

**6 WORLD**

- Ukraine targets key Crimean city a day after striking the Russian navy headquarters
- Netanyahu tells UN that Israel is 'at the cusp' of a historic agreement with Saudi Arabia

**8 NATION**

- Cauvery issue: Farmers' and pro-Kannada outfits observe bandh
- Cong: New Parl building architecture 'killed' democracy

## Govt making sincere attempts to draft laws in simple manner, Indian languages: Modi



**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said his government is making sincere attempts to draft laws in a simple manner and in Indian languages to the maximum extent.

Inaugurating the International Lawyers' Conference here, he also flagged concerns about cyber terrorism and money laundering besides the use of artificial intelligence for destructive purposes.

Modi said these dangers do not recognise borders and jurisdiction and called for collaborative efforts among legal frameworks of different countries to deal with them.

"When danger is global, then the manner

to deal with it should also be global," he said. The Prime Minister cited the example of cooperation between air traffic control systems of all countries to ensure air travel and said preparing a global framework to deal with these dangers is not about one government or country.

Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, Lord Chancellor and secretary of state for Justice of the United Kingdom Alex Chalk KC, Attorney General for India R Venkataramani, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, Bar Council of India chairman and senior advocate Manan Kumar Mishra and others, including several judges of the apex court, were present at the event. Commenting on the legal system, he said the language used to write laws and in the judicial process plays a big role in ensuring justice.

"We in the Indian government are thinking that law should be produced in two ways. One draft will be in the language you are used to," he said to the audience drawn from the legal field. "The second draft will be in a language which the country's common man can understand. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## State inks ₹ 3,214 cr investment agreement

Kaziranga to get 5-star resort • Agreements to generate 5,000 direct, indirect employment opportunities

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 23:** The state government on Saturday inked agreements with multiple companies who will cumulatively invest ₹ 3,214 crore in the state.

Attending the programme, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said his government is hoping to attract investment to the tune of ₹ 1 lakh crore over the next two-three years.

"Today, we have signed MoUs with six companies for a total investment of ₹ 3,114 crore. This will cumulatively generate more than 5,000 job opportunities over the coming years," he said.

Apart from these, another agreement will be signed by the Assam Tourism Development Corporation for setting up a five-star hotel near Kaziranga National Park.

"Kaziranga will soon have a five-star resort to attract tourists from across the world. It will be set up by the Hyatt Group at an investment of ₹ 100 crore, offering 100-120 rooms," Sarma said. "Assam is moving forward fast to-



wards becoming an industrialised state. With today's programme, this year we have signed MoUs that will bring record investments of ₹ 11,314 crore, creating over 10,000 jobs in the state," he added.

The chief minister said that another batch of proposals worth ₹ 10,000 crore

is under active consideration of the Industry Department.

"We have made the processes very simple for investors. Instead of running to different departments, a dedicated committee has been formed to process such applications. Assam has a robust policy to support industries. Even after

the plant is commissioned, we work alongside businesses to solve teething problems," he added.

From labour to land sale permission, the state government has fast-tracked the clearance process for industries. Assam is now on the radar of big-ticket investors, Sarma said.

"The PSUs as of now are investing around ₹ 75,000 crore in Assam. In the private sector, I hope that we will be able to bring ₹ 50,000 crore investments in the next one to one-and-half years, and another ₹ 50,000 in the subsequent one year," he said.

Referring to the signing of memorandum of understanding signed on Saturday as a historic moment for the state, the chief minister said the ₹ 2,000-crore investment by M/s Kesar Petro Products shall generate around 200 direct and around 1800 indirect employment opportunities while Longspan Structures' investments of ₹ 129 crore would lead to generation of around 220 direct and 180 indirect employment opportunities. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

### HT BRIEFS

#### Heroin seized

**GUWAHATI:** In an operation launched by the Special Task Force (STF) of Assam based on a source input regarding a potential drug consignment, six drug peddlers were apprehended in Guwahati. The operation resulted in the seizure of 46 grams of heroin concealed in 33 vials. "The team of STF got hold of six drug peddlers along with 46 grams of heroin concealed in 33 vials," Assam Police spokesperson Pranabiyoti Goswami said. One of them hails from Meghalaya and others are from various places of Assam, Goswami added. "The recovered heroin and the six apprehended drugs peddlers were handed over to the Basistha Police Station for initiating necessary legal actions by registering a case," he further said. Another senior official said that the value of the seized drug would be nearly ₹ 37 lakh as per Narcotics Control Bureau standards.

