got 20.11 per cent. This was much better compared to the vote share figure of the CPI(M) at 4.71 per cent and the Congress at 3.03 per cent in the 2021 assembly polls. That way, the CPI(M) vote share increased by 8 per cent as a whole in the panchayat areas of the state. But within two months, Dhupguri by poll brought the total figure down to 6.52 per cent

In the backdrop of the panchayat elections on July 8 and Dhupguri by poll early this week, TMC is advantageously placed in INDIA Alliance and set to dictate terms once seat sharing talks take place. There are seven political parties; partners of INDIA alliance are involved in Lok Sabha polls. They are TMC, Congress, CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc, RSP and the CPI(ML) Liberation The Left Front in Bengal led by the CPI(M) has got three other partners CPI, FB and RSP. These four parties of the LF generally abide by the CPI(M) diktat. The CPI(M) is opposed to any alliance with the TMC in Bengal for the Lok Sabha elections even if the Congress changes its present position later.

Indications suggest that the high level coordination committee of the INDIA alliance may meet in New Delhi at Sharad Pawan's house on September 13 to take forward the issues of seat sharing talks and joint campaign. TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee is a member of this coordination committee. He may suggest the constituent parties in Bengal should immediately initiate the process of discussion. Mamata will be out of the country from September 12 to 19. Sources say that Mamata wants the Congress to make the party's position clear on the issue of alliance in Bengal by this month end. The Congress high command has made some preliminary assessment on the Party's position on alliance with TMC. The draft will be given to Rahul Gandhi after he is back from Europe next week. Things will move fast in Bengal politics after Mamata is back from her tour abroad. For the moment, it is advantage Mamata, Congress is in middle position while the CPI(M) is in back foot. *(IPA Service)*

Putting 'gender' in G20: Selective treatment won't help in addressing inequality

By: Laura Del Duca

Gender equality is a condition for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. But they will remain out of reach when countries are too scared to legalise people of all genders when religious dogma does not permit everyone to live freely, and when gender issues are not 'prioritised' over other problems, often perceived as bigger or more urgent.

'Leave no one behind' is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – but the current reality is that we are leaving too many behind to be heard at all. We call on G20 countries to push uncomfortable boundaries and make progress on eradicating gender-based violence and legalising all forms of gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gender equality is both a goal and a condition of success. Still, none of the G20 nations in the Global South as well as the Global North, are on track to achieve it by 2030.

In fact, the G20 is unable to achieve any SDGs when all G20 countries, aside from Mexico and South Africa, have at least one law that treats men

and women differently. Gender inequality exists in every country, taking different forms depending on its cultural context. Where gender-related issues challenge longstanding norms in development, they tend to be downplayed and even ignored.

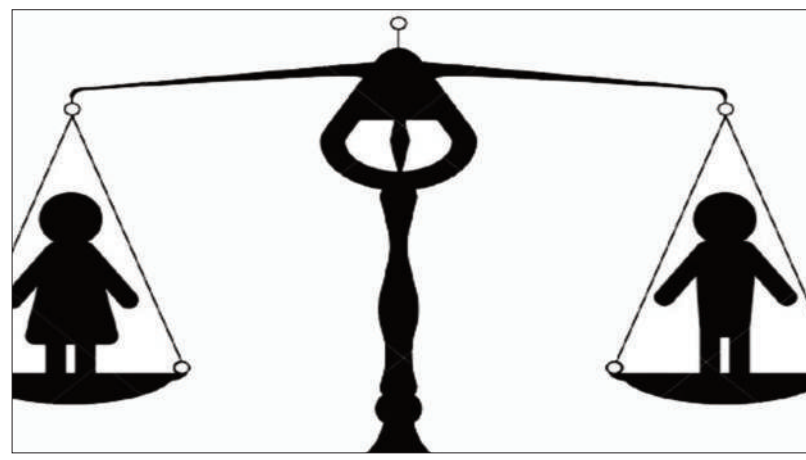
Caveats towards raising the gender issue

Our international team of science-to-policy researchers at Stockholm Environment Institute recently presented five pathways for the G20 to address underlying systemic and deeply embedded drivers of gender inequality. There were recommendations we wanted to make but could not. If we wanted to be heard by the G20, we needed to take off some edges.

We were discouraged from explicitly calling for the legalisation of some gender identities, expressions, and orientations – as that would make it hard for us to get our research published. Even though a central purpose of the policy brief was to present actionable knowledge to 'leave no one behind', we had to leave many behind to be able to be heard at all.

Laws around gender and sexuality remain skewed

Achieving gender equality is critical: it tends to reduce poverty, improves health for all, including children,



strengthens the economy, reduces human trafficking, correlates with peace or the level of democracy, and even saves lives in crises.

While the concepts and lived reality of gender and sexuality are evolving, the world is stuck in old gender and sex norms leaving millions of people behind. These unchanging norms have devastating consequences around the globe and in G20 countries. For instance, Homosexuality is punishable in Saudi Arabia.

In most countries, transgender and non-binary people struggle to access public sanitation services. Almost one

in three women in the UK is a victim of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in her lifetime. In three G20 nations – Brazil, Mexico, and India – over 15% and even 20% of girls between 15 and 19 had been or were still married, divorced, widowed, or in an informal union in 2019.

Gender-based violence incidence rates are much higher for gender minorities, and these numbers cannot be ignored when being intersex is about as common as having red hair and around 5% of young people say their gender differs from their sex assigned at birth.

The most uncomfortable issues to

discuss are those that challenge norms and involve legislation considered too complex to achieve.

A shared focus on all aspects of inequality is imperative

We continue to focus much more on understanding interventions for issues such as gender pay gaps and unequal care work than on how nations decriminalise people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. Property rights and ownership take precedence over strengthening legal mechanisms to prosecute acts of gender-based violence.

Without expanding our definition of gender equality and addressing complex problems that plague the spectrum, the SDGs will not be achieved for all, and the effectiveness of other gains will be hugely undermined. Even though these topics can be immensely complicated and context-specific, it should not stop us from trying.

Gender justice includes all genders, everywhere. Our understanding of gender is changing, and we need to embrace its complexity and challenge our norms, as the fear to go deeper limits progress towards equality.

Hence, based on our research and policy recommendations, we urge the G20 countries to embrace the uncomfortable. We call for four actions,

across countries and scales, to push these 'uncomfortable boundaries' depending on the country's context:

Operationalise international commitments (eg, CEDAW), including land rights and eradicating gender-based violence in G20 nations. Leverage legal and programmatic options to end gender-based violence.

Invest in understanding how countries legalise all forms of gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation.

Pressurise countries to make progress on all of the above stated areas in international, high-level forums.

When can a comprehensive solution be sighted?

In recent years, gender inequality not only persists in G20 countries but worldwide. Multiple crises have put additional stress on countries and their infrastructure, revealing and amplifying underlying systemic factors and drivers of inequity.

None of the G20 countries is on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Gender equality at the current rate of progress will take almost 300 years to achieve. We are convinced they can do better. Our children and grandchildren deserve a more just world, and they need us to try harder. (Courtesy: The Quint)

What to know about vegan diets

By: Jamie Smith

Increasing numbers of people are moving toward vegan diets due to health, animal welfare, or environmental concerns. A 2018 Gallup poll reports that about 3% of people in the United States are fully vegan and notes that sales of plant-based foods are rising. Vegan diets tend to be rich in nutrients and low in saturated fats. Research suggests that the diet can improve heart health, protect against cancer, and lower the risk of type 2 diabetes.

However, people eating only plant-based foods need to be more aware of how to obtain certain nutrients, including iron, calcium, and vitamin B-12, that usually come from an omnivorous diet. In this article, we take a close look at the vegan diet, including its health benefits and risks, as well as important things to consider before trying it out. We also provide recipe ideas and tips for following a vegan diet.

What is a vegan diet?

A vegan diet involves eating only foods comprising plants. Those who follow this diet avoid all animal products, including meat, dairy, and eggs. Some people also avoid eating honey. For some, being vegan is a dietary choice, while for others, it is a lifestyle choice.

People who choose to live a vegan lifestyle may also avoid clothes, soaps, and other products that use or contain parts of animals, such as leather and animal fur. Some adopt this lifestyle for its environmental benefits as a sustainable diet. Vegan diets tend to include plenty of fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, and seeds. Eating a variety of these foods will provide a wide range of important vitamins, minerals, healthful fats, and protein.

People following this diet should, however, take care to get key nutrients that people usually consume in animal products. These nutrients include iron, protein, calcium, vitamin B-12, and vitamin D.

Vegan vs. vegetarian

The main difference between vegetarians and vegans is that although vegetarians do not eat meat (including cows, pigs, chicken, and fish), they consume dairy products, eggs, or both. The vegan diet excludes all products with animal-based ingredients. The vegan diet is more restrictive, so people will need to think more about where their nutrients are coming from to ensure that they meet their daily dietary requirements.

Benefits

Vegan diets can provide all of the nutrients that a person needs, and they can eliminate some of the possible risks that research has associated with harmful animal fats. Research has linked the vegan diet with a range of health benefits, including those below.

Better heart health

A large scale 2019 study has linked a higher intake of plant-based foods and lower intake of animal foods with a reduced risk of heart disease and death in adults. Animal products — including meat, cheese, and butter — are the main dietary sources of saturated fats. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), eating foods that contain these fats raises cholesterol levels. High levels of cholesterol increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Plant foods are also high in fiber, which the AHA link with better heart health. Animal products contain very little or no fiber, while plant-based vegetables and grains are the best sources. In addition, people on a vegan diet often take in fewer calories than those on a standard Western diet. A moderate calorie intake can lead to

a lower body mass index (BMI) and a reduced risk of obesity, a major risk factor for heart disease.

Lower cancer risk

According to a 2017 review, eating a vegan diet may reduce a person's risk of cancer by 15%. This health benefit may be due to the fact that plant foods are high in fiber, vitamins, and phytochemicals — biologically active compounds in plants — that protect against cancers.

Research into the effects of diet on the risk of specific cancers has produced mixed results. However, the International Agency for Research on Cancer report that red meat is "probably carcinogenic," noting that research has linked it primarily to colorectal cancer but also to prostate cancer and pancreatic cancer. The agency also report that processed meat is carcinogenic and may cause colorectal cancer. Eliminating red and processed meats from the diet removes these possible risks.

Weight loss

People on a vegan diet tend to have a lower body mass index (BMI) than those following other diets. The researchers behind a 2015 study reported that vegan diets were more effective for weight loss than omnivorous, semi-vegetarian, and pescovegetarian diets, as well as being better for providing macronutrients. Many animal foods are high in fat and calories, so replacing these with low calorie plant-based foods can help people manage their weight. It is important to note, though, that eating lots of processed or high fat plant-based foods — which some people refer to as a junk food vegan diet — can lead to unhealthy weight gain.

Lower risk of type 2 diabetes

According to a large 2019 review, following a plant-based diet can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. The research linked this effect with eating healthful plant-based foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and legumes.

Was this helpful?

A vegan diet removes some sources of nutrients from the diet, so people need to plan their meals carefully to avoid nutritional deficiencies. People may wish to talk to a doctor or dietitian ahead of adopting a vegan diet, especially if they have existing health conditions. Key nutrients that may be low in a vegan diet include:

- **Vitamin B-12:** Vitamin B-12 is mainly present in animal products. It protects the nerves and red blood cells. Plant-based sources of this vitamin include fortified cereals and plant milks, nutritional yeast, and yeast spreads. Read more about vegan sources of vitamin B-12.

- **Iron:** Iron is important for blood health. Beans and dark leafy greens are good sources. Find out more about iron-rich vegan foods.

- **Calcium:** Calcium is crucial for bone health. Eating tofu, tahini, and leafy greens will help keep calcium levels up. Learn about calcium-rich plant-based foods.

- **Vitamin D:** Vitamin D protects against cancer and some chronic health conditions, and it helps strengthen the bones and teeth. Regularly eating vitamin D-fortified foods and spending time in the sun can boost vitamin D levels.

- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Important for heart, eye, and brain function, there are three types of omega-3 fatty acid: EPA, DHA, and ALA. Walnuts and flaxseeds are good sources of ALA, but seaweeds and algae are the only plant sources of EPA and DHA. Read about how to get omega-3 as a vegan.

- **Zinc:** Zinc is important for the immune system and the repair of DNA damage. Beans, nutritional yeast,

nuts, and oats are high in zinc. Read about zinc-rich vegan foods.

- **Iodine:** Iodine is important for thyroid function. Plant-based sources include seaweeds and fortified foods.

A person may wish to ask for their doctor's advice on whether to take supplements or consume more fortified foods. A vegan diet may be low in specific nutrients. Certain specialized foods and dietary supplements can help people meet their daily requirements. People can choose from a variety of brands online.

- vitamin B-12 supplements
- nutritional yeast and yeast spreads, which are rich in vitamin B-12

- iron supplements
- calcium supplements
- vitamin D supplements
- vegan omega-3 supplements
- zinc supplements
- iodine supplements

Plant-based food ideas

The change from an unrestricted diet can seem daunting, but there are many simple, tasty, and nutritious ways to pack a vegan diet with key vitamins and minerals.

Instead of cow milk, people can use plant-based alternatives. Compared with cow's milk, plant milks tend to be lower in calories and contain less saturated fat. Manufacturers often enrich them with vitamins and minerals. People can also buy plant-based cheeses, yogurts, and butters or make their own. Read about dairy alternatives here.

Some people may have concerns about meeting their protein needs on a vegan diet, but many plant foods are excellent sources of protein. Read about the best plant-based sources of protein. Soy products — such as tofu, tempeh, and seitan — provide protein and also add a meat-like texture to many dishes. Vegan recipes often use the following nutritious foods in place of animal products:

- tofu
- tempeh
- mushrooms
- potatoes
- jackfruit
- eggplant
- lentils
- beans and legumes
- cauliflower
- nut
- peanut butter and other nut butters
- beans

Recipe ideas

People can find a huge variety of vegan recipes online. Some examples include:

- vegan mac 'n' cheese
- sweet potato chickpea Buddha bowl
- southwest tofu scramble
- vegan falafel burgers
- butternut, sweet potato, and red lentil stew
- coconut cauliflower curry
- quinoa black bean tacos
- healthy pasta salad

There are plenty of sweet vegan recipes online, too:

- vegan cinnamon rolls
- apple buckwheat pancakes
- vegan avocado brownies
- peanut butter cookies
- vegan ice cream

It may take a little experimentation, but most people will be able to find a vegan meal plan to suit their taste. Vegan diets are growing in popularity. A vegan diet can offer many health benefits, including better heart health, weight loss, and a reduced risk of chronic diseases.

Research also suggests that vegan diets are better for the environment. People who wish to adopt a vegan diet will need to plan their meals carefully to ensure that they are getting enough key nutrients to avoid deficiencies. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

The story of how Hindus stopped distrusting biscuits and began eating them

By: Priyadarshini Chatterjee

There's hardly an indulgence more desi than steaming kulhads of sweet, thick, golden tea, scented with ginger and cardamom, and paired with biscuits. It doesn't matter which biscuit you like: flaky, buttery, crusty, plain, cumin-flecked, sweet, salty, sweet and salty, cream-filled or sugar-dusted. The shudh desi romance of chai and biskoot bewitches all today. But a little over a hundred years ago, this wasn't so. Back then, the biscuit was an object of antipathy, even hostility, for many Indians.

