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● PM in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh today to launch devp projects

My govt committed for devp of KA: Himanta

CMs of Assam and Meghalaya inaugurate Rs 21.5 crore Karbi Hemtun at Shillong ● Base of 100-bedded Students' Hostel for KA students laid

HT Bureau

SHILLONG, Sept 13: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has reiterated his government's commitment towards growth and development in Karbi Anglong.

"The present government in Dispur has been paying unprecedented attention towards Karbi Anglong and its residents," Sarma said after inaugurating a Karbi Hemtun, or Karbi Bhawan in Shillong on Wednesday along with Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma.

The Karbi Hemtun in Shillong has been built at a cost of ₹ 21.5 crore by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

The duo also took part in the foundation stone laying ceremony for the construction of a 100-bedded Karbi students' hostel cum commercial complex, with a project cost of approximately ₹ 22



core, in the pine city.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister exuded confidence the newly inaugurated Karbi Hemtun in Shillong would be of great help for residents of Karbi Ang-

long district visiting the pine city for various purposes.

Further, with the laying of foundation stone for the construction of the 100-bedded students' hostel on Wednesday, a long step has been

taken towards finding a solution to scarcity of suitable accommodations for students from Karbi Anglong pursuing their academic courses in Shillong, one of the most sought-after destinations for higher studies in the Northeastern region. He hoped that the commercial complex in the hostel premises would help strengthen the financial health of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

CM Sarma also lauded the role of chief executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Tuliram Ronghang in the never-before-seen peace and development being witnessed in Karbi Anglong in recent times under his able leadership. Expressing his gratitude towards his Meghalaya counterpart Conrad Sangma for the latter's role in the Karbi Hemtun project completion in (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

CMs of Assam, Meghalaya hold informal border talks Joint visit of border likely in October: Himanta

By Dhrubajyoti Chakravorty

SHILLONG, Sept 13: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday held an informal discussion on the border issue and decided to formalise confidence building measures before conducting a joint visit to the areas of difference in October.

Addressing the media after the meeting, Sarma said, "We want to sit in a formal meeting and then probably we will be able to take some confidence building measures and with that, we will visit the borders because we thought that our visit should not create tension because if we both CMs go to the area and after our return there is a fresh tension then people will blame us. So we want to quickly evolve some confidence building

measures."

"Once that confidence building measures are formalised, we will both go to the site and we will discuss with the people of border villages also. When we went to Langpih, there were lots of festivities. So we want to go to the Karbi Anglong and Jaintia Hills also with the same kind of festivity," he added.

The Assam CM said he would like to have the formal meeting and visit the border areas in the month of October.

"I like to do it in the month of October. If Meghalaya CM can come to Guwahati in the first week of October, we can do otherwise in the second week of October."

As part of the second phase of border talks, both Assam and Meghalaya governments have constituted the regional committees to

come up with solutions for resolving the remaining six areas of differences shared by the two states.

Asked when likely the regional committees will submit their reports, Sarma however said, "As we told you that these six areas are little bit complicated so these regional committees are headed by matured people on both the sides, they are working very hard, they are visiting those areas frequently and we believe that everything will be settled in a most peaceful and amicable manner."

The Assam CM however refused to take questions related to the demand for retransferring of Block I & II by saying, "Don't ask us substantial questions because today is just an informal visit." Appealing to the people in the border to maintain peace and harmony, Sarma also assured (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Assam earns ₹ 10 crore as excise revenue per day

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: More than 5.30 lakh bulk litre (BL) of liquor is sold daily on an average in Assam, with the state earning over ₹ 10 crore as excise revenue per day, state excise minister Parimal Suklabaidya said in the Assembly on Wednesday.

A 'bulk' litre is the actual volume of a liquid. In contrast, a 'standard' litre is the volume of the liquid if it were at standard temperature and density. In reply to a question by Congress MLA Sibamoni Bora, Suklabaidya said the average daily sale of India Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) is 3,06,772.577 BL. In the case of beer, the approximate (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Policeman shot dead in Manipur's Churachandpur

CHURACHANDPUR, Sept 13: A police sub-inspector on duty at Chingphei bunker No.1 in Manipur's Churachandpur district was shot dead on Wednesday afternoon. The policeman, identified as Onkhomang, was shot in the head by a sniper between 1pm and 1.30pm, officials said.

Officials added that two more persons also sustained bullet wounds in the incident, the details of which are still awaited. This attack comes a day after three tribals were gunned down by unidentified men in Kangpokpi district on Tuesday morning. On September 8, another three persons were killed and over 50 injured at Pallel in Tengnoupal district. More than 180 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organized in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. (PTI)

Over 1.56 lakh foreigners detected, 30,000 deported: Bora

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: More than 1.56 lakh illegal foreigners have been detected in the state as per the 1985 Assam Accord provisions while over 30,000 of them have been deported so far, minister Atul Bora told the state Assembly on Wednesday.

He said various clauses of the Accord are in different stages of implementation, with a sub-committee formed to advice the government on it.

Replying to a question by Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) legislator Ramendra Narayan Kalita, Bora said 1,56,651 illegal foreigners have been identified in the state till July 31, 2023, as per the Accord regulations.

The Assam Accord was signed in August 1985 after a six-year-long anti-foreigner movement.

It stated, among other clauses,

that names of foreigners coming to Assam on or after March 25, 1971, would be detected, deleted from electoral rolls and steps would be taken to deport them.

The minister said 30,089 illegal foreigners have been deported on the basis of it till August 31.

He also said all 100 Foreigners' Tribunals are functioning currently. Bora said a sub-committee has been formed by the government to look into the implementation of all the clauses of the Accord.

The sub-committee has held five rounds of sittings so far and further measures on Accord implementation will be taken after its report submission. On fencing along the international border with Bangladesh, Bora said 1.49 per cent is still open and the ministry of external affairs has been urged to take steps. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Congress stages walkout, dissatisfied with Assam Record implementation



GUWAHATI, Sept 13: The opposition Congress staged a walkout in the Assembly on Wednesday, taking umbrage on the reply regarding the implementation of the Assam Accord. The matter was raised by Congress' Sibamoni Bora during the question hour, seeking to know progress in Assam Accord implementation. The Assam Accord was signed on August 15, 1985, at the end of a six-year-long agitation against infiltration. Assam Accord Implementation minister Atul Bora

started his reply by stating that the martyrs of the agitation lost their lives during the... government.

At this, the Congress MLAs took umbrage and demanded that the word used by the minister to imply the deaths be deleted from proceedings. Speaker Biswajit Daimary intervened and ordered that the word be expunged from records.

Bora, resuming his reply, maintained that the objective of the Accord has not been fulfilled yet. As he began to share details of progress made so far, the Congress legislators expressed dissatisfaction at the reply and walked out of the House.

In the reply laid in the House, the minister said a sub-committee formed by the state government is looking into the implementation of the different clauses of the Accord. Five rounds of talks by the sub-committee with stakeholders have already been held and it is in the process of finalizing the roadmap for completely implementing all the clauses, Bora added. Meanwhile, Bora also informed the House that more than 1.56 lakh illegal foreigners have been detected in the state as per the 1985 Assam Accord provisions, among who over 30,000 have been deported so far. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Nobody demanding separate state in Assam: CM

HT Bureau

SHILLONG, Sept 13: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said nobody is demanding separate statehood in Assam.

"Assam's Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong - they are in a different geographical situation. So one plus one is not two. However, there is a totally different situation in Barak Valley, different situation in Brahmaputra Valley so we should not, I mean in Assam now nobody demands States," Sarma told reporters.

"If Karbi Anglong also demands, they are demanding State within Assam and not outside Assam. I think that phase is over now in Assam," he added.

Minimum 3 promotions for Assam police personnel

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: The Assam cabinet has decided that police personnel will be entitled to at least three promotions from the constable rank under the Assured Career Progression Scheme.

The council of ministers, in a meeting presided by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Tuesday night, decided that police personnel will be eligible for assured promotion to the next higher level after completion of eight years of regular service in a particular post, subject to performance and vigilance clearance, state tourism and PHE minister Jayanta Malla Baruah said.

"It will strengthen public service delivery by the law-enforcement personnel through effective management of human resources," he said.

Further, to ensure the health and well-being of Assam Police personnel in lower ranks, ration money allowances from the rank of followers to inspectors of battalions, including uniformed ministerial staff, will be enhanced to Rs 2,500 per (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Libya floods claim over 5000 lives, over 7000 injured

DERNA, Sept 13: The death toll from flooding that hit the eastern Libyan city of Derna reached more than 5,000 and was expected to rise further, a local health official said on Wednesday, as authorities struggled to get aid to the coastal city where over 7,000 were injured, thousands missing and tens of thousands homeless.

Aid workers who managed to reach the city, which was cut off on Sunday night when flash floods washed away most of the roads, described devastation in the city's centre, where search and rescue teams combed shattered apartment buildings for bodies and retrieved floating bodies offshore.

"Bodies are everywhere, inside houses, in the streets, at sea. Wherever you go, you find dead men, women, and children," Emad al-Falah, an aid worker from Benghazi, said over the phone from Derna. "Entire families were lost."

Mediterranean storm Daniel



caused deadly flooding in many towns of eastern Libya, but the worst-hit was Derna. As the storm pounded the coast on Sunday, residents said they heard loud explosions when the dams outside the city collapsed. Floodwaters washed down Wadi Derna, a river running from the mountains through the city and into the sea.

"The city of Derna was sub-

merged by waves seven metres high that destroyed everything in their path," Yann Frieze, head of the delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Libya, told broadcaster France24. "The human toll is enormous."

Derna lies on a narrow coastal plain on the Mediterranean under steep mountains running along the coast. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

India, Russia discuss transport corridors to widen maritime corridor

VLADIVOSTOK, Sept 13: Union Minister of ports, shipping and waterways and Ayush, Sarbananda Sonowal met with minister of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic, A.O. Chekunkov at the Pavilion of Kamchatka Territory, 'Far East Street' here on Wednesday to discuss several issues relating to maritime communication between India and Russia to widen maritime cooperation including possibility of usage of new transport corridors like the Northern Sea Route (NSR) as well as the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) between Vladivostok and Chennai.

India and Russia has agreed to train Indian seafarers in Polar and Arctic waters at the Russian Maritime Training Institute equipped with simulator training facilities in Vladivostok. Sarbananda Sonowal said, "The relationship between

Russia and India has deep historical roots and is based on mutual respect and shared interests. We remain committed to maintaining strong ties and fostering strategic co-operation across various sectors. With the support from the Russian government, our team visited the ports of Vladivostok, Vostochny, Nakhodka and Kozmino in May, 2023, which helped us gain insights into the requirements for the full-scale operationalisation of the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC). Our proposed workshop in Chennai will discuss this and we will involve all stakeholders involved in the trading and transportation of potential commodities such as coking coal, oil, and liquefied natural gas along this corridor," he said.

Meanwhile, the Union minister on September 12 also extended an invitation to Russia to participate at the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Over 82,000 hectares of state's land encroached: Assam minister

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: More than 82,000 hectares of Assam territory has been encroached by four of its neighbouring states, state border protection and development minister, Atul Bora said in the Assembly on Wednesday.

He also said that the boundary disputes are being resolved through talks and legal measures with the neighbouring states.

Replying to a question by Congress MLA Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha, Bora said 59,490.210 hectares of Assam land has been encroached by Nagaland.

Arunachal Pradesh has encroached 16,144.00117 hectares, Mizoram 3,441.8601 hectares and Nagaland 3,675.7800 hectares. Regarding the resolution of disputes, Bora said talks are going on with Mizoram at different levels, while the matter relating to Nagaland is before the Supreme Court.

In another reply to Congress' De-



babrata Saikia, Bora said the border rows with Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh are being resolved through regional committees, formed as per the suggestion of the Union home ministry.

In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the two states on April 20 this year to settle the disputes regarding 123 villages

claimed by Arunachal Pradesh. 12 regional committees were formed to deal with the disputed areas and the boundaries in 71 of these villages have already been settled. Process for coming to a settlement in the remaining villages is going on and it will be completed within six months of signing of the MoU, the minister said. Bora said that 12 areas (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

C-295 aircraft to replace ageing Avro--748 fleet IAF Chief receives first C-295 aircraft at Seville

SEVILLE (SPAIN), Sept 13: Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari on Wednesday received the first of the 56 C295 transport aircraft two years after India sealed a deal of ₹ 21,935-crore with Airbus Defence and Space to procure the jets to replace its ageing Avro--748 fleet.

Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari, receiving the aircraft at the aerospace major's production facility in the southern Spanish city of Seville, described it as a "momentous day" for the Indian Air Force (IAF) and India as 40 C-295 out of the total fleet will be manufactured in Vadodara.

"It is a momentous day for us, for the Indian Air Force in particular, and a nation as a whole to receive the first aircraft which marks the beginning of a new era, wherein we



will be manufacturing 40 of these aircraft in India," he said.

Under the deal, Airbus will deliver the first 16 aircraft in 'fly-away' condition from its final assembly line in Seville by 2025

and the subsequent 40 aircraft will be manufactured and assembled by Tata Advanced Systems (TASL) in India as part of an industrial partnership between the two companies. "It gives a tremendous boost to

the capability of moving our forces to the frontline when required," Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari said.

The Chief of Air Staff also took a sortie on the new aircraft.

The C295, in transport configuration and with an indigenous electronic warfare suite, will leave Airbus' production site in Seville for Delhi on September 15. It will be piloted by a joint IAF-Airbus crew.

"While the first aircraft was rolled out from Spain, the 17th aircraft will be assembled at the final assembly line in Baroda in 2026. It will mark a historic moment as the first time a military transport aircraft will be fully manufactured in India," Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari told PTI. Indian Ambassador to Spain Dinesh Patnaik said the aircraft was handed over (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Goyal talks tough to auto industry on unnecessary import of components

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: In a strongly-worded message, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday suggested the auto industry not to import components unnecessarily if the exporting country is not giving equal access to Indian players.

He however said that companies can import quality products if those are not available or manufactured domestically.

"Where things are being unnecessarily imported without India getting an equal opportunity in those countries I would be tempted....," he said here at the annual convention of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers.

He did not elaborate on these remarks.

Goyal also said that the government may have to look at the practices of some of the players in the sector who get dictated by their parent companies on sourcing and pricing of imports of components.

He added that there are certain companies who by choice prefer to import and there are certain firms who may not by themselves be importing and on record showing a greater degree of indigenisation.

"But the moment, we go down one or two levels into their supply chain, we find them still dependent on imports. Often being dictated



by their parent company from where these component suppliers would source, the pricing at which it will be sourced.

"I do not know how legal that is. But I personally think there is a question mark on transfer pricing in that, there is a question mark on fairplay... I would urge all the players of the auto industry to introspect on it. I personally believe that at some point the government may also have to get into greater detail on this subject," he added.

The minister also said that the government may have to take retaliatory action against countries that do not allow access to Indian steel companies but are permitted

to send the metal to India.

Goyal was referring to some companies importing automotive steel from their parent country.

The auto industry is still dependent on 20 per cent of its requirement on imports and this dependence varies across companies which shows that some of them are importing by choice..

Further, the minister dismissed the contention of some of the global auto firms which say that they bring investments into India.

"Investments come to India because of its market size," he said adding bringing investments into India does not mean that "we would have to continue to import

goods into India that are available locally at a competitive price and of very high quality.

He also slammed the practice of some companies who route their investments from one geography and import components and inputs from third countries that are "not very" friendly to India.

He said India may also have to look at products coming from other countries at zero duty under the free trade agreement more carefully to see whether there is a level playing field between Indian suppliers and the countries from which their products are coming.

"Non-tariff barriers created by some countries, written or unwritten, by which they get together not to allow goods from other countries those are areas of concern," the minister added.

Goyal added that the industry should trust the domestic ecosystem and "I am not against imports per se".

He said that his ministry is bringing quality control norms for different products.

He also suggested increasing R&D and design capabilities.

"We are also concerned about the skilling, upskilling and re-training of our workforce," the minister said urging the industry to work on this. (PTI)

Sensex rises for 9th straight session, Nifty closes at record high as banking, metal shares gain

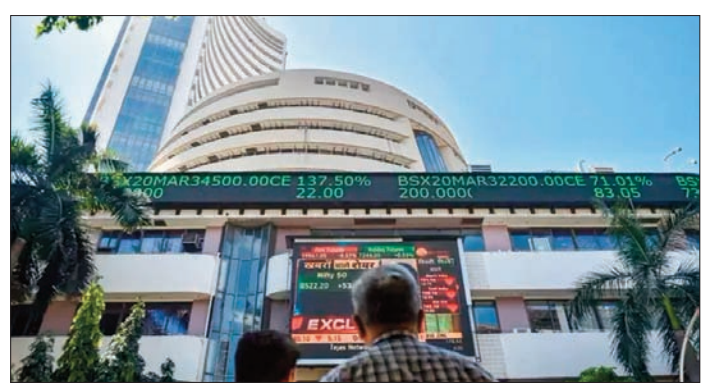
MUMBAI, Sept 13: Benchmark Sensex rose for a ninth straight session while Nifty closed above the record 20,000 mark for the first time on Wednesday as positive macroeconomic data triggered buying in banking, energy and telecom shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex bounced back from early lows to trade near its all-time high levels at 67,565.41 in day trading. The barometer settled at 67,466.99, up 245.86 points or 0.37 per cent. As many as 20 Sensex shares closed in the green while 10 declined.

The broader Nifty closed above the 20,000 mark for the first time, rallying 76.80 points or 0.38 per cent to 20,070, its all-time closing high. Of 50 Nifty shares, 31 closed higher and 19 declined. Among the Sensex firms, Bharti Airtel rose the most by 2.72 per cent. Titan, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Power Grid, NTPC and Tata Motors were among the major gainers.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Nestle, JSW Steel, Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra and Maruti were the major laggards.

"The domestic indices resumed an upward trajectory despite weak global cues. The cooling of domestic CPI inflation to 6.83% in August and the rise in industrial



production data reaffirmed the robustness of the Indian economy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

The contraction in the UK economy and a rise in oil prices have created a level of uncertainty in the global market. Also, investors await US inflation data, which holds global significance as it will provide insights into the Fed's policy outlook, Nair added.

Retail inflation declined to 6.83 per cent in August after touching a 15-month high of 7.44 per cent in July, mainly due to softening prices of vegetables, but still remains above the Reserve Bank's comfort zone.

India's industrial production growth rose to a five-month high of 5.7 per cent in July, mainly due to good showing by the manufac-

turing, mining and power sectors, according to official data released on Tuesday. In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower while Tokyo ended in the green. European equities were trading lower. The US markets ended in negative territory on Tuesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.66 per cent to USD 92.56 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,047.19 crore on Tuesday after a day's breather, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark had climbed 94.05 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 67,221.13 on Tuesday. The Nifty, however, pared all its gains and ended marginally lower by 3.15 points or 0.02 per cent at 19,993.20 in a volatile trade. (PTI)

Federal Bank to open 100 branches this fiscal



MUMBAI, Sept 13: Federal Bank, the largest private sector lender in Kerala, on Tuesday said it will open 100 more branches this fiscal as part of its increasing focus on lending to small businesses.

The Kochi-based lender had opened 75 branches last fiscal, its executive director Malini Warriar told reporters here on the sidelines of the three-day global SME financing summit organised by the developmental lender Sidbi.

She said one-third of its total loan book of ₹ 1,86,593 crore as of June 2023, which rose close to 21 per cent on-year, was SME loans, and so are the retail and wholesale books.

"The idea of focusing on SMEs is that we should be growing in sectors of the economy which is growing faster or which has more credit needs. And the fast growing industry segment in terms of credit is SMEs.

"Therefore our decision to open more SME-focused branches this fiscal as well," Warriar said.

According to her, most of these branches will come up in Tamil Nadu where it already has 200 branches besides Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, the states which have the largest concentration of small businesses.

During the past five years, the bank has almost doubled its branch presence to 1,100 from 600, she noted.

As part of the SME focus, the bank will be driving the co-lending model too.

It has already tied up with a fintech player Yubi and is in discussions with half a dozen more and will likely close co-lending agreements with at least four of them, this fiscal. (PTI)

Return property papers to borrowers within 30 days of repayment or pay ₹ 5k/day for delay, RBI to banks

MUMBAI, Sept 13: The Reserve Bank on Wednesday directed banks and financial institutions to release all original movable or immovable property documents and remove charges registered with any registry within 30 days after full repayment of a loan by the borrower.

Failing to comply with the direction, Regulated Entities (REs) would compensate the borrower at the rate of ₹ 5,000 for each day of delay, RBI said in a notification.

RBI noted that REs follow divergent practices in release of such movable or immovable property documents leading to customer grievances and disputes.

As part of Fair Practices Code and to make things uniform, RBI asked "REs to release all the original movable/immovable property documents and remove charges registered with any registry within a period of 30 days after full repayment/settlement of the loan account."

In case of delay in doing so, it said, the RE would communicate to the borrower reasons for such delay.

The borrower shall be given the option of collecting the original movable/ immovable property documents either from the banking outlet/branch where



the loan account was serviced or any other office of the RE where the documents are available, as per her/his preference, it said.

The timeline and place of return of original movable/immovable property documents will be mentioned in the loan sanction letters issued on or after the effective date, it said.

In order to address the contingent event of demise of the sole borrower or joint borrowers, RBI said,

REs shall have a well laid out procedure for return of original movable/immovable property documents to the legal heirs.

Such procedure would be displayed on the website of REs along with other similar policies and procedures for customer information, it said.

With regard to loss/damage to original movable/immovable property documents, the notification said, REs would assist the borrower in obtaining duplicate/certified copies of such documents and would bear the associated costs, in addition to paying compensation.

"However, in such cases, an additional time of 30 days will be available to REs to complete this procedure and the delayed period penalty will be calculated thereafter (i.e., after a total period of 60 days)," it said. The compensation provided under these directions would be without prejudice to the rights of a borrower to get any other compensation as per any applicable law, it said.

These directions would be applicable to all cases where release of original movable/ immovable property documents falls due on or after December 1, 2023, RBI said. (PTI)

Rupee falls 2 paise to close at 82.97 against US dollar



NEW DELHI, Sept 13: The rupee depreciated by 2 paise to close at 82.97 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, weighed down by a surge in crude oil prices and strong American currency overseas.

However, a positive trend in domestic markets and upbeat macroeconomic data from India cushioned the downside for the local unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.92 against the US dollar and moved in a range of 82.89 and 82.99.