#### NIA arrests suspected terrorist

**NEW DELHI:** The NIA has arrested a suspected terrorist for his alleged links with Myanmar-based rebel groups and conspiring to wage war against India by exploiting the current ethnic unrest in Manipur, an official said. Moirangthem Anand Singh was arrested from Manipur and brought to New Delhi for questioning, a spokesperson of the NIA said. Singh was one of the five persons arrested by Manipur Police for possessing weapons looted from police armoury. The arrest had led to agitation by the majority community, who were claiming them to be village defence activists. A local court had granted bail to all the five on Friday. However, Singh was immediately placed under arrest and whisked away to an undisclosed location before being brought to the national capital. The official said Singh was arrested in a case related to a "transnational conspiracy" by Myanmar-based leadership of terrorist groups to wage war against the govt of India by exploiting the current ethnic unrest in Manipur.

## CM's wife files ₹ 10-crore defamation suit against Gaurav

**GUWAHATI, Sept 23:** Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, the wife of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has filed a ₹ 10-crore defamation suit against Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi for "false" allegations of irregularities in a food processing project.

Senior advocate Devajit Saikia, her counsel, told PTI that the case has been filed at the Court of Civil Judge (Senior Division) of Kamrup Metropolitan on Friday and it will be moved on September 26.

"My client has claimed a defamation of ₹ 10 crore against Gaurav Gogoi for various tweets on X. We have made it very clear that we never made any application to receive subsidy," he added.

Saikia further claimed that the process to seek subsidy has not been initiated at all and for which, a show cause notice was slapped on his client's firm on May 26 this year,

followed by an email from the Ministry of Food Processing.

"The approval for the project was given on November 22, 2022. In the last email, we were told that our claim would lapse if we didn't submit our proposal. We are not responding to anything to seek subsidy," he added.

Whatever Gogoi stated on social media about Sarma and her entity "Pride East Enterprises", that information was not based on facts, claimed the senior advocate.

"He (Gogoi) did not do his homework. Getting approval for a project does not mean that a subsidy has been received. We will fight the case tooth and nail," he asserted.

A huge controversy erupted after Guwahati-based digital media 'The Crosscurrent' published a report alleging that over 50 bigha (nearly 17 acres) of (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Govt of Assam shells out ₹ 291 crore; to benefit 2.2 lakh loan borrowers

CM attends relief distribution under AMFIRS 2021

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 23:** In a significant step towards fulfilling election promises made during the 2021 State Assembly elections, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma attended the ceremonial distribution of relief under "Category - III" of the Assam Microfinance Incentive & Relief Scheme (AMFIRS) 2021. This event took place at the Janata Bhawan Complex in Dispur on Saturday.

Under Category - III of AMFIRS 2021, borrowers whose accounts had become non-performing assets (NPAs) as of March 31, 2021, and have an outstanding principal amount of up to ₹ 25,000 are eligible for benefits. The state government is allocating ₹ 291 crore as

compensation to microfinance institutions. This move is expected to benefit approximately 2.2 lakh borrowers across the state. In return, the microfinance institutions will issue "no due certificates" to these borrowers, making them credit-worthy again within the formal financial system.

Speaking at the event, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed his happiness that around 2.2 lakh female microfinance and bank loan borrowers would regain their creditworthiness through the Category - III relief. He highlighted the unique nature of the Assam Microfinance Incentive & Relief Scheme, which aims to provide relief to eligible borrowers who had taken small loans from microfi-

nance institutions and the formal banking system but were unable to repay the borrowed amount in full due to certain circumstances.