Indians have been making and eating biscuits in some form or the other for centuries. New techniques, tastes and textures arrived with different waves of migration — the Arabs, Persians and later Europeans. But the tea time biscuits that are a staple in Indian homes were introduced and popularised by the British. As food historian Lizzie Collingham writes in *The Biscuit: The History of a Very British Indulgence*, "Just as Goan and Pondicherry bakers began to make Portuguese curd tarts and French croissant, an array of English cakes and biscuits were soon on display at bakeries in British presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay." Storied companies like Huntley & Palmers imported into India mass-produced biscuits from an industrialising Britain, even though their market was limited. To start with, biscuits were elite snacks out of the reach of the working classes. And for another, to caste Hindus, they were forbidden.

In Hindu society, food is charged with religious and moral connotations premised on notions of purity and impurity that underlie nearly all facets of the caste system. This means that, even though the history of Indian food is a history of exchange and assimilation, new foods were invariably met with resistance. In the 19th century, an orthodox Hindu would consider a biscuit naturally suspect, an unfamiliar food eaten by mlechhas (a term used for foreigners, outcasts and invaders alike). Bound by insidious caste rules, he would reject the treat — along with items like bread, fowl, lemonade and ice — as ritually impure. Succumbing to its temptation could result in excommunication from his birth caste.

Bengali freedom fighter, writer and educator Bipin Chandra Pal wrote in his memoir *Sattar Batsar* about an uproar among Hindus over biscuits in east Bengal's Cachhar district. "When the new English-educated middle-class consumed biscuits with tea in their drawing room, the news spread to Sylhet from Cachhar," Pal wrote. "It was only after rigorous expiation that the rebels could save themselves from being outcast."

Beyond the pale

Such was the stigma around the biscuit that caste Hindus refused to work in bakeries. In Bharuch, where the English set up the first bakery in 1623, and in Surat, "no Hindu Savarna was ready to work in the bakery on grounds that...[it] used toddy and eggs, [both] considered impure," notes VS Parmar in *Mahyavanshi: The Success Story of a Scheduled Caste*.

When Muslims and lower caste Hindus took up the jobs they shunned, it didn't make the bakery any more agreeable to the upper castes. If anything, this became another reason for them to avoid biscuits since caste rules forbade accepting food or drink



from one ranked lower in the caste hierarchy. If they broke this rule, they would lose their ritual purity and thus caste status.

Owning a bakery wasn't permitted to them either. Parmar documents the case of an upper caste man named Mulshankar Veniram Vyas who learned the art of making biscuits from a European butler and opened a bakery in his house in Ramjini Pole. His caste brethren punished him swiftly by boycotting him.

"Many industries in India have been very severely handicapped owing to caste prejudices but those which are concerned with the manufacture or preparation of articles of food are the worst sufferers," observed 19th-century British journalist Arnold Wright. As a result of such myriad social complexities, most bakeries in the country were owned either by Europeans or by Parsis.

These rebels would bravely take a bite of the forbidden fruit — biscuit in this case — often knowing well the social rebuke they would face from detractors, who found this food un-Hindu and by extension un-Indian. In the nationalist imagination, biscuits were a symbol of anglicisation, a politically charged colonial icon. Bengali playwright Amritlal Basu's play *Kalapani* or *Hindumote Samudrajatra* began with a song that described the Ingo-Bongo or anglicised Bengalis:

*There are no devotees like our men,
Turning in sahibs by Hindu rules,
amen.*

*Foreign biscuits they like,
Oh Lord take a bite
Soulful daily offerings.
In our homely abodes divine.*

In Durgacharan Roy's 19th-century social satire *Debganer Martye Agomon*, gods on a trip to earth are flabbergasted at how Brahmins in Calcutta "while holding on to their sacred thread had no qualms consuming biscuits and breads prepared by Muslim bakers," writes Utsa Ray in *Culinary Culture of Colonial India*. "The implication was that this sacred thread was the facade that still held the order of the society; otherwise the middle-class had completely degenerated."

It was the taboo nature of the biscuit that ultimately made it popular. As Ray writes, "Biscuits became immensely significant on its account of being labelled a forbidden food and hence heavily tempting." The boxes of biscuits stocked in shops catering to Europeans became aspirational for the Indian middle classes. "The young were creative in their quest for such alluring novelties," Jayeeta Sharma writes in the essay *Food and Empire* in the *Oxford Handbook of Food History*. To get around religious laws, upper caste Hindu schoolchildren, Sharma says, would persuade their Muslim classmates to bring them these "illicit tastes".

By the late 19th century indigenous biscuit factories were cropping up around the country. In Thalassery, Kerala, Mambally Bapu, a business-

man who used to ship milk, tea and bread from Burma to the British troops in Egypt, opened the Royal Biscuit Factory in 1880. In the east, Britannia started its journey in 1892, selling "sweet & fancy biscuits" from a small Calcutta room fitted with a single fire oven. Food historian KT Acharya writes in *Food Industries of British India* that by the First World War there were at least eight major biscuit factories in big Indian cities and several small bakeries around the nation.

Pleasing to the palate

Making the biscuit acceptable to caste Hindus, however, was still not easy. How do you make someone ignore the religious rules that have dictated their life and the lives of their ancestors? That problem was finally solved by one Lala Radha Mohan.

Mohan started the Hindu Biscuit Company in Delhi in 1898. Within two decades, it was producing 55 kinds of biscuits — with names like Canteen, Cabin, Imperial, Coronation — along with 30-odd varieties of cake. Mohan's products won numerous awards and, along with Calcutta's Wilson Hotel (later The Great Eastern Hotel), his company became the main supplier of military-grade biscuits to the British troops during WWI.

Aside from supplying the troops, the Hindu Biscuit Company's business plan was to popularise biscuits among caste-conscious Hindus. To achieve this, it employed only Brahmins and upper caste Hindus so that its products would be unpolluted and acceptable in the eyes of orthodox Hindus. A company advert published in 1898 declared: "During the whole course of manufacture and packaging the biscuits are only touched by high-caste Hindoos, prepared only with milk, no water used."

The growing popularity of the Hindu Biscuit Company made many other Indian factories sell their products under the generic name of Hindu biscuits. Their idea was to confuse the buyer and it worked. As Wright reports, many people bought their biscuits under the impression that they were manufactured by the Hindu Biscuit Company, which forced its exasperated management to change the company name to the Delhi Biscuit Company. Spotting an opportunity, Britannia — then called Gupta & Co — too "turned to making western-style biscuits... which they marketed as Hindu biscuits", Acharya writes. Eventually, in 1951, the Delhi Biscuit Company merged with Britannia and became its Delhi factory.

During this era, recipes for the Hindu biscuit travelled far and wide. In a 1917 article in the American weekly magazine *Collier's*, one Madame Louise Bocquet from the French town of Flers de l'Orne shared a recipe for Hindu biscuits she acquired from a Hindu officer (the recipe required one ounce each of flour, butter and grated cheese). The proliferation of the Hindu biscuit is underlined by civil servant Atul Chandra Chatterjee in his 1908 book *Notes on the Industries of the United Provinces*: "I have seen Delhi biscuits sold on railway platforms in the western districts and also in the larger bazaars. The taste for biscuits among Indians is growing very fast. Musalmans have no objection to them and I think a large proportion of Hindus would also consume 'Hindu' biscuits. They are an obvious convenience for railway travelling and are also of much request for the use of children and invalids." (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

United States marks 22 years since 9/11, from ground zero to Alaska

NEW YORK, Sept 11: Americans are looking back on the horror and legacy of 9/11, gathering on Monday at memorials, firehouses, city halls and elsewhere to observe the 22nd anniversary of the deadliest terror attack on US soil.

Commemorations stretch from the attack sites — at New York's World Trade Center, the Pentagon and Shanksville, Pennsylvania — to Alaska and beyond. President Joe Biden is due at a ceremony on a military base in Anchorage.

His visit, en route to Washington, DC, from a trip to India and Vietnam, is a reminder that the impact of 9/11 was felt in every corner of the nation, however remote. The hijacked plane attacks claimed nearly 3,000 lives and reshaped American foreign policy and do-

mestic fears. On that day, "we were one country, one nation, one people, just like it should be. That was the feeling — that everyone came together and did what we could, where we were at, to try to help," said Eddie Ferguson, the fire-rescue chief in Virginia's Goochland County.

It's more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) from the Pentagon and more than three times as far from New York. But a sense of connection is enshrined in a local memorial incorporating steel from the World Trade Center's destroyed twin towers.

The predominantly rural county of 25,000 people holds not just one but two anniversary commemorations: a morning service focused on first responders and an evening cer-



emony honoring all the victims.

Other communities across the country pay tribute with moments of silence, tolling bells, candlelight vigils and other activities. In Columbus, Indiana, 911 dispatchers broadcast a remembrance message to police, fire and EMS radios throughout the 50,000-person city,

which also holds a public memorial ceremony.

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts raise and lower the flag at a commemorative ceremony in Fenton, Missouri, where a "Heroes Memorial" includes a piece of World Trade Center steel and a plaque honoring 9/11 victim Jessica Leigh Sachs. Some of her relatives live in the St. Louis suburb of 4,000 residents.

"We're just a little bitty community," said Mayor Joe Maurath, but "it's important for us to continue to remember these events. Not just 9/11, but all of the events that make us free."

New Jersey's Monmouth County, which was home to some 9/11 victims, made Sept. 11 a holiday this year for county employees so they could attend commemora-

tions. As another way of marking the anniversary, many Americans do volunteer work on what Congress has designated both Patriot Day and a National Day of Service and Remembrance. At ground zero, Vice President Kamala Harris is due to join the ceremony on the National Sept. 11 Memorial and Museum plaza. The event will not feature remarks from political figures, instead giving the podium to victims' relatives for an hourlong reading of the names of the dead.

James Giacone signed up to read again this year in memory of his brother, Joseph Giacone, 43. The family attends the ceremony every year to hear Joseph's name.

"If their name is spoken out loud, they don't disappear," James Gia-

cone said in a recent interview. The commemoration is crucial to him.

"I hope I never see the day when they minimize this," he said. "It's a day that changed history."

Biden, a Democrat, will be the first president to commemorate Sept. 11 in Alaska, or anywhere in the western U.S. He and his predecessors have gone to one or another of the attack sites in most years, though Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Barack Obama each marked the anniversary on the White House lawn at times. Obama followed one of those observances by recognizing the military with a visit to Fort Meade in Maryland.

First lady Jill Biden is due to lay a wreath at the 9/11 memorial at the Pentagon. In Pennsylvania, where one of the hijacked jets crashed

after passengers tried to storm the cockpit, a remembrance and wreath-laying is scheduled at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Stoytown operated by the National Park Service. Harris' husband, Doug Emhoff, is expected to attend the ceremony. The memorial site will offer a new educational video, virtual tour and other materials for teachers to use in classrooms. Educators with a total of more than 10,000 students have registered for access to the free "National Day of Learning" program, which will be available through the fall, organizers say.

"We need to get the word out to the next generation," said memorial spokesperson Katherine Hostetter, a National Park Service ranger. (AP)

Biden spoke about strengthening Vietnam's semiconductor industry and his administration's commitment to an open Pacific

Biden highlights business deals and pays respects at John McCain memorial to wrap up Vietnam visit

HANOI, Sept 11: President Joe Biden closed a visit to Vietnam on Monday by spotlighting new business deals and partnerships between the two countries and paying respects at a memorial honouring his late friend and colleague Sen John McCain, who endured a lengthy incarceration during the Vietnam War.

Biden met with Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, who also accompanied the president to a quick drop by at a meeting of American and Vietnamese business leaders. Biden also sat down with President Võ Văn Thưởng, who hosted the US president for a state luncheon of steamed codfish and Hanoi beef noodle soup.

Biden spoke about strengthening Vietnam's semiconductor industry and his administration's commitment to an open Pacific.

"My message today is quite simple. Let's keep it up," Biden told the

CEOs. "We need to develop and drive our collaboration; we need to forge new partnerships."

The prime minister also stressed the need to improve cooperation and said "the sky is the limit" for the expanding U.S.-Vietnam relationship.

"We truly wish to receive strong political commitment from the U.S. government including you, Mr. President, who has had great affection for Vietnam," the prime minister said. Highlights of the major deals announced by the White House during Biden's first-ever visit to Vietnam include U.S.-based Boeing's USD 7.5 billion deal with Vietnam Airlines to buy about 50 aircraft and Arizona-based Amkor Technology's plans for a USD 1.6 billion factory in Bac Ninh Province.

The White House also said the administration would help "build Vietnamese capacity to fight re-



gional and international transnational crime," including targeting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. China has been locked in long-running territorial conflicts with Vietnam, along with the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei, as Beijing claims waters in the other nations' exclusive economic zone. Biden arrived in Vietnam on Sunday and met with Nguyen Phú Trọng, general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Trọng formally announced Viet-

nam had elevated the U.S. to its highest diplomatic status, comprehensive strategic partner. Biden said the shift demonstrated how far bilateral relations had evolved from the "bitter past" of the Vietnam War. At the same time, Biden insisted that his roughly 24-hour visit was not about trying to start a "cold war" with China but was part of a broader effort to improve global stability by building relationships throughout Asia, including with Vietnam, at a time of tensions with

Beijing. Before departing, Biden visited the John Sidney McCain III Memorial near the site where, as a 31-year-old Navy lieutenant commander, McCain's Skyhawk dive bomber was shot down by the North Vietnamese. Both sides exchanged documents Monday on unaccounted U.S. service members and Vietnamese soldiers. Biden left one of his commemorative coins at the memorial, the White House said.

McCain parachuted out of the plane and landed in a lake in Hanoi, North Vietnam. He broke both arms and a leg in the fall, was dragged from the water by an angry crowd, and was beaten and bayoneted. The harrowing 1967 incident began a more than five-year ordeal that became the defining moment for the future Republican senator from Arizona and two-time presidential candidate. (AP)

SKorean media: NKorean train presumably carrying leader Kim Jong Un departed for Russia

SEOUL, Sept 11: A North Korean train presumably carrying North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has departed for Russia for a possible meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, South Korean media said on Monday.

Citing unidentified South Korean government sources, the Chosun Ilbo newspaper reported that the train likely left the North Korean capital of Pyongyang on Sunday evening and that a Kim-Putin meeting is possible as early as Tuesday. The Yonhap news agency and some other media published similar reports. South Korea's National Intelligence Service didn't immediately confirm those details.

US officials released intelligence last week that North Korea and Russia were arranging a meeting between their leaders that would take place within this month as they expand their cooperation in the face of deepening confrontations with the United States. According to US officials, Putin could focus on securing more supplies of North Korean artillery and other ammunition to refill draining reserves and put further pressure on the West to pursue negotiations amid concerns about a protracted conflict in Ukraine.