The rupee finally settled at 82.97 (provisional) against the US dollar, down 2 paise from its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee closed at 82.95 against the US currency.

"The Indian rupee depreciated on Wednesday on strong Dollar and surge in global crude oil prices. However, positive domestic markets and upbeat macroeconomic data from India cushioned the downside," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

The dollar gained on expectations that the US Fed may hike interest rates one more time this year.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on rising US dollar and surge in crude oil prices. Risk aversion in global markets may also weigh on the rupee.

"However, a positive tone in domestic markets may support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may remain cautious ahead of US CPI data. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 82.70 to ₹ 83.30," Choudhary said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose marginally by 0.08 per cent to 104.79.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.58 per cent to USD 92.59 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 245.86 points or 0.37 per cent higher at 67,466.99. The broader NSE Nifty advanced 76.80 points or 0.38 per cent to its lifetime closing high of 20,070.00.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Tuesday as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 1,047.19 crore, according to exchange data.

India's industrial production growth rose to a five-month high of 5.7 per cent in July, mainly due to good showing by the manufacturing, mining and power sectors, as per official data released on Tuesday.

Retail inflation declined to 6.83 per cent in August after touching a 15-month high of 7.44 per cent in July, mainly due to softening prices of vegetables, but still remains above the Reserve Bank's comfort zone. (PTI)

Acko releases comprehensive health insurance report

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, health has assumed an unprecedented significance in the collective consciousness. The crisis has acted as a catalyst for heightened awareness of health, underlining the critical role played by health insurance. Notably, India's leading tech-first insurance provider, ACKO, has seized upon this moment to shed light on some startling insights through its latest report, 'The ACKO Health Insurance Index.' This comprehensive report surveyed 1,000 respondents aged 28 to 55 across six major Indian cities, revealing that while 60% of respondents express confidence in understanding their health insurance policies, their comprehension primarily spans just three crucial aspects: cashless treatment (53%), accident coverage (50%), and 100% bill payment (45%).

The report underscores that a significant portion of the Indian population remains underinsured. An alarming 68% of policyholders hold coverage amounts under ₹ 10

lakh, with 27% having coverage below ₹ 5 lakh. Surprisingly, 64% of policyholders haven't increased their coverage from the previous year. Equally concerning is the fact that 61% of potential buyers are not considering health insurance policies with a sum insured exceeding ₹ 10 lakh. The report further reveals that a slow and cumbersome claim settlement process acts as a significant deterrent for 43% of both policyholders and potential buyers.

In light of these insights, ACKO is poised for significant business opportunities. The company's tech-driven approach aligns well with the changing preferences of customers. Rupinderjit Singh, vice president of Retail Health at ACKO, emphasises the importance of understanding customer needs, particularly in the health insurance sector. He asserts, "The ACKO Health Insurance Index has identified these gaps in health insurance, which can be addressed by modern insurers like ACKO to provide a superior health insurance experience."

11th ICE concludes in Kolkata

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: The 11th edition of South Asia's premier ice cream event, the 'Indian Ice Cream Congress & Expo' (IICE), wrapped up in Kolkata on September 15, culminating in a remarkable three-day gathering that united national and international players in the dynamic ice cream industry. Co-organized by IICMA & AIM Events, with HAIER India as its title sponsor, this year's IICE was a showcase of the latest trends and innovations in the world of frozen delights.

The prestigious event was inaugurated by Dr Shashi Panja, the Cabinet minister of industries, commerce & enterprises in West Bengal. Rajesh Gandhi, managing director of Vadilal Industries Ltd & chairman of IICMA, extended a warm welcome to attendees and emphasized the event's role as a transformative platform for ice cream companies aiming to modernize their operations, explore cutting-edge technologies, and uncover innovative concepts. He stressed that IICE is the ideal ground for nurturing creative ideas and fostering industry collaboration. Sudhir Shah, president of IICMA and MD of Scoops Ice Cream, noted the industry's rapid growth, which has escalated from ₹ 9000 crore in 2016 to ₹ 12,000 crore in 2018, boasting an impressive annual growth rate of 15-20%.

Motorola unveils Moto G54 5G

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: Motorola launched the Moto G54 5G, a high-powered device set to make waves with its remarkable features. It is now available for purchase from September 13 on Flipkart and at leading retail outlets across the country.

The Moto G54 5G boasts a robust configuration, sporting a colossal 12GB RAM and 256GB 5G storage. It debuts the MediaTek™ Dimensity 7020 octa-core processor in India, delivering blazing-fast performance, not just for gaming and multitasking but also enhancing camera capa-

bilities with advanced ISPs and AI functionalities. Its 6nm architecture ensures efficient battery optimization, and with support for 14 5G bands, 3 Carrier Aggregation, and VoNR, coupled with the MediaTek™ Dimensity 7020 processor, the Moto G54 5G establishes itself as a top contender for 5G performance in its segment. The device offers an immersive entertainment experience with its 6.5" FHD+ display boasting an adaptive refresh rate ranging from 30 to 120Hz, delivering seamless visuals for gaming and media consumption.

Govt will not make six airbags mandatory for cars: Gadkari

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: The government will not make six airbags mandatory for cars, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Wednesday. "We don't want to make six airbags rule for cars mandatory," Gadkari said at the ACMA annual session here. Last year on September 29, the government deferred the implementation of the proposal to make six airbags mandatory in passenger cars by one year to October 1, 2023.

The government had earlier planned to make six airbags mandatory in eight-seater vehicles for enhanced safety of occupants from October 1, 2022.

"Considering the global supply chain constraints being faced by the auto industry and its impact on the macroeconomic scenario, it has been decided to implement the proposal mandating a minimum of



6 Airbags in Passenger Cars (M-1 Category) w.e.f 01st October 2023," Gadkari had said in a tweet.

The minister had further asserted that the safety of all passengers travelling in motor vehicles irrespective of their cost and variants is the foremost priority. An airbag is a vehicle occupant-restraint system which interferes between the occupant and the vehicle's body during a collision, thereby preventing serious injuries. (PTI)

Govt exploring legal options against electric 2-wheeler cos for not complying with FAME II norms

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: The government is exploring legal options against electric two-wheeler companies for not complying with the FAME II scheme norms, according to a senior government official. The Centre has sought ₹ 469 crore from seven electric two-wheeler makers for claiming incentives while not complying with the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME II) scheme norms.

The government is seeking a refund of incentives from Hero Electric, Okinawa Autotech, Ampere EV, Revolt Motors, Benling India, Amo Mobility, and Lohia Auto.

As per the official, notices have been sent to the companies, and so far, only Revolt Motors has offered to refund the amount.

"We have sent them notices. So far, only Revolt has offered to

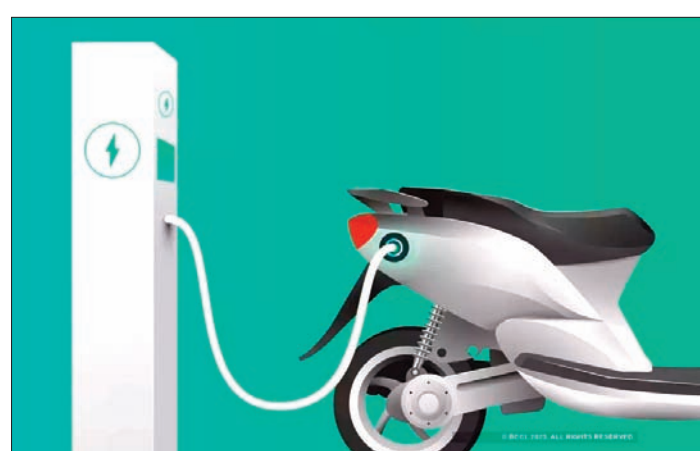
pay...others have not responded," the official said.

He noted that the deadline is almost over, and next week, the government will be making some decisions. "We are examining legal options," he said when asked about action being considered by the government.

An investigation by the heavy industries ministry has revealed that these companies have availed fiscal incentives under the scheme by violating the norms.

As per the rules of the scheme, incentives were allowed to produce electric vehicles by using made-in-India components, but in the investigation, it was found that these seven firms allegedly used imported components.

The ministry conducted the investigation after receiving anonymous emails alleging that several



EV makers were claiming subsidies without complying with the Phased Manufacturing Plan (PMP) rules to boost domestic manufacturing of these electric vehicles.

After that, the ministry delayed

the distribution of subsidies last financial year.

The seven electric two-wheeler makers have urged the government to look at the possibility of asking customers to pay back excess re-

bates availed by them on the purchase of the vehicles.

The companies have suffered a cumulative loss of over ₹ 9,000 crore on account of unpaid dues and loss of market after their subsidies were stopped last year, the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) has stated.

To promote electric and hybrid vehicles, a ₹ 10,000 crore-programme under the FAME-II scheme was announced in 2019.

It is the expanded version of the FAME scheme, launched on April 1, 2015, with a total outlay of ₹ 895 crore.

In three-wheeler and four-wheeler segments, incentives are applicable mainly to vehicles used for public transport or registered commercial purposes. In the two-wheeler segment, the focus is on private vehicles. (PTI)



GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
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completed 

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PRADHAN MANTRI AWAAS YOJANA-GRAMIN

in Assam

in last 28 months



The Department of Panchayat & Rural Development, Assam has been working relentlessly to fulfill the dream 'Housing for all' of Hon'ble Prime Minister **Sri Narendra Modi**. Under the guidance of Hon'ble Chief Minister **Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma**, 10 lakh pucca houses were completed within the last 28 months in Assam under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin. Including this, 14,01,218 PMAY-G houses were built in Assam since 2016. For this outstanding success, I extend my gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister **Sri Narendra Modi** and Hon'ble Chief Minister **Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma** for their guidance and support. I also congratulate the beneficiaries and appreciate the department officials for their hard work in implementing the scheme.



Ranjeet Kumar Dass

Minister, Panchayat &
Rural Development Department, Assam



QUOTE OF THE DAY

The best way to get a bad law repealed is to enforce it strictly.
- Abraham Lincoln

Sedition laws need relook

For far too many years, Section 124A, commonly known as the Sedition law, has loomed over the Indian legal landscape, casting a shadow on freedom of expression. The recent push to challenge its constitutional validity has ignited a glimmer of hope, but it's a contentious journey, one where the government and the Supreme Court find themselves at odds. It's a familiar script – when in opposition, all political parties unite in demanding the complete repeal of Section 124A. However, the narrative drastically shifts when they assume power. The Modi government is no exception. Yet, this time around, the Supreme Court appears steadfast in its commitment to addressing this contentious issue. The apex court's stance is crystal clear: the constitutional validity of Section 124A will be deliberated upon, and there's no room for compromise. A Constitution bench, comprising five justices, will lead this critical examination.

For those unacquainted, Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) criminalizes sedition, a provision that has sparked numerous debates on freedom of speech. The government's argument that there's no need for such a hearing, as the IPC is being replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill which is currently under parliamentary review, has fallen on deaf ears in the Supreme Court. The court maintains that as long as Section 124A remains in the statute books, challenges must be addressed accordingly. The proposed new law will apply prospectively and not retrospectively, as clarified by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud. This means that existing cases under Section 124A will remain unaffected. The Constitution bench will also revisit the 1962 judgment, which upheld the validity of Section 124A but did not scrutinize it against Article 14 (equality before law). Today, the popular sentiment leans towards scrapping Section 124A entirely. Warnings abound that prosecutions will continue even with the new law in place. Section 124A's ambiguity in distinguishing between "state" and "government" only adds to its contentious nature. This colonial-era relic should have been discarded with the end of British rule, but it has endured, employed indiscriminately by successive Indian governments to stifle dissent. Section 124A is a weapon that turns any government authoritarian when wielded. Regrettably, every Indian government post-independence has succumbed to this temptation, including the current Modi administration. The law has silenced government critics across the board – journalists, students, academics, and political rivals. The maximum sentence for sedition is 'life', but the real punishment lies in the protracted legal process itself.

Each new parliamentary session sees calls to abolish the sedition law, yet it lingers on. In 2022, the Supreme Court temporarily restrained its use, hinting that if Parliament failed to act, the court might address its constitutionality. Beyond domestic concerns, international human rights standards require India to reconsider Section 124A's existence. The time for change is long overdue. The Supreme Court must stand firm, resolute in its pursuit of justice. Only a decisive ruling will put an end to this perpetual uncertainty. The British repealed their own sedition law in 2009. India should not wait for a crisis to act. During Modi's tenure, sedition cases have surged by 30 percent, an alarming statistic that raises concerns over the suppression of free speech. It's a bitter irony that even making jokes about the Prime Minister can attract the heavy hand of Section 124A. The situation is both ludicrous and concerning – it's time for India to take a decisive step towards upholding the principles of free expression.

G-20 Summit's success has catapulted India as a reliable leader of Global South

Xi Jinping's absence from the recent Group of 20 summit may have been a deliberate move to prevent India from taking the spotlight. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with the United States and Europe, managed to find more effective ways to challenge China's influence on the global stage as the G-20 Summit concluded on September 10 in New Delhi.

Other G-20 nations praised India's achievement in reaching a consensus on a joint communiqué, which was uncertain until a few days before the major annual diplomatic event convened by world leaders. In addition to resolving the challenging matter of Russia's conflict in Ukraine, they also granted full G-20 membership to the African Union and addressed crucial issues such as climate change and debt sustainability, which are of significant concern to emerging markets.

Ukraine expressed dissatisfaction with the ultimate result, as they perceived the compromise on language regarding the war as less robust than what leaders had achieved in Bali, Indonesia, just ten months prior. However, for the United States and its allies, facing criticism for a communiqué that, in substance, resembled the one from Bali and had limited real-world impact was a minor trade-off. They viewed it as a worthwhile concession to Prime Minister Modi, strengthening India's standing as an ascending power capable of countering China's global influence.

President Joe Biden took the lead, seeing in India his administration's best hope of isolating China and Russia while reinforcing the United States-led world order. This outcome underscores that Washington is progressively becoming more attuned to the concerns of the so-called Global South, with India serving as its primary guide. Milan Vaishnav, who heads the South Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, mentioned that some analysts see the softened stance on Russia-Ukraine as a Western concession. However, there's an alternate perspective: Western nations were also determined to ensure India's success. Failing to reach

an agreement would have been a significant letdown for India, especially Prime Minister Narendra Modi who staked everything on the success of this summit before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

If we had to pick a moment that truly showcased the dynamics of the summit, it would be Biden's meeting on Saturday, where he discussed the White House-led initiatives aimed at providing additional funding to developing countries.

In a photo op, President Biden, alongside World Bank President Ajay Banga (the first Indian American in this role), was seen with Prime Minister Modi, Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, and South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa. These leaders are vital members of the BRICS group, excluding China and Russia. This bloc recently expanded, presenting a challenge to the advanced economies of the Group of Seven (G7). Earlier in the day, US Deputy National Security Advisor Jon Finer indirectly criticized China by describing these countries as "the three democratic members of the BRICS." He emphasized that these nations, along with the US, were dedicated to the success of the G-20. Finer added that if China didn't share this commitment, it would be regrettable for all parties involved, but even more so for China.

The United States didn't stop at that point. They also revealed a separate agreement with India, the European Union, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and additional Middle Eastern nations to establish an extensive rail and maritime network in the region. President Biden praised this as a "transformative regional investment" and sealed the deal with a three-way handshake involving Modi and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, whom the US president had previously portrayed as an outcast before the last election.

Such a declaration is undoubtedly more appealing to Middle East stakeholders compared to pressing concerns about human rights, even though the project's specifics, such as the timeline and funding, remain uncertain. While the US denied any inten-

tion to counter China's increasing influence in the Gulf, a French official admitted that it was crafted to offer an alternative to Xi's Belt and Road Initiative, a development they saw as a positive competition.

Xi's decision to skip the G-20 summit, which was the first time since he assumed the presidency in 2013, marked a noticeable change in his behaviour. Last November, he portrayed himself as a statesman striving for good relations with other countries. China's negotiators also risked coming across as overly critical by trying to hinder India's progress, even raising minor issues like Modi's use of a Sanskrit phrase and the US's bid to host the G-20 gathering in 2026. The Global Times, a newspaper affiliated with the Communist Party, labelled the US as a mere imitator for its Middle East infrastructure plan. Before the summit began, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak accused China of obstructing the advancement of a joint statement. During private discussions, Beijing introduced the topic of semiconductor access in the context of climate action, according to sources familiar with the talks.

This led National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, a proponent of US export controls on semiconductor-related technology to China, to criticize the notion of using climate-related matters as leverage for unrelated issues. Premier Li Qiang, acting on behalf of China while Xi was absent, conveyed to leaders that the G-20 should prioritize unity over division and cooperation over confrontation, as reported by the official Xinhua News Agency. This statement came after a commentary from a Chinese think tank associated with the nation's top intelligence agency, which had criticized India for disrupting the cooperative atmosphere at the G-20 by pursuing its own agenda.

However, China eventually gave in on its resistance to the communiqué, and India received commendation from various quarters for facilitating a compromise. Sources familiar with the discussions revealed that the

breakthrough happened when India, along with Indonesia, Brazil, and South Africa, collectively presented a proposal for the wording concerning the war.

"The fact that this consensus was reached highlights India's established position as a reliable mediator in a world marked by deep divisions over geopolitical matters such as the Ukraine conflict," remarked Swasti Rao to a media, who is an associate fellow at the Europe and Eurasia Center at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses. "It's clear that middle-ranking powers aim to maintain a multipolar global economic order rather than getting caught up in China's efforts to dominate it."

Although the ultimate wording on Ukraine may have made some US allies uneasy, endorsing the compromise represented a significant chance to strengthen alignment with major democracies in the Global South. These democracies play a crucial role as pivotal nations when it comes to addressing Russia's conflict and other global concerns. G-7 leaders openly commended the result, with Sunak emphasizing that the adopted language was "highly robust" and that "Russia finds itself entirely isolated."

For the United States, any action that strengthens India and empowers other democracies in the Global South serves as a means to counter the influence of China and Russia, especially concerning the G-20's goal of achieving a "comprehensive, equitable, and enduring peace" in Ukraine. Going back to May during the G-7 summit in Japan, the US and its allies faced challenges in persuading leaders like Modi, Lula, and Indonesia's Joko Widodo to align with their stance on Ukraine, even with President Volodymyr Zelensky making an unexpected appearance. It's worth noting that Zelensky was not invited to address India's G-20 summit.

A high-ranking European Union representative stated that this agreement essentially rescued the G-20, as it remains the primary global platform for uniting major world powers. Furthermore, the official pointed out that it played a crucial role in narrow-

ing the divide between the G-7 and emerging markets. This means that emerging markets are now partners in holding Russia accountable if it fails to uphold the pursuit of an equitable peace in line with UN principles.

According to other prominent European officials, China made a strategic mistake by abstaining from the summit. This decision ultimately enabled India to solidify its leadership role within the Global South and created a clear opportunity for the United States and Europe to enhance their relationships with emerging markets.

Even Russia, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attending in place of Vladimir Putin, regarded the agreement as a victory.

Moscow expressed satisfaction with the role of BRICS democracies as intermediaries with the G-7, as reported by someone familiar with the situation. This emphasized China's position as an external observer rather than an active participant.

The United States, of course, still faces the possibility of encountering challenges in its efforts to strengthen its appeal to the Global South. Before the G-20 summit, President Biden did not attend a summit hosted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Indonesia, which seemed like a snub to President Widodo. However, President Biden attempted to mitigate any negative impact during his visit to Delhi, where he briefly met with the Indonesian leader and committed to a future meeting at the White House in November, coinciding with the APEC summit when world leaders gather in the United States.

More importantly, India seized the opportunity to assert its global leadership position. Prime Minister Modi stated that a historic moment had been achieved, and his chief negotiator, Amitabh Kant, referred to India as the representative of the entire Global South.

Above all, the summit's outcome has amplified the influence of the Global South," Kant remarked. "It has also showcased India's substantial capability to unite the world and take a leadership role in both developmental and geopolitical matters." (IPA Service)

Why do they burn the holy Quran?

By: Sahil Sharifdin Bhat

“The Western education futilely aims to make our bodies healthier with the blood of our souls.”

What is the Quran?

The Quran is the holy book of Islam, believed by Muslims to be the word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) over a span of approximately 23 years, beginning around 610 CE and concluding around 632 CE. As of 2023, the holy Quran is approximately 1,391 years old. The term 'Quran' originates from the Arabic word 'Qa-Ra-Aa,' meaning 'to recite' or 'to read aloud.' It serves as a comprehensive guide encompassing moral, spiritual, political, and religious matters. The Quran contains teachings, laws, scientific facts, historical narratives, and other important aspects of the Islamic faith. Muslims firmly believe that the holy Quran has remained unaltered since its revelation and has been preserved in its original form unlike its rival books.

The reason behind Quran burning?

Why would a thief like locked doors? Why would a criminal like the law and order? Why would a junkie like ban on intoxicants? All the people who want to indulge in adultery, fornication, usury, live-in relationships, open and unlawful relationships, bribery, incest, homosexuality, usurpation of the property of the weak and orphans, racism, colonisation etc would never ever like a book like the holy Quran that prohibits all these crimes and evils. It is such people who try to disrespect or burn the holy Quran. The holy Quran is a book of guidance for the whole of humanity. It advocates justice, equality, discipline, law and order, truth, decency and morality. It favours peace and harmony, not anarchy. It teaches that all people of all places are the children of Adam and Eve; therefore, they all are equal. No white person is superior to any black person; no Arab is superior to any non-Arab and no person is holier than his/her fellow-humans except by good and righteous actions. The followers of the Devil would never ever like such beautiful teachings, that is why, they want to burn the holy Quran, the last unchanged and completely preserved testament of the creator.

The incidents of Qur'an burning occur mostly in the West because the Western thought and philosophy promote it. To summarize Western philosophy, it suggests closing churches,

synagogues, and mosques. It advocates for a lifestyle akin to wild animals, disregarding historical rules and norms devised in earlier eras by sages and saints and prophets. It categorically states that the world has no creator and it came into existence automatically and voluntarily. It says that human beings have evolved from apes because humans and apes have some similarities in their respective DNA's. The West is struggling with its wealth, technology and manpower to annihilate the holy Quran because it is the last stumbling block in their way to satanize the world. If the West succeeds in its nefarious mission, in near future, children will be born from unmarried women, the constitution of marriage will vanish forever, old aged parents will be thrown on roads and mere anarchy will be looked upon the world. A human being who does not believe in God, does not know his real father or grandfather, does not have a legal wife and does not have a place of worship to go to, does not have reliable friends and relatives to turn to in the ups and downs of life will not have any option but to commit suicide or suffer his entire life from anxiety and depression. That is what is happening in the most parts of West. No wonder a small percentage of the Western population revert to Islam for inner peace and happiness.