Chief minister Sarma expressed gratitude to the microfinance institutions for waiving approximately ₹ 300 crore in interest income to facilitate the successful implementation of Category - III relief measures. He appealed to beneficiaries to ensure timely and full repayment of any future loans, emphasising that providing beneficiaries with "no due certificates" would aid in universal financial inclusion. He also mentioned the upcoming launch of "Category - IV" relief. The chief minister cited the Covid-19 pandemic and the anti-CAA movement as primary (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## 2.5% of Assam Police personnel fail BMI test: DGP

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 23:** Approximately 2.5% of Assam Police's 70,161 personnel have failed the Body Mass Index (BMI) test, according to DGP Gyanendra Pratap Singh. These personnel will undergo medical care over the next three months to improve their fitness. The BMI test initiative for Assam Police personnel began on August 16, with a total of 70,161 tests conducted. Out of these, 1,748 personnel were found to be obese, with BMI readings exceeding 30.

In response to this, the Chief Minister's office approved a plan to provide these individuals with thorough medical examinations at Government Medical Colleges. They will receive medical and nutritional support and be retested after three months. The goal is to help them improve their BMI and overall health. DGP Gyanendra Pratap Singh expressed hope that these personnel would become fit in the coming days and years.

As previously stated, those who do not reduce their weight by the end of the three-month period will be offered a voluntary retirement option, except for those with genuine medical reasons like thyroid issues, according to the DGP.

Announcing the news of social media, the DGP said, "Reference BMI tests, the first phase of the exercise is over. Total no of BMI tests done for @assampolice personnel: 70161. No of Obese (30+BMI) Police Personnel: 1748 (2.47%)."

As approved by Hon @CMOIAssam these personnel would now be thoroughly tested at Government Medical Colleges for any underlying medical condition and provided medical and nutritional support and tested again after three months. Hope to see a fitter Assam Police in days and years to come. Grateful to Hon CM Sir @himantabiswa Sir and @mygovassam for continued support in our quest to improve fitness of @assampolice." (With inputs from PTI)

## Canada shared evidence of 'credible allegations' on Nijjar's killing with India 'many weeks ago': Trudeau

**TORONTO, Sept 23:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said that Canada shared with India "many weeks ago" evidence that it may have been behind the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian soil and wants New Delhi to commit constructively with Ottawa to establish the facts in the "very serious matter."

Trudeau, however, did not elaborate on the evidence that he says has been shared with India.

"Canada has shared the credible allegations that I talked about on Monday with India. We did that many weeks ago... We hope that they engage with us so that we can get to the bottom of this very serious matter. That's important," he said in a press conference with the visiting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "And what we are asking is for India to commit constructively with Canada to establish the facts on this situation. We're there to work with them. And we have been for weeks now," Trudeau said in response to a question.

When asked about Canada sharing any information in the case with India, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in New Delhi said: "No specific information has been shared by Canada on this case, either then or before or after. We have, you know, as we have said, or I think we have made very clear, we are willing to look at any specific information."

"We have conveyed this to the Canadian side and made it clear to them that we are willing to look at any specific information that is provided to us. But so far we have not received any such specific information," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said in New Delhi. Tensions flared between India and Canada early this week following Trudeau's explosive allegations of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Nijjar on his country's soil on June 18 in British Columbia.

India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020. India angrily rejected the allegations as "absurd" and "motivated" and expelled a senior Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move to Ottawa's expulsion of an Indian official over the case. Trudeau said Canada is working with its partners over the matter.

US Ambassador to Canada David Cohen also confirmed that "shared intelligence among Five Eyes partners" had informed Trudeau of the possible involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar.

This is the first admission by any US government official about the sharing of intelligence by Five Eyes partners with Canada even when there were multiple unofficial and non-official reports about the same, CTV News channel reported. 'Five Eyes' network is an intelligence alliance consisting of the United States, United Kingdom, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Simultaneous poll panel to invite political parties, Law Commission for suggestions

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** A high-level committee to explore the feasibility of conducting simultaneous elections, headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, held its first meeting here on Saturday and decided to invite political parties and the Law Commission to seek their views on holding synchronised polls in the country, a statement

named in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, was not present in the meeting, the statement noted. After he was

### Synchronised polls

named in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, was not present in the meeting, the statement noted. After he was notified the eight-member "high-level" panel to examine and make recommendations at the earliest on the issue of holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, municipalities and panchayats.

Home minister Amit Shah, law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, former leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Finance Commission chair-

man N K Singh, former Lok Sabha secretary general Subhash C Kashyap and former chief vigilance commissioner Sanjay Kothari attended the meeting. Noted lawyer Harish Salve joined the meeting virtually. The Congress's leader in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, was not present in the meeting, the statement noted. After he was notified the eight-member "high-level" panel to examine and make recommendations at the earliest on the issue of holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha, state assemblies, municipalities and panchayats.