In exchange, Kim could seek badly needed energy and food aid and advanced weapons technologies, including those related to intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-capable ballistic missile submarines and military reconnaissance satellites, analysts say. (AP)

G20's New Delhi summit declaration sent a 'positive signal' to tackle global challenges: China

BEIJING, Sept 11: China on Monday said the G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration has sent a "positive signal" that the member countries are joining hands in tackling global challenges and economic recovery.

India on Saturday pulled off a big diplomatic win after the G20 summit held under its presidency adopted a consensus declaration overcoming major differences on the Russia-Ukraine war, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for ending the "global trust deficit".

"The declaration released by the G20 summit shows that China's proposition is a good signal," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here in response to a question on how Beijing views the outcome of the G20 summit which concluded on Sunday.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang attended the summit, deputising for President Xi Jinping.

The declaration also "signals that the G20 countries are joining hands in tackling global challenges, sending a positive signal to the world on economic recovery," Mao said.

During the preparation process, China also played a



"constructive role and also attached importance to the concerns of developing countries and supported the outcome which was conducive to global common development", she said.

Mao said China has always attached importance to the G20 20 grouping and supports its work.

"We support the G20 solidarity and cooperation in tackling risks to the world economy and various development sectors," the spokesperson said.

Premier Li during his attendance fully recounted China's position and propositions on G20 cooperation, she said.

"He championed that all countries need to adhere to the original aspiration of solidarity and cooperation and shoulder

the responsibility of times and promote a partnership conducive to global economic recovery, openness, cooperation and sustainable development," Mao said.

The G20 member countries represent around 85 per cent of the global GDP, over 75 per cent of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population.

The grouping comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the UK, the US and the European Union. On Saturday, the African Union was admitted as G20's permanent member. (PTI)

Hawaii volcano Kilauea erupts after nearly 2 months of quiet

HONOLULU, Sept 11: Kilauea, one of the most active volcanoes in the world, began erupting on Sunday after a two-month pause, displaying glowing lava that is a safe distance from people and structures in a national park on the Big Island.

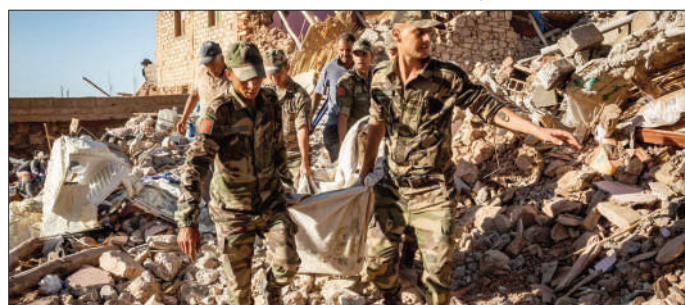
The Hawaii Volcano Observatory said the eruption was observed in the afternoon at the summit of Kilauea.

The observatory said gases released by the eruption will cause volcanic smog downwind of Kilauea. People living near the park should try to avoid volcanic particles spewed into the air by the eruption, the observatory said.

The volcano's alert level was raised to warning status and the aviation colour code went to red as scientists evaluate the eruption and associated hazards. In June, Kilauea erupted for several weeks, displaying fountains of red lava without threatening any communities or structures. Crowds of people flocked to the Big Island's Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, which offered safe views of the lava.

Kilauea, Hawaii's second-largest volcano erupted from September 2021 until last December. A 2018 Kilauea eruption destroyed more than 700 homes. (AP)

Moroccans sleep in the streets for 3rd night following an earthquake that took more than 2,100 lives



AMIZMIZ, Sept 11: People in Morocco slept in the streets of Marrakech for a third straight night as soldiers and international aid teams in trucks and helicopters began to fan into remote mountain towns hit hardest by a historic earthquake.

The disaster killed more than 2,100 people — a number that is expected to rise — and the United Nations estimated that 300,000 people were affected by Friday night's magnitude 6.8 quake.

Amid offers from several countries, including the United States and France, Moroccan officials said Sunday that they are accepting international aid from just four countries: Spain, Qatar, Britain and the United Arab Emirates.

"The Moroccan authorities have carefully assessed the needs on the ground, bearing in mind that a lack of coordination in such cases would be counterproductive," the Interior Ministry said in a statement. While some foreign search-and-rescue teams arrived on Sunday as an aftershock rattled Moroccans already in mourning and shock, other aid teams poised to deploy grew frustrated waiting for the government to officially request assistance.

"We know there is a great urgency to save people and dig under the remains of buildings," said Arnaud Fraisse, founder of Rescuers Without Borders, who had a team stuck in Paris waiting for the green light. "There are people dying under the rubble, and we cannot do anything to save them." Help was slow to arrive in Amizmiz, where a whole chunk of the town of orange and red sandstone brick homes carved into a mountainside appeared to be missing. A mosque's minaret had collapsed.

"It's a catastrophe," said villager Salah Ancheu, 28. "We don't know what the future is. The aid remains insufficient." "There aren't ambulances, there aren't police, at least for right now," Ancheu said, speaking about many parts of the region on Sunday morning. Those left homeless — or fearing more aftershocks — slept outside Saturday, in the streets of the ancient city of Marrakech or under makeshift canopies in hard-hit Atlas Mountain towns like Moulay Brahim. Both

there and in Amizmiz, residents worried most about the damage in hard-to-reach communities. The worst destruction was in rural communities that rely on unpaved roads that snake up the mountainous terrain covered by fallen rocks. Those areas were shaken anew Sunday by a magnitude 3.9 aftershock, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. It wasn't immediately clear if it caused more damage or casualties, but it was likely strong enough to rattle nerves in areas where damage has left buildings unstable and residents feared aftershocks.

In a region where many build bricks out of mud, Friday's earthquake toppled buildings not strong enough to withstand such a mighty tremor, trapping people in the rubble and sending others fleeing in terror. A total of 2,122 people were confirmed dead and at least 2,421 others were injured — 1,404 of them critically, the Interior Ministry reported. Most of the dead — 1,351 — were in the Al Haouz district in the High Atlas Mountains, the ministry said. Flags were lowered across Morocco, as King Mohammed VI ordered three days of national mourning starting Sunday. The army mobilized search and rescue teams, and the king ordered water, food rations and shelters to be sent to those who lost homes.

He also called for mosques to hold prayers Sunday for the victims, many of whom were buried Saturday amid the frenzy of rescue work nearby. Though it said for the first time Sunday that it would accept aid from four countries, Morocco has not made an international appeal for help like Turkey did in the hours following a massive quake earlier this year, according to aid groups.

Aid offers poured in from around the world, and the U.N. said it had a team in Morocco coordinating international support. About 100 teams made up of a total of 3,500 rescuers are registered with a U.N. platform and ready to deploy in Morocco when asked, Rescuers Without Borders said. Germany had a team of more than 50 rescuers waiting near Cologne-Bonn Airport but sent them home, news agency dpa reported. (AP)

Thailand's new PM tells Parl his govt will urgently tackle economic woes

BANGKOK, Sept 11: Thailand's new Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin vowed to act quickly to relieve the country's economic problems in his inaugural speech to Parliament on Monday, following four months of political uncertainty while parliamentarians were unable to agree on a government.

Srettha entered politics after a career as a major real estate developer, and his government is facing high expectations and pressing demands to address a range of economic, political, social and environmental problems in its four-year term.

Thailand's economy has slumped after the COVID-19 pandemic all but crippled its lucrative tourism industry. Public debt rose to more than 60% of GDP in 2023, while household debt spiked to over 90% of the GDP this year, he said.

He vowed to quickly take measures to relieve debt problems, mitigate rising energy costs and boost tourism, without going into detail.

He also said the government would work immediately to implement a campaign promise — a 10,000-baht (\$280) handout for all Thais 16 and older to stimulate the economy by boosting short-term spending. Details were not given, though he's previ-

ously said it would cost up to 560 billion baht (\$15.8 billion) and will be ready to deliver by the first quarter of next year.

The promise drew major interest in the election campaign, but critics have questioned whether it would have a sustainable effect.

Long-term goals cited by Srettha include boosting international trade, supporting start-up businesses, investing more in transport infrastructure, improving agricultural production, empowering local government and increasing access to land ownership. The government would also seek to amend the current military-installed constitution through a process that allows public participation.

These steps would allow the economy to grow and its people to be able to "live with dignity," he said.

The results of Thailand's elections in May revealed a strong mandate for change after nearly a decade under military control.

But Parliament failed to endorse a coalition formed by the progressive Move Forward party, which won the most seats in the May polls, because members in the appointed and conservative Senate were alienated by its calls for minor reforms to the monarchy. (AP)

Move in England comes after detection of highly-mutated coronavirus variant that is spreading around the world

UK brings forward winter top-up vaccines amid new COVID variant fears

LONDON, Sept 11: The UK health authorities began rolling out their winter vaccine schedule for the most medically vulnerable on Monday, brought forward from a planned early October rollout amid concerns around the new COVID variant BA.2.86.

The National Health Service (NHS) said residents of older adult care homes and people who are housebound will begin receiving their COVID and flu vaccinations from this week and other high risk groups will begin to be invited to get their "top up protection" ahead of winter from next week.

While the variant, BA.2.86, has not been classified as a "variant of concern" by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), it is being moni-

tored closely due to its proclivity to mutate.

"While BA.2.86 has a significant number of mutations to the viral genome compared to other currently circulating COVID-19 variants, the data so far is too limited to draw firm conclusions about the impact this will have on the transmissibility, severity or immune escape properties of the virus," said Dr Renu Bindra, an Indian-origin Incident Director for the UKHSA.

"It is clear that there is some degree of widespread community transmission, both in the UK and globally, and we are working to ascertain the full extent of this. In the meantime, it remains vital that all those eligible come forward to receive their autumn vaccine as soon



as it is offered to them," she said.

NHS England said it is rolling out its adult COVID and annual flu vaccination programmes in tandem following pressures it faced with a "twindemic" of flu and COVID resulting in high occupancy in hospitals and record

pressure on staff last year. It stressed the importance for those who are eligible to top up their protection, even if they have had a vaccine or been ill with flu or COVID-19 before, as immunity wanes over time and the viruses change each year.

"With concerns arising over

new COVID variants, it's vital we adapt the programme and bring it forward for those most at risk, and so I strongly urge everyone eligible to come forward as soon as they can for this important protection in colder months," said Steve Russell, NHS Director of Vaccinations and Screening.

"Older people and those in clinical risk groups remain at highest risk of serious illness from COVID-19...The vaccine continues to provide the best protection against serious illness and hospitalisation from COVID-19, so please make sure you get vaccinated when offered and encourage loved ones who are eligible to do the same," added Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at UKHSA. (PTI)

Millets marketing awareness programme

NWJFPC purchases foxtail millets from Nagaon farmers



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 11: The North West Jorhat Farmers Production Company (NWJFPC), based in Jorhat, ceremonially acquired 25 quintals of foxtail millets from 18 farmers in the Nagaon district. This transaction is part of the Assam Millets Mission, sponsored by the state government, which aims to promote the cultivation and consumption of millets. The purchase took place at a rate of Rs 40 per kilogram, and payment cheques were handed over to the participating farmers. The district agriculture department in Nagaon had cultivated foxtail millets on 112 hectares of land as part of this initiative.

Key officials, including district

commissioner Narendra Kr Shah, deputy district commissioner Lakshay Jyoti Das, district agriculture officer Satish Talukdar, and additional agriculture director Ranjan Prasad Deka, were present during the millet purchase event. They emphasized the nutritional benefits of millets and encouraged the acceptance of these crops among the public.

The Assam Millets Mission represents a concerted effort to promote millet cultivation as a source of high-quality nutrients, contributing to public health in the state.

This initiative not only supports local farmers but also aligns with the broader goal of diversifying agricultural production and improving nutrition in the region.

Month-long celebration of 6th Rashtriya Poshan Maah inaugurated in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 11: The Ministry of Women and Child Development has commenced the month-long celebration of the 6th Rashtriya Poshan Maah (National Nutrition Month) across India in September 2023. In Nagaon district, the inaugural program was held at the Kamala Devi Todi Smriti Bhawan, where district commissioner Narendra Kumar Shah formally launched the program.

Addressing the occasion, district commissioner Narendra Kumar Shah urged Anganwadi workers to work in mission mode to achieve the goals of Poshan Maah and make it a success. He highlighted the significant role of Anganwadi workers and the Women and Child Development Department in nurturing healthy children who, in turn, contribute to building a stronger nation. The DC also participated in a cake-cutting ceremony featuring a cake made from millets, prepared by Anganwadi workers.

The focal point of Poshan Maah 2023 is to raise widespread awareness about critical stages in human life, including pregnancy, infancy, childhood, and adolescence. The objective is to promote nutritional knowledge throughout India under the theme "Suposhit Bharat, Sakshar Bharat, Sashakt Bharat" (Nutrition-rich India, Educated India, Empowered India).

During the event, various activities were conducted, including 'Diha Naam' performances by Anganwadi workers of the Khagorijan Project under Borbheti Gaon Panchayat, a dance performance by children from the Shivhashan Anganwadi Kendra, Urban Project, and a storytelling program by children and Anganwadi workers of the Khagorijan Project, Senchowah Gaon Panchayat. Additionally, the District Commissioner inaugurated a demonstration stall showcasing millet-based recipes and food items.

The event was attended by Additional District Commissioner Phyllis V L Hrangchal, Sub-Divisional Health Officer Dr. B G Baruah, District Social Welfare Officer Bidyut Hazarika, CDOs of various projects under Nagaon district, Anganwadi workers, along with officials and staff from the district Women and Child Development department and District Administration.

BRS MLC Kavitha offers prayers at Kamakhya Temple

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: K Kavitha, a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) representing the ruling BRS party in Telangana, visited the renowned Kamakhya temple in Assam and offered prayers on Monday. During her visit, she prayed for the wellbeing of the people of Telangana and expressed confidence in her party's prospects in the upcoming Legislative Assembly polls scheduled to be held in the southern state in a couple of months.

Kavitha shared her visit to the temple on the social media platform X, describing the Kamakhya Devi Temple as a symbol of strength, faith, and devotion. In her post, she stated, "I prayed for the well-being, healthy life, and prosperity of loved ones, well-wishers, and the people of Telangana." (With inputs from PTL)

Eminent Assamese theatre personality Abinash Sarma honoured

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Assam's eminent theatre personality Abinash Sarma has been bestowed with the Life in Theatre award for his contribution to the art form, at the Guwahati Theatre Festival (GTF) here. The award, comprising a citation and a cheque of Rs 31,000, was presented to him by the Chairman of the Festival Sunit Jain on the concluding day of the festival on Sunday.

Sarma, on receiving the award, expressed his gratitude to the organisers for honouring him.

"Theatre has been my life and I hope to continue to be involved with the stage till the last days of my life," he said.

Associated with the GTF since its inception, 71-year-old Sarma developed a keen interest in traditional Assamese theatre forms like Jatra during his early years,



which sparked his passion for drama and performing arts.