Unfortunately, the Western education and philosophy succeeded in creating a coterie known as 'liberals' who believe and preach that all the problems in the world are due to religions especially 'Islam'. These liberals are small in number but they are found in all the populous continents. These liberals employ double standards. They are hypocrites. They fail to adhere to the principles they themselves have established."

Main principles which liberals preach but not practice:

1. Individual Freedom i.e. emphasis on personal liberties and the right to make choices. (They grant non-Muslims freedom to be nude but they don't grant Muslims freedom to be in clothes)

2. Rule of Law i.e. everyone, including leaders, is subject to and protected by the law. (When a Muslim girl wearing hijab or offering salah at a public place without disturbing others is physically attacked by racists and xenophobes, she is not protected by the law)

3. Democracy i.e. government by all the citizens of a nation. (It is no longer democracy, it is democracy i.e. government by demons and devils)

4. Human Rights i.e. recognition and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms. (Practicing one's faith is a human right which liberals categorically deny to Muslims)

5. Equality i.e. equal treatment and opportunities regardless of race, gender, or other characteristics. (The whole world knows how Muslims are unnecessarily tortured everywhere for their beliefs and rituals)

6. Secularism i.e. Separation of religion and state, ensuring freedom of belief. (Name just one nation (if you can) where secularism is practised to the letter and spirit. There is none. There are only Christian countries, Muslim countries; etc.)

7. Free Speech i.e. the ability to express opinions without censorship, promoting open discourse. (Free speech is the sole right of liberals. They can say anything about anyone but won't tolerate anything said against them)

8. Tolerance i.e. acceptance of diverse viewpoints and lifestyles, fostering social cohesion. (If the principle of tolerance was truly practiced, no religious book would be disrespected and no religious figure would be abused)

9. Life has no meaning and no purpose. (Liberals promote nihilism and do not accept that the main purpose of life is to know the creator and follow His will. They follow their own vain desires and thus suffer from eternal anxiety)

10. Compete with one another. (The much needed peace in the world will prevail with the mutual co-operation, not with competition with one another. However, liberals advertise competition on all forums)

Teachings of the holy Quran which liberals dislike:

Say no to racism. (49:13)

Say no to intoxicants and alcohol. (5:90)

Don't kill your children. (17:31)

Don't mistreat your parents. (17:23)

Don't deal in usury. (3:130)

Don't abuse the gods of other people. (3:25)

Don't kill any human being. (5:32)

Don't do adultery. (17:32)

Don't do injustice. (49:09)

Don't walk around nude. (7:26)

Don't follow your vain desires. (38:26)

Don't let your women have extramarital affairs. (24:34)

Offer prayers regularly. (11:114)

Give charity and help the needy. (2:177)

Speak kindly and respectfully. (2:83)

Forgive others. (24:22)

Give up backbiting, spying and name calling. (49:11)

A sincere appeal

The world has turned into a big wrestling ring and liberals and Westernised literates have knocked out almost everyone and everything except the holy Quran. Since they can't convince people that the holy Quran is an irrelevant book, they simply disrespect it or burn it almost on weekly basis. They think they can diminish or bring down the importance of the holy Quran in the world with their silly stunts but they are absolutely wrong.

"Aahon se soz-e-ishq mitaya na jayega."

"Phonkon se yeh chiraagh bujhaya na jayega."

(The fire of love cannot be extinguished by sighs.)

The lamp burning bright will not be put out by puffs of breath)

Dear Muslims, you cannot thrive by building tall buildings, driving big cars and eating most nutritious food. You need also mental peace, spiritual strength, loving parents, obedient spouses and kids, reliable friends and relatives and God-fearing people in your surroundings. Otherwise, you will die daily of anxiety and depression. I repeat that a person who does not know his biological father, does not have a faithful wife, does not know the number of people his teenage daughter/son has slept with and does not know his creator and the purpose of his earthly existence will definitely hate Muslims who have all these prerogatives or bathe under these fountains of inner peace. These fountains of inner peace flow from the holy Quran and you (Muslims) must guard, respect, believe in, read, understand and promote it (the holy Quran). It is the rope of the creator and your must hold fast to it with your both hands, else, you will become like the people who wander from one paternity court to another seeking their true biological fathers or from one philosophy to another looking for the true meaning of life. Hello liberals and Quran burners, there is more to admire than to despise in all religions. Give up violence and hurting the religious sentiments of the innocent Muslims. Give up sins and following your vain desires. Read the holy Quran objectively and unbiasedly and try to understand it. Insha'Allah, your lives will be peaceful and tension-free too. (The author is a lecturer of English language and literature. He can be reached at sahilsharifdinenglish@gmail.com)

International Labour Organisation welcomes G20 support for just transition measures

By: Satvaki Chakraborty

International Labour Organisation Director-General, Gilbert F. Houngbo, has welcomed the G20 Leaders' support for the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions.

In their final Declaration the G20 leaders pledged to, "support progress on the implementation" of the UN Global Accelerator, a UN initiative led by the ILO that aims to bring together UN Member States and a wide range of public and private sector partners to help create 400 million decent jobs and extend social protection coverage to the four billion people currently excluded.

The Leaders agreed to create a new Working Group on the Empowerment of Women. They reaffirmed the importance of gender equality and the promotion of, "full, equal, effective and meaningful participation of women in the economy as decision-makers", adding that that such investment "has a multiplier effect in implementing the 2030 Agenda".

"I heartily welcome the G20's endorsement of the Global Accelerator and its potential to deliver change and better working lives for hundreds of millions of people. The creation of the working group on women's empowerment is also an historic step forward," Houngbo said. "The G20 leadership has made progress on some of the most crucial future of work issues facing us if we are to build a sustainable and equitable future. We must build on this momentum, particularly at the UN SDG Summit later this month."

Following two days of discussions the leaders committed themselves to promote sustainable, quality, healthy, safe and gainful employment, address skill gaps, and ensure inclusive, adequate and sustainably financed social protection policies. They endorsed a set of policy priorities for "adequate and sustainable social protection and decent work for gig and platform workers".

The Declaration also included pledges to promote well-managed migration, increase efforts to eliminate child labour and forced labour in global value chains, support youth employment and encourage skills for sustainable and inclusive economic development – including extending

coverage of the ILO/OECD Skills for Jobs Databases to G20 countries.

Speaking at the Summit, Houngbo stressed that effective policy responses to climate change needed to deliver on both climate targets and decent employment creation. "If we don't recognize these issues a social backlash could make the transition even harder. It is essential we achieve a just transition.... that greens the economy in ways that are fair, inclusive and leaves no one behind" he said, adding that this would require three things: effective and inclusive social dialogue, new financing strategies for social protection, and the creation of decent employment. "Here, the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions... can play a major role," he said.

The G20 Leaders' Summit was held in New Delhi, India on 9-10 September, under the theme "One earth, one family, one future". In 2024 the rotating Presidency of the G20 will pass to Brazil, which will also host the first meeting of the Working Group on the Empowerment of Women. The summit decisions, if implemented, will be of big help to the global south in the area of new employment generation. The developing and the poor countries are suffering from the problem of acute joblessness and that is hampering their economic growth. The G 20 declaration of New Delhi gives some hope that the developed countries will take special measures to ensure larger job generation in the developing and the poor countries.

As regards India which was the host country of the recently concluded G-20 summit, the employment crisis has accentuated due to the large increase in the youth work force. According to the UN report on World Population 2022, in India, in the age group of 9-22 years, the population will rise from 102 million in 202 to 130 million in 2025 and 191 million in 2030. For people between 23 and 40 years, the population will grow from 409 million in 202 to 522 million in 2025 and to 767 million in 2030.

Presently, the unemployment rate in India is over 8 per cent and the new entrants, especially the youth are having a tough time in getting jobs. Studies show that 599 million people will be in job market in 2030 which is a humungous task. (IPA Service)

The fast, furious, and brutally short life of an African male lion

By: Alexander Richard Brackowski, Duan Biggs and Peter Lindsey

The death of a lion in Kenya's picturesque savannas rarely tugs at people's hearts, even in a country where wildlife tourism is a key pillar of the nation's economy. But when one of the most tracked male lions in Kenya's famous Masai Mara was killed on July 24, 2023 the world took notice. Known as Jesse, he was killed during a fight with a coalition of three male lions from a rival pride, drawing attention to the brutally risky and dangerous lives of male lions.

Lions are organised in family groups known as a pride. Each pride is comprised of several related lionesses. One or more adult male lions will also be present. In the public imagination, male lions are better known by their popularised image as kings of the jungle. Their bravery, strength, and size (only tigers are larger) fits this profile.

But in reality, male lions live a life far more vulnerable. One in two male lions die in the first year of life. From the moment a male lion is born it faces a gauntlet of challenges – from snakebite and hungry hyenas to infanticide at the hands of other male lions.

If a male lion makes it out of their first year of life, and then to independence at around 3, they leave their pride for a period of nomadism. Nomads lead a dangerous existence, skirting the territories of established male coalitions.

Out there on their own, few will make it to the age of 10.

At no time, it seems, is the male lion safe. We know from the evidence collected by the Kenya Wildlife Trust, resident guides, and tourists that Jesse administered and received many beatings from other male lions. We also know that Jesse, who lived to the ripe old age of 12, was eventually killed by three younger, stronger lions. Life comes full circle: killers frequently become victims themselves, of younger, brasher lions, or those in larger and thus more powerful coalitions.

We are three researchers with over 50 years of combined experience in big cat ecology, conservation, and the complexities of people and wildlife living together.

We base our commentary on the extensive information gathered by conservation organisations, independent scientists and tourism guides working in the Masai Mara. Information on Jesse has been collected mainly through sightings data compiled by these entities over time.

Often the survival of male lions will be dictated by the size and strength of their coalitions, and the make up of the lion landscape at large. This sometimes has bearing for conservation especially when lions stray out of national parks or when male lions are hunted after leaving the safety of a protected area.

The trials of a young lion

A young male lion's biggest threat is his exposure to other male lions that



aren't their father or uncle. A host of studies from the Serengeti in Tanzania to Zimbabwe show that the most significant single cause of lion mortality in the first year of a lion's life is attributed to other male lions that kill them during infanticide.

This involves incoming males seeking out and killing the cubs of other males or driving young males away, and attempting to take over prides. Killing cubs accelerates the onset of oestrus in pride females and so is likely to increase the reproductive success of incoming males.

Most lions that get pushed out of their pride when very young don't survive.

Cubs that survive to independence – around 3 years of age – must leave their pride for a period of nomadism.

During this time, they join up with cousins, brothers, and sometimes unrelated males of similar age to form what biologists term 'coalitions'. The power of coalitions increases dramatically with the size of the group. This power can be defined by the number of different prides these coalitions are likely to rule, the number of offspring they will sire, and the number of times they will successfully be able to defend their prides from violent incursions from neighbouring male lions and their coalitions.

The tradeoff of larger coalitions is a watering down of a male lion's reproductive opportunities.

Examples of such powerful coalitions include the six-strong Mapogo, and five-strong Majingilane from South Africa. There is also the Lake

Quintet coalition from Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania.

Contrastingly, Jesse had only one coalition mate, a lion known as Frank. The two were strong enough to kick out the duo of Dere and Barikoi from the Offbeat pride in May 2014. After his coalition mate Frank disappeared, Jesse left the Offbeat Pride and led a largely nomadic lifestyle except when he unsuccessfully tried to take over the Rakero pride and even fought with his own son Jesse 2.

Three laws of the wild

Mate, protect, fight. These are the three tenets most male animals live and die by in the animal kingdom and this could not be truer for male lions. When male lions are in the prime of their lives somewhere between 5 and 9 years of age they will attempt to have as many cubs as they can. And they will do their best to protect and guard over as many prides as possible.

But there is a fine line between holding tenure over many different prides, and successfully being able to defend them and their young. When fights do breakout between male lions they are usually over territorial and breeding rights.

At times they are mere squabbles between coalition mates. At other times, the battles are big enough to cause rifts and splits within coalitions. But in most cases fights are between rival coalitions. During these fights lions engage in a suite of bodily and olfactory engagements including posturing, roaring

and growling, swatting, and biting, and even urination and territorial demarcation.

For conservation: look to the lionesses

When it comes to the conservation of the lion species it is important to look to the lionesses. They are the sentinels of a populations health, specifically the number of animals in a group, and more importantly the ratio of lionesses to lions. Healthy populations can expect ratios of roughly 2 females for every male, but when under pressure due to poaching, killings by cattle farmers and a loss of prey these ratios invert towards males.

The story of Jesse highlights how, in spite of their status as king of the beasts, lions are vulnerable. While in this instance, the cause of death was another lion, much more commonly, lions die at the hands of humans. This can be through being shot or poisoned to protect livestock, being poached for their body parts or being caught as bycatch in traps and snares set for other animals by bushmeat poachers.

On the plus side, the fascinating pride dynamics and trials and tribulations of individual lions can help capture the public's imagination and foster a love for the species and other wildlife. Although human pressures are high, Kenya retains a large lion population and a suite of iconic wildlife areas. These assets are a great source of pride for many Kenyans, and rightly so. (Courtesy: The Wire)

COP28 should shine a spotlight on corporate environmental responsibility

By: Heera Lal, Sumit Kaushik

The 28th Conference of Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is all set to feature a "global stocktake", where participating countries will report on their progress in meeting their voluntary emissions reduction commitments and discuss strategies for closing the gaps. The summit also gives an opportunity to focus on corporate environmental responsibility (CER) to help protect our planet.

India's stance at COP28 centres around the importance of adaptation and equity in addressing climate change. Along with other developing countries, it is pushing for a new global climate finance target, acknowledging the growing costs of addressing and adapting to climate change. The Government of India has launched several domestic actions to improve understanding of climate change. It also put forward its long-term low-carbon development strategy to the UNFCCC in November 2022 after analysing the climate impact in India due to the global rise in temperature.

However, as most studies so far have relied on mathematical modelling of climate change impacts, these are not empirically verified. Hence, India needs more accuracy about the attribution of climate change directly causing untimely rains, severe droughts and flash floods. As the central government complements the efforts of the state government through technical and financial aid, 34 states and Union territories have prepared State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) consistent with the objectives of the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).

However, this area is consistently developing and massive trends will continue to develop, but we as a nation need to keep up with the evolving innovations and put in continuous efforts. While the national-level policy frameworks and ambitious targets look and sound phenomenal, what are we doing to achieve the set goals? There have been progressive initiatives by the Centre, but how has

the implementation been going?

Companies try to portray themselves as persuasive towards sustainability practices, but we need to look at the actual impact of their initiatives. The social sector is intellectually aloof about all sorts of jargon related to the environment and climate change; however, what is really happening at the grassroots level? We must question how public, private and social sectors can collaborate to foster a conducive environment for sustainability-led solutions and innovative environmental, social and governance practices. Among a broad range of potential solutions to curb the emerging challenges, CER needs to take root in the country because businesses often resist from giving back to the environment after sourcing natural resources.

CER suggests that it is the responsibility of the companies operating within society to contribute towards economic, social and environmental development that creates a positive impact on society at large. It is an important concept and businesses must take into consideration to ensure the sustainability of our planet. Companies have a responsibility to reduce their environmental impact and promote sustainable practices. This includes reducing emissions, conserving resources and minimising waste.

It also involves educating employees about the importance of environmental responsibility and encouraging them to adopt eco-friendly habits. They can help protect our planet for future generations if they start implementing a company-wide recycling programme to reduce waste and promote sustainable practices. The companies should invest in renewable energy sources such as solar or wind power to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels. They need to be innovative and develop a carbon offset programme to balance out their carbon emissions and shouldn't be reluctant to use environmentally friendly materials and products in manufacturing and packaging. Furthermore, companies should encourage their employees to use public transportation, carpool, or bike to work. Companies can also partner with local

environmental organisations to support conservation efforts and volunteer opportunities. There is a need to conduct regular environmental audits to assess a company's impact on the environment. If companies start offering incentives for customers to recycle or return products for reuse, it might lead to positive outcomes in the long run.

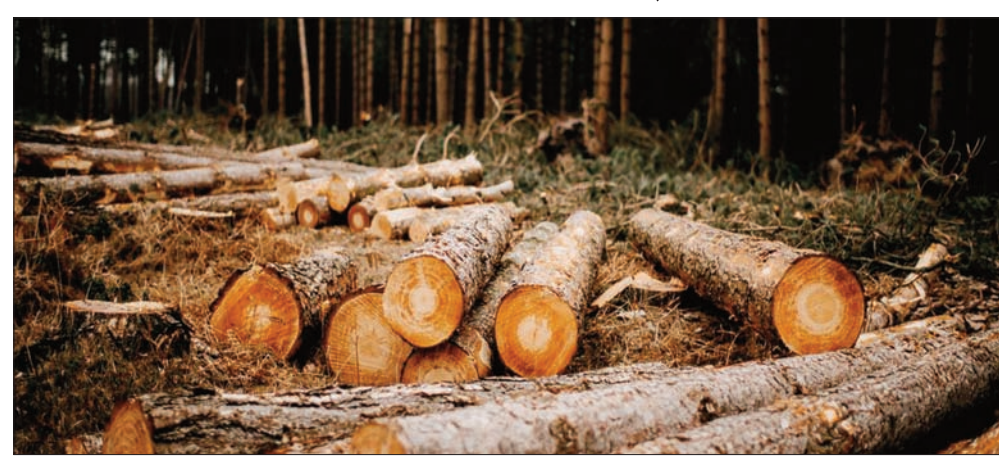
While companies are incorporating eco-friendly practices into their supply chain management, they should not be reluctant to support the research and development of new environmentally sustainable technologies.

Humans are the most selfish of the species and the last two centuries since the onset of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century have taken a massive toll on the environment. We need societies that are liveable, workable and sustainable and we need to find an equilibrium between ecological concerns and developmental needs. The public, private and social sectors need to come together to adopt sustainability initiatives, strengthen ecological communication and build a multi-stakeholder roadmap to address existing gaps, barriers and challenges on our sustainability journey. Companies should measure the impact they have on the environment and how this can be reduced, for example, through carbon footprints. It is believed that each of the sustainability-led initiatives should have a significant social impact.

Each of the efforts empowers communities and societies towards behavioural change communication, which eventually benefits them at large. It is recommended that companies set aside at least 15 per cent of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds for environmental causes. A slight amendment to the Companies Act, 2013 to ensure that a set percentage of CSR funds get reserved for CER will be a massive move. Ideally, it is also recommended to define frameworks for capturing several indicators and make this reporting mandatory.

This way, it will also be one of the substantial instruments to achieve the UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Little evidence that carbon offsets reduce deforestation, emissions



By: Julia PG Jones & Neal Hockley

In early 2023, the Guardian published an article suggesting that more than 90% of rainforest carbon offsets are worthless. These credits are essentially a promise to protect forests and can be bought as a way to "offset" emissions elsewhere. Verra, the largest certifier of these offset credits, said the claims were "absolutely incorrect" but the story still shook confidence in the billion-dollar market. Soon after, Verra's CEO stood down.

The claims in the Guardian article rested heavily on analysis which had been published as a preprint (before peer review). Now the research has been fully peer-reviewed and is published in the journal Science. It shows unequivocally that many projects which have sold what are known as REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation) credits have failed to reduce deforestation.

REDD+ projects aim to slow deforestation (for example, by supporting farmers to change their practices). They quantify the carbon saved through reducing deforestation relative to what would have happened without the project, and sell these emission reductions as credits.

Such REDD+ credits are widely used to "offset" (that is, cancel out) emissions from companies (who may use them to make claims that their operations are carbon neutral) or by people concerned about their carbon footprint. For example, if you were planning to fly from London to New York you might consider buying REDD+ credits that promise to conserve rainforest in the Congo Basin (with added benefits for forest elephants and bonobos). Offsetting your return flight would appear to cost a very affordable £16.44.

However, while previous analysis showed that some REDD+ projects have contributed to slowing deforestation and forest degradation, the central finding from the new study is that many projects have slowed deforestation much less than they have claimed and, consequently, have promised greater carbon savings than they have delivered. So that guilt-free flight to New York probably isn't carbon neutral after all.

The finding that many REDD+ carbon credits have not delivered forest conservation is extremely worrying to anyone who cares about the future of tropical forests. We spoke to Sven Wunder, a forest economist and a co-author of the new study. He told us that: "To tackle climate change, tropical deforestation must be stopped. Forests also matter for other reasons: losing forests will result in loss of species, and will affect regional rainfall patterns. Despite the evidence that REDD+ has not been delivering additional conservation, we cannot afford to give up."

Deforestation could shift elsewhere. Carbon credits also face other challenges, one of the biggest being "leakage" or displacement of deforestation. Leakage may occur because the people who were cutting down the forest simply relocate to a different area. Alternatively, demand for food or timber that was fuelling deforestation in one place

may be met by deforestation elsewhere – perhaps on the other side of the world.

Another problem is ensuring that the forests are protected in perpetuity so that reduced deforestation represents permanent removal of carbon from the atmosphere.

Addressing these challenges is vital because selling carbon credits is an important source of finance for forest conservation. It is not too dramatic to say that unreliable REDD+ credits directly threaten forests.

However, this is an active research area and new approaches are increasingly available. Andrew Balmford is a professor of conservation science at the University of Cambridge who is actively developing methods to improve the credibility of forest carbon markets. He says the new study raises some important concerns but that more robust and transparent methods have been developed. Deploying these new methods, he told us, is "an urgent priority".

Change is also needed to how certification operates. At present, there are incentives for verifiers to inflate estimates of the amount of deforestation that would have happened without the project, and therefore the number of credits that can be issued. Sven Wunder explains: "We need to move beyond vested interest towards independent governance employing scientifically informed, cutting-edge methods."

Reasons to be cautious

Even if these problems can be solved, there are still reasons to be cautious about the role of carbon offsets in combating climate change. First, there is the risk that offsetting actually increases emissions because people or companies might feel more comfortable emitting carbon if they believe they can undo any damage by simply buying carbon credits. For this reason, some argue that offsets must only ever be a last resort, after all non-essential emissions have been cut (the problem being of course: who decides which emissions are essential?).

Second, keeping warming within 2 degrees Celsius will require most deforestation to be stopped and major reductions in fossil fuel emissions. There is a limit to which one can be used to balance out the other.