Home minister Amit Shah, law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, former leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Finance Commission chair-

## Internet services were suspended after ethnic violence erupted in the state on May 3

## Mobile internet services restored in Manipur after over 4 months

**IMPHAL, Sept 23:** Mobile internet services, which were suspended as ethnic violence erupted in Manipur in early May, were restored after over four months from Saturday.

The services resumed hours after chief minister N Biren Singh made an announcement in this regard on Saturday morning.

He also called for the cancellation of the free movement regime that allows people residing close to both sides of the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km deep into each other's territory without any document.

Addressing a press conference here, Singh said, "The government had suspended mobile internet services on May 3 to check the spread of fake news, propaganda and hate speech. However, with the improvement of the situation, mobile internet services will be restored across



the state from today."

The services were restored from around 3 pm, an official said. The chief minister said the government will continue to deal with the influx of "illegal immigrants" and stressed the need for complete fencing of the India-Myanmar border. "The Union

Home Ministry has taken steps to fence 60 km of the international border in Manipur," he said.

The CM claimed that the present situation was a result of unplanned policies of the previous governments and not an immediate aftermath of any recent decision.

"Our government has requested the Union Home Ministry to cancel the free movement regime. Also, security forces have not properly guarded the border. Instead of being deployed at zero point, they were found guarding the border 14-15 km inside Indian territory," he claimed.

The CM also came out strongly against the bandh culture and incidents of "rampant verbal abuse against MLAs, ministers and police officials, which has diverted people from real issues and created conflict among ourselves".

"Over the last two months, the situation has improved and the frequency of firing incidents has come down with the deployment of security forces in vulnerable areas," he said. Singh claimed that a country-wide survey has found a rise in drug and substance abuse among youths of the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

**SILCHAR, Sept 23:** The indefinite hunger strike by students of NIT Silchar in protest against the alleged suicide of a third-year student was called off following discussions with the institute director Dilip Kumar Baidya, an official said on Saturday.

The director, who had met the agitating students for the first time on Friday afternoon, met them at again at night and assured them that the Dean (Academics) B K Roy would be removed from the post, following which the strike was called off by the students.

The director offered fruit juice to the students to end the hunger strike which was launched by the students on Sunday and 10 students were hospitalised with the condition of one turning critical.

"The Director apologised to us with folded hands and he is like our father. We trust him and respect his



assurances, so we are calling off the agitation," a student Rishi Kant said.

The director has "assured us that the Dean Academics will be removed within two days", Kant added.

He (Director) also assured the students that the agitation period would not be counted in the academic calendar and none of them would be marked absent, Kant said.

Baidya had met the students for the first time on Friday afternoon but the students said that they would

call off the strike only if they received written assurance from the authorities. Later in the night they, however, agreed to call off the agitation as the entire discussion was video recorded.

"The Director told us that they want to start anew, leaving behind all the issues of the past. They could have prevented violence by talking to the students on time. We don't want to pressurise, change has to come from both sides," Kant said.

"The authorities can close the institute for an indefinite period if we continue with the agitation and we don't want that," he said.

The students requested the director to conduct a condolence meeting for Koj Buker, a student hailing from Arunachal Pradesh who had allegedly committed suicide on September 15 in his hostel room. Baidya said that they wanted to conduct it on (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



# TRAI recommends measures to boost telecom infra in North Eastern states

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** TRAI has issued recommendations for bolstering telecom infrastructure in North East, suggesting parleys with the state governments to harmonise their respective 'right of way' policies with related Central rules, as well as favouring provision of electricity to telecom sites on priority at utility tariffs.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) noted that while a number of initiatives have been taken by the government to improve telecom connectivity in the northeastern states, there is still a lack of high-speed mobile-based internet and fixed broadband connectivity, mainly due to the inadequate transmission bandwidth (optical fibre, Microwave and satellite).

"The Northeast states continue to grapple with a significant digital divide due to various reasons such as inhospitable terrain conditions, poor availability of power supply, transmission media related limitations, poor return of investment prospects for TSPs, and Right of Way (RoW) related issues," the sector regulator said in a release.