Despite lacking in formal training, Sarma's early exposure to the art form and his innovative spirit allowed him to excel in areas such as dramatics, writing, scripting and contemporary art forms, resulting in a significant and meaningful body of work in the performing arts.

He produced memorable

and groundbreaking productions including "Aditir Atma Katha" and "Momor Ghar" which continue to impress theatre enthusiasts.

Life In The Theatre Award is an initiative of English weekly G Plus and Guwahati Theatre Festival since its inception to recognise outstanding theatre personalities of the state with earlier recipients being Dulal Roy, Kulada

Bhattacharjee and late Arun Sarma, Nipon Goswami and Surkracharjya Rabha.

The sixth edition of the three-day festival, which began on Friday, presented three nationally acclaimed plays 'Barfi', directed by Saurabh Shukla, 'The Scent of a Man' by Ashvin Gidwani, and 'Blame it on Yashraj' by Bharat Dabholkar.

The Guwahati Theatre Festival started in the year 2016 with an objective to bring in nationally and internationally acclaimed plays to theatre enthusiasts of the region and has become a landmark event in the cultural landscape of the region.

In the earlier five editions of the festival, stalwarts like Shabana Azmi, Amol Palekar, Rajat Kapoor, Lilette Dubey, Vinay Pathak, Saurabh Shukla, Kalki Koechlin, Rajit Kapoor, Atul Kumar had performed. (PTI)

Himanta predicts BJP victory in 22 out of 25 Northeast LS seats

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 11: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed confidence that the BJP will secure victory in 22 out of the 25 Lok Sabha seats in the North-Eastern region during the upcoming general elections in the next year. He attributed this predicted success to the development work carried out under the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre.

Addressing the national executive meeting of the BJP's Mahila Morcha over a two-day period, Sarma highlighted the transformation that the North-East has witnessed since 2014, citing notable improvements in the transportation sector, particularly in states like Arunachal Pradesh.

Despite recent ethnic violence in Manipur, Sarma noted that the region has maintained adequate commodity supplies due to its multiple national highway connections.

He emphasised the progress in

Karam Puja celebrated with enthusiasm at Borpam

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 11: The 20th edition of the Karam Puja, organized by the Borpam Tinali Karam Puja Celebration Committee, took place on Monday at Borpam, located in the northern part of Sootee. This traditional puja was celebrated in the evening with great fervor, following the customs of the community.

The event featured a series of lively cultural performances by local artists. Attendees included Jagannada Kurmi, Arun Bordoloi, Sanatan Kurmi, Nanigopal Karmakar, Deben Pator, Ramesh Bhumi, and others.

The celebration commenced with a vibrant Jhumur performance by the Jhumur team of Ghiladhar T.E. Papu Bhumi, the president, and Rahul Kurmi and Pranjal Kurmi, the joint secretaries, expressed their gratitude to all those who supported and contributed to the event.

Karam Puja is a traditional festival of the Tea Tribes Community, celebrated in the Indian calendar month of Bhadra. The festival holds significant cultural and social importance among the community members.



rural electrification and the establishment of educational institutions in the North-East, affirming that the region has become more integrated into the national mainstream. Additionally, he claimed

that people from the North-East no longer face racial discrimination in other parts of the country.

Sarma praised the BJP's efforts to reach every household in the North-East and expressed his cer-

tainty that out of the 25 Lok Sabha seats from the region, the BJP will win 22. He asserted that the benefits of government schemes under the BJP have reached the people more effectively than during Congress regimes.

Furthermore, Sarma underscored his commitment to ensuring the reelection of Prime Minister Modi for a third term, expressing confidence in the formation of the Modi government in India while making a lighthearted comment about the Congress potentially forming a government on the moon or other distant locations.

Sarma also highlighted his government's initiatives for women's empowerment, including the expansion of self-help groups, support for entrepreneurial ventures, and financial assistance for widows and abandoned women.

This prediction sets the stage for what promises to be a competitive and closely watched general election in the North-Eastern region next year. (With inputs from PTL)

Sahitya Akademi awardee Gyan Pujari advocates for stress-free education

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Sept 11: Sahitya Akademi awardee poet and writer Gyan Pujari expressed deep concern about the increasing mental pressure and stress among students during a meeting held to confer the 'Gangotri Goswami Memorial Award' at Sankardev Sishu Niketan, Gohpur. He emphasized the need for a stress-free educational environment and urged everyone to work towards creating such an atmosphere for students.

The 'Gangotri Goswami Memorial Award' is presented every year in memory of the late Gangotri Goswami of Tezpur. This year, the award was given to Darshana Kashyap, an economically disadvantaged but brilliant student from Kenduguri, Bihpuria. The award aims to honor the memory of Gangotri Goswami, who was known for her academic excellence and achievements in various competitions.

Gangotri Goswami, a versatile student, tragically passed away in a road accident on December 16, 2015. Since 2016, her family has been presenting this award on her birthday to economically disadvantaged students, continuing her



legacy of excellence.

During the event, Pankaj Barua, president of Akanir Sahitya Sabha, Uday Aditya Goswami, Head of Sankardev Sishu Niketan, Principal Jayanta Saikia, and Senior Scribe Bhuvan Saikia highlighted the significance of the award, which not only keeps Gangotri's memory alive but also helps economically disadvantaged students continue their education with a sense of social responsibility.

Darshana Kashyap, the recipient of the award, expressed her gratitude and noted that the award

would inspire her to uphold the values of social responsibility. The event also included special felicitations for Ashok Sharma and Jumi Devi (parents of Darshana Kashyap), retired teacher Nalin Sarma, and photojournalist Samir Kar.

The program began with a welcome address by Gangotri's mother, Momi Bhagawati Goswami, and included a tribute to Gangotri Goswami by her parents, Gokul Goswami and Momi Bhagabati Goswami, as well as a performance of Borgeet by Om Pal and Kaustabhmoni Keot.

Dibrugarh SP confirms Mehek Sharma's murder

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Sept 11: Dibrugarh superintendent of police, Shwetank Mishra, confirmed on Monday that Mehek Sharma was allegedly murdered. Her body was discovered on Sunday near Dibrugarh town bypass with severe injury marks.

Speaking at a press conference, Dibrugarh SP Mishra stated, "We have initiated an investigation into the matter. We arrested the prime suspect, Aziz Ahmed, yesterday, and today he was presented in court. We will analyze all scientific evidence collected from the site."

The body was found lying on the road near a car bearing registration number AS-06-AH-1143 in the middle of the bypass. A person identified as Aziz Ahmed alias Munna was also found lying on the road alongside the deceased girl, with no injuries. The car belonged to him.

Mehek Sharma resided in the Khalihamari area of Dibrugarh, while Aziz Ahmed was a resident of Majjan in Dibrugarh. According to sources, Aziz is reportedly a professional gambler who lends money on interest as his primary business. His mother, Munni Begum, previously served as the Congress Mahila Morcha Dibrugarh district President.

Meanwhile, Mehek's mother, Moushumi Sharma, alleged that her daughter was murdered by Aziz Ahmed. She claimed, "My daughter was murdered by Aziz Ahmed. He had been harassing my daughter for the past six months. I'm a teacher and used to live alone with my daughter. When I threatened to file a police complaint against him, he threatened us with dire consequences. Yesterday at 3:30 pm, he forcibly took her out for a drive. At 8:30 pm, she called, saying she was having dinner in a dhaba. That was the last phone call from her. Aziz Ahmed killed her in cold blood."

During the initial investigation, it was revealed that Aziz Ahmed, a married man and a father of two children, had been pressuring Mehek Sharma to have a relationship with him for the last six months.

Bloodstains were found inside the car, and scratch marks from nails were discovered on Aziz Ahmed's neck. "Mehek was allegedly murdered by Aziz because he wanted to marry her, and she denied. Mehek was pushed from the moving vehicle. Before her murder, Aziz tortured her," said a police source.

The investigation into this tragic incident is ongoing.

Golden Jubilee celebrations kick off at Amolapatty Primary School

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Sept 11: The year-long golden jubilee celebrations of Sivasagar Amolapatty Primary School began with enthusiasm as hundreds of alumni, students, parents, and local residents gathered at the school campus. The celebration began with a grand cultural procession, one of the longest ever organized by a primary school in the region, which was flagged off by journalist Manoj Kumar Borthakur. Students from ten other primary schools in the town joined in the procession.

The celebrations commenced with the hoisting of flags by Dr Prakash Kotoky, the president of the Celebration Committee, and Manjula Devi, the head mistress of the school. Minu Thakur, the first Mistress of the school in 1972, lit the ceremonial light, and 48 other individuals joined in lighting earthen lamps in memory of deceased teachers and academicians of the town.

The concluding function of the golden jubilee celebrations will be held in September 2024.

At the open meeting, Dr Dilip Baruah, principal of Sibsagar Commerce College, a noted academician, addressed the audience. The meeting was inaugurated



by Mohan Chandra Dutta. Other speakers, including Advocate Dilip Baruah, Dr Prakash Kotoky, Arabinda Baruah, and Chandan Rajkhowa, shared their memories and associations with the primary school. They recalled its humble beginnings in a room provided by late Krishna Baruah in his residence before moving to late Kumud Rajkhowa's residence. The school later got its own building on the

present site, thanks to the generous support of philanthropist SR Khemka, who donated rent for the house for 18 years.

The cultural program was inaugurated by renowned singer Pranoti Baruah.

The year-long jubilee celebrations promise to be a time of nostalgia, remembrance, and celebration for the entire school community and the town of Sivasagar.

Maha govt wants Maratha quota to be foolproof; no hasty decision: Shinde ahead of all-party meeting

MUMBAI/NAGPUR, Sept 11: The Maharashtra government wants to give quota to the Maratha community which will be foolproof and stands legal scrutiny but it won't take any hasty decision, chief minister Eknath Shinde said on Monday ahead of the all-party meeting.

Deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis said the government will try for broad consensus on how to move forward on issues raised by Marathas and other communities at the meeting.

"The state government wants to give the Maratha community a reservation that will be foolproof and which will pass legal test. We are not taking any decision in haste. The state does not want to cheat anybody," Shinde told reporters in Mumbai.

He said the government needs to establish that the Maratha community is socially and educationally backward and also assure other communities that their quotas will not be affected.

"The demand for Maratha quota is a social issue and not a political



one. I hope opposition parties will come up with some suggestions and avoid politicising the issue," the chief minister said when asked about his expectations from the all-party meeting, scheduled to be held in Mumbai this evening.

He pointed out that the state government is parallelly giving out several facilities and financial assistance to students from the Maratha community on par with the other backward communities.

Fadnis said the government would address the demands of various

communities without politicising the quota issue and would try to arrive at a decision suitable to the interests of the state.

"As the head of the state, chief minister Eknath Shinde has called the all-party meeting today. The agenda is to create a broad consensus over the Maratha quota issue. Several organisations have also raised their demands regarding reservations," he said.

Queried about the decision of Manoj Jarange, the quota activist who has been on hunger strike for

the last 14 days, to stop drinking water, Fadnis said, "The government needs to take a decision which will pass the legal test, otherwise, the community will blame us for misleading them".

He said the state government won't take any decision which would bring two communities (OBCs and Marathas) face to face.

Jarange has demanded that all Marathas be given the Kunbi status, which effectively means the OBC quota.

The rounds of talks held between the state government and the quota activist from Jalna district have remained inconclusive so far.

"We will not allow any injustice to happen to OBCs. The state government will not take any decision which will bring two communities (OBCs and Marathas) face to face," Fadnis said in Nagpur.

He hoped that leaders of all communities would avoid giving statements that hurt the sentiments of any community.

"I want to assure OBCs that no injustice would be done to them," the deputy CM added. (PTI)

Saudi Arabia one of India's most important strategic partners: PM

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: The strategic partnership between India and Saudi Arabia is crucial for regional and global stability and welfare, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday during his talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

Describing Saudi Arabia as one of India's most important strategic partners, Modi said both sides are adding new dimension to the ties in tune with changing times.

Modi and Bin Salman reviewed the bilateral relations at the first meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council.

In his opening remarks at the meeting, the prime minister said several initiatives have been identified to take "our close partnership to next level. Our relationship will get a new direction and energy in today's meeting".

The India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council was announced in 2019 with an aim to further increase cooperation in critical areas.

Bin Salman is currently on a State visit to India following end



of the G20 Summit.

Ahead of the talks, the Crown Prince was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"I am very glad to be here in India. I want to congratulate India for the G20 Summit," Bin Salman told reporters after the ceremonial welcome.

The Saudi leader said the announcements made at the summit will benefit the world. "We will work together to create a great future for both the countries," he said.

Saudi Arabia is one of India's key strategic partners in the Mid-

dle-East.

The overall relations between the two countries have witnessed a significant upward trajectory in the last few years.

The two sides have also been focusing on strengthening their defence and security partnership.

The then chief of army staff Gen MM Naravane visited Saudi Arabia in December 2020 in the first-ever visit by a head of the 1.3 million-strong Army to the important Gulf nation.

Since then, there have been series of visits of high-ranking military officials between the two sides. (PTI)

INDIA coordination committee meet to finalise campaigns, rallies: Manoj Jha

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: The first meeting of the coordination committee of the opposition bloc INDIA will focus on finalising campaigns and rallies to be held in the coming days, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Manoj Jha said on Monday. Talking to PTI, Jha said the results of the recent bypolls in seven assembly seats in six states - of which the opposition won four and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) three - show that a narrative is getting built in favour of the INDIA bloc.

"The meeting of the 13th is important, meetings of the different sub-groups have been held, like the social media committee, campaign committee, research committee, all have held their meetings. The deliberations held in these meetings will get a stamp of approval. A final shape will be given to the agenda, what would be the programmes, where the campaigns will be held, it will all be deliberated upon," he said.

The meeting of the 14-member coordination committee of the INDIA bloc, which is the top decision making body of the grouping, will be held at the residence of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar in Delhi on Wednesday. Over two dozen opposition parties have formed the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to take on the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance unitedly in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Asked about the Enforcement Directorate (ED) summoning Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee, a member of the coordination committee, to appear before it on the day of the meeting, Jha said the government is using agencies where it is incapable of defeating opponents politically.

"The day we formed the INDIA alliance - 'Judega Bharat, Jitega India' - we knew ED, I-T, CBI will be let loose. Today Abhishek Banerjee has got a summons, tomorrow someone else will get it.... These people have this mindset that if you cannot deal with the opposition politically, arrest them. They forget the bars of the prison are not so strong that it may contain people's outrage," he said, targeting the ruling BJP.

"This shows the prime minister and his team have not been able to get any concrete political vocabulary against the opposition alliance INDIA. They are calling us East India Company, Ghamandiya.... The prime minister and his team look rattled, worried...." the Rajya Sabha MP said. He said the recent by-polls showed that a narrative is getting built in favour of the INDIA bloc.

"Usually we don't give so much importance to bypoll results, but this time, on one side is a party which has so much resources and power, on the other hand, the opposition parties have a serious lack of resources. The results show that you can't buy everything by using power and money," Jha said.