Finally, there are serious equity concerns with some forest carbon offsets. If forest conservation is achieved by stopping farmers in low-income countries from clearing land for agriculture, REDD+ may exacerbate poverty: your long haul flight would come at the expense of others being able to feed their families.

We don't know how much it would cost to achieve genuinely additional offsets which avoid leakage and ensure equity but it is likely to be considerably more expensive than forest carbon credits currently sell for. A higher price would reduce the perception that offsetting is an easy option and should encourage more focus on reducing emissions. So, should you buy those cheap forest carbon offsets when taking a flight? Unfortunately, there's currently little evidence that doing so will really make your journey carbon neutral. If you want to contribute to tackling climate change, perhaps the only real option is to not take the flight. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Sustainable agriculture, climate change and nutrition: A complex challenge

By: Shoba Suri

Recent years have seen a surge in recognition of the complex and interdependent relationship between food insecurity, climate variability, sustainable agricultural practices, and land utilisation. This interdependent network has far-reaching consequences for the health of the planet and its citizens. Food security, which is the assurance of regular and equitable access to nutritious food, is facing growing challenges as a result of climate change. Climate variability and unpredictable weather patterns are disrupting traditional agricultural practices, resulting in crop failures and food insecurity. Extreme weather events such as drought and flooding further exacerbate these issues, particularly for vulnerable populations.

On the other hand, climate variability is intrinsically linked to agricultural practices and land use. Agricultural practices such as deforestation, livestock husbandry, and the use of synthetic fertilizers contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, which in turn contribute to global warming, and further disrupts weather patterns, thus creating a vicious circle that threatens food production. The solution to this challenge lies in sustainable agriculture, which focuses on practices that maintain or improve agricultural productivity

while reducing environmental degradation. Common principles of sustainable agriculture include crop rotation, organic farming and reduced pesticide use. Land use is also a key factor in this equation, as agricultural expansion releases carbon into the atmosphere, which worsens climate change.

On the other hand, practices such as reforestation and agroforestry as well as land conservation can sequester carbon and improve soil health, thus contributing to both agricultural and climate change mitigation. The need for a comprehensive approach to address these issues is becoming increasingly apparent. International agreements, like the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals, emphasize the need to address these issues together in order to create a secure and sustainable future for the planet and its inhabitants.

The topic you have explored has both global and local relevance. How can agriculture be made more sustainable and resilient in communities in developing countries?

Agriculture in developing countries is confronted with a range of issues, such as climate change, resource constraints, and food insecurity. To address these issues, a combination of strategies, tailored to the particular needs and circumstances of each community, can be employed to make agriculture more sustainable and resilient. Examples – in-

creasing crop diversity and diversifying mixed farming systems that include livestock and aquaculture to improve nutrient cycling and resilience; investing in efficient irrigation systems to improve soil health and conservation; promoting organic farming practices; cultivating climate-resistant crops and drought-resistant seeds, such as millets; strengthening market links and value chains to enable farmers to sell their produce at reasonable prices; and providing microfinance opportunities to assist farmers in investing in sustainable practices. Finally, policy support that emphasizes sustainable agriculture and provides incentives for sustainable practices.

The G20 Indian Presidency is an extraordinary opportunity and the topic you have explored is part of the strategic debate. What concrete prospects do you see in global terms?

The G20 Indian Presidency offers a unique opportunity to address global challenges related to sustainable food systems, climate change, and food demand. Concrete prospects include international cooperation, knowledge sharing, policy advocacy, and resource mobilization to create a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable global food system. The G20 can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of agriculture to meet the needs of a growing global population while safeguarding the planet.

Agricultural practices and technologies that are resilient to climate change can be adopted around the world. G20 countries can share best practices and technical assistance to assist countries in adapting to changing climate trends and mitigating agriculture-related GHG emissions. G20 countries can promote international cooperation in agriculture research and innovation by pooling their resources and expertise. By working together, countries can speed up the development of sustainably grown crop varieties, pest-resistant crops, and precision farming technologies.

G20 nations including India can work together on global food security issues. Coordinating efforts to enhance food distribution systems and reduce food losses and waste, as well as promoting sustainable agriculture, can help to secure more food for vulnerable populations around the world. Agricultural and rural development investments in developing countries, with a focus on infrastructure investment, capacity development, and financial assistance to smallholder farmers in order to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable farming practices, can be leveraged by the G20 as a global governance platform for a sustainable food system. This platform can facilitate dialogue and agreements between nations, establishing shared objectives and benchmarks for sustainable agriculture. (Courtesy: ORF)

For Putin, the meeting with Kim is an opportunity to refill ammunition stores that the 18-month-old war has drained

North Korea's Kim vows full support for Russia's 'sacred fight' after viewing launchpads with Putin

SEOUL, Sept 13: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un offered Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday his country's "full and unconditional support" for Russia's "sacred fight" to defend its security interests, in an apparent reference to the war in Ukraine, and said Pyongyang will always stand with Moscow on the "anti-imperialist" front.

Kim also called North Korea's relations with Russia "the first priority."

The leaders met at a remote Siberian rocket launch facility for a summit that underscores how their interests are aligning in the face of their countries' separate, intensifying confrontations with the United States.

Putin in his opening remarks welcomed Kim to Russia and said he was glad to see him. Putin listed economic cooperation, humanitarian issues and the "situation in the region" among the agenda items for their talks. The two men began their meeting at the Vostochny Cosmodrome, Russia's most important domestic satellite launch centre, with a tour of a Soyuz-2 space rocket launch facility, at which Kim peppered a Russian space official with questions about the rockets. Kim and Putin then met together with their delegations and later one-on-one, according to Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov.

Following the talk, the two leaders headed a meeting of their delegations, and then spoke one-on-one.

The meeting came hours after North Korea fired two ballistic missiles toward the sea, extending a highly provocative run in North Korean weapons testing since the start of 2022, as Kim used the distraction caused by Putin's war on Ukraine to accelerate his weapons development.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff didn't immediately say how far the North Korean missiles flew. Japan's Coast Guard, citing Tokyo's Defence Ministry, said the missiles have likely already landed but still urged vessels to watch for falling objects.

Putin welcomed Kim's limousine, brought from Pyongyang in the North Korean leader's special armoured train, at the entrance to the



launch facility with a handshake that lasted around 40 seconds. Putin said he was "very glad to see" Kim. Kim's translator thanked Putin for the warm welcome, "despite being busy."

The decision to meet at Cosmodrome suggests that Kim is seeking Russian technical assistance for his efforts to develop military reconnaissance satellites, which he has described as crucial in enhancing the threat of his nuclear-capable missiles. In recent months, North Korea has repeatedly failed to put its first military spy satellite into orbit.

Official photos showed that Kim was accompanied by Pak Thae Song, chairman of North Korea's space science and technology committee, and navy adm. Kim Myong Sik, who are linked with North Korean efforts to acquire spy satellites and nuclear-capable ballistic missile submarines, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

Asked whether Russia will help North Korea build satellites, Putin was quoted by Russian state media as saying "that's why we have come here. The DPRK leader shows keen interest in rocket technology. They're trying to develop space, too," using the abbreviation for North Korea's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Asked about military cooperation, Putin said "we will talk about all issues without a rush. There is time."

For Putin, the meeting with Kim is an opportunity to refill ammunition stores that the 18-month-old war has drained. North Korea may have tens of millions of aging artillery shells and rockets based on Soviet designs that could give a huge boost to the Russian army in Ukraine, analysts say.

Kim also brought Jo Chun Ryong, a ruling party official in charge of munitions policies who joined him on recent tours of factories producing artillery shells and missile, according to South Korea.

Kim said his decision to visit Russia four years after his previous visit showed how Pyongyang is "prioritising the strategic importance" of its relations with Moscow, North Korea's official news agency said Wednesday.

Kim is expected to seek economic aid as well as military technology. Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko said Russia may discuss humanitarian aid with the North Korean delegation, according to Russian news agencies.

An arms deal would violate international sanctions that Russia supported in the past.

Lim Soo-suk, South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said Seoul was maintaining communication with Moscow while closely monitoring Kim's visit.

"No U.N. member state should violate Security Council sanctions against North Korea by engaging in an illegal trade of arms, and must certainly not engage in military cooperation with North Korea that undermines the peace and stability of the international community," Lim said at a briefing.

The United States has accused North Korea of providing Russia with arms, including selling artillery shells to the Russian mercenary group Wagner. Both Russian and North Korean officials denied such claims.

Speculation about military cooperation grew after Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu visited North Korea in July. Kim subsequently toured his weapons factories, which experts said had the dual goal of encouraging the modernisation of North Korean weaponry and examining artillery and other supplies that could be exported to Russia. (AP)

Rescuers recover over 2,000 bodies after floods devastate eastern Libya

Derna, Sept 13: Rescuers have found more than 2,000 bodies as of Wednesday in the wreckage of a Libyan city where floodwaters broke dams and washed away neighbourhoods. Officials fear the death toll could exceed 5,000 in the nation made vulnerable by years of turmoil and neglect.

Mediterranean storm Daniel caused deadly flooding in many eastern towns, but the worst-hit was Derna. As the storm pounded the coast on Sunday night, Derna residents said they heard loud explosions when the dams outside the city collapsed. Floodwaters washed down Wadi Derna, a river running from the mountains through the city and into the sea.

Rescue teams were working day and night to recover many other bodies scattered in the streets and under the rubble in the city. Some bodies were retrieved from the sea. The startling devastation pointed to the storm's intensity, but also Libya's vulnerability. The country is divided by rival governments, one in the east, the other in the west, and the result has been neglect of infrastructure in many areas. The floods damaged or destroyed many access roads to Derna, hampering the arrival of international rescue teams and humanitarian assistance to tens of thousands of people whose homes were destroyed or damaged.

Libya's neighbours, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia, as well as Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, have sent rescue teams and humanitarian aid.

President Joe Biden also said the United States is sending emergency funds to relief organizations and coordinating with the Libyan authorities and the UN to provide additional support. (AP)

Ukrainian pilots could be flying F-16s in 3 months: Air National Guard head



NATIONAL HARBOR, MD. Sept 13: The U.S. could have the first Ukrainian pilots trained on F-16 fighter jets before the end of the year, though it will be longer than that before they are flying combat missions, the director of the U.S. Air National Guard said on Tuesday.

The Ukrainian pilots are expected to arrive at Morris Air National Guard Base in Tucson, Arizona, by October. Those aviators are being evaluated for English language skills right now, and depending on their proficiency and previous fighter jet experience, they could complete the U.S. training within three months, Lt. Gen. Michael Loh, director of the U.S. Air National Guard, said at the annual Air Force Association convention in National Harbor, Maryland. "As soon as they're given a go-ahead, they'll be coming over and they'll start their training immediately," Loh said.

To meet the quick training timeframe, Tucson will likely shift some of its other international pilot training commitments to move Ukraine to the front of the line, he said.

"It's a national priority," Loh said.

However, after completing the U.S. training, the Ukrainians would need to return to Europe for additional NATO training. NATO allies are also training Ukrainians on how to maintain the aircraft, and that will also need to be completed before the jets would be flying combat missions. Loh did not have an estimate

of how much time the additional training would take. Gen. David Allvin, the nominee to become the next chief of the Air Force, told senators at his confirmation hearing Tuesday that, on average, the F-16 training will take six to nine months.

Ukraine's leaders have asked for fighter jets from the West since the earliest days of the war. For the first year and a half, the U.S. and other allied partners focused on providing other weapons systems, citing the jets' cost, concerns about further provoking Russia, the number of deadly air defense systems Russia had covering Ukrainian airspace and the difficulty in maintaining the jets.

Since then the war has become a gruesome, slow-moving fight with ground tactics and trench warfare reminiscent of World War I, and for that, the F-16's ability to suppress enemy air defenses and conduct low-altitude attacks could help Ukraine, Loh said. In addition, unlike some other systems pledged to Ukraine, the F-16 is still in production, and because it is widely used by a number of international partners, there are plenty of spare parts.

"I definitely think it can be a game changer," Loh said. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., asked Allvin if the training could be accelerated, noting that the Ukrainian forces learned how to operate other systems, such as the Stryker and Bradley fighting vehicles, faster than anticipated. (AP)

A fire that burned in a 9-story apartment building in Vietnam's capital, killed about 12 people

HANOI, Sept 13: A fire in a nine-story apartment building in Vietnam's capital killed about 12 people and injured more than 50, state media reported Wednesday.

The fire has been extinguished and rescue operations were continuing, the official Vietnam News Agency reported. Authorities have not confirmed an exact death toll.

The fire was believed to have started late Tuesday and rescuers struggled to reach the building on a narrow lane in south Hanoi. It wasn't immediately clear how much of the building had burned.

It was home to 150 residents, and 54 of the 70 people rescued from the fire were hospitalized for their injuries, state media said.

Authorities were investigating the cause of the fire.

A deadly fire at a karaoke parlor in southern Vietnam's Binh Duong province killed 32 people last year. (AP)

Pak court extends judicial remand of Imran Khan in cipher case till Sep 26

ISLAMABAD, Sept 13: A special court in Pakistan on Wednesday extended judicial remand of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan in the cipher case till September 26. The special court - newly formed to hear cases related to the Official Secrets Act, 1923 - Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain conducted the hearing of the cipher case inside the Attock jail where the former prime minister is currently lodged. Former Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was also produced in court on Wednesday following the completion of his 14-day judicial remand.

The 70-year-old chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has been kept in jail since August 5 after his conviction in the Toshakhana corruption case. His sentence was suspended by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on August 29, but he continues to remain in Attock prison in the cipher case. His remand has been extended till September 13 by a special court in the case. The cricket-turned-politician is charged with the violation of the Official Secrets Act in connection with the leakage of a confidential diplomatic cable from Pakistan's embassy in Washington. The special court hearing the case extended Khan's remand till September 26.

"Judicial remand of Chairman PTI Imran Khan extended till September 26," Khan's PTI party said in a brief message on WhatsApp. The court also extended Qureshi's judicial remand till September 26.

Earlier, the law ministry issued a notification on Tuesday, expressing no objections to conducting the trial in jail, saying that special court judge Abul requested that proceedings be held in Attock jail "due to security reasons". The hearing comes at the end of a 14-day judicial remand which was ordered by the court on the last hearing conducted in the same jail. The ministry in its notification cited unspecified security issues for allowing hearing in the jail premises. However, Khan's spokesman Zulfiqar Bukhari rejected the plea and demanded a trial in a normal court environment.

"Hearing continues citing security concerns, a preposterous excuse saturated with malice when there can be video link appearance if not in person," he said in a statement. Bukhari also said that the authorities had not waited for the outcome of the case heard by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against Khan's trial in jail. The IHC on Tuesday reserved its order on a petition against the conduct of Khan's trial in prison, rather than Islamabad.

Chief Justice Aamer Farooq concluded proceedings by saying that he would pass an "appropriate order". Cipher Case Hearing is to proceed at Attock Prison premises on Wednesday despite a petition filed & awaiting a reserved decision by the Islamabad High Court which is yet to be announced. The hearing continues citing security concerns, a preposterous excuse saturated with malice when there can be a video link appearance if not in person.

The cipher case was filed last month against Khan on the allegations of violating secret laws of the country in the matter of a cable sent by the Pakistan embassy in Washington in March last year. (PTI)

Japan's Kishida shuffles Cabinet and party posts to solidify power

TOKYO, Sept 13: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is shuffling his Cabinet and key party posts on Wednesday in an apparent move to strengthen his position before a key party leadership vote next year, while appointing more women to showcase his effort for women's advancement in his conservative party.

It's the second Cabinet shuffle since Kishida took office in October 2021 when he promised fairer distribution of economic growth, measures to tackle Japan's declining population and a stronger national defense. Russia's war in Ukraine, rising energy prices and Japan's soaring defense costs have created challenges in his tenure, keeping his support ratings at low levels.

Kishida's three-year term as Liberal Democratic Party president expires in September 2024, when he would seek a second term. His faction is only the fourth largest in the LDP, so he must stay on good terms with the others to maintain his position.

He distributed Cabinet posts to reflect the balance of power, and nearly half of the positions are shared between the two largest factions associated with late leader Shinzo Abe and former leader Taro Aso.

Kishida appointed five women in his 19-member cabinet, part of his attempt to buoy sagging support ratings for his male-dominated Cabinet. He previously had two, and five matches Abe's 2014 Cabinet and one in 2001 under then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, and women still hold



only a quarter of the total posts.

One of the five, Yoko Kamikawa, a former justice minister, takes the post of foreign minister to replace Yoshimasa Hayashi. Both Kamikawa and Hayashi are from Kishida's own faction.

The LDP supports traditional family values and gender roles, and the omission of female politicians is often criticized by women's rights groups as democracy without women.

Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki, Digital Reform Minister Taro Kono as well as Economic Security Minister Sanae Takaichi, were among the six who stayed.

His Cabinet had resigned en masse in a ceremonial meeting earlier Wednesday before retained Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno announced the new lineup.

Kishida also kept his main intra-party rival Toshimitsu Motegi at the No. 2 post in the party and retained faction heavyweights like Aso in other key party posts.

Kishida is expected to compile a new economic package to deal with rising gasoline and food prices, which would be necessary to have wage increase continue and support low-income households in order to regain public support.

Two figures who lost posts in the shakeup had been touched by recent scandals.

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Tetsuro Nomura was reprimanded by Kishida and apologized after calling the treated radioactive wastewater being released from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant "contaminated," a term China uses to characterize the water as unsafe. And magazine reports have contained allegations that Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Kihara influenced a police investigation of his wife over her ex-husband's suspicious death.

Kishida last shuffled his Cabinet a year ago after Abe's assassination revealed ties between senior ruling party members and the Unification Church, a South Korea-based ultra-conservative sect. (AP)

Thrust of UN reform has to be to 'democratise' Security Council: UNGA President

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 13: UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis has said it is "incongruous" that only five countries can exercise certain powers within the UN Security Council, underlining that the thrust of reform has to be to "democratise" the powerful UN organ, making it more fit for purpose in the 21st century.

"It's not untrue that the architecture of the Security Council was designed a very long time ago, decades ago when geographically and geopolitically the world was a very different place," Francis, President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, told PTI in an exclusive interview here.

Francis said many countries did not exist at the time when the UN Security Council was formed more than seven decades ago, particularly developing countries in the Global South and "countries like my own Trinidad and Tobago. We would at that time have been represented by the British."

"But the world has changed. Democratization has spread across the globe. There are many more sovereigns at the table and the United Nations itself has realised that there is a need to rethink and re-engineer the Security Council," Francis, a veteran diplomat from Trinidad and Tobago who was elected President of the General Assembly in June, said. While the UNSC reform process is ongoing, Francis said "it is incongruous that only five countries can exercise certain powers



within the Council", referring to the five permanent members - China, France, Russia, the UK and the US - who have veto powers.

While 10 countries are elected for two-year terms to become members of the 15-nation Council on a rotating basis, only the permanent five have veto power.

"This is bothersome for many people, for many delegations. The thrust of the reform therefore has to be to democratise the Security Council to make it more fit for purpose in the 21st century, given that we are in a different geopolitical structure, one that most probably involves a multipolar world and where important decisions need to be taken in a more timely fashion, particularly on things like issues of human rights and humanitarian concerns."

India, the world's most populous country, has been at the forefront of years-long efforts to reform the Security Council, saying it rightly deserves a seat as a permanent

member at the UN high table, which in its current form does not represent geo-political realities of the 21st century. Earlier this month, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj said that an expansion of the Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership is absolutely essential.

"This is the only way to bring the Council's composition and decision-making dynamics in line with contemporary geo-political realities," Kamboj had said.

"What we...need is a Security Council that better reflects the geographical and developmental diversity of the United Nations today. A Security Council where voices of developing countries and unrepresented regions, including Africa, Latin America and the vast majority of Asia and Pacific, find their due place at this horse-shoe table," she had said.

India has asserted that the international community can no longer

hide behind the smokescreen of the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) in the General Assembly and continue to pay lip service by continuing to deliver statements in a process which has no time frame, no text and no defined goal to achieve.

"If countries are truly interested in making the Council more accountable and more credible, we call on them to come out openly and support a clear pathway to achieve this reform in a time-bound manner, through the only established process in the UN, which is by engaging in negotiations based on text and not through speaking at each other, or past each other, as we have done for the last three decades," Kamboj has said.

Francis noted that there is a degree of "hope" currently in the sense that while the UN Charter assigns primary responsibility for peace and security to the Security Council, the General Assembly also exercises certain residual powers over peace and security. He referred to the General Assembly resolution adopted two years ago requiring that any permanent member of the Council that uses the veto explain to the Assembly why it was necessary to use the veto.

"This is an important innovation that had not existed before and it is designed to enhance the level of transparency and accountability of the Security Council. But the work of reform of the Council is continuing," he said. (PTI)

A cruise ship with 206 people onboard has run aground in Greenland

COPENHAGEN, Sept 13: A Bahamas-flagged Norwegian cruise ship with 206 passengers and crew has run aground in northwestern Greenland, authorities said on Tuesday, adding that no one on board was in danger and no damage has been reported.

"Our units are far away, and the weather can be very unfavourable," said Cmdr. Brian Jensen of the Joint Arctic Command.

The closest Danish navy ship was about 1,200 nautical miles (more than 2,000 kilometers or 1,380 miles) away, he said, adding it was heading to the site and could be expected at the grounded ship as soon as Friday. Jensen said in a statement there is no immediate danger to human life or the environment, but that officials "take this incident very seriously". The 104.4-metre (343-foot) long and 18-metre (60 foot) wide Ocean Explorer ran aground on Monday in Alpefjord in the Northeast Greenland National Park. It's the world's largest and most northerly national park and is known for icebergs and the musk oxen that roam the coast.

The ship belongs to Ulstein Group in Ulsteinvik, southern Norway.

Authorities have been in contact with another cruise ship in the area and it had been asked to remain nearby to assist should the situation develop. The other cruise ship was not identified.



The grounded cruise ship might also get free on its own when the tide is high, Greenland television KNR reported. "Regardless, the most important thing for us is that everyone gets to safety," Jensen said.

Later Tuesday the Joint Arctic Command said on its Facebook page that the ship was still stuck despite the tide.

"There are still no reports that human life or the environment is in acute danger," Joint Arctic Command said. The primary mission of the Joint Arctic Command is to ensure Danish sovereignty by monitoring the area around the Faeroe Islands and Greenland, two semi-independent territories that are part of the Danish realm. (AP)

Strategic Sela tunnel in Arunachal likely to open in Oct

ITANAGAR, Sept 13: Construction of the strategic Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh is nearing completion and it is likely to be opened in October this year, BRO sources said.

Constructed by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), the Sela tunnel in West Kameng district of the northeastern state would provide all-weather connectivity to Tawang district, bordering China.

According to BRO sources, a small amount of work remains for completion of the tunnel.

The Centre is pushing for greater connectivity in the Eastern sector of the Line of Actual Control with China, by developing infrastructure.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday inaugurated the Nechipu Tunnel in West Kameng district, which is on the



Balipara-Charduar-Tawang (BCT) Road, ahead of the Sela Tunnel.

The Sela Tunnel comprises Tunnel 1, which is a 980 m long single tube tunnel and Tunnel 2, which is 1,555 m long twin tube tunnel. Tunnel 2 has one by lane tube for

traffic and one escape tube for emergencies.

It will also be one of the longest tunnels to be constructed above an altitude of 13,000 feet.

The project also includes the construction of an approach road

of 7 km to Tunnel 1, which takes off from BCT Road and a link road of 1.3 km, which connects Tunnel 1 to Tunnel 2.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the project on February 9, 2019.

The tunnel once completed will avoid all avalanche-prone and snowfall areas.

It will reduce the travelling time from Tezpur in Assam's Sonitpur district to Tawang by more than one hour as the travellers would be able to avoid the dangerous snow-covered 13,700-ft high Sela Pass.

There has been a push for road connectivity towards the 3,488 km-long Line of Actual Control which is divided into the Western Sector (Ladakh), Middle Sector (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and Eastern Sector (Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh). (PTI)

Nagaland Assembly refers new Municipal Bill to select committee

KOIHMA, Sept 13: The Nagaland Assembly recently decided to refer the Nagaland Municipal Bill 2023 to the Select Committee for further consideration.

The decision to this effect was taken on the second day of the monsoon session of the Assembly after the members deliberated on the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) election which has not been held in the northeastern state for almost two decades.

The first and last election to Urban Local Bodies in Nagaland was held in 2004.

During its March session, the Assembly had repealed the Nagaland Municipal Act 2001 and decided to bring about a new law incorporating the views of the tribal bodies and civil societies on 33 per cent women reservation and also tax on land and properties.

The government had announced conduct of the elections to ULBs several times but staunch objection from the tribal bodies and civil society organisations against the 33 per cent women reservation and tax on land & properties had held back the polls.

In 2017, when the state government led by T R Zeliang tried to hold the elections, there was violence. Two persons were killed and government properties and offices were damaged. It also led to the fall of the Zeliang ministry. The Neiphiu Rio-led all-party government in March this year also announced conduct of an election with 33 per cent women reservation as directed by the Supreme Court.

However, following stiff resistance again, the government can-



celled the elections and also repealed the Act of 2001.

In the September 1 consultative meeting with the tribal bodies and civil society organisations convened by the state government, it was decided that ULB elections will be held with women quota and that the government will table the new Act in the monsoon session of the Assembly.

On Tuesday, at least nine members led by minister for parliamentary affairs K G Kenye participated in the discussion and they were of the view that while women's quota is welcome, the final Bill should be referred to the select committee and also placed before the public for a consensus.

First-time women legislators – minister Salhouitounuo Kruse and MLA Hekani Jakhalu – also participated in the discussion.

Giving the concluding remarks, chief minister Neiphiu Rio said, "The Tribal Bodies and the people always viewed the attempts for holding elections with suspicion and there was stiff opposition," he

said. Serious questions were always raised about the provisions of the Nagaland Municipal Act, 2001 being in contravention of Article 371A of the Constitution, the Assembly repealed the Act in toto in the interest of the people, and the state, Rio said.

"Our action of repealing the Act has been subsequently examined by the Supreme Court, and in its last order, the court while advocating 1/3rd representation for women has further stated that the personal laws of Nagaland and the special status under Article 371A are not being touched in any manner.

"We have been given by the court one last of the last opportunities to abide by its directions, and the case is next listed on September 26," he said.

The chief minister said if the House is of the opinion that more examination and deliberations are required for the provisions in the Bill, it may consider referring to the Select Committee for its consideration. (PTI)

Dalai Lama to visit Sikkim next month

GANGTOK, Sept 13: Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama will pay a five-day visit to Sikkim from October 10-14, according to chief minister Prem Singh Tamang.

The CM made the announcement at a meeting.

"His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, will be coming to Sikkim on October 10 and return on October 14," he said at a meeting with senior officials in the state capital on Wednesday to discuss the proposed visit of the Tibetan spiritual leader.

Chairing the meeting attended among others by the ecclesiastical minister Ven Sonam Lama, chief secretary V B Pathak, additional chief secretary S Sudhakar Rao and heads of various departments. Tamang stressed on the importance of the Dalai Lama's visit and directed everybody to take it seriously.

"Ever since we formed the government in 2019, it has been our continued effort to extend an invitation to His Holiness to visit Sikkim and seek His blessings. Finally, our effort is seeing fruition this year. So we should leave no stone unturned in making the visit a historic and memorable one", the chief minister said.

Tamang and the ecclesiastical minister will be the chief patron and patron of the organising committee while the chief secretary will serve as the chairman.

Other core committees and groups have also been formed for the Dalai Lama's visit, officials said.

The Tibetan spiritual leader has last visited Sikkim in 2010. (PTI)

Nagaland distributes 20 ice box laden motorcycles to promote fish business

KOIHMA, Sept 13: To celebrate the country's Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the Nagaland department of fisheries and aquatic resources (F&AR) on Wednesday distributed 20 motorcycles with ice boxes to unemployed youths to promote fish business. MLA and advisor to the department, A Pangjung Jamir, handed over the keys and documents during the ceremonial distribution held at the directorate as part of the centrally sponsored scheme – Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). Speaking on the occasion, Jamir said fish is an extremely perishable food commodity unless frozen and stored in deep freezers for which the department came with the idea to provide motorcycles with ice boxes to unemployed youths to encourage

sustainable fish business. He said the motorcycles with ice boxes can be used to supply fish in the interior areas where four wheelers cannot ply.

The department had distributed two motorcycles on a trial basis in 2020-21, said additional director of F&AR, Lotimenba. Seeing the success of the trial, the department proposed for 20 motorcycles during 2022-23 and the Centre provided it under PMMSY, he said.

Fish-farmers and unemployed youths from all the districts of the state were selected as beneficiaries, said director of F&AR Rongsenununga. He said district officers would be constantly monitoring the beneficiaries so that the actual use is made lest the motorcycles would be confiscated. (PTI)

Village in Imphal West attacked by gunmen, bombs hurled

IMPHAL, Sept 13: Conflict-torn Manipur witnessed a fresh incident of violence as unidentified gunmen, suspected to be cadres of banned terror groups, attacked people and hurled bombs at a village in Imphal West district, bordering Kangpokpi where three persons were killed a day before, officials said on Wednesday.

No one was injured in the incident in Koutruk village where armed men hurled at least ten bombs late Tuesday night, they said.

The bomb attack triggered panic among the villagers, an official said, adding that Indian Reserve Battalion personnel deployed at the area fired shots in retaliation.

The fresh violence comes after unidentified armed men, suspected to be members of the outlawed terror groups, killed three persons from the tribal community on Tuesday morning near Kharam Vaiphei village in Kangpokpi district. Tension is still running high in several parts of the district as there is apprehension of fresh attacks in the wake of the killing of three persons, the officials said.

Koutruk is one of the worst violence-hit areas in Imphal valley and has witnessed several exchanges of fire between the two warring groups since clashes broke out on May 3.

Earlier this week, a 14-year-old girl was hit by a bullet that pierced through the wall of her residence at Koutruk.

More than 180 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur early in May, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. (PTI)

State-level Ayushman Bhavah campaign launched in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 13: The state-level Ayushman Bhavah campaign was launched by Nagaland Governor La Ganesan in the presence of chief minister Neiphiu Rio at Raj Bhavan in Kohima on Wednesday. The governor, CM and other dignitaries also joined the national-level virtual launching of the Ayushman Bhavah by President Droupadi Murmu earlier on the day. Speaking on the occasion, Ganesan called the campaign a revolutionary initiative aimed at providing healthcare accessible to every citizen of our country.

Saying that healthcare is a fundamental right of every individual, he said it is our duty as a welfare state to ensure that no citizen is deprived of this basic right due to financial constraints.

He added that Ayushman Bhavah is a transformative initiative that aims to strengthen the healthcare system of the country and the state.

The governor also gave away awards to various voluntary blood donors on the occasion.

CM Rio said this campaign will bring Nagaland closer to the objective of achieving "healthy villages" based on the principle of "leaving no one behind". He

said this is an important component of Sustainable Development Goals 2023. He also gave away certificates to Nikshay Mitras awardees.

Health and family welfare minister P Paiwang Konyak said the Ayushman Bhavah campaign is an umbrella consisting of three major components – Ayushman Apke Dwar 3.0, Ayushman Mela and Ayushman Sabha. He said Nagaland has already generated and distributed 6, 12,415 PM-JAY health cards covering 2,71,593 households.

Stating that a total of 13,782 claims were submitted by various hospitals amounting to ₹ 32.63 crore, Konyak said out of this, a total of ₹ 24.29 crore has been paid for to date.

"Through the intervention of this scheme, out-of-pocket expenditure on hospitalisation for 13,782 beneficiaries amounting to ₹ 24.29 crore has been prevented," he said.

He urged the people of the state to actively take part in the Ayushman Bhavah campaign and avail the various health schemes.

A pledge for organ donation was also read out by the participants on the occasion.

Kohima vendors to get training on food safety and hygiene

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 13: The National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), supported by the Food Safety Authority, Nagaland, launched 'The Project Serve Safe Food: Training of Street Food Vendors' for Kohima vendors at Kohima DC's conference hall on Wednesday to train street food vendors on food safety and hygiene.

Welcoming the state government officials from various departments and food vendors of Kohima district to the launch programme, Subrata Banerjee, the head of branch corporate affairs of Nestle India Ltd, said Nestle India had joined hands with NASVI and local food authorities in 2016 to ensure proper training to the street food vendors. He said the company felt the need to train the street food vendors on food safety and hygiene not only to ensure healthy food for consumers but also to enable them to sustain and better their livelihoods.

The training programme modules include health and hygiene involving personal hygiene and cart hygiene, food handling and food



safety, cleaning and pest control and garbage disposal.

Joint secretary, health and family welfare department, Nokhasashi thanked Nestle India Ltd for organising the training programme for the Kohima street food vendors.

With the mushrooming of street food vendors in the state capital Kohima and Dimapur, he said safe hygiene practices should become integral to the vendors. He asked the vendors to fully grasp the opportunity of the training which will make them confident and competent in their business.

Kohima Municipal Council administrator Lanusenla L Peseyie urged the vendors to be fully equipped with all the necessary information on food safety and hygiene practices and get the food safety training certificate from this training, which is very important for the vendors to run their stalls.

Assistant food safety commissioner Sendong Jamir highlighted that the vendors should be registered under FACCI and keep the registration paper in the stall, should serve the food items in proper utensils and should avoid re-use of cooking oil.

M'laya govt to cite minimum requirement for granting licenses and mining leases

SHILLONG, Sept 13: The Meghalaya government has taken up with the Centre for reducing a hundred hectares of land as a minimum requirement for granting prospecting licenses and mining leases in the state. This was after different miner organisations demanded an immediate review of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for granting prospecting licenses and mining leases for coal mining in the state.

"Based on the different miner organisations appealing that it should be reduced, we have taken up the matter with the Government of India. The process is already on but we have not reached a conclusion yet but it is going in the right direction," Sangma told reporters.

He said when the State was fighting in the Supreme Court against the NGT ban on coal mining a discussion also took place with the Government of India.

Stating that Meghalaya's case was very unique, Sangma said the State was having so much difficulty in reaching to a conclusion because of the unique land holding system.

Further, the chief minister informed that the mining plan for starting scientific mining is in the final stage of getting the approval of the Centre.

He said the mining plans of four agencies which have already received the NOC concerned from the Centre government are being approved. (NNN)

Nagaland Assembly passes bills to revise taxes on motor vehicles and goods

KOIHMA, Sept 13: The Nagaland Assembly on Tuesday passed two bills that seek to revise taxes on motor vehicles and goods transported in them.

Another bill was for amending an Act to include various new subjects to be taught in the North East Christian University. The Bills were introduced on September 11, the first day of the monsoon session. Chief minister Neiphiu Rio, who also holds the transport department, said the motor vehicles tax for transport vehicles was last revised in 1999 and for private vehicles, the same was done in 2009.

The tax rate prevalent in Nagaland is low as compared to other states in the country, Rio stated adding that the hiring charges for transport vehicles have significantly increased and the road conditions too have improved over the years. Taking into account the rise



in price and to improve the financial health of the state, he said the government proposes for revision of the Motor Vehicles Tax by amending the Act. The Nagaland Motor Vehicles Taxation (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and The Nagaland Passengers & Goods Taxation (Amendment) Bill were passed by voice vote on Tuesday. The North East Christian University (Second Amendment) Bill 2023 was passed to include new subjects such as nursing, and medical sciences and research. (PTI)

Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma bats for students' welfare

SHILLONG, Sept 13: As teachers continue to protest the implementation of the National Education Policy 2020 in colleges across the state, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday underlined that decisions of all stakeholders in education should revolve around the interests of students and not otherwise.

Talking about NEP 2020, he spoke at length on the need for colleges to offer a broader range of courses, which necessitates additional resources and infrastructure and financial implications of about ₹ 400-500 crore.

His statement came in the wake of teachers from 22 of 75 colleges affiliated to the North Eastern Hill University protesting against the implementation of the four-year degree courses as envisaged under NEP 2020 for lack of infrastructure and proper training.

"Decisions should be taken by keeping the students' interest and future in mind. The management committee, teachers, officials and

political leaders, we all should focus on this and not the pressure and dharnas here and there. These are secondary," the chief minister said, addressing the closing ceremony of the 100-year celebration of Laban Bengali Boys Higher Secondary School here.

He warned that political interference in anything that revolves around education could have an adverse impact on the future of students.

According to the chief minister, "Politics in education is bad. Politicians may want to take decisions for politics. Sometimes, teachers may decide what is good for them and the managing committees may decide due to political influence."

"While all of these are important, in the last 50 years, we forgot that the centre of all of this is the student," he added.

On NEP 2020, the chief minister said there will be a new syllabus, there will be requirements and that it is a process that goes on and requires huge investments.



"There are challenges. The needs are quite large, we are looking at an investment of ₹ 300-400 crore to be able to move forward," he added. Talking about the complex nature of Meghalaya's education sector, he said the state has over 55,000 teachers and close to

15,000 schools and educational institutes.

As compared to Manipur or Nagaland with similar population structure, the chief minister said these states have around 3000-5000 schools and 18,000 teachers. "The number of schools is huge.

Because of the spread and the numbers, things are not manageable at the level that we want to be," he said, adding that the state government is on the verge of normalisation of certain institutions that would benefit the students.

The chief minister congratulated the school on the historic milestone of 100 years and said it is the vision of the founding members and the commitment and the dedication of the past and present teachers and members of the managing committee that has brought the school to its present glory.

"I can say confidently that the education sector is one of the top priorities of the government and the government has adopted student-centric policies to better educational facilities," he said.

The chief minister emphasized student-centric decision-making and said the education cess collected by the state government, which was lying unused until recently, has been diverted towards improving infrastructure in all government schools. (PTI)

Ayushman Bhava campaign will help achieve universal health coverage: Prez

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: Optimum delivery of health schemes to every intended beneficiary, including those in the last mile, will lead to achieving the goal of universal health coverage, President Droupadi Murmu said on Wednesday.

Launching the Ayushman Bhava campaign, she said it is a comprehensive nationwide healthcare initiative that aims to provide saturation coverage of health services in every village and town in the country.

Murmu, who also virtually launched the Ayushman Bhava portal from the Raj Bhavan in Gujarat's Gandhinagar, said these initiatives mark a "significant leap" towards ensuring healthcare for all as they strive to further consolidate the accessibility and affordability of healthcare services, particularly for the underserved.

"I have been told that multi-ministerial approach is being taken to implement the programme. To achieve such a ambitious target everyone's cooperation is critical," she said.

"No person should be left behind and no village should be left behind i.e. 100 per cent people can avail health services. This goal will make our country successful in achieving the objective of Universal health coverage in true sense," she said.

The prime minister has given central importance to Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Antyodaya in his activities. This campaign to provide health services to the last person in the last village is inspired by the ideal of Antyodaya, the president



said. She noted that during the G20 Summit, member nations put forth a clear roadmap for the G20 2023 action plan for accelerating progress on the sustainable development goals.

"The government of India has set localised sustainable development goals in order to achieve the UN's SDG 2030. Under this, a major focus is on development works at the rural level," she said.

Village panchayats that successfully saturate the health schemes will earn the prestigious title of Ayushman Gram Panchayat or Ayushman Urban Ward, symbolising their dedication to equitable healthcare provision, she said.

The campaign, which was launched on Tuesday, will be implemented during the Seva Pakhwada

starting from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday on September 17 and continue till October 2.

"Everyone knows that Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana is the world's largest health insurance scheme in the world. Big thinking and big achievements are now India's identity.

India's digital economy especially is being praised. India connecting people from across India including small villages to the digital economy has become an example in the world," Murmu said.

Referring to the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission which was launched in September 2021, she said she believes that like in other areas, India will present the ideal in digital inclusion even in healthcare services.

Indian can achieve anything and that was proved in the country's fight against Covid, the president said.

Due to the patience and courage of Indians, the extraordinary capabilities of the scientists, the deviation of the doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers and the successful leadership India not only freed its huge population from the clutches of the major disaster but also helped other countries, she said.

Implementing the largest vaccination drive in the history of the world is an example of India's self reliance and expertise, she added.

The president also applauded the goals of Ayushman Bhava to further facilitate access of Ayushman cards, generate ABHA IDs, and raise awareness about vital health schemes and disease conditions, such as non-communicable diseases, tuberculosis, and sickle cell disease.

Adding further, she said the health services through the three components of Ayushman Bhava - Ayushman - Apke Dwar 3.0, Ayushman melas at health and wellness centres and community health clinics and Ayushman Sabhas in every village and panchayat will substantially expedite the access of healthcare services at grass-root level thereby ensuring building of a healthy nation. The campaign is a collaborative effort spearheaded by gram panchayats in coordination with the department of health, other government departments, and local elected bodies in rural and urban areas, Union Health Minister Man-

sukh Mandaviya said.

"Its core objective is to extend comprehensive healthcare coverage to every village and town, transcending geographical barriers and ensuring that no one is left behind," he said. The Ayushman Bhava campaign is aligned with the vision of creating 'healthy villages' and 'healthy gram panchayats', laying the foundation for achieving universal health coverage in the country.

With the Ayushman Bhava initiative, India is going to write a new chapter in making healthcare affordable and accessible. Under Ayushman Bhava, health melas and medical camps are an important component which will be set up once a week at all health and wellness centres and community health clinics, Mandaviya said.

"Besides the launch of Ayushman Bhava initiative, organ donation and blood donation pledge campaigns will also be organized from September 17 till October 2 which are noble initiatives that should be taken up by every individual," he said.

"Today, around one lakh Nikshay mitras are taking care of the 10 lakh TB patients who had given their consent for this initiative. This has taken us closer to the prime minister's goal of ending TB by 2025," he added.

Mandaviya praised the impact of healthcare services stating, "In the last 9 years, there has been a significant transformation in the healthcare landscape of the country which was also appreciated by the visiting dignitaries at the G20 summit." (PTI)

PM in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh today to launch devp projects



NEW DELHI, Sept 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh on Thursday to launch a slew of projects in the two states.

His office said in a statement that he will lay the foundation stone of projects worth over ₹ 50,700 crore in Madhya Pradesh from an event in Bina in the state.

The projects include a petrochemical complex at Bina refinery and 10 new industrial projects across the state.

Later, he will travel to neighbouring Chhattisgarh to dedicate important rail sector projects worth around ₹ 6,350 cr.

Assembly polls are due in both states in November-December.

During the programme, it said, he will lay the foundation stone of critical care blocks in nine districts of Chhattisgarh and also distribute one lakh sickle cell counselling cards.

The statement said the new projects in Madhya Pradesh will provide a major stimulus to industrial development in the state.

The state-of-the-art Bina refinery of the Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, which will be developed at a cost of about ₹ 49,000 crore, will produce about 1,200 KTPA (Kilo-Tonnes Per Annum) of ethylene and propylene, vital component for various sectors like textiles, packaging and pharma among others.

This will reduce the country's import dependence and be a step towards fulfilling the prime minister's vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', it said.

The mega project will also create employment opportunities and spur the development of downstream industries in the petroleum sector.

During the programme, Modi will also lay the foundation stone of 10 projects, including power and renewable energy manufacturing zone in Narmadapuram district, two IT parks in Indore, a

mega industrial park in Ratlam, and six new industrial areas across Madhya Pradesh.

Modi's emphasis on improving connectivity across the country will get a boost with the inauguration of important rail sector projects in Raigarh in Chhattisgarh, the statement said.

The projects include Chhattisgarh East Rail Project Phase-I, third rail line between Champa to Janga, third rail line between Pendra Road to Anuppur and MGR (Merry-Go-Round) system connecting Talaipalli Coal Mine to NTPC Lara Super Thermal Power Station (STPS).

The rail projects will provide impetus to socioeconomic development by facilitating movement of passengers as well as freight traffic in the region, it said.

The Chhattisgarh East Rail Project Phase-I is being developed under the ambitious PM Gati Shakti-National Master Plan for multi-modal connectivity and consists of a 124.8 km rail line from Kharsia to Dharamjaygarh, including a spur line to Gare-Pelma and three-feeder lines connecting Chhal, Baroud, Durgapur and other coal mines.

The rail line, built at a cost of around ₹ 3,055 crore, is equipped with electrified broad gauge level crossings and free port double line with passenger amenities. It will provide rail connectivity for coal transportation from Mand-Raigarh coalfields located in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh.

With an aim of addressing health problems caused by sickle cell disease, especially among the tribal population, Modi will also distribute one lakh sickle cell counselling cards to the screened population.