"A narrative has been built by these results, even the one seat that the Congress lost - Bageshwar - the margin is very small. It is nothing if you look at the previous results in Uttarakhand," he said. (PTI)

Efforts on to 'insult' Sanatan Dharma, but Rahul Gandhi and Uddhav Thackeray silent: Anurag Thakur

NAGPUR, Sept 11: Union minister Anurag Thakur on Monday said efforts were being made to "insult" Sanatan Dharma and hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray for staying silent over it.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader's remarks came amid a political row after DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin blamed Sanatan Dharma for promoting division and discrimination among people and said it should be eradicated.

Also, DMK leader A Raja had likened Sanatan Dharma to diseases like leprosy and HIV which had social stigma.

To a query by reporters here on Rahul Gandhi's statement that he has read Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita and that there is nothing Hindu about what the BJP does, Thakur said, "The opposition should break its silence on insults to Sanatan Dharma."

"The opposition is limited to insulting the Sanatan Dharma. This shows their mentality and efforts are going on one after another to insult the Sanatan Dharma," the minister claimed.

Asked about Rahul Gandhi's comments over the India versus Bharat debate, Thakur said some people have the habit of "spreading fear and confusion and

Covid-19 body bags purchase 'scam': Ex-Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar appears before EOW

MUMBAI, Sept 11: Former Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar appeared before the Mumbai police's Economic Offences Wing on Monday in connection with an alleged scam in the purchase of body bags for Covid-19 victims, a police official said.

On September 6, the Bombay High Court granted interim protection from arrest for four weeks to Pednekar, noting the case probe was on and at this stage custodial interrogation was not warranted.

The court also directed Pednekar to cooperate with the probe in the case and appear before the city police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) on September 11, 13 and 16 for questioning.

On Monday, Pednekar reached the EOW office here at around 11 am to face an inquiry into the case, the official said.

Pednekar approached the HC



after a sessions court rejected her pre-arrest bail plea, saying she was accused of an economic offence involving a huge amount of public money.

The EOW had registered a case against Pednekar and two senior officials of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) under various Indian Penal Code sections including 420 (cheating) and 120 (B) (criminal conspir-

acy), based on a complaint filed by BJP leader Kirit Somaiya.

It was alleged that there was a misappropriation of funds and irregularities in the management of health facilities and purchase of body bags for deceased coronavirus patients, masks and other items by the BMC during the pandemic.

Pednekar was Mumbai mayor from November 2019 till March 2022 when the term of the BMC's general body ended. Fresh civic elections are yet to be held. In her pre-arrest bail plea, Pednekar claimed she was falsely implicated in the case and the complaint against her was politically motivated.

She claimed the case was lodged only after the split in the Shiv Sena party and that she is being targeted as she belongs to the Uddhav Thackeray's faction. (PTI)

MUMBAI DEBATE

Agenda of special Parl session is to separate Mumbai and declare it UT: Maha Cong chief



MUMBAI, Sept 11: Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Monday alleged the agenda of the upcoming special session of Parliament is to separate Mumbai from the state and declare it as a Union Territory.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi never called a special session of Parliament on COVID pandemic or issues like (2016) noteban or Manipur. The session is convened now as per the whims and mood of the government. This session will declare Mumbai as a union territory and separate it from the rest of Maharashtra," Patole alleged while speaking to reporters.

The Centre has not spelt out the agenda of the special session to be

held from September 18 to 22, triggering various speculations.

"Mumbai is an international city and the financial capital. Now, powerhouses of Mumbai such as Air India, the International Financial Services Centre, and the diamond market among others are being shifted out of the city," Patole alleged.

He claimed a plan is afoot to shift the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange to Gujarat.

Patole also alleged that as the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi government-comprising Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP, and Congress- was a major obstacle in such anti-state decisions, it was brought down by the Centre. (PTI)

Bombay HC asks Maha govt to decide in 30 days on Godrej & Boyce plea for hike in compensation for land acquisition

MUMBAI, Sept 11: The Bombay High Court on Monday directed the Maharashtra government to decide within a month an application filed by Godrej & Boyce company seeking enhancement of compensation awarded to it for acquisition of its land in suburban Vikhroli for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project. A division bench of Justices B P Colabawala and M M Sathaye was hearing a petition filed by the company seeking a direction to the Mumbai suburban district collector and the deputy collector (land acquisition) to make a reference to the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Authority on the company's application seeking enhancement of compensation.

The bench directed the state government authorities concerned to decide on the company's application within 30 days.

The company and the government have been embroiled in a legal dispute over acquisition of the company-owned land in Vikhroli area of Mumbai for the bullet train project since 2019.

Godrej's contention was that initially the compensation was decided to be ₹ 572 crore, but when the final award was passed, the compensation amount was reduced to ₹ 264 crore.

The company is now seeking enhancement of the compensation amount to ₹ 993 crore.

In February this year, the high court dismissed a petition filed by the company



challenging the acquisition proceedings. The HC then also said it was open for the company to seek enhancement of the compensation awarded to it.

The company challenged the HC order dismissing its plea in the Supreme Court. The apex court upheld the HC order, but said the issue of enhancement of compensation shall be decided within a period of six months.

Godrej in its petition said it filed an application in February 2023 before the collector and deputy collector (land acquisition) requesting them to make a reference to the LARR Authority for enhancement of compensation. However, the collector did not take any action.

In April 2023, the company filed an application before the LARR Authority seeking a direction to the collector to make a reference. The LARR Authority, however, dismissed the application, noting it cannot direct the collector to make

a reference.

Godrej then filed a petition in the HC challenging the collector and deputy collector's inaction, claiming the same was absolutely arbitrary, manifestly unreasonable and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India.

It claimed the state authorities were deliberately delaying the issue and flouting the Supreme Court's order.

The inaction on part of the respondent authorities constitutes a clear case of abdication of powers and functions vested in them. The inaction is completely arbitrary, unreasonable and capricious, the plea said.

Of the total 508.17 kilometres of rail track for the bullet train project between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, about 21 km is planned to be underground. One of the entry points to the underground tunnel falls on the land in Vikhroli (owned by Godrej). (PTI)

CSIR announces Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes-2022 to 12 scientists

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: Ahead of its foundation day, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on Monday announced the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar awards for 2022 to be distributed to 12 young scientists across the country.

Immunologist Dipayan Ganguli of CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata, astrophysicist Kanak Saha from the Pune-based Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Kanishka Biswas from International Centre of Materials Science of the Bengaluru-based Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research were among the awardees. The award is given every year to scientists under the age of 45 years and carries a purse of ₹ five lakh and a citation.

The announcement of the awards came amid a row over government's plans to prune National Science Awards.

Amit Singh, Department of Mi-



crobiology and Cell Biology of the Indian Institute of Science and Anun Kumar Shukla Department of Biological Sciences and Bioengineering of Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur were awarded in the category of Biological Sciences.

Biswas and T Govindaraju of the Bio-organic Chemistry Laboratory of Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research have been selected for the prestigious

prize in the Chemical Sciences category.

In the Earth, Atmosphere, Ocean and Planetary Sciences category, the Prize has been bagged by Binoy Kumar Saikia of the Coal and Energy Research Group of CSIR North East Institute of Science and Technology, Jorhat.

In the field of Engineering Sciences, Debdeep Mukhopadhyay of the Department of Computer Sci-

ence and Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur has bagged the Prize. The prize in the Mathematical Sciences category has gone to Anish Ghosh of Mumbai-based Tata Institute of Fundamental Research and Saket Saurabh of the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai.

In the field of Medical Sciences, Dr Jeemon Panniyammakal of the Achutha Menon Centre for Health Science Studies of Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology and Rohit Srivastava of the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay will receive the Prize.

Saha has received the Prize in the physical sciences category. The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, instituted in the memory of the first director general of the CSIR, are usually announced on the foundation day of the institution on September 26. (PTI)

Will examine any UDF request to probe alleged conspiracy to implicate Chandy in sex scandal: Kerala CM

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Sept 11: Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday said his government would legally examine and take requisite action on any request by the Congress-led UDF opposition for a CBI probe into the alleged criminal conspiracy to implicate Oommen Chandy in a sexual exploitation case.

Vijayan said that while there was no material before the government to take such action on its own, if the opposition provides the same with its request, it would be considered.

The CM was responding to the debate on UDF's motion for adjourning the House to discuss the issue of the alleged conspiracy which was reportedly mentioned in a report filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) before a magisterial court recently.

The report was filed in connection with the probe initiated by the agency, on the request of the LDF government in the state, based on a complaint by the prime accused in the sensational solar scam that had rocked the state nearly a decade ago when the UDF was in power. Vijayan said the government has not yet officially received the CBI report and therefore, it was not in a position to comment on it or take any action based on it.

In such a scenario, any discussion on the issue would not be based on facts or the law and therefore, the adjournment motion should be rejected. In view of the stand taken by the CM, the motion was rejected by Speaker A N Shamseer.

The notice for adjournment was moved by Congress MLA Shafi Parambil on the same day that Chandy's son, Chandy Oommen, took oath as an MLA after trouncing his main rival Jaick C Thomas of the CPI(M) by a margin of 37,719 votes in the recently held bypoll for the Puthupally constituency.

The September 5 bypoll for Puthupally constituency in Kottayam



district was necessitated following the death of Oommen Chandy on July 18.

Parambil, during the discussion on the adjournment motion, alleged that the Left front "targeted and hunted" Chandy and his family for several years and even dragged his name through the mud in connection with sexual exploitation accusations.

He further alleged that the accusations were levelled against Chandy as part of a "criminal conspiracy" to topple the then UDF government and defame him and demanded that the CPI(M) publicly apologise for the same.

He also demanded a probe to ascertain the alleged role, if any, of the CM and his government regarding the sexual exploitation accusations against the Congress stalwart.

During the over two-hour long discussion on the issue, several UDF MLAs, including Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan, also alleged that Vijayan was the main person behind the criminal conspiracy to "crucify" Chandy.

Some UDF MLAs also stated that Kerala Congress (B) MLA K B Ganesh Kumar's name finds mention in the CBI report according to which he had procured the complainant's letter containing the accusations.

Ganesh, the sole MLA of Kerala

Congress (B) which is a part of the LDF, denied the allegations and said he was never in touch with the complainant. He said that neither he nor his late father had any role in the matter. Ganesh is the son of Kerala Congress stalwart and former state minister R Balakrishna Pillai.

He also said that his father had stated that Chandy's name was not there in the letter in question and the same was communicated to the CBI when it questioned him.

Opposing the UDF allegations, several LDF MLAs, including K T Jaleel, said it was the Congress itself which had "stabbed" Chandy in the back and that factions within the grand old party were the ones who "hunted" the late Kerala CM.

"Chandy Oommen, we are your political opponents, not your enemies. Your political enemies are on your side," Jaleel said.

The LDF also alleged that it was factions within the Congress which engineered the ISRO spy case to target K Karunakaran and levelled false allegations against party stalwart P T Chacko which eventually resulted in his downfall in the early 1960s.

Some Left front MLAs also questioned the propriety of raising the issue on the same day when Oommen took oath as an MLA and contended that it

amounted to "cruelty" towards him and his family.

Towards the end of the discussion, the CM termed as 'baseless' the opposition claims and said his government sought a CBI probe on the complainant's complaint in accordance with law after getting legal advice from experts, including the then Advocate General.

Vijayan said his government was never interested in swaying the probe outcome in their favour and did not target Chandy.

Earlier in the day, while agreeing to discuss the issue in the House, Vijayan said making any comments on the matter would not be possible as the government was yet to officially receive the CBI report.

The CM also said that without officially getting the report, the government cannot take any steps merely based on news articles about the contents of the document in question.

The CBI in December last year had given a clean chit to Chandy in the sexual exploitation allegation levelled by a woman, who is the prime accused in the sensational solar scam.

The CBI had earlier submitted referral reports in the court giving clean chits to four other Congress leaders including AICC general secretary K C Venugopal, Lok Sabha MPs Adoor Prakash and Hibi Eden, and MLA A P Anil Kumar who were named as accused in the sexual exploitation case filed by the woman.

The cases against the six people, including Chandy, were registered over the past few years and investigated by the Crime Branch of the Kerala Police based on a complaint by the woman, an accused in the multi-crore solar panel scam during the UDF government, that she was sexually exploited by them in 2012. The CPI(M)-led Kerala government had according to a CBI inquiry into the cases in January 2021, a few months ahead of the polls to the state assembly. (PTI)

TDP chief Naidu taken to Rajamahendravaram central prison

RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM (AP), Sept 11: Telugu Desam Party chief N Chandrababu Naidu was brought to the Central Prison here early Monday after a court in Vijayawada sentenced him to 14-day judicial custody in a multi-crore corruption case, officials said. He was taken to the jail after a nearly 200-km journey to Rajamahendravaram in East Godavari district from Vijayawada. "Chandrababu Naidu was taken to the prison around 1:20 am," East Godavari district Superintendent of Police P Jagadish told PTI. Home-cooked food, medication and a special room were among the amenities granted by the court to Naidu during his judicial custody. The 73-year-old former chief minister has been provided with a separate accommodation inside the jail in view of the purported threat to his life. He is a Z-plus category security protectee. Naidu's son and TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh followed his father to the prison gates and waited outside for some time before leaving. According to the detention order, the judge highlighted there were grounds to believe the accusations levelled against Naidu, and that 24 hours were not enough to complete the investigation. (PTI)

Over 100 toilets constructed for transgenders in Delhi, govt tells HC

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: Over 100 toilets have been built for exclusive use by transgender people in the national capital, the city authorities informed the Delhi High Court on Monday.

The counsel for the social welfare department told a bench headed by Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma that a total of 102 such toilets have been built and 194 more are under construction.

"Efforts are being made and further action will be taken expeditiously," the counsel told the court.

The counsel for the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), which functions under the union ministry of home affairs, informed the bench that 12 toilets for transgender people are operational in the area under its jurisdiction and tenders for construction of 79 more have been awarded. The area is commonly referred to as Lutyens' Delhi.

The court was hearing a PIL filed by Jasmine Kaur Chhabra seeking direction for constructing separate washrooms for the third gender on the ground that their ab-

sence makes transgender population prone to sexual assault and harassment. The court, which had earlier ordered expeditious construction of public toilets for transgender people, said it will pass an order on the petition, observing that "substantial progress" has been made by the authorities.

"We will dispose it off," the bench, also comprising Justice Sanjeev Narula, said. On March 14, the high court had warned in case of non-compliance of its direction for construction of public toilets for transgenders, it will order personal appearance of city officials before it.

It had noted citing the status report filed by the city government that while the process of construction of such toilets was stated to be underway none were complete.

The PIL has said since the transgender community constitutes 7-8 per cent of the total population of the country, the authorities must necessarily provide toilets for them, and ensure they are treated equally. The petition said Mysore, Bhopal, and Ludhiana have al-

ready started taking action and have built separate public washrooms for them but the national capital is still not seen taking such an initiative. There are no separate toilet facilities for transgenders, they have to use male toilets where they are prone to sexual assault and harassment. Discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation or gender identity, therefore, impairs equality before the law and equal protection of the law and violates Article 14 of the Constitution, the petition, filed through advocate Rupinder Pal Singh, has said.

People, including men, women, and transgenders, feel uncomfortable and hesitate when the third gender uses the washrooms which are made for others, the plea has asserted, adding this also violates the 'right to privacy' of the third gender.

Last year, the Delhi government had informed the high court that 505 toilets meant for persons with disabilities have been designated for the use of transgenders and creation of separate washrooms for them will be fast-tracked. (PTI)

Sonowal to participate in Eastern Economic Forum meet in Vladivostok; Putin to address



NEW DELHI, Sept 11: Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal, leading an Indian delegation, will take part in the 8th Eastern Economic Forum meeting being held in Russia's far eastern city Vladivostok this week, where Russian President Vladimir Putin will be present.

Sonowal, who left for Moscow this morning en route to Vladivostok, will have a dialogue with business leaders and foreign partners during his three-day stay there, official sources said. He is leading a delegation of senior officials of various Union ministries and departments, they said.

Delegations from China, Laos, Mongolia and ASEAN countries are also participating in the meeting in the Russian city being held from September 10-13.

Putin will be in Vladivostok on September 11-12 to take part in the 8th Eastern Economic Forum, according to a statement issued by the Kremlin.

On September 12, the President of Russia will deliver a speech at the plenary session in which Vice President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic Pany Yathotou will also take part, the statement said.

Putin will also hold a number of bilateral meetings with the heads of foreign delegations on the sidelines of the forum, it said.

However, it was not immediately known whether Sonowal will meet Putin.

"The forum traditionally offers strategic solutions for the comprehensive development of the Far East. The joint participation of gov-

ernment and business representatives, the expert community and leading economists makes it possible to find new approaches to addressing current challenges," according to Anton Kobaykov, Adviser to the President of the Russian Federation and Executive Secretary of the EEF 2023 Organising Committee.

Sources said Russia has shown interest in India's presence at the Vladivostok port. Russia is keen to accord further momentum to the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime corridor, which could give a huge boost to maritime ties.

Sonowal is the Union minister of ports, shipping and waterways. Vladivostok is the largest Russian port on the Pacific Ocean and it is located about 50 km from the China-Russia border.

The Eastern Economic Forum is a key international platform for establishing and strengthening ties within the Russian and global investment communities, and for comprehensive expert evaluation of the economic potential of the Russian Far East, the investment opportunities it offers, and business conditions within advanced special economic zones. The Forum was established by a decree of the Russian president in 2015 to support the economic development of Russia's Far East and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Spike in demand caught us off

gone up. But there is no load-shedding anymore," he said. Sarma also claimed that the power situation in Assam is better than most Congress-ruled states, stopping short of directly blaming the opposition party for not investing in power generation in the state when it was at the helm of affairs here.

Earlier, moving the adjournment motion, Congress MLA Bharat Chandra Narah said the government should procure power from an open source to meet the demand.

The government has money for various schemes, including crores for a plantation drive. It can use some of the money to ensure that the people get electricity during such hot conditions, he said.

Congress' Rakibul Hussain, CPI(M) legislator Manoranjan Talukar, AIUDF's Aminul Islam and Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi also spoke during the discussion on the adjournment motion. (PTI)

Climate experts laud India's balancing

taken steps in this direction. Transition away from coal is possible only if RE is scaled up. India will also be pleased with the emphasis on energy efficiency, as it means financing can be directed towards these specific targets," the former negotiator said.

Reportedly, some countries emphasized on the role of carbon capture and storage (CCS) for stabilization of emissions from oil and coal industry. This has been balanced with reference to all future technologies relating to both abatement as well as removal.

There are no immediate implications for CCS because these are long-term technologies, he said. The immediate takeaway is that more financing should be allocated to renewable energy. It is possible that having developed a consensus on RE and energy efficiency targets at G20, a consensus may also emerge at the COP about these goals as part of the future nationally determined contributions, the climate policy expert said. "On the financing side, the G20 discussed greater involvement of multilateral developmental banks (MDBs). There could be some progress in this regard in future at the G20 level. It is a positive development that the MDBs have taken cue from the G20 declaration. World Bank President Ajay Banga has already expressed optimism with the emphasis on MDB involvement," he said.

The G20 Summit in New Delhi committed to making multilateral lending more effective in the fight against poverty and recognized the enhanced role of MDBs in mobilizing climate finance.

Some experts have also argued that governments in developing countries should avoid linking MDB reform with climate change because this would essentially mean MDBs reserving developmental finance for coal phasedown.

On the absence of the fossil fuel phaseout/phasedown language in the G20 declaration, Chandra Bhushan, president and CEO of independent think tank International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST), said, "G20 is also about continuity. Unabated coal has figured in communiqués of many previous G20 Summits.

India would have certainly tried (bringing in all fossil fuels in the text). Since it's a give and take, they thought it was right to continue with the language from the Bali Summit."

There has been no backsliding on commitments and it's a very positive result considering the circumstances made in previous G20 Summits.

The declaration talks about efforts to triple renewable energy capacity, doubling energy efficiency by 2030 and peaking of global emissions by 2025. It also includes Mission Life (Lifestyle for Environment) an initiative India has been championing, the climate policy expert said.

The G20 declaration noted the findings from the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), according to which, global greenhouse gas emissions should reach their highest point, or "peak", somewhere between 2020 and no later than 2025 to meet the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement.

However, they said, it doesn't mean that every individual country must reach its emissions peak within this timeframe.

"Timeframes for peaking may be shaped by sustainable development, poverty eradication needs, equity, and in line with different national circumstances," the declaration read.

Chandra Bhushan said India has been able to push its agenda. The declaration reflects all commitments made during the previous conference of parties and what the COP28 wants to achieve. G20 countries, under India's presidency, have laid a good foundation for COP28. It's a very positive outcome from the perspective of climate and just energy transition. (PTI)

DYA demands re-transfer of

ADC, Borah accepting the memorandum assured DYA members that the memorandum will be forwarded to the DC to be taken up in the claims and objection to be heard by December this year.

The memorandum was submitted by DYA president, Thengklong Rongpi, secretary, Harsing Rongpi along with other members.

Diphu MLA questions on

the Karbi literary body to choose a script. Unless it does so the language cannot be developed. They should opt for any of the recognized Indian script.

I appeal to have a consensus among the Karbi society on this matter," He also said that the CEM of KAAC has informed the Chief Minister that discussion has been ongoing on with the literary body to bring a consensus.

Once the recognized Indian script is adopted the state government will make Karbi an associate language in Assam and also recommend to the Centre for its inclusion in 8th schedule.

Regarding clause 3.4 of the MoS, the CM said that the government of India will examine the demand for notifying Karbi people living outside the KAAC area for granting ST status and setting up of Karbi Welfare Council in such areas.

The CM replied that the Welfare Council for Karbis living outside the KAAC area is already there. Should the existing Welfare Council in Amri Karbis be dissolved to have a new Welfare Council? This will be done according to suggestions from Karbis.

They have to give the structure of forming the council within a month.

"The Bodos in Karbi Anglong are also demanding ST (H) status and Karbis living in plain areas are also demanding ST status. However, they are demanding that Bodos living in the Karbi Anglong should not be granted ST (H) status. Discussion is on with the Centre to find a solution," said Sarma.

Assam CM urges MLAs to unitedly

Mangaldai town in July this year, with a video going viral in which the youths attending it were purportedly seen being given arms training. Four persons, including the organizers and the principal of the school, were also arrested during the course of investigation. (PTI)

2 killed, several injured in

with a mini truck on September 5 at Kakopathar in Tinsukia district.

The passengers were returning back from Doomdooma's weekly market when the vehicle in which they were travelling collided with the truck.

"The accidents are happening due to over speeding and carelessness while driving. Many accidents have occurred in several places of Upper Assam this past week, in which many people died. While driving everybody should be vigilant and follow all traffic and safety features," said a police official.

Assam Assembly speaker accepts

stating that since it is a five-day session, a delay in introducing the bills will not give the members enough time before these are taken up for consideration.

When Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) legislator Phani Bhushan Choudhury pointed out that other business cannot be taken up after an adjournment motion is admitted, Daimary said that he was making an exception and using his power as the speaker to permit it this time.

On the other hand, the Chief Minister also unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the new assembly complex on the inaugural day of the autumn session.

The autumn session of the assembly is the first sitting of the house in the new building.

"Honoured to have unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi ahead of the first session of the Assam Legislative Assembly in the new complex," Sarma posted 'X'.

"The enduring message of peace, nonviolence and harmony (of Mahatma Gandhi) continues to guide and inspire us. Bapuji is a beacon for our nation".

The new complex is spread across 10 acres and houses the main building, which will also accommodate the House and annexe buildings for administrative and other sections. It has a seating capacity for over 180 lawmakers. The current strength of the Assembly is 126 MLAs. (PTI)

Arunachali villagers not willing

built by the Arunachal Pradesh government," Kena said. The locals of Durpai are the real owners of the land and they will not go to Assam, he said.

"If our concern is not addressed, the villagers will write a letter with their blood to the Chief Minister, but never accept Durpai as part of Assam," Kena said.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart Pema Khandu signed the MoU.

DVDC general secretary Regi Bui said the villagers would not allow the regional committee members to visit the place for the second round of ground verification.

"Darpai is one of the oldest villages of the undivided Siang district. We have sufficient evidence to claim our rights. Therefore, we cannot give an inch of land from the area to Assam," he said.

It is stated that Kompek, Mingmang and Ruti villages were already marked for Assam during the Namsai Declaration.

Chief Ministers of the two states had signed an agreement to end border issues on July 15 last year too and decided to "restrict" the number of disputed villages to 86 instead of 123. It was called the Namsai Declaration after the name of the place where the meeting was held.

Bui asserted that the villagers will not allow the proposed construction of a hydropower plant in the district if their demand is not met.

An out-of-court settlement should benefit both sides without impacting anyone, he said.

Assam and Arunachal Pradesh share an 804.1-km-long border. Arunachal Pradesh, which was made a union territory in 1972, has been maintaining that several forested tracts in the plains traditionally belonged to tribal chiefs and communities and these were "unilaterally" transferred to Assam earlier.

After Arunachal Pradesh achieved statehood in 1987, a tripartite committee was appointed, which recommended that certain territories be transferred from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh. Assam contested this and the matter was in the Supreme Court for a long time. (PTI)

Ladakh border residents demand devp of tourist destinations

LEH, Sept 11: Border residents of Ladakh have demanded development of tourist destinations, internet connectivity and allocation of land for the construction of rest houses to support their livelihood.

The demands were made during a recent visit of Atal Dulloo, the secretary of border management in the Union home ministry, to Chushul, Maan, Merak, Urgo, and Tangse villages in the Pangong area.

Dulloo visited these villages to assess the progress of Vibrant Villages Programme, a centrally sponsored scheme, an official spokesman said on Monday.

The programme, launched on February 15 this year, is aimed at comprehensive development of select villages in 46 blocks in 19 districts in the northern border in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and the UT of Ladakh.

Accompanied by Additional Director General of ITBP Manoj Singh Rawat and senior security and civil administration officials from Ladakh, Dulloo over the weekend engaged in discussions with members of panchayati raj institutions and local residents, the spokesman said.

He said the public highlighted several pressing demands, including the installation of mobile towers to address absence of internet facilities, development of tourist destinations and land allocation for the construction of rest houses to support their livelihood, as there are limited avenues for earning a living in the region. (PTI)

JANHVI KAPOOR wraps 'Ulajh'

MUMBAI, Sept 11:

Actor Janhvi Kapoor has completed shooting for "Ulajh" and said her biggest learning while working on the upcoming film has been "to allow yourself to love what you do". Directed by National Award winner Sudhanshu Saria and produced by Junglee Pictures, the movie is billed as a patriotic thriller set in the world of Indian Foreign Services (IFS).

Kapoor, who plays an IFS officer in "Ulajh", shared the update on the film's wrap on Instagram Sunday night.

"It's a wrap still having dreams of the world we tried to create. Each film has been a lesson, and its story deeply and coincidentally intertwined with things happening in my life. "And through Suhana's journey, and the journey of making this film- my biggest learning has been to allow yourself to love what you do, to identify if you're doing it for the right reasons, to let go of baggage and external pressures and opinions..." the actor wrote in her post alongside pictures from the wrap party. She also thanked Saria for making her believe in herself. "You made me feel heard, and seen and made me want to fight battles that I never knew I had a right to even be a part of. To see you smile in the face of each obstacle and embrace each challenge with enthusiasm is beyond inspiring," she added. (PTI)



FILM HERITAGE FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES TWO-DAY FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE DEV ANAND'S BIRTH CENTENARY

MUMBAI, Sept 11: A film festival celebrating the 100th birth anniversary of screen icon Dev Anand will be held later this month, the Film Heritage Foundation (FHF) announced Monday.

Dev Anand, star of films such as "Hum Dono", "Tere Ghar Ke Samne", "CID", and "Guide", will be honoured ahead of his birthday on September 26 with a gala titled 'Dev Anand@100 - Forever Young'. The two-day celebration, held jointly in association with NFDC-NFAI (National Film Development Corporation Of India - National Film Archive of India) and PVR Inox will be conducted on September 23 and 24 across 30 cities and 55 cinema halls all over India, according to a press release.

The FHF, founded by filmmaker and archivist Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, has curated a collection of four of the actor's movies for the showcase: "CID" (1956), "Guide" (1965), "Jewel Thief" (1967) and "Johnny Mera Naam" (1970). Audiences in cities including, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Trivandrum, Chennai, Bengaluru, Lucknow, Kolkata, Guwahati, Indore, Jaipur, Nagpur, New Delhi, Gwalior, Rourkela, Kochi, and Mohali, will get an opportunity to watch these landmark films of Dev Anand restored by NFDC-NFAI in 4K resolution for the big screen, the release stated. After a successful run with 'Bachchan Back To The Beginning' and 'Dilip Kumar - Hero Of Heroes', Dungarpur said they had to celebrate the birth centenary of Dev Anand. "We wanted to honour his legacy by screening four of his milestone films. The films are among my personal favourites as I consider Goldie Anand (Vijay Anand) one of the most stylish directors of Indian cinema. (PTI)



'JAWAN' COLLECTS ₹ 520.79 CRORE IN FIRST WEEKEND



MUMBAI, Sept 11: Superstar Shah Rukh Khan's action thriller 'Jawan' has earned ₹ 520.79 crore gross at the worldwide box office in its first weekend, the makers said Monday. Directed by Tamil filmmaker Atlee, the pan-India film also stars Nayanthara and Vijay Sethupathi as well as Deepika Padukone in a special appearance. It hit the screens worldwide on September 7 in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

Red Chillies Entertainment, the production house behind 'Jawan', shared the worldwide gross box office figures on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"Rewriting history at the box office ₹ 520.79 crore as gross worldwide box office collection. Highest weekend collection ever," the post read.

At the worldwide box office, the high-octane action thriller collected ₹ 129.6 crore on day one, making it the biggest opening day in the history of Hindi cinema globally, according to the makers. (PTI)

Pankaj Tripathi inaugurates school library in memory of late father in his village

MUMBAI, Sept 11: Actor Pankaj Tripathi has inaugurated a library at a higher secondary school in his village Belsand, Gopalganj, in Bihar, in the memory of his father Pandit Banaras Tiwari.