The distribution of sickle cell counselling cards is being done under the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission (NSAEM), which was launched by the prime minister in July 2023 at Shahdol, Madhya Pradesh. (PTI)

Govt calls all-party meeting on Sep 17 ahead of Parl session

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: A meeting of the floor leaders of all political parties has been convened on September 17, a day before the start of a five-day Parliament session, parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday. The invitation for the meeting has been sent to all concerned leaders through e-mail. Joshi posted on social media platform X. On August 31, Joshi had announced a "special session" of Parliament for five days from September 18, but did not spell out any specific agenda for it.

"Amid Amrit Kaal, looking forward to having fruitful discussions and debate in Parliament," Joshi had posted on X. With no specific agenda announced so far for the session, speculations have been doing the rounds if it could be about women's reservation bill, uniform civil code, simultaneous polls or other subjects. It is also expected that the Parliament proceedings will move from the old building to the new one during this session. Opposition parties have slammed the government for not spelling out the agenda of the session even with just a few days left for its commencement. (PTI)

ED grills TMC MP Nusrat Jahan for 6 hrs; party maintains distance

KOLKATA, Sept 12: TMC MP and actor Nusrat Jahan was on Tuesday grilled by Enforcement Directorate (ED) sleuths for nearly six hours at its office in a case linked to alleged duping of senior citizens by promising them flats in New Town area here, a senior official of the probe body said. The 33-year-old actor, who was summoned by the federal agency for questioning last week, was asked to clarify her role as the director of the real estate company besides other questions related to the investigation.

"I answered all the questions I was asked. Thank you so much," was her brief reply to questions by reporters after coming out of the ED's office in the evening.

The TMC leadership distanced itself from Jahan while affirming her cooperation with the central agencies. An ED official said that Jahan during the questioning was also asked about the huge loan (over Rs one crore) that she allegedly took from the company.

"She was asked how she repaid the loan. She has submitted some documents to our officers and they are being probed. Our officers also asked her to specify the respective roles of Rakesh Singh and small-time actor Ruplekha Mitra who were co-directors in the company," he told PTI. ED has summoned Mitra for questioning in the same case.

"We have nothing to say regarding it. From the very first day, we have said we have zero tolerance (towards corruption). She was summoned, she had gone and cooperated," senior TMC minister Partha Bhowmik said when asked to comment on Jahan's questioning by the ED. Bhowmik said while addressing a press conference at state headquarters along with cabinet and party colleague Shashi Panja. (PTI)

Govt earmarks ₹ 1,650 cr for additional 75 lakh LPG connections under Ujjwala

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: The government on Wednesday allocated ₹ 1,650 crore towards the release of an additional 75 lakh free LPG connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) over three years ending March 2026.

As per the existing modalities of Ujjwala 2.0, the first refill and stove will also be provided free of cost to Ujjwala beneficiaries, information and broadcast minister Anurag Thakur told reporters after the meeting of the Union Cabinet.

He said Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the extension of PMUY for the release of 75 lakh LPG connections over three years from Financial Year 2023-24 to 2025-26.

The total financial implication will be ₹ 1,650 crore.

A targeted subsidy of ₹ 200 per 14.2 kg LPG cylinder for up to 12 refills per year is being provided to PMUY consumers.

With the release of an additional 75 lakh connections, the number of PMUY beneficiaries will go up to 10.35 crore.

The total financial implication will be ₹ 1,650 crore. This includes ₹ 2,200 per



connection (14.2 kg single bottle connection/ 5 kg double bottle connection), and ₹ 1,300 per connection (5 kg single bottle connection).

An official release on the Cabinet decision said some eligible households still do not have LPG connections.

This is due to multiple reasons - new

households are formed every year as a result of rising population, marriages, migration, nuclearisation of families, leftover households, extremely remote locations etc.

There is demand for 15 lakh PMUY connections as of August 31, 2023.

Last month, the government on Tuesday announced a ₹ 200 per cylinder cut in prices of domestic cooking gas to soften the impact of rising inflation on households.

A 14.2-kg LPG cylinder in the national capital cost ₹ 903.

For Ujjwala beneficiaries, the price of an LPG cylinder is ₹ 703 after considering the continuing ₹ 200 per cylinder subsidy.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana was launched by the Prime Minister in May 2016 to provide LPG connections to women of below poverty line (BPL) families.

PMUY has majorly contributed to increase in LPG penetration in the country from 62 per cent in 2016 to near saturation now, the release said. (PTI)

12 killed in accident in Rajasthan's Bharatpur, police say; PM announces aid package

JAIPUR, Sept 13: Twelve people from Gujarat were killed and at least 11 injured when a trailer ramed into their private bus from behind in Rajasthan's Bharatpur district early on Wednesday, police said.

The bus was on its way from Gujarat to Mathura in Uttar Pradesh when the accident occurred around 4.30 am, they said.

Expressing grief at the loss of lives and offering condolences to the victims' families, Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved an ex-gratia of ₹ 2 lakh to the next of kin of the dead and ₹ 50,000 to the injured.

President Droupadi Murmu, Rajasthan Governor Kalraj Mishra, chief minister Ashok Gehlot and other leaders also consoled the deaths.

Ramavtar, an officer at Lakhanpur police station, said the bus met with the accident around 4.30 am at the Hantra culvert. The bus had stopped on the fly-over when a speeding 10-wheeler hit it from behind. Five men and six women died on the spot. Another woman died dur-



ing treatment, he said.

Of the 11 injured, the condition of four is serious and they have been referred to Jaipur. The relatives of one injured person took him to Sainik Hospital while another was sent home after first aid, the officer said.

The bodies were scattered on the side of the highway. The police were informed about the accident by drivers of vehicles passing the spot, they said.

The victims were from Dihar in Gujarat's Bhavnagar district.

According to the police control room, Antu, Nandram, Lallu, Bharat, Lalji, his wife Madhuben, Ambaben, Kambuben, Ramuben, Anjuben and Madhuben -- the wife of an Arvind -- died in at the spot. Kalluben died while undergoing treatment.

Expressing her grief at the loss of lives, Murmu also wished a speedy recovery for the injured.

"I am deeply saddened by the news of a bus full of devotees going from Gujarat to Uttar Pradesh meeting with an accident in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan and the death of several passengers," Murmu said in a post on X.

"I express my condolences to the bereaved families and pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," she added. Gehlot also expressed sadness at the loss of lives and said, "The death of devotees on a pilgrimage from Gujarat in the collision between a bus and a trailer in Bharatpur is extremely sad. Police-administration is on the spot and the injured have been taken to the hospital for treatment." (PTI)

Kerala govt strengthens measures to prevent spread of Nipah virus

KOZHIKODE (KERALA), Sept 13: The Kerala government has strengthened measures to prevent the spread of Nipah infection after the brain-damaging virus killed two people and infected two others in this north Kerala district. Considering the serious nature of the disease, the Kozhikode administration declared seven village panchayats as containment zones.

In a Facebook post, Kozhikode district collector A Geetha said that the panchayats declared as containment zones included Atanchery, Maruthonkara, Tiruvallur, Kuttyyadi, Kayakkodi, Villyapalli, and Kavilumpara. No travel in or out of these containment zones will be allowed till further notice. The police have been asked to cordon off these areas, she said on Tuesday. Only stores selling essential commodities and medical supplies will be allowed to function.

Stores selling essential goods will be allowed to function from 7 am to 5 pm. No time bar has been given for pharmacies and health centres.

Local self-government institutions and village offices can function with minimum staff. Banks, other government or quasi-government institutions, educational institutions, and anganwadis should not operate, the collector said.

The public should use online services and avoid going to local self-government institutions, she said. Buses or vehicles plying on national highways through the containment zones should not stop in the affected areas. Directions regarding this should be issued by the regional transport officer and district transport officer, the post said. All should maintain social distancing and use masks and sanitizer in the containment zones, it said.

Soon after the Nipah virus infection was confirmed in Kozhikode district, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan had urged people not to panic and to take precaution instead.

"Everyone should strictly follow the instructions of the health department and the police and fully cooperate with the restrictions," he had said. (PTI)

G20 declaration underlines strengthening fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property; their restitution

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: The New Delhi Declaration adopted at the G20 Summit emphasised the "strengthening" of the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property at the national, regional or international levels to enable its "return and restitution" to their countries and communities of origin.

Protection and restitution of cultural property is one of the four pillars of culture articulated under India's presidency of the influential grouping.

The G20 Summit was held at the newly-built Bharat Mandapam at Pragati Maidan from September 9-10.

It was attended by US President Joe Biden, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and French President Emmanuel Macron, among other world leaders.

The declaration, the adoption of which was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, came out at the start of the second session of the G20 Leaders' Summit on September 9.

The declaration also highlights the "crucial role of tourism and culture" as a means for sustainable socioeconomic development and economic prosperity, and takes note of the Goa Roadmap for Tourism as one of the vehicles for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"We call for the full recognition and protection of

culture with its intrinsic value as a transformative driver and an enabler for the achievement of the SDGs and advance the inclusion of culture as a stand-alone goal in future discussions on a possible post-2030 development agenda," reads the text of the declaration, under the sub-head 'Culture as a Transformative Driver of SDGs'.

The Preamble of the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration begins by asserting that "We are One Earth, One Family, and we share One Future".

As Leaders of G20, the premier global forum for international economic cooperation, "we resolve to act in concrete ways through partnerships", and "we commit to accelerate strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth", it says.

In the sub-head 'Culture as a Transformative Driver of SDGs', the declaration also speaks about the illicit trafficking of cultural property and their restitution to their countries and communities of origin as relevant.

"We reiterate our commitment to strengthen our fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property at national, regional or international levels to enable its return and restitution to their countries and communities of origin as relevant, and call for sustained dialogue and action in that endeavour, with a view to strengthening cultural diplomacy and intercultural ex-

changes, consistent with national law and relevant UNESCO Conventions," it reads.

Prior to the summit, over 200 G20 events at nearly 60 locations across India were held, including four meetings of the G20 Culture Working Group and a G20 Culture Ministerial Meeting, and four meetings of the G20 Tourism Working Group and a G20 Tourism Ministerial Meeting.

The fourth and last Culture Working Group meeting was held in Varanasi from August 23-25, followed by the Culture Ministerial Meeting on August 26 in the holy town.

At the end of the G20 Culture Ministerial Meeting, an Outcome Document and Chair's Summary -- 'Kashi Culture Pathway' -- was issued.

The 'Kashi Culture Pathway' reiterated the deepest concern for the "continued looting and illicit trafficking of cultural property -- including through the rise of the online market and other digital and social platforms, which may require specific regulation -- as well as for organised crime committed globally against cultural heritage and cultural institutions".

The outcome document further underlined that "destruction and illicit trafficking of cultural property are serious crimes and can be linked to money laundering, corruption, tax evasion and terrorist financing,

notably in conflict or post-conflict situations, and reiterating our commitment to strengthen the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property".

G20 Culture Ministerial Meeting's Outcome Document and Chair's Summary -- 'Kashi Culture Pathway'; and G20 tourism ministers' Meeting Outcome Document and Chair's Summary, are among the documents which have been annexed to the G20 leaders' declaration.

In the Varanasi ministerial meeting, deliberations were held on the four pillars of culture articulated under India's presidency of the G20.

These pillars are the protection and restitution of cultural property, harnessing living heritage for a sustainable future, promotion of cultural and creative industries and creative economy, and leveraging digital technologies for the protection and promotion of culture.

The G20 leaders in the New Delhi declaration also resolved to "encourage the international community to protect the living cultural heritage, including the intellectual property, notably with regard to the impact of the over-commercialisation and misappropriation of such living heritage on the sustainability and on the livelihoods of practitioners and community bearers as well as Indigenous Peoples". (PTI)

Army colonel and major, Dy SP killed in gunfight with terrorists

Two Army personnel and one J&K Police personnel injured

SRINAGAR, Sept 13: An Army commanding officer, a Major and a Deputy Superintendent of Jammu and Kashmir Police were killed in a gunfight with terrorists in the higher reaches of Kokorenag area in the south of the valley, officials said here on Wednesday.

Colonel Manpreet Singh, Commanding Officer of 19 Rashtriya Rifles, Major Ashish Dhoneck, and Deputy Superintendent Humayun Bhat were critically injured in the gunfight with terrorists that ensued in the Garol area of Anantnag district in the morning hours of Wednesday.

The officers succumbed to their injuries during the treatment, they said. Bhat, father of a two-month-old daughter and son of retired Inspector General of Jammu and Kashmir Police Ghulam Hasan Bhat, died due to heavy blood loss, they added.

The banned Resistance Front, believed to be a shadow group of Pak-



istan-based Lashker-e-Taiba, has claimed responsibility for the attack. Officials believe that it is the same set of terrorists who had carried out the attack on army personnel on August 4 killing three jawans in the higher reaches of the Halan forest area of Kulgam district.

The operation against the terrorists began on Tuesday evening in

Garol area but was called off during the night. This morning, the hunt for the terrorists resumed after information started trickling that they were spotted at a hideout, the officials said.

Colonel Singh, leading his team from the front, attacked the terrorists. However, the terrorists fired upon him and he was critically in-

jured.

Major Ashish and DSP Bhat were also hit by bullets resulting in critical injuries, they said.

Senior army and police officers, GoC 15 Corps Lt General Rajiv Ghai and including DGP Dilbag Singh rushed to the spot to assess the situation.

Earlier Jammu and Kashmir Police had posted on social media handle that an "encounter has started in #Kokorenag area of #Anantnag. Officers from Army and JKP injured. Details shall follow".

Kashmir-based XV corps also gave details that "based on specific intelligence on presence of terrorists a Joint Operation was launched by #IndianArmy & @JmuKmrPolice on the intervening night of 12-13 Sep in Area Garol, Anantnag. "Contact established and firefight ensued. Two Army personnel and one J&K Police personnel injured. Operation in progress." (PTI)

Discussions on BJP-JD(S) alliance for LS polls still on; Modi & Shah to take final call: Yediyurappa

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: Veteran BJP leader B S Yediyurappa on Wednesday said discussions are still underway on the party joining hands with JD(S) in Karnataka for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and the central leaders will take a final call. The statement is a marked dilution of his earlier assertion that both parties have already finalised their alliance for the elections next year and the BJP central leadership has agreed to give the regional party four seats.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Yediyurappa said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, union home minister Amit Shah and the party's central leadership will decide on the alliance.

"We do not know what's in the mind of Modi and Amit Shahji... The discussions are still underway," he said.

The decision on seat-sharing is left to the central leaders, he said adding that he neither has any say in this matter nor will offer any suggestion.

Yediyurappa - former chief minister of Karnataka and member of the BJP Parliamentary Board - is in the national capital to attend the Central Election Committee meeting to review the poll preparedness for the upcoming assembly elections and 2024 Lok

Sabha elections.

On September 8, Yediyurappa told reporters in Bengaluru, "I am happy that Deve Gowda ji met our prime minister and they have already finalised about 4 seats. I welcome it..."

His comments had led to a flutter in state politics with JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy claiming that no such development has taken place.

In an apparent attempt to put a lid on the row, Yediyurappa on Wednesday clarified that he was "factually incorrect" in his previous assertion, stressing that the BJP leadership will take the final call on the possible alliance.

He further said that the aim is to win 25-26 LS seats in Karnataka and for this district workers' meetings will be held across the state.

Yediyurappa said he would request the party's central leadership to appoint at the earliest the Leader of Opposition in Karnataka Assembly and the party's new state president.

On the opposition forming the INDIA coalition for the LS polls, he said, "In front of Modi, they are zero. We will get an absolute majority. We got last time and will get the same number of seats in 2024. Modi will be the Prime Minister again." (PTI)

Media trial may deflect 'cause of justice', says SC, asks MHA to draft manual for police briefing in criminal cases

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: A media trial may result in "deflection of cause of justice", the Supreme Court observed on Wednesday and directed the union home ministry to prepare within three months a comprehensive manual on how police should brief journalists about criminal cases. The top court said there is an urgent need for a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) about how journalists should be briefed as there has been an upsurge in reporting on criminal offences in print, electronic and social media since the last guidelines on the subject were issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in 2010.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said a delicate balance has to be maintained between the media's fundamental right to free speech and expression, the right of the accused to fair investigation, and the privacy of the victim. The top court also

asked the Directors General of Police (DGP) of all states to submit their suggestions to the MHA within a month on how to go about preparing the manual.

"All DGPs, in a month, should communicate to Ministry of Home Affairs, their suggestions for guidelines... National Human Rights Commission's suggestions may also be taken," the bench, also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and Manoj Misra, said.

The SC said any disclosure by police at a "premature stage", when the investigation is on, triggers a media trial that affects administration of justice since it could also influence the judge conducting the trial. The top court said the nature of disclosure by police, in the absence of an SOP, cannot be uniform as it would depend on the nature of crime and participating stakeholders including victims, witnesses and ac-

cused. The age and gender of the victim and accused also have a significant bearing on the disclosure, it said.

"Media reporting in matters involving commission of crimes involves several aspects of public interest. At a basic level, the fundamental right to free speech and expression is directly both in terms of rights of media to portray and disseminate news, views and information and the right of the viewing public and readers to receive a diversity of opinions.

"There can be no gainsaying in the fact that the media in terms of its right to speech and expression and consumers have a right to receive fair and unbiased information. Criminal offences and investigation by law enforcement machinery involves significant elements of public interest bearing upon the right to inform as well as the right to know," the bench said. (PTI)

Congress hits out at govt over Parl special session, says 'only two people' know agenda

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: Opposition leaders on Wednesday hit out at the government over the special session of Parliament, saying "only two people" know about its agenda with only a few days left for its commencement.

Jairam Ramesh, the Congress general secretary said in a post on X, "Today is September 13. The five-day special session of Parliament will commence five days from now and nobody -- barring One Man (ok, perhaps the Other One too) -- has any sense of the agenda."

Ramesh also listed several previous occasions when special sessions or special sittings were held and the list of business was known in advance.

On November 26, 2019, a special sitting in Central Hall commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Constitution was held, he said. A Joint Special Session in Central Hall was held at midnight on June 30, 2017, to roll out the GST, he noted. Ramesh pointed out that on November 26 and 27, 2015, a special sitting was held to commemorate Constitution Day.

"May 13, 2012 -- special sitting to commemorate 60th anniversary of first sittings of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha. July 22, 2008 -- special session of Lok Sabha for a trust vote after the Left parties withdrew support from UPA-1 govt," he said in his post.

From August 26 to September 1, 1997, a special session to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Indian Independence was held, he said.

From June 3 to 4, 1991, a special session (158th session) of the Rajya Sabha for approval of President's Rule in Haryana, under the proviso to Article 356 (3), was held, he pointed out.

From February 28 to March 1, 1977, a special session of the Rajya Sabha was held for two days for the extension of President's Rule in Tamil Nadu and Nagaland under the second proviso to Article 356 (4). Ramesh said. In a post on X, TMC Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien said, "Two working days to go before the special parliament session begins and still not a word on the agenda."

The TMC spokesperson further said, "Only two people know! And we still call ourselves a parliamentary democracy," he said.

Contd. from Page 1...

My govt committed for devp

Shillong, CM Sarma said he was hopeful of an amicable and logical solution to the long-standing border issues between Assam and Meghalaya. The chief minister said that with the NDA regime at the Centre, the North-eastern region has become an epicenter of peace and development. He also expressed happiness at the Northeastern region going through a phase of academic and cultural renaissance.

In his speech, the Meghalaya chief minister thanked the CEM for bringing together both the CMs of Meghalaya and Assam in one platform through this programme. He said that the inauguration of Karbi Hemtun in Shillong will send a strong message of unity between people of both states.

The CM also expressed the beautiful Karbi cultural demonstration performed by Karbi cultural troupe. Stating that there were small issues like the inter-state border, he said, "We need to solve them amicably through dialogue." "Never before the inter-state border was taken seriously" he said that it was the present of Assam and Meghalaya governments have taken keen interest to resolve border disputes.

In his welcome address, Tuliram Ronghang, CEM, KAAC, said that the peace along the Assam-Meghalaya inter-state boundary would prevail. Meghalaya deputy chief minister Sniawbhalang Dhar, chief executive of Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council P Syiem, Member of Parliament Haren Sing Bey, Members of Legislative Assembly Bidya Sing Englang, Rup Sing Teron, deputy Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly Dr Numal Momin and host of other dignitaries were also present on Wednesday. The Karbi Hemtun, having a basement plus ground floor plus three other floors (Basement + G + 3), is a modern building with facilities such as conference halls, dormitories for boys and girls, restaurant, suite rooms, gym, among others, and can accommodate as many as 50 guests at a time.

Joint visit of border likely

that the two state governments are trying their best to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the people of both Assam and Meghalaya. "They (people at the border) must remember that we are working overtime to resolve the dispute. We want to keep the best interest of people living on both sides of the border in our mind. We want to protect the interest of the people living on the border. So be calm, remain in peace, remain in peace, help us, we will try to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the people of both Assam and Meghalaya."

Earlier, Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma said that the informal meeting is part of the exercise and process to discuss the matter to help both States get into a better understanding.

"There is no definitive outcome of it and this exercise will continue from time to time," he said while thanking the chief minister of Assam, CEM of KAAC and deputy chief minister of Meghalaya, who is heading the regional committee in Jaintia Hills region for their time.

Stating that the informal discussion was very positive, Sangma said, "We are hopeful that we are able to slowly and steadily move towards a resolution and also ensure that there is peace in that area and the different misunderstandings that are coming in a while, we are hopeful that we will be able to resolve those issues also."

Congress stages walkout

Replying to a question by Asom Gana Parishad legislator Ramendra Narayan Kalita, Bora said 1,56,651 illegal foreigners have been identified in the state till July 31, 2023, as per the Accord regulations.

It stated that among other clauses, the names of foreigners coming to Assam on or after March 25, 1971, would be detected, deleted from electoral rolls and steps would be taken to deport them. The minister said 30,089 illegal foreigners have been deported on the basis of it till August 31.

He also said all 100 Foreigners' Tribunals are functioning currently in the state. Sharing details of the unfenced areas, he said a 6.1-km stretch along Dhubri-Mankachar has not been fenced as it is a deep area, while another 4.5km in Cachar-Karimganj area has remained unfenced due to objections by the Border Guard Bangladesh. (PTI)

India, Russia discuss transport

upcoming Global Maritime India Summit (GMIS), 2023 in Chennai. A.O. Chekunkov, said, "We discussed the development of maritime communications between our countries as well as the prospects for using the Northern Sea Route. This dynamic of contacts is the foundation for further strengthening our partnership. Co-operation with India is one of the priorities of the international activities of our ministry and we intend to develop relations with Indian partners in the Far East in all areas of mutual interest."