Tiwari died on August 21 at the age of 99. Tripathi, who recently received the National Award for Best Supporting Actor for "Mimi", said he is honoured to make a contribution for the betterment of future generations of his native village.

"In dedicating this library to the cherished memory of my father, Pandit Banaras Tiwari. I hope to instill a lifelong love for knowledge and literature in the hearts of the students of Belsand, Gopalganj. Education is the greatest gift we can give to our future generations, and it is my honour to contribute to their journey of learning," the actor said in a statement.

Tripathi and his elder brother have established the Pandit Banaras Tiwari Foundation Trust, a trust in the honour of their parents.

The actor, also known for films such as "Newton", "Stree" as well as web series "Mirzapur", had also supported the school by providing electrical equipment and installation of eco-friendly solar energy panels. (PTI)



'Jigarthanda Double X' a creatively satisfying experience: Karthik Subbaraj



CHENNAI, Sept 11: Film-maker Karthik Subbaraj said filming for "Jigarthanda Double X" has been a "creatively satisfying" process and he is confident the movie will be an exciting experience for the audiences as well.

"Jigarthanda Double X", a Tamil action gangster drama starring Raghava Lawrence and SJ Suryah in the lead roles, is a prequel to the 2014 blockbuster "Jigarthanda".

The teaser of the pan-India film was released on Monday on X, formerly known as Twitter, by Dhanush (Tamil), Mahesh Babu (Telugu), Dulquer Salmaan

(Malayalam), Rakshit Shetty (Kannada).

"The film is a creatively satisfying experience for all of us. We had shot 'Jigarthanda Double X' in some of the most exotic locations."

"I am sure we are going to present a very exciting experience to the audience. I sincerely thank my actors, technicians and all others who supported this huge project," Subbaraj said in a statement.

"Jigarthanda Double X", extensively shot in locations across Tamil Nadu and Kerala, is produced by Kaarthikeyan Santhanam and S Kathiresan under

the banners of Stone Bench Films and Five Star Creations, respectively.

National Award winner Tirru is the cinematographer, while Shafique Mohamed Ali is in charge of editing.

The makers have locked the Diwali release for the movie. It will also be released in Hindi and Telugu.

The original "Jigarthanda" revolved around a budding filmmaker who decides to draw inspiration from the life of a gangster for his feature film. Things go awry when he gets caught snooping on the mafia. (PTI)

THE 28-YEAR-OLD SOUGHT HELP OF LEGENDARY PRAKASH PADUKONE

'Sindhu low on confidence, not a medal favourite at Asian Games'

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: Repeated failures in tournaments this season has dented P V Sindhu's confidence and not much should be expected from the ace Indian shuttler at the Asian Games, says former India coach Vimal Kumar. The double Olympic medalist has found the going tough ever since returning from a five-month long lay-off following an ankle injury en-route to the Commonwealth Games gold last August.

Desperate to arrest the slide, the 28-year-old sought help of legendary Prakash Padukone and trained under him at his Academy PPBA in Bengaluru last week.

"We have been sitting and observing her sessions. Prakash spoke to her and tried to motivate her. We have also interacted with her coach (Muhammad Hafiz Hashim)," Vimal, who is the director of the PPBA, told PTI.

"She is at the moment low on confidence and she has some work to do. We shouldn't expect much from her at the Asian Games," he added.

The 2019 world champion has lost seven times in the first round of BWF tour events this year. A semifinal finish at the Canada Open and two quarterfinals - US Open super 300 and Australian Open super 500 -- are the only notable

performances so far this season.

Plagued by a string of underwhelming performances, Sindhu had conceded that the quarterfinal loss at the US Open had "a significant emotional impact" on her. "This loss has left a significant emotional impact on me, especially considering the challenging and demanding year I've had. It's disheartening to experience a disappointing defeat after each successful tournament," she wrote on 'X' in July.

After observing the shuttler from close quarters during her week-long stint, Vimal feels Sindhu needs to make a few technical changes in her game and is likely to take some time to regain her form.

"She is a big player and it is important to give her some time, it might take her a few months to regain her touch. There are a few technical aspects, where she can make some changes. Some initiatives she needs to take in the technical aspect."

Ahead of the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, Sindhu has pulled out of the China Open Super 1000 and Hong Kong Open Super 500 to focus on the multi-sport event beginning September 23.

Her personal coach, Malaysian Hafiz Hashim was also with her when she trained at the PPBA last week. (PTI)



Diksha finishes 21st stays third on Order of Merit in Europe

HILVERSUM (THE NETHERLANDS), Sept 11: Diksha Dagar carded a decent 2-under 70 on the final day to finish a modest tied-21st on the Ladies European Tour's Big Green Egg Open here.

The 22-year-old left-hander had rounds of 71-70-70 for an aggregate of 5-under 211, which was not enough to maintain her run of top-10 finishes. Diksha had two birdies and one bogey on either side of the Hilversumsche Golf Club in the final round. Despite the modest finish, Diksha stayed in third place in the Race to Costa Del Sol -- the LET's Order of Merit.

It has been a great season for Diksha so far with the Indian winning a tournament and having six top-10 finishes. She also notched up a career-best finish in a Major -- a T-21 in the AIG Women's Open.

India's Vani Kapoor (70) finished tied-39th at 1-under 215, while Amandeep Drall, Tvesa Malik, Rid-



hima Dilawari and amateur Avani Prashanth had missed the cut.

A thrilling final day saw Thai rookie Trichat Cheenglab land her maiden LET title as she fired a 67 (-5) to win by one shot. With seven players tied at the top prior to the final round, it was a close affair.

Cheenglab posted six birdies, including a wonderful four on the par-5 18th to pip Lydia Hall and Nicole Broch Estrup to glory on 12-under par. Playing in the final group alongside Welsh duo Chloe Williams and Lydia Hall, Cheenglab birdied her opening hole at the par-5 as the latter

eagled to break from the pack and take the sole lead.

In the final stages after Broch Estrup set the clubhouse target at 11-under par with a sensational 65, Cheenglab and Hall both required two birdies in their final five holes to topple the score.

The rookie struck first with a birdie on the par-3 14th only for Hall to respond with one of her own on the par-4 15th. Hall gave shots back on the 16th and 17th after finding trouble off the tee, meaning the one-time LET winner required an eagle on the last hole with Cheenglab needing a birdie.

Hall saw her eagle attempt shave the hole leaving Cheenglab with a four-footer for the win after a clutch chip. The 28-year-old became the seventh Thai player to win on the LET. Hall and Estrup recorded their best results of the 2023 season with the T2 finishes at the Big Green Egg Open. (PTI)

Dhiraj loses Bronze play-off, India return with a Silver from Archery WC final

HERMOSILLO (MEXICO), Sept 11: Dhiraj Bommadevara showed some spark when he shocked two-time Olympic team gold medalist Kim Woojin 6-2 but lost his next two matches to return empty-handed as India ended their campaign with a solitary silver medal in the 'Archery World Cup Final'. Compound archer Prathamesh Jawakar won the country's lone medal despite India fielding their biggest-ever contingent of five archers in the World Cup's season-ending grand finale.

Rising Indian recurve archer Dhiraj began his campaign on a rousing note when he rallied from 0-2 to pull off an upset 28-29, 30-28, 30-28, 29-26 win over the World No. 2 Korean heavy-weight in the men's quarterfinals here on Sunday.

But the 22-year-old Army archer faltered against another Korean Lee Woo Seok as he went down 1-7 (28-28, 27-30, 28-30, 28-29) in the semi-final to be left to fight for the third-place playoff, where he was up against Medellin World Cup winner Mauro Nespoli. The bronze medal contest went down to the wire with the Italian clinching the issue 6-5 (29-30, 27-

27, 25-29, 27-26, 27-28) (10-9) in the shoot-off where Dhiraj dropped a point.

Jayanta Talukdar remains the only male recurve archer to have won a World Cup Final medal -- bronze -- 13 years ago in Edinburgh.

Dola Banerjee is the only Indian with a World Cup Final gold that came way back in Dubai 2007 in the women's recurve section. In terms of medals, woman recurve archer Deepika Kumari is the most successful Indian, having won four silver medals at different World Cup Finals.

The event is a year-

ending world outdoor competition where a total of 32 archers, eight in each of the four championship categories, fight it out for the gold, silver and bronze medals.

Archers qualify for the tournament by winning one of the circuit's four stages -- in Antalya (Turkey), Shanghai (China), Medellin (Colombia) and Paris (France) -- or by climbing high enough in the World Cup Ranking with consistent finishes across the season to make it as a points qualifier. One spot in each category is also awarded to the host nation. (PTI)



Messi is a doubtful starter for Argentina's WC qualifying game



SAO PAULO, Sept 11: Excited Bolivian fans gathered at the La Paz international airport to welcome Lionel Messi ahead of Argentina's World Cup qualifying game against the home team on Tuesday.

The 36-year-old Messi traveled with the defending World Cup champions but is not a certain starter at the game because of fatigue.

Meanwhile Brazil, coached for the first time by Fernando Diniz in a 5-1 win over Bolivia last Friday, is preparing to face Peru with the same squad. Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Colombia won their opening games in continental qualifying last week. All 10 South American teams will play their second games on Tuesday. The 2026 edition of the World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada is expanding to a 48-team format. The top six teams in South America will secure a direct spot.

The seventh-place team will contest an intercontinental playoff for a berth. Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni told a news conference he will have against Bolivia a very similar lineup to the one that beat Ecuador on Thursday. Messi's presence, however, could be decided hours before kick off. The match will take place at the Hernando Siles Stadium, which is more than 3,000 meters above sea level, a venue where visiting teams can struggle, particularly older players. Scaloni also said veteran Angel di Maria and striker Julian Alvarez could make it to his starting XI, probably replacing Nico Gonzalez and Lautaro Martinez.

"If all is well, the idea is to repeat or see some changes, which could be these two (Di Maria and Alvarez) entering," the coach said.

"There is a chance they will play, but we can make the decision on the morning before the match."

If Messi sits out, Scaloni will have to come up with a solution for to cover for a player who has no substitute.

Brazil coach Diniz has a one-year contract, which ends precisely at the same time Carlo Ancelotti's deal with Real Madrid is set to expire. Ancelotti is widely tipped to take over Brazil's national team but local media has shown a lot of excitement for the attacking ideas of the 49-year-old Diniz due to the intensity of the Selecao's game against Bolivia.

Sunday's training suggests Diniz will make no changes to play against Peru, which drew its opening match at Paraguay.

Richarlison, who was in tears after being substituted during the match against Bolivia, is likely to get another opportunity as a starter. Defender Gabriel Magalhães has recovered from a light injury and was also working with the likely starters in practice.

Neymar, who until last Friday had not played since February, showed he has recovered with two goals that helped him break Pelé's record as Brazil's all-time top goal scorer. The toughest encounter on Tuesday is in Quito.

Ecuador's new coach Félix Sánchez Bas was happy to defend at Argentina, but playing at home against Marcelo Bielsa's Uruguay he will have to push forward so his team has a chance to erase its three-point deficit in the standings. The point deduction punishment was imposed by FIFA for Ecuador's falsification of birth information of defender Byron Castillo, who is of Colombian origin. (AP)

Twin sisters Vithya and Nithya Ramraj eye Asian Games glory

CHANDIGARH, Sept 11: Born within minutes of each other, twin sisters Vithya and Nithya Ramraj lived cheek by jowl in a sports hostel, played together, and will be in close proximity as they represent India in the Asian Games.

Twins making it to the Indian team in any sport is rare but Vithya and Nithya, belonging to a poor family near Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore, did just that, with their homemaker mother being the person behind their success story.

Vithya and Nithya figure in the sports ministry's list of 65 track and field athletes for the upcoming Hangzhou Asian Games. Vithya will compete in 400m hurdles and Nithya in 100m hurdles.

"Nithya and I are twins and we have qualified for the Asian Games. Our mother Meena is so happy hearing that we are going together for the Asian Games," Vithya, who ran the 400m race at the Indian Grand Prix 5 here, told PTI in an interview on Sunday. "I am younger to Nithya, in fact I am the youngest. We are three sisters, the oldest is Sathya who is 27." She said her mother was the brain behind the two twins taking to the sport. Her tempo-driver father was earlier the lone bread earner of the family. Now, Vithya is an Indian Railway employee, while Nithya is with Income Tax department.

"My mother is just a homemaker and we are in athletics because of our mother. People asked you are three women, how will you survive. My mother decided we have to do something. So, she put us in a sports hostel," said the 24-year-old Vithya. (PTI)

Nuwan Seneviratne From school bus driver to India's left-arm throwdown specialist

COLOMBO, Sept 11: As Rohit Sharma effortlessly flicked left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi for a six over backward square leg during the Asia Cup Super 4 match here, the cameras zoomed in on a person standing on the Indian dressing room balcony.

Even hardcore cricket buffs would have found it tough to identify him, or fathom why he was shown on TV. Meet Nuwan Seneviratne, the left-arm throwdown specialist of the Indian team. So how did Seneviratne, whose cricketing career ended in obscurity having played just two First-Class matches in Sri Lanka, became a prominent part of the Indian cricket team?

The answer is quite simple. Senior India batters Rohit and Virat Kohli believe that Seneviratne's ability to generate extreme pace and acute angles with his left-arm throwdowns helps them tackle left-arm pacers better in a match situation.

But the journey of Seneviratne was not so simple. There was a time when he did not know about his future, and tried to earn his livelihood as a school van driver in Colombo. In his free time, Seneviratne came back to his old club -- the Nondescripts Cricket Club, Maitland. During one of the trips to the NCC in 2015, he met former Sri Lanka batsman Charith Senanayake and his life turned the curve for the better.

"Nuwan is a hard-working boy from a humble background, and I saw him first when he was assisting the Sri Lanka 'A' side with their fielding drills.

"He was doing some bowling and throwdowns to them, and I was immediately impressed with his skills and work ethics. He was first to enter the field and last to leave," Senanayake, who was the team's manager then, told PTI.

He said Seneviratne's ability to trouble batters with pace at nets caught his eye. "He was excellent



with throwdowns, especially while recreating the angles of a left-arm pacer at nets. It helped our batsmen, especially (Danushka) Gunathilaka, a lot in the subsequent 'A' tours," said

Senanayake.

"I thought this boy should be helped not just to earn his livelihood but he has genuine skill, so I recommended him to Roy (Dias), and he was glad to take him on

board," said Senanayake.

Dias, a former stylish Lankan batsman, accommodated Seneviratne in the support staff of Sri Lanka 'A' team in 2016 that toured India.

Seneviratne then returned to the senior team later that year to help them on the tour to England.

"I had recommended him to then Sri Lanka coach Graham Ford, who then watched him at the nets. Ford was immediately impressed with the brutal force Bavuwa (pet name of Seneviratne) generated against players like Dimuth (Karunaratne) and Angelo (Mathews).

"Ford then rather jokingly asked me: 'Is he a human?' He had no hesitation to take him with the team to England," said Senanayake, who accompanied the team on that tour as manager.