Highlighting the role of other alternative routes for exploring trade and commerce opportunities between India and Russia, Sonowal said, "India is keen to collaborate with Russia regarding the development of the Northern Sea route, recognizing the potential it holds for enhanced connectivity and trade."

"We agree with your conclusions that the potential cargo base of the line will be coking coal, oil, LNG and fertilizers. In the Far East, this product range is present in sufficient quantities, and in the east of India, the infrastructure to receive it is being built up. Taking into account the specialization of the Far Eastern ports, the project should be implemented in an expanded geographical scope, including other regions in addition to Primorye, primarily the Khabarovsk Territory," Chekunkov said.

"We are ready to visit Chennai this October on a business mission and with the participation of leading Russian exporters, to develop mutually beneficial solutions with the Indian side for the launch of these lines. The NSR is a global transport project. Its development can provide economic benefits to both Russia and non-regional states. For India, this is an opportunity to increase sales of shipbuilding products and gain income from participation in the general logistics business in northern latitudes," he further said. (PTI)

Minimum 3 promotions for

individual monthly, he said. "This is aimed at improving access of officers/personnel in these ranks to a healthy and nutritious diet which will improve their overall functioning and efficiency," Baruah said.

The cabinet also decided to construct a unity mall (Ekta Mall) at an estimated cost of ₹ 226 crore at the Assam Trade Promotion Organization complex here to promote national integration and carry forward the concept of 'One District, One Product' (ODOP).

The council of ministers also approved the proposal of a commission for the alteration of areas under the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) for the inclusion of 41 villages from Biswanath to BTR. On the other hand, the services of lecturers in the five polytechnics of Chirang, Hailakandi, Morigaon, Tinsukia and Udalguri and assistant professors in Dhemaji Engineering College will be extended for smooth conduct of technical education, Baruah said. The cabinet also discussed the draft guidelines on Mukhya Mantri Atma Nirbhar Asom to generate employment opportunities through the setting up of new entrepreneurial ventures, the minister added. (PTI)

Libya floods claim over

Only two roads from the south remain usable, and they involve a long, winding route through the mountains. Aid teams with some supplies managed to get in that way, but local emergency workers otherwise, were relying on whatever equipment they already had on hand. Collapsed bridges split the city centre, further hampering movements. Ossama Ali, a spokesman for the Ambulance and Emergency Centre in eastern Libya, said at least 5,100 deaths were recorded in Derna, along with around 100 others elsewhere in eastern Libya. More than 7,000 people were injured in the city, most receiving treatment in field hospitals that authorities and aid agencies set up, he told The Associated Press by phone on Wednesday. The number of deaths is likely to increase since search and rescue teams are still collecting bodies from the streets, buildings and the sea, he said. At least 30,000 people in Derna were displaced by the flooding, the UN migration agency said. The damage is so extensive that the city is almost inaccessible for humanitarian aid workers, the International Organization for Migration said.

The startling devastation pointed to the storm's intensity, but also Libya's vulnerability. The country is divided by rival governments, one in the east, the other in the west, and the result has been neglect of infrastructure in many areas. "This is a disaster in every sense of the word," a wailing survivor who lost 11 members of his family told a local television station as a group of rescuers tried to calm him. The television station did not identify the survivor. Ahmed Abdalla, a survivor who joined the search and rescue effort, said they were putting bodies in the yard of a local hospital before taking them for burial in mass graves at the city's sole intact cemetery. "The situation is indescribable. Entire families have perished in this disaster. Some were washed away to the sea," Abdalla said by phone from Derna. Bulldozers worked over the past two days to fix and clear roads to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid and heavy equipment urgently needed for the search and rescue operations. Derna is 250 kilometres east of Benghazi, where international aid started to arrive on Tuesday. (PTI)

Over 82,000 hectares of

of differences were identified with Meghalaya and a MoU for settlement in six of these areas, which were taken up in the first phase, was signed on March 29, 2022. The areas where settlement has been reached are Tarabari, Gizang, Hahim, Baklapara, Khanapara- Pitingkata and Ratacheria. Discussions on resolving disputes in Lampi, Deshdumoria, Borduar, Nongwa-Moutamur (Garbhanga) block 1 and block 2, and Pisiar- Khanduli are underway. (PTI)

IAF Chief receives first

to IAF by Airbus 10 days ahead of its schedule delivery. Patnaik told PTI that the C295 project will significantly enhance India-Spain bilateral relations, especially the economic engagement. "The project makes a lot of difference to the overall relations between the two countries," he said. The first 'Make in India' C295 will roll out of the Vadodara final assembly line in September 2026 in what will be a milestone for the Indian aerospace industry. The final aircraft is expected to be delivered to the IAF by August 2031.

"It was only two years ago that we signed this contract with India, the largest order in the history of the C295," said Jean-Brice Dumont, Airbus' Head of Military Air Systems. "Today, we are enhancing the capabilities of the Indian Air Force and modernizing its transport fleet by delivering the first aircraft on schedule. This is the beginning of an exciting and long-term journey with the Indian Air Force," he said.

The production of components of these aircraft has already started in the Main Constituent Assembly (MCA) facility in Hyderabad, southern India. These parts will be shipped to the Final Assembly Line (FAL) in Vadodara which is expected to be operational by November 2024. (PTI)

Assam earns ₹ 10 crore

quantity sold per day is 1,66,589.883 BL and for country spirits, it is 57,818.365 BL. As per figures from last financial year, the daily average revenue from excise was at ₹ 10.85 crore. The minister said licenses for 1,684 wine shops and 896 bars have been given in the state so far.

He said new licenses are given in urban areas as per requirements and in areas near inter-state borders to prevent smuggling of liquor from across the boundary. In rural areas, except for allowing bar-cum-restaurants in tourist resorts, no other licenses for wine shops or bars are being issued at the moment, Suklabaidya added. Replying to another question by Congress' Jakir Hussain Sikdar, the minister said the state also has 486 country spirit shops. The state has earned ₹ 1,718.75 crore in excise revenue till August this fiscal, he added. (PTI)

Over 1.56 lakh foreigners

Sharing details of the unfenced areas, he said a 6.1-km stretch along Dhubri-Mankachar has not been fenced as it is a deep area while another 4.5km in Cachar-Karimganj area has remained unfenced due to objections by the Border Guard Bangladesh. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: Researchers at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi and National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology (INRIA) in France have developed advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) and signal processing techniques to accurately predict structural health of bridges and other structures.

These AI-based algorithms have broad applications, not limited to bridges alone, and can be extended to structures such as ropeways, buildings, aerospace structures, transmission towers, and various infrastructure elements requiring periodic health assessments and protection measures, the researchers claimed.

According to officials, there are over 13,500 bridges across India.

"These structures undergo natural ageing due to environmental factors like temperature fluctuations, and water and air exposure, compounded by heavy road traffic. Traditionally, assessing bridge conditions has relied on visual inspections, a method considered inadequate by experts.

"It falls short in detecting all structural issues and is subjective and time-consuming, involving manual analysis of numerous photographs," said Subhamoy Sen, Associate Professor, School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, IIT Mandi.

The findings of the research have recently been published in the journals Mechanical Systems and Signal Processing and Neural Computing and Applications.

Recent advances in instrumentation, data analy-



sis and AI tools like deep learning hold great promise for structural health monitoring (SHM) of bridges and other structures. These technologies make it easier to detect, measure, understand, and even predict the evolution of defects over time. This, in turn, enables more effective planning for renovation or repair work, ultimately reducing maintenance costs and extending the lifespan and availability of bridges.

The research team at IIT Mandi claims to have developed such a Deep Learning-based SHM approach. Their AI algorithms can identify and isolate structural damages by analysing recorded ambient dynamic responses, all without the need for human intervention.

"We have employed data-driven methods like Machine Learning, AI, and Bayesian statistical inference to estimate a bridge's health and pre-

dict its remaining usable life. This outcome has the potential to reduce risks to infrastructure under operational and adverse loading conditions," Sen said.

"Temperature fluctuations can greatly affect a bridge's dynamic traits, especially prestressed concrete, and cable-stayed bridges. It is therefore important to consider these temperature effects in both real-time and AI-based SHM.

"IIT Mandi's algorithm was rigorously validated on a real bridge in a cold region with extreme annual and daily temperature swings," he added.

Sen explained that to assess the algorithm's damage detection capabilities, the IIT Mandi researchers initially tested it on an undamaged real bridge.

Subsequently, they intentionally induced damage in the computer model to evaluate the algorithm's accuracy in pinpointing the damage's location. This testing confirmed the algorithm's efficacy in identifying structural damage. In another related study, the researchers used advanced filtering techniques to estimate the condition of different structural components without the need for direct measurement of their connections.

"This technique enables the separate assessment of each component's health, which can in turn help in evaluating overall structural integrity. The method was validated using computer simulations of a beam exposed to various forces and demonstrated robust performance in handling challenges like background noise and damage severity," he said. (PTI)

CONCERT ROW: WE TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY, APOLOGISE, SAYS EVENT PLANNER



CHENNAI, Sept 13: Musician AR Rahman has nothing to do with the "inconveniences" caused to people during his September 10 concert here managed by ACTC Events, the event planner said on Wednesday.

Hemanth, the firm's founder and CEO, shared a video on Instagram and appealed that Rahman may not be targeted on social media as "ACTC takes responsibility" for the problems faced by people on Sunday. He assured to refund ticket cost of those who had missed out.

"There were many inconveniences (such as) those unable to enter despite having tickets--(we

apologise for such inconvenience. We did all the arrangements to enthrall people who wanted to listen to Rahman. Sorry for that (the problems). ACTC takes responsibility, for the said issues," he added. Rahman's role was confined to delivering a grand show and he did that and those who were seated in the venue enjoyed the show, Hemanth added.

"There have been some social media posts targeting Rahman. He has got nothing to do with the inconveniences, so please don't attack him. We assume full responsibility for the inconveniences caused-- overcrowding, ticket duplications happened," he said.

All the required permissions for the show were obtained and all necessary arrangements made.

"Those who had paid for the tickets and could not attend, the money will be refunded from our side. We will validate and verify and certainly refund the amount very soon," Hemanth added.

Rahman's September 10 'Marakkuma Nenjam' (Can the heart forget) had run into a controversy over allegations of mismanagement, resulting in traffic snarls on the busy East Coast Road, ticket-holders being denied entry into the venue and alleged sexual harassment of women among others. (PTI)

Rima Das directorial 'Tora's Husband' set for India release on Sept 22

MUMBAI, Sept 13: Filmmaker Rima Das' upcoming feature film "Tora's Husband" will be released in Indian theatres on September 22, the makers announced Wednesday.

The Assamese language feature had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). It was showcased under the 'Platform' section of the TIFF, making it the first Indian

title to be screened in the category.

"Tora's Husband" will be released across 40 cinemas in Assam and metro cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Hyderabad, a press release stated.

The movie is Das' follow-up to critically-acclaimed Assamese titles "Village Rockstars" and "Bulbul Can Sing".

Featuring Das' family members

-- brother Abhijit Das and sister-in-law Tarali Kalita Das -- in the lead, "Tora's Husband" is a story of a man who struggles to keep his small-town business afloat while his relationships deteriorate, amidst loss and lockdowns.

"I'm thrilled to share that on September 22nd, we're releasing 'Tora's Husband', a project that's close to our hearts. We've poured our passion into creating some-



thing special, and we can't wait for you to experience it. Your support means the world to us, so we're inviting you to join us on this journey," the filmmaker said in a statement.

The film will also make its debut in Australian theatres on September 22. It will be distributed by Mitu Bhowmick Lange of Mind Blowing Films. "I've always admired Rima's work for her authentic voice. The authenticity in her creations resonates deeply with me. We are very honoured and delighted to bring her latest film, 'Tora's Husband', to the Australian audience," Lange said. (PTI)

'Sholay' actor Satinder Kumar Khosla, popularly known as Birbal, dies at 84

MUMBAI, Sept 13: Veteran actor Satinder Kumar Khosla, best known by his stage name Birbal, died on Tuesday evening due to cardiac arrest at a hospital here, his daughter Shalini said.

He was 84. Birbal is perhaps most remembered for the role of a prisoner with a half moustache in 1975's "Sholay", headlined

by Dharmendra and Amitabh Bachchan. According to Shalini, her father was admitted to Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital for kidney-related issues last week.

"He had undergone brain surgery about a month ago. We had admitted him to the hospital three-four days ago due to kidney issues. He passed

away at the hospital last evening due to cardiac arrest," Shalini told PTI.

Birbal became popular for his comic timing in 1960s and 1970s films such as "Boond Jo Ban Gayi Moti", "Upkar", "Roti Kapda Aur Makaan", "Kranti", "Naseeb", "Yaarana", "Hum Hain Rahi Pyar Ke" and "Anjaam". As a char-

acter actor, he has appeared in over 500 movies across languages like Hindi, Punjabi, Bhojpuri and Marathi.

The final rites will be performed today at around noon at the Versova crematorium.

Besides Shalini, Birbal is also survived by his wife and another child. (PTI)



Will try to push content envelope through my brand of cinema: Ayushmann

MUMBAI, Sept 13: Actor Ayushmann Khurrana, who is the only Indian to be chosen for the 2023 edition of the TIME100 Impact Awards, on Wednesday said he is humbled by the honour which will encourage him to push the envelope of Indian content through his brand of cinema.

Known for tackling several social and taboo subjects through his films such as "Vicky Donor", "Dum Laga Ke Haisha", "Shubh Mangal Saavdhan" or "Bala", Khurrana was chosen to be amongst 100 Most Influential People of the World by the US-based publication in 2020.

"This is the second time that the prestigious TIME Magazine has chosen to recognise the work that I do on camera as well as off it. I'm proud as well as humbled with this honour from TIME Magazine because it validates my core belief system as an artist and a human being trying to affect positive social change.

"I'm deeply grateful to TIME Magazine for bestowing me with the TIME100 Impact honour this year. I have and will always try to push the content envelope of India through my brand of cinema," the "Dream Girl 2" star said in a statement.

In the title of his profile of Khurrana, TIME magazine described the actor as "a Bollywood Star Like No Other". He won the National Award for Best Actor for 2018's "Andhadhun".

"Khurrana has carefully curated a filmography that seamlessly switches between light-hearted commercial hits and films that critique the social mores of India's conservative middle class.

"The risk-taking has seen the actor win several more accolades, including a prestigious National Film Award, administered by the Indian government. As his career has flourished over the years, Khurrana has also become passionate about using his platform on the silver screen to advocate for social issues," the outlet stated.

Khurrana, who was appointed the National Ambassador by UNICEF India for ensuring rights of every child, said he wants to use his work to make the country a better place. (PTI)

Comedy film 'Tumse Na Ho Payega' to land on Disney+ Hotstar on Sept 29

MUMBAI, Sept 13: Streaming service Disney+ Hotstar on Wednesday announced that "Tumse Na Ho Payega", an upcoming comedy film, will premiere on its platform on September 29.

Directed by Abhishek Sinha, the movie is a "light-hearted take on the modern-day challenges faced by today's youth, and their dilemma in standing up to these rules laid by the society", a press release stated.

The film will feature an ensemble cast of Ishwak Singh, Mahima Makwana, Gaurav Pandey, Amala Akkineni, Gurpreet Saini, Parmeet Sethi and Meghna Malik.

Filmmaker Nitesh Tiwari has written the script and also produced the movie through his banner Earthsky Pictures Production along with Star Studios, RSVP and Roy Kapur Films.

"Tumse Na Ho Payega" was written with the intention to bring the story of every youngster in a middle-class household to screen. Whether it is the grind of a corporate job or chasing your childhood love or your lifelong dream of starting something of your own, 'Tumse Na Ho Payega' is that relatable story.

"We are all so excited to share this journey with viewers across the world on Disney+ Hotstar and hope it inspires and entertains our audience at the same time," Tiwari said in a statement.

Sinha said viewers will be able to relate their "own personal growth journey" with the movie. (PTI)



PRABHAS-STARRER 'SALAAR' DELAYED, MAKERS TO ANNOUNCE NEW RELEASE DATE IN 'DUE COURSE'

BENGALURU, Sept 13: "Salaar" will not hit the screens on its scheduled release date of September 28 due to "unforeseen circumstances", the makers announced Wednesday.

In a statement on X, production house Hombale Films said it will reveal the new date of the Prabhas-starrer in due course.

"We deeply appreciate your unwavering support for #Salaar. With consideration, we must delay the original September 28 release due to unforeseen circumstances.

"Please understand this decision is made with care, as we're committed to delivering an exceptional cinematic experience. Our team is working tire-

lessly to meet the highest standards," the banner said in the post.

The first part of the pan-India film series, titled "Salaar Part 1: Cease-fire", is billed as a big-budget action adventure. It is directed by Prashanth Neel of the "KGF" franchise fame and produced by Vijay Kiragandur.

"The new release date will be revealed in due course. Stay with us as we make the final touches on #SalaarCeaseFire and thank you for being a part of this incredible journey," Hombale Films further said.

The film will also feature Prithviraj Sukumaran, Shruti Haasan, Eshwari Rao, Jagapathi Babu and Sriya Reddy. (PTI)



Ranatunga masterminded Lanka's '96 World Cup victory: Upul Chandana

COLOMBO, Sept 13: Some people are destined to watch the unfolding of history from the ringside. Upul Chandana is one of them. The leg-spinner, who played 147 ODIs and 16 Tests, was part of Sri Lanka's 1996 World Cup winning side, but he didn't get a game the whole tournament. But that hardly mattered to him then, and even now. "I am a World Cup winner for my country. It does not matter whether I was in the playing 11 or not. The victory was the result of team work," Chandana told PTI.

The Lankans entered that tournament, held across India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as the underdogs. But Chandana said the squad was quietly confident as captain Arjuna Ranatunga kept them in good spirits. "Before the World Cup, Arjuna ensured that all the team members remained in a good mood. We were gathered in Colombo. He went out of his way to provide the players, especially from outside the city, with all the facilities like training and accommo-

dation," the leg-spinner said. "We felt like a big family going into the tournament, and the captain never let anything ruin that atmosphere. His captaincy played a big part in us winning the maiden World Cup," said Chandana. Chandana, who is now a full-time coach, remembered Ranatunga as a shrewd tactician, whose strategic acumen were way ahead of the time. "It was after his thought that we used Sanath (Jayasuriya) and Kalu (Ramesh

Kaluwitharana) as openers. It was a masterstroke as other teams were not ready for that kind of batting in Power Plays," said Chandana. Both Australia and West Indies did not travel to Sri Lanka because of security concerns following a suicide bombing at Central Bank, and Sri Lanka adjudged winners by walkover. Their lone big opponent in the group stage was India, a match they won by 6 wickets at Feroz Shah Kotla. (PTI)

INDIA LEAD THE TABLE WITH FOUR POINTS

Pakistan, Sri Lanka face-off for place in Asia Cup final

COLOMBO, Sept 13: An injury-hit Pakistan will have the tough task of taming a high-spirited Sri Lanka when they lock horns in a Super 4 match here on Thursday for a place in the Asia Cup final. Both Pakistan and Sri Lanka have two points and the winner of the virtual knock-out game will progress to the final on September 17.

India have already secured a place in the summit clash after they defeated Sri Lanka by 41 runs in a Super Four game on Tuesday. Rohit Sharma's men lead the table with four points.

However, Pakistan will have more lines on their forehead ahead of their crunch game against the Lankans.

In all probability, they will not be able to summon pacers Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah as both of them have been rendered doubtful with respective injuries.

Pakistan have added Shahnawaz Dahani and Zaman Khan, a 22-year-old slinger pacer who can hit 150 kmph clicks, as back-ups for the remainder of Asia Cup. But that is just one part of their bag of worries. Pakistan batting is yet to hit the top gear in the tournament, except a 342 for six against minnows Nepal in the Asia Cup opener at Multan.

However, largely they are de-



pendent on their openers – Fakhar Zaman and Imam-ul-Haq – and captain Babar Azam for big runs.

They need some runs from the likes of Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Agha, and urgently too.

Ifikhar Ahmed showed his big-hitting prowess with a blistering hundred against Nepal, but he needs to do that more consistently against better oppositions.

Sri Lanka are definitely one of them. Pakistan had defeated them by seven wickets in a league

match but the past will not hold for anything on the morrow.

While defeating Bangladesh and stretching India, the Lankans under Dasun Shanaka have shown that they are not mere pushovers despite the absence of some first-choice players.

Sri Lanka too were hit hard by injuries in the run-up to the tournament as key players like Wanindu Hasaranga, Dushmantha Chameera and Lahiru Kumara were ruled out. It has forced them

to field a young side lacking in experience and exposure but players such as Dunieth Wellalage, Matheesha Pathirana and Maheesh Theekshana have come up with some impressive efforts in the tournament. That said the home side will hope for some more consistency from their pacers – particularly from Kasun Rajitha, who has taken four wickets from as many matches but gave away nearly six runs an over in all the games. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Sept 13: Saina Nehwal is aware that qualifying for the Paris Olympics will be "tough" for her but the injury-ravaged Indian shuttler has no plans to quit badminton and would do everything under the sun to resurrect her career.

Laid low by a spate of injuries, including a recurring knee issue, and other health problems, the 33-year-old from Hyderabad has found it tough to stay fit to consistently turn up at the BWF World Tour events.

Her ranking has plummeted to number 55 in the world.

"I get inflammation in my knee whenever I train for an hour or two. I am not able to bend my knee so a second session of training is not possible. The doctors have given me a couple of injections. Of course the Olympics is near and it is tough (to qualify)," Saina told reporters.

"But I am trying my level best to comeback. The physios are helping me but if the inflammation doesn't reduce, it will take little more time to recover. I also don't want to play half-heartedly and results will also not come."

"If you are trying to compete against An Seyoung, or Tai Tzu Ying or Akane (Yamaguchi), it won't happen with just one hour of training. The level has improved so much. So when you are playing such high level players, you need



a high level game," Saina, who was named the 'Race Ambassador' for Harvest Gold Global Race on September 24 in Gurugram, said.

The former world number 1 last played at the Singapore Open in June this year.

It was her sixth tournament of the season. She managed just one quarterfinal finish in 14 events in 2022, while a semifinal finish at Orleans Masters was her best performance in 8 events in 2021.

"If you are thinking about the knee showing inflammation after a training, then in tournament also if it shows up after one round, then it will be a negative sign."