But fate had something bigger in store for Seneviratne. Under no regular contract with the Sri Lanka side, he was called to assist

the Indian team at nets on its tour to these shores in 2017.

"At nets, Bavuwa hit Kohli on the body and also troubled him a bit with his pace and angles.

"After the training, the Indian team manager approached me and asked for details about the local throwdown specialist," said Senanayake. A brief interview followed, and after a few months Seneviratne was on a flight to India to be the team's left-arm throwdown specialist. "Bavuwa called me and said: 'Sir, I am going to India to be with their cricket team.' I was so happy, as finally he found the recognition that he deserves.

"People often only sees his success. But he worked hard at nets to improve his skillsets, and spent countless hours at gym to strengthen his throwing arm.

"I think that work ethic and dedication to his job impressed Kohli and the India management," said Senanayake. (PTI)

Record-breaking Kohli, comeback-man Rahul make mincemeat of Pakistan bowling

COLOMBO, Sept 11: Virat Kohli returned to his record-breaking ways with his 47th ODI ton while KL Rahul dispelled all doubts over his fitness with a scintillating hundred and powered India to a mammoth 356 for 2 against a hapless Pakistan in an Asia Cup Super Four match here on Monday.

Kohli also became the fastest to reach 13,000 runs in the format as he closed down on Sachin Tendulkar's world record 49 ODI centuries.

The contemporary legend's love affair with R Premadasa Stadium continued as his unbeaten 122 off 94 balls was his fourth hundred on trot at this very venue.

Kohli's hundred did not overshadow Rahul, who raced to his sixth ODI hundred -- a chiselled 106-ball-111 not out in a superb 233-run stand for the unconquered third wicket.

The highly-rated Pakistan bowling attack lay in tatters and was hamstrung on the day due to absence of their fastest man Haris Rauf, who didn't turn up due to an injury.

Shaheen Shah Afridi, considered to be India's biggest threat was taken to the cleaners by India's top four as he leaked 79 runs in his 10 overs.

Overall, the Pakistani bowlers struggled to contain the opposition batters, who hit 37 boundaries and nine sixes in all.

India started the innings, which was suspended on Sunday because of rain, at 147 for two in 24.1 overs, as Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill had given them early mo-



mentum with fifties.

But there was no ennui surrounding the Indian batting, and they maintained a run

rate close to 7.

Rahul's innings might have been particularly heartening for the team management.

He might have batted well in the match simulation process at the NCA, but here the 31-year-old proved his readiness for bigger battles with an ebullient innings against a top opposition.

At the other end, Kohli was a little slow to get off the blocks, sussing up the conditions and also allowing space to Rahul to slot himself into his gear.

But once settled, Kohli bruised the Pakistan attack as only he can.

As he was the previous day, pacer Naseem Shah (0/53 in 9.2 overs) was the most threatening of Pakistan bowlers as others largely struggled to hit the right button.

They were also hit hard by the absence of Rauf, who did not enter the field after suffering an oblique muscle pull while bowling yesterday.

It meant that Pakistan had to use part-time off-spinner Iftikhar Ahmed longer than they would have liked.

However, Kohli and Rahul were not complaining. There were sparkling shots all around as one would expect from two of the finest shot-makers around.

Kohli conjured his drives, on-the-up shots and pulls out of the draw, while Rahul's swat-flick six off leg-spinner Shadab Khan (1/71 in 10 overs) was worth freezing inside a frame among an array of on-side shots.

Rahul completed his hundred in as many balls, and Kohli went past the mark in 84 balls as Pakistan wilted under tremendous pressure. (PTI)

Raina backs Ishan Kishan to open for Team India

MUMBAI, Sept 11: Former cricketer Suresh Raina has thrown his support behind Ishan Kishan's potential as an opener for Team India, citing the 25-year-old's strong character and his ability to foster a positive team atmosphere, a quality reminiscent of the injured Rishabh Pant.

The wicketkeeper-batter has impressed with a matured 82 while batting at No. 5 in the rain-out Asia Cup opener against Pakistan in Pallekele on September 2.

But the lefthander, who opens for Jharkhand and his IPL franchise Mumbai Indians, also gives the flexibility to bat at the top of the order.

"I always said that Ishan Kishan has to open because he is a strong character who maintains a good team atmosphere," Raina told JioCinema.

The former India and Chennai Super Kings lefthander had a small stint together with Kishan at the now-defunct IPL franchise Gujarat Lions in 2016 and 2017.

Raina remembered his time with the youngster, and how the wicketkeeper-batter brought camaraderie and team spirit to the squad.

Recalling an incident, Raina

said, "I told (Aaron) Finch that if Dwayne Smith and Brendon McCullum aren't playing, then Ishan Kishan should open. I'll bat at No. 3, and you can decide the rest of the batting line-up."

"I remember in one match, he hit four-five sixes in Rajkot against Mumbai Indians, and the way he showed intent is what a team needs. Just like Rishabh Pant, who keeps laughing and maintains good team bonding, that's what's crucial," Raina added.

Raina also remembered that MS Dhoni had asked him to keep a watch on the youngster.

"Since he (Ishan) hails from Ranchi, he spoke to MS Dhoni, and everyone wants to be like Dhoni there. Also, because of the way Ishan contributed to Jharkhand, Dhoni told me to observe his wicketkeeping progress," Raina recollected.

India have a set opening pair in skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill, both of whom have performed decently in the ongoing Asia Cup.

The current opening duo are expected to continue in the upcoming World Cup in India next month as Kishan's chance to open in the format may have to wait. (PTI)

NADA collecting 30 samples from Indian Grand Prix V, some from 'specific' athletes

CHANDIGARH, Sept 11: The National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) will collect around 30 samples, including those of targeted athletes, during the two-day Indian Grand Prix track and field meet (IGP V), which concludes here on Monday.

With athletics set to contribute the bulk of the medals for the country at the Hangzhou Asian Games (September 23 to October 8), NADA apparently wants to ensure all the participants are dope-free.

A target of 30 samples can be considered to be a good number, taking into account that this is not a national championship and all the events in a full-scale nationals are not being competed here. Two doping control officers (DCOs) of the NADA have come here from Delhi for the IGP V, which began on Sunday. It is learnt that the NADA officials in Delhi have given instructions to take around 30 samples. (PTI)

Boult, Neesham make cut as New Zealand go with experience for World Cup



AUCKLAND, Sept 11: Trent Boult and Jimmy Neesham, who both opted out of central contracts, have made the cut as New Zealand on Monday named an experienced 15-member squad, led by Kane Williamson, for next month's World Cup in India.

Williamson, who last played for the Black Caps in March, returns to the side as he continues to recover from a ruptured ACL he suffered during the IPL earlier this year.

However, it is not yet known whether the batter will be fit for New Zealand's opening match against England, which is also the tournament opener, on October 5.

New Zealand had lost to England on boundary count in the 2019 World Cup final at Lord's, after the teams could not be separated by a tie-breaking Super Over.

"From Kane and Tim heading to their fourth tournament to the guys selected for the first time it's always a very exciting time," head

coach Gary Stead said.

"As with any squad named for an ICC tournament, there have been some tough calls and there will be some disappointed players. The key for us was finding the right balance for the squad and making sure we had our bases covered for what is going to be a very competitive tournament," he added.

Williamson and experienced pacer Tim Southee, who featured the last time the tournament was held in India in 2011, will be playing in their fourth ODI World Cup.

Alongside the duo, Boult, Matt Henry and Tom Latham, who feature in their third ODI World Cup squad, form the experienced core.

Wicketkeeper Latham will serve as Williamson's deputy.

All-rounder Neesham, who almost led New Zealand to victory with the bat in the thrilling Super Over in 2019, Lockie Ferguson, Mitchell Santner and Ish Sodhi

have also been retained and will feature in their second consecutive 50-over World Cup.

The likes of Mark Chapman, Devon Conway, Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips have earned a maiden call-up for the 50-over mega event, having featured in the T20 World Cup squads before.

Spin all-rounder Rachin Ravindra and batter Will Young are selected in their first senior white ball World Cup squads.

Pacer Adam Milne, who was ruled out of the ongoing England series with a hamstring injury, and opener Finn Allen miss out.

Changes to the 15-player squad can be made until September 28.

New Zealand squad: Kane Williamson (captain), Trent Boult, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Jimmy Neesham, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee, Will Young. (PTI)

Novak Djokovic wins the US Open for his 24th Grand Slam title by beating Daniil Medvedev



NEW YORK, Sept 11: Halfway through a second set that lasted 1 hour, 44 minutes, a test of tenacity as much as talent amid a U.S. Open final as exhausting as it was exhilarating, Novak Djokovic and Daniil Medvedev engaged each other in a 32-stroke point.

It was among many such elongated exchanges between two men whose styles are nearly mirror images, and Djokovic capitulated by netting a backhand. He fell to his back and stayed down, chest heaving. The crowd roared. Djokovic sat up but remained on the ground for a bit. The crowd roared some more, appreciating the effort, saluting the entertainment.

Using every ounce of his energy and some serve-and-volley guile — an old man with new tricks — Djokovic emerged for a 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-3 victory over Medvedev at Flushing Meadows to claim a historic 24th Grand Slam title on Sunday night in a match more closely contested than the straight-set score indicated.

"I never imagined that I would be here standing with you talking about 24 Slams. I never thought that would be the reality," said Djokovic, a 36-year-old from Serbia and the tournament's oldest male champion in the Open era, which dates to 1968. "But the last couple of years, I felt I have a chance, I have a shot for history, and why not grab it if it's presented?"

He moved one major singles title ahead of Serena Williams and is the first player to win 24 in the Open era. Margaret Court also collected a total of 24, but 13 of those came before professionals were admitted to the Slam events.

There were snapshots, particularly in the miniseries of a second set, when it appeared Djokovic was faltering. After some of the most grueling points — and there were many — he would lean over with hands on knees or use his racket for support or pause to stretch his legs. And then, suddenly, he would snap to.

"That's Novak," Medvedev said. "No matter what, he can be there."

There was an inescapable sense, on the part of the participants and any observer, that whichever man succumbed in the second set would be unable to overcome it.

"I don't think I have ever played a longer set in my life," Djokovic said.

Medvedev's take on that segment of the match?

"Oh, regrets, for sure," he said. "Should have won it."

Medvedev came within a single point of taking that set while returning at 6-5. Djokovic rushed the net behind his serve, and while Medvedev had an opening for a backhand passing shot by hitting it down the line, he instead went cross-court, and Djokovic had it covered. In the tiebreaker, Medvedev led 5-4 before Djokovic grabbed the next three points.

One key adjustment: When Djokovic was looking more bedraggled, he turned to serve-and-volleying, not his usual sort of tactic. He won 20 of 22 points he played that way, and 37 of 44 overall on the points when he went to the net, some with spectacular volleys or half-volleys at angles a pool shark would appreciate.

Medvedev never countered. "I should have been less stubborn," Medvedev said.

This was the 27-year-old Russian's fifth major final and he is 1-4, with two losses apiece to Djokovic and Rafael Nadal. The victory came against Djokovic in the 2021 final at Flushing Meadows, stopping a bid for the first men's calendar-year Grand Slam in more than a half-century.

That weighed on Djokovic. "I really did my best in the last 48 hours not to allow the importance of the moment and what's on the line get to my head," Djokovic said Sunday, "because two years ago that's what happened, and I underperformed."

Djokovic's fourth championship in New York, where he was unable to compete a year ago because he isn't vaccinated against COVID-19, goes alongside 10 trophies from the Australian Open, seven from Wimbledon and three from the French Open, extending his lead among men. Nadal is next with 22; Roger Federer retired with 20.

When it was over, Medvedev tapped Djokovic on the chest as they talked at the net. Djokovic flung his racket, put his arms up and then knelt on the court, head bowed. Then he found his daughter for a hug. His son and wife came next, along with his parents and his team.

"This is one of the biggest achievements in (sports) history," said his coach, Goran Ivanisevic. "We're not talking about tennis. We are talking generally in sports."

Soon, Djokovic was donning a shirt with "24" and "Mamba Forever" written on it as a tribute to the late NBA star Kobe Bryant, a close friend who wore that jersey number. And on top of that went a white jacket with the same significant number on the chest. (AP)

Assam Rifles organise friendly football match



HT Correspondent BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 11: Assam Rifles, under HQ Inspector General Assam Rifles (East) organised a 'Friendly Football Match' with Laberghari Football Club at Battalion Headquarter, Lokra on Monday. The aim of the event was to promote the 'Fit India Movement' and to encourage local youths to have a healthy lifestyle. A total of 17 players from the Laberghari Football Club & 17 personnel participated in the event. The event was witnessed by 30 personnel and 46 villagers with full zeal and enthusiasm.

Sindhu trains at PPBA academy for a week to regain form, Vimal says she needs to make technical changes

NEW DELHI, Sept 11: Olympic medallist P V Sindhu needs to make a few technical changes in her game and is likely to take some time to regain her form, said former India coach Vimal Kumar, who has observed the Indian ace from close quarters during her week-long stint in Bengaluru.

Sindhu has found the going tough ever since returning from a long lay-off following an ankle injury en route to the Commonwealth Games gold last August.

Desperate to arrest the slide, the 28-year-old, a two-time Olympic medallist, sought the help of the legendary Prakash Padukone and trained under him at the PPBA academy in Bengaluru last week.

"We have been sitting and observing her sessions. Prakash spoke to her and tried to motivate her. We have also interacted with her coach (Muhammad Hafiz Hashim)," Vimal, who is the director of the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy, told PTI.

"She is at the moment low on confidence and physically and mentally slightly in a poor state. She has some work to do and we shouldn't expect much from her at the Asian Games."

"She is a big player and it is important to give her some time, it might take a few months for her to regain her touch. There are a few technical aspects, where she can make some changes. Some initiatives she needs to take in the technical aspect."



Sindhu, the 2019 world champion, has lost seven times in the first round of BWF tour events this year with a semifinal finish at the Canada Open and two

quarterfinals -- US Open super 300 and Australian Open super 500 -- being the highlight so far.

Ahead of the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China,

Sindhu has pulled out of the China Open Super 1000 and Hong Kong Open Super 500 to focus on the multi-sport event beginning September 23.

She along with her coach Hafiz Hashim then spent the last week training at the PPBA under the former All England champion Padukone.

"The last week has been a good change for her. She had a good experience of learning from Mr Prakash Padukone. He was very kind to be there and watch her practice session," Sindhu's father PV Ramana, who had won a bronze medal as part of the Indian Volleyball team in the 1986 Asian Games, said.

"They have been very supportive and has given her great encouragement. It is good to learn from different coaches, everyone has different views and ways. As a player, she might like to go again, every player have their own strategy."

For world number 14 Sindhu, it is a crucial period in her career with the Olympic qualification period for the 2024 Games having started from May 1.

In February, the player from Hyderabad parted ways with Korean coach Park Tae-Sang, who was instrumental in her winning the bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

Sindhu worked with SAI coach Vidhi Chaudhary for sometime before roping in Hafiz ahead of the Olympics. (PTI)