"I am trying to sort out that first. Playing is easy, to maintain the body, to not have any niggles is

what is important. Hopefully with the guidance of physios and Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, let's see how I recover and comeback. It all depends on practice."

The two-time world championships medallist Saina last won a title in January 2019 at the Malaysia Masters.

While knee has been a recurring issue, she also had problems with groin and ankle, besides being diagnosed with acute gastroenteritis with mild pancreatitis in the past.

Asked about retirement, Saina said: "Woh toh sab ko karna parta hai (everyone has to retire someday)...there is no deadline. Everyone is going to stop when you feel the body is not supporting you." (PTI)

I was a little nervous on my comeback: KL Rahul



COLOMBO, Sept 13: India batter KL Rahul admitted that he was a bit nervous ahead of his comeback game against Pakistan but grew in confidence once he spent some time in the middle before going on to complete a memorable hundred.

In a rain-marred Asia Cup match, Rahul struck an unbeaten 111 and then kept wickets for the entire duration in his first match for India since March.

"I am happy with how the last two games have gone. I was a little nervous initially but as I started facing a few balls I felt alright," said Rahul in the post-match press conference on Tuesday night after India's 41-run win over Sri Lanka.

Rahul said his strong preparations during the rehabilitation period at the NCA helped him prepare for his return.

"I was thinking that I will be in the playing 11 and that's how I prepared. I was confident that I can still go there and do the job," said Rahul. The 31-year-old said he was given a clear idea about his role in the team as a middle-order wicket-keeper batter.

"The team management has also told me that this will be my role – batting in the middle-order and keeping wickets," said Rahul.

In that context, the Bangalore man said he worked on his wicket-keeping during his time at the NCA.

"I have been keeping wickets for the last couple of years. So, it is not new to me. I think I started keeping in 2019 when Rishabh (Pant) got concussed against Australia. "During my time at the NCA, I have worked on my keeping with the coaches there. Hopefully, I can do both the roles well," he added.

Rahul patted Kuldeep Yadav, India's highest wicket-taker in ODIs this year, for upgrading his skills and coming back as a better bowler. "I am really enjoying watching him bowling and I can see that he has developed a few new tricks that are giving some results to him."

"We keep talking between the overs about the strategy to be adopted to get a batsman out or how to keep a set batsman away from the strike. His rhythm has also been good in the last two matches," said Rahul. Dunieth Wellalage produced a wonderful solo effort for Sri Lanka on Tuesday, taking five wickets and scoring an unbeaten 42 off 46 balls to stretch India. (PTI)

We have respect for the national team: East Bengal head coach

KOLKATA, Sept 13: East Bengal head coach Carles Cuadrat has affirmed that his club has respect for the Indian national team and will be releasing players ahead of the upcoming Asian Games. With the 10th season of the Indian Super League set to get underway on September 21, the Games begin a couple of days before at Hangzhou.

As the Games act as a qualifying berth for the Paris Olympics 2024, the ISL clubs have been compelled to release some of the Indian players for national duty.

Asked about the issue, Cuadrat said during the ISL press meeting here on Wednesday, "We have the calendar, and it's very clear. I've worked with Saudi Arabia's national team in the past, so I know clearly about how the calendar works for the clubs." "Everything is under control. It will remain organized in the football industry across the world." "We have respect for the national team and have sent them



a list of players they can use. The clubs and federation (AIFF) must cooperate to do the best for the country."

"We have players in the U-23 and the senior team, and we support the national team. There is a list of East Bengal players who can partake in the Asian Games," he added. Team India has been clubbed in Group A of the Games, alongside hosts China (September 19), Bangladesh (September 21) and Myanmar (September 24).

The top two teams from the six groups make it to the pre-quarters, with four best-ranked third-

placed sides also qualifying.

The Men in Blue did not participate in the continental tournament in Indonesia 2018, while in Incheon 2014, it was ousted in the group stage. The Indians' best outing in the competition came in Guangzhou 2010, where it made it to the pre-quarters.

India men's squad for Asian Games:

Goalkeepers: Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Gurmeet Singh and Dheeraj Singh Moirangthem.

Defenders: Sandesh Jhingan, Anwar Ali, Narender Gahlot, Lalchungnunga, Akash Mishra, Roshan Singh and Ashish Rai.

Midfielders: Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Suresh Singh Wangjam, Apuia Ralte, Amarjit Singh Kiyam, Rahul KP and Naorem Mahesh Singh.

Forwards: Siva Sakthi Narayanan, Rahim Ali, Aniket Jadhav, Vikram Partap Singh, Rohit Danu and Sunil Chhetri.

Head Coach: Igor Stimac. (PTI)

Good to play high-pressure match, challenged a lot of aspects of our game: Rohit

COLOMBO, Sept 13: India captain Rohit Sharma on Tuesday said it was good to play a high-pressure game against Sri Lanka in the Super 4 stage of the Asia Cup as it "challenged a lot of aspects of our game" ahead of the World Cup.

Opting to bat, India managed a below-par 213 but the bowlers produced a splendid collective effort to carry their team to a 41-run win, and into the final of the continental tournament.

Rohit Sharma's fifty (53 off 48 balls) was the cornerstone of India's total as Lankan spinners Dunieth Wellalage (5/40) and Charith Asalanka (4/18) bamboozled them.

But India, guided by Kuldeep Yadav's 4 for 43, bowled out Sri Lanka for 172.

India, who entered the final



with four points, will either face Sri Lanka or Pakistan in the summit clash on Sunday.

"It was a good game. For us

also to play a game like that under pressure. Challenged a lot of aspects of our game," Rohit said at the post-match presentation cere-

mony. "We definitely want to play on pitches like these to see what we can achieve."

Rohit was full of praise for Hardik Pandya (1/14) and Kuldeep Yadav's (4/43) efforts with the ball.

"He's (Hardik) worked hard on his bowling over the last couple of years, and it's pleasing to see how he bowled that spell. Not an easy target to defend. Pitch got slightly better towards the end so we had to hold our nerve and bowl consistently," the skipper said.

"(Kuldeep) again for the past year or so bowling really well. He's worked hard on his rhythm and you can see the results in the last 15 ODIs he's played. He gives us a lot of options. So going forward it's a pretty good

sign."

Sri Lanka skipper Dasun Shanaka was surprised by the turn the wicket provided but praised young Wellalage for his all-round show.

Wellalage first picked up his maiden five-wicket haul and then remained unbeaten on 42 off 46 balls even as wickets kept tumbling at the other end.

"We didn't expect this kind of a wicket, but after the first 10 overs we came into the match brilliantly with the spinners."

"The luxury of the two genuine batters bowling is great, they've done well in the nets but it was great how they performed. After the last game with Bangladesh I sensed he (Wellalage) would do something special," Shanaka said. (PTI)

Guv unveils 'Sarpanch Samvaad' mobile app, empowering grassroots leaders

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: In a significant development, Governor Gulab Chand Kataria inaugurated the 'Sarpanch Samvaad' mobile application, a pioneering initiative by the Quality Council of India (QCI), at Raj Bhavan.

The QCI's 'Sarpanch Samvaad' initiative aims to establish connections among approximately 2.5 lakh sarpanchs across India, providing them with a comprehensive platform for networking, knowledge dissemination, and collaboration. Through this innovative platform, sarpanchs can showcase the developmental endeavours in their villages, exchange best practices, and create nationwide networks.

Expressing his enthusiasm, Governor Kataria remarked, "I am delighted to witness this remarkable app, which is a significant step in empowering our



grassroots leaders." He also acknowledged the dedicated female leaders in Assam who have been tireless contributors to their communities' development.

The Governor emphasised that the 'Sarpanch Samvaad' initiative will propel Indian villages towards the forefront of the nation's growth trajectory and contribute

to realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a developed nation by 2047.

Established in 1997 by the Indian government and the country's industry, the Quality Council of India plays a pivotal role in establishing and operating the third-party national accreditation system, enhancing quality standards across various sectors, and

offering advisory services to the government and other stakeholders on quality-related matters. The organisation comprises constituent Boards responsible for accreditation in specific domains, including NABL for laboratories, NABH for hospitals, NABCB for certification and inspection bodies, and NABET for education and training. The National Board for Quality Promotion, a part of QCI, oversees the national quality campaign.

The launch event witnessed the presence of over 30 sarpanchs from different corners of the nation who have been wholeheartedly supporting this initiative from its inception. The QCI delegation included chairperson Jaxay Shah and secretary-general Dr Ravi P Singh, along with other senior officials, marking a significant step toward empowering grassroots leaders in India.

Demise of Pranobjit Chaliha, aka 'Romuda', casts shadow over Sivasagar

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Sept 13: Sivasagar has been enveloped in sorrow as it mourns the passing of Pranobjit Chaliha, affectionately known as 'Romuda'. He was a towering figure in the realm of Assamese nationalism and a respected veteran in the world of sports. Romuda breathed his last at AMCH, Dibrugarh, around 2:30 pm on Wednesday at the age of 73, succumbing to a prolonged battle with bronchial illness.

Pranobjit Chaliha played a pivotal role in the Assam Movement and was incarcerated over a hundred times for his involvement in anti-government protests and his impassioned speeches. Despite his commanding presence in the political landscape, Chaliha never aspired to hold a ministerial position in the AGP ministry under Prafulla Mahanta's leadership. He remained an unwavering advocate for the common people and vociferously criticised corrupt politicians and others for betraying the nation.

During his tenure as the general secretary of AASU, Sivasagar unit from 1972 to 1974, Chaliha was incarcerated a record 127 times. He made headlines for his fiery protests against the government during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's public address in Sivasagar in 1979. Additionally, Chaliha served as the general



secretary of the Sivasagar Sports Association from 1996 until last year.

Pranobjit Chaliha leaves behind his wife Raka Chaliha, son Shringkhal Chaliha, and daughter Karbi. His legacy as a passionate advocate for Assamese nationalism and uncompromising champion of the common people will be remembered and revered by many.

Sonitpur SSB team shines with medals

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Sept 13: The Sonitpur district's SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal) team delivered an outstanding performance at the 39th Senior National Taekwondo Championship, which took place at the Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Indoor Stadium in Guwahati from September 9 to 11.

The Taekwondo athletes representing the SSB team from Sonitpur district showcased their skills and determination, securing a remarkable tally of medals: one gold, four silver, and two bronze medals in various categories. In the Kyorugi category of the competition, Sabita Ramcharyi clinched silver, while Anima K Sanu and Ajay Pal Singh secured bronze medals. Additionally, Amit Pradhan and Bidyalakshmi Devi impressed by winning the silver medal in the poomsae category. Furthermore, Joyimala Devi and Abhijit Kalita added to the team's success with a silver medal in the group participation category, while K Daina Devi and Joyimala Devi proudly achieved a gold medal.

English translation of Golap Khound's 'Girmit' debuts at New Art Players

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: An English rendition of Golap Khound's remarkable short story compilation, 'Girmit', was unveiled at the New Art Players in Guwahati. The release ceremony, graced by celebrated drama luminary and National Film Award winner, Kulada Kumar Bhattacharjee, showcased the translation work of Dr Suranjana Barua, a prominent regional translator whose previous translation of 'Miri Jiyori' earned her the inaugural Pallavi Barua Bhuyan Memorial Best Translation award in 2014.

During the event, chief guest Bhattacharjee emphasised the substantial effort required in translating literary works and commended Dr Barua for her elegant interpretation of Golap Khound's captivating stories into English. Putali Khound shared insights into her husband's literary journey and his notable con-



tributions during the Ramdheni era, including works like 'Girmit', 'Shyamolir Swapna', and 'Xeuja Prithivir Xadhu'. Golap Khound was also known for his columns in 'Dainik Janambhumi' and 'Dainik Axiom'.

Addressing the esteemed gathering, Dr Suranjana Barua, an associate professor at the Indian Institute of Information Technology Guwahati (IIITG), recounted her personal experiences translating 'Girmit' and elaborated on the various socio-historical, cultural,

and linguistic challenges that impact translation endeavours. She stressed the translator's responsibility to faithfully convey an author's vision while leaving a personal imprint on the translation and maintaining fidelity to the original text. Dr Barua noted that Khound's masterful use of language, with its mystical and exotic quality, presented a significant challenge for translation, given the intense poetic elements in his prose.

The collection of ten short stories

includes titles such as 'Girmit' (Indenture), 'Noyanjulir Jui' (The Fire of Noyanjuli), 'Sinnomostaa Kothaa' (About a Beheading), 'Kukur' (Dog), 'Bondir Bedona' (The Trauma of the Captive), 'Phoolmoni' (Phoolmoni), 'Xoti' (Sati), 'Sindhur Swad' (Taste of the Ocean), 'Eti Mon Jiya Pokhi' (A Heart Winning Bird), and 'Dhormoghotor Karon Bisari' (In Quest for the Reason of the Strike). Dr Barua expressed her hope that this translation would effectively convey the author's profound understanding of the region and his empathy for indentured laborers who, uprooted from their native lands and cultures, have toiled in Assam's soil for generations. The event was aptly hosted by Nayan Prasad, and Kulada Bhattacharjee received felicitation from the president of New Art Players, Ajoy Dutta, in recognition of his recent national award.

World Suicide Prevention Week NHM Assam conducts interactive session on Mental Health

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 13: September 10 is observed as World Suicide Prevention Day worldwide each year and to mark the occasion, National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) under National Health Mission, Assam is carrying out various activities to spread awareness about Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in all the districts of Assam.

In this regard the Mental Health Programme Unit at the state headquarters had organised an interactive session at Phanidhar Datta Hall, Gauhati University in collaboration with the Department of Sociology. Dr Prakash Barman, state consultant of NMHP, Dr Nabin Bhuyan, Consultant TELMANAS, Dr Ranjan Kakati, Director of Students Welfare, Dr. Shabeena Yasmin Saikia, Head of the Department - Sociology, Guwahati University among others was present at the event. During the interactive session many issues

regarding Mental Health and Suicide Prevention were discussed and insights shared. All the attendees were of the opinion that it is the need of the hour to talk and spread awareness regarding Mental Health, Mental illness, Stress and its management in today's fast paced changing lifestyle.

The participants in the event were also apprised regarding the toll free helpline number 14416 - TeleMANAS, for any Mental Health issues including suicide.

The students welcomed the initiative and this was iterated by their feedback which conveyed that the interaction helped in better understanding of their psychological health.

It is mentionable here that such interactive events have already been conducted at Handique Girls College and Dispur College recently. The NMHP unit in all districts are also conducting awareness meetings in schools and colleges.



Shri Keshab Mahanta
Minister, Health &
Family Welfare, Assam



Swasthya Sewa Abhiyan - 12, Special Health Camp

An initiative by National Health Mission, Assam to facilitate comprehensive health services especially for Mother and Child Health including specialities like Ophthalmic, Dental among others, all in one location at identified Health Blocks in Assam.



Location wise list of Health Camps for the month of September, 2023

Sl.	District	Camp-1	Camp-2	Camp-3	Sl.	District	Camp-1	Camp-2	Camp-3
1	Baksa	21/09/2023 - Gorvitor village, Angardhowa	22/09/2023 - Kharuajan Balika ME School, Barama	28/09/2023 - 1690 No. Janata LP School, Garh Ali, Patla	18	Jorhat	15/09/2023 - Tamulisiga MV School, Bhogamukh	21/09/2023 - Pub Nakachari Higher Secondary School, Nakachari	28/09/2023 - Pachim Chowkhat High School, Kakojan
2	Bajali	15/09/2023 - Madhabpur Nakuchi High School, Bhawanipur BPHC	22/09/2023 - Swahid Kapil Talukdar High School, Nityananda BPHC		19	Kamrup	19/09/2023 - TRP Hindi High School	25/09/2023 - Gyan Bikash School, Katahbari	29/09/2023 - Lalmati Durga Mandir
3	Barpeta	19/09/2023 - B.K. High School, Bartari, Kalgachia BPHC	21/09/2023 - Harendra Chitra College, Bhaktardoba, Nagaon BPHC	21/09/2023 - B.K.T. High School, Tetlirlat, Mandia BPHC	20	Kamrup	19/09/2023 - Borhardia ME School, Sualkuchi BPHC	22/09/2023 - Upordan High School, Azara BPHC	29/09/2023 - Mouman Anchalic ME School, Boko BPHC
4	Biswanath	21/09/2023 - Chengamari ME School, Biswanath Chariali BPHC	22/09/2023 - Kakila Milanbazar LP School, Gohpur BPHC	23/09/2023 - Bortoli LP School, Rangchali, Behali BPHC	21	Karbi Anglong	15/09/2023 - Dhokhora LPS, near Bogijan Bagan, Chowkholola BPHC	19/09/2023 - Thekarajan LP School, Manja BPHC	26/09/2023 - Tekalanjun High School, Howraghat
5	Bongaigaon	21/09/2023 - Harirchar Uscha Buniyadi LP School, Srijangram BPHC	26/09/2023 - Baghpara Mission, Bongaigaon BPHC	30/09/2023 - 417 No. Pariyapara LP School, Jhawbari, Manikpur BPHC	22	Karimganj	14/09/2023 - Medley TE Hospital, Patharkandi BPHC	21/09/2023 - Baropunji Part-I LP School, Girishganj BPHC	30/09/2023 - 710 no. Alekargool LP School, Kachuadam BPHC
6	Cachar	21/09/2023 - Naba Kumar ME School, Digorsrikona	26/09/2023 - Chandighat TE Hospital	27/09/2023 - Bandoo TE LP School	23	Kokrajhar	19/09/2023 - Rajadabri ME School, Kachugaon BPHC	26/09/2023 - Maderkuti LP School, Gossaigaon BPHC	28/09/2023 - Jaregaon Tilapara LP School, Balajan BPHC
7	Charaideo	21/09/2023 - Milonjyoti Gaon Panchayat Auditorium, Sapekhati BPHC	22/09/2023 - Napuk TE, Patsaku BPHC		24	Lakhimpur	21/09/2023 - Ubhata Champara LP School, Ghilamora BPHC	22/09/2023 - Thekeragury MES, Chauldhua Sector, Boginodi BPHC	29/09/2023 - Nabarup High School, Teliapathar, Nowboicha BPHC
8	Chirang	22/09/2023 - Mwkhnaguri, Boro Bazar SD, Ballamguri BPHC	26/09/2023 - Pub-Khagrabari LP School, Basugaon MPH		25	Majuli	28/09/2023 - Patharichuk LP School playground, Patharichuk		
9	Darrang	25/09/2023 - Kharupetia CHC, Kharupetia BPHC	26/09/2023 - Baznapathar CHC, Sipajhar BPHC	29/09/2023 - Duni Model Hospital, Patharighat BPHC	26	Morigaon	19/09/2023 - Buwalguri HS School, Laharighat Block	21/09/2023 - Jurgaon LP School, Merugaon, Jhargaoon Block	22/09/2023 - Pachim Manipur LP School, Udari, Bhurbandha Block
10	Dhemaji	15/09/2023 - Gyan Jyoti LP School, Dhemaji BPHC	21/09/2023 - Bogori Chapari Community Hall, Ramdhan, Jonai BPHC	28/09/2023 - Arunudoy High School, Gogamukh BPHC	27	Nagaon	21/09/2023 - Bina Pani LPS, 2 No. Bhurbandha, Singimari BPHC	21/09/2023 - Kellyden TE, Missa Division School, Simonabasti BPHC	26/09/2023 - Jajori SD, Buragohaitan BPHC
11	Dhubri	24/09/2023 - Jarua Char Public HS, Jharnarchar, Dhubri Part	28/09/2023 - Bhagadulu ME School, Halakura BPHC	29/09/2023 - Krishnakali Tea Estate, Chapor BPHC	28	Nalbari	15/09/2023 - Bhelebari Nityananda LP School	21/09/2023 - Char Anchalik ME Madrasa, Naparapam	28/09/2023 - 2 No. Pub Sariahtali LP School
12	Dibrugarh	21/09/2023 - Nilmoni TE Hospital, Naharani BPHC	22/09/2023 - Hatiali TE Hospital, Panitola BPHC	28/09/2023 - Beheating TE Hospital, Barbaruah BPHC	29	Sivasagar	12/09/2023 - Nemaajan, Khelua BPHC	14/09/2023 - Rupohimukh ME School, Gaurisagar BPHC	22/09/2023 - Gosaibari Tea Garden Hospital, Demow BPHC
13	Dima Hasao	22/09/2023 - Kupali Tea Estate, Gunjung BPHC	23/09/2023 - Pangmoul ME School, Mahur BPHC	25/09/2023 - Mahurpura Village, Langting BPHC	30	Sonitpur	19/09/2023 - Bamgaon TE, Balipara BPHC	26/09/2023 - Bhomoraguri, Bhaguri BPHC	29/09/2023 - Nizbasti LP School, North Jamuguri BPHC
14	Goalpara	15/09/2023 - Deuli LP School, Agia BPHC	21/09/2023 - Dolgoma ME School, Matia BPHC	22/09/2023 - Shankardev LP School, Hasrabori, Rangjuli BPHC	31	South Salmara	23/09/2023 - Tumni High School	25/09/2023 - Kanaimara Gaon Panchayat Office	
15	Golaghat	19/09/2023 - Wokha Rajahua Mancha, Wokha TE	19/09/2023 - Numaligarh TE Hospital	22/09/2023 - Rongagora TE Hospital	32	Tinsukia	15/09/2023 - Bogapani TE Hospital, Hapjan BPHC	19/09/2023 - Basa Gaon ME School, Na Sadiya BPHC	26/09/2023 - Dehing TE Hospital, Ketetong BPHC
16	Hailakandi	22/09/2023 - 838 No. Ramnathpur Nimma Prathamik Vidyalaya, Katlicherra BPHC	23/09/2023 - Vajantipur Bazar ME School, Algapur BPHC	28/09/2023 - B. R. Tusnial LP School, Narsingpur TE, Lala BPHC	33	Udalguri	16/09/2023 - Nachansali High School, Udalguri BPHC	19/09/2023 - Nehru Memorial High School, Khoirabari BPHC	29/09/2023 - Jhargaoon ME School, Orang BPHC
17	Hojai	22/09/2023 - Panchbhandar Natun Prathamik Vidyalaya, Lanka BPHC	26/09/2023 - Kaniya Enghi High School, Hawaipur, Jugijan BPHC		34	West Karbi Anglong	21/09/2023 - Chengchengbil LP School, Dongkamukam BPHC	26/09/2023 - Tumprop LP School, Baithalangso BPHC	29/09/2023 - Amreng LP School, Zirikindeng BPHC

(NHM/D/2023-24/1220)