The Northeastern Region (NER) comprises the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Megha-

laya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura - together they form part of the East Himalayan region.

The latest recommendations by TRAI assume significance given that while average tele-density of India (as of April 2023) stood at 84.46 per cent, the tele-density in Assam state is 71 per cent and that of Northeast Licensed Service Area consisting of six states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura is 79.6 per cent.

The digital divide hampers the region's socio-economic growth, restricts access to essential services and information, and exacerbates the developmental gap between the Northeast and the rest of the country, TRAI noted.

Accordingly, the sector regulator has formulated its recommendations with an aim to enhance telecom infrastructure in the region, bridge the digital divide, unlock economic potential, overcome geographical challenges, foster collaboration, and ensure national security.

These recommendations will greatly strengthen the region's telecom backbone, enabling seamless communication, efficient surveillance, and effective border



coordination, as per TRAI.

"Engage with respective state governments of Northeastern (NE) States including Sikkim to...harmonise their respective state RoW policy in line with 'The Indian Telegraph Right of Way Rules, 2016' and its amendments thereon at the earliest," TRAI said in its recommendations to Telecom Department. TRAI has also called for implementing exemption of Right-of-Way (RoW) charges in rural, tribal and hilly regions for a duration of five years.

"Implement waiver of the addi-

tional 25 per cent 'Tribal Development Charges' being imposed upon TSPs (telecom service providers) wherever applicable in the NE states including Sikkim...facilitate creation of enabling provisions in their policy to expedite accord of environmental clearance to TSPs for installing mobile towers and DG sets for tower locations," TRAI said.

State Governments there should provide electricity to telecom sites as a priority (within 15 days of connections request) at Utility/Industrial tariff.

Another recommendation is to do with waiving or subsidising last mile installation charges for extending electricity connection to telecom sites in remote and hilly areas.

"Respective State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) to spell out utility tariffs which should be lower than the Industrial tariff. Telecom Service/Infrastructure Providers should be subjected to such utility tariffs only," it said. TRAI recommended that the Centre should provide budgetary assistance in the form of grant to the states (including those in NER) only for the purpose of assisting certain village-level government institutions in obtaining a Bharat-Net connection, procuring digital communication devices, and covering the monthly usage charges for connectivity.

"The grant should be divided in the proportion of 25:75 wherein the 25 per cent of the grant should be used by these institutions for procuring terminal end digital communication devices and 75 per cent of the grant should be utilised for paying the cost of connectivity and monthly usage charges thereof to BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd)," it said. (PTI)

## Two big semiconductor proposals under process: Ashwini Vaishnaw



**SANAND, Sept 23:** Two big semiconductor proposals are under process and expected to take shape in the coming few months, Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Saturday.

Without divulging specifics of the proposals, the minister said the projects will focus on a special area where India can emerge as a leader at the global level.

While speaking with PTI on the sidelines of the groundbreaking ceremony of Micon's semiconductor plant, Vaishnaw said that the global semiconductor company is noticing the progress made by India in the segment and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's capability to execute large and complex policy decisions.

"This has developed India as a major trusted geography in which global industry players want to come. We can see in the coming few months at least two more large semiconductor proposals taking shape," Vaishnaw said.

He said that there are some specific areas where India can take the lead and the focus of the semiconductor projects will be in areas that can help the country export technology to other parts of the world.

The minister said that the Micon plant, for which construction has started, will start producing the first chip from December 2024 onwards. Memory chip maker Micon in June announced setting up a semiconductor assembly and test plant in Gujarat entailing a total investment of USD 2.75 billion (around ₹ 22,540 crore).

Micon will invest up to USD

825 million in setting up the plant in two phases and the rest of the investment will come from the Centre and the state government.

The company has roped in Tata Projects for phased construction of the new assembly and test facility in Sanand.

Phase 1 will include 500,000 square feet of planned cleanroom space, and will start to become operational in late 2024.

The minister said semiconductor demand is expected to grow to Rs 5 lakh crore in coming years from about Rs 2 lakh crore.

"India is already a very large design hub. With manufacturing coming to India, the entire process and value chain will come to our country and Bharat will become a major semiconductor hub in coming years," Vaishnaw said. Micon Senior Vice President Gursharan Singh at the event said that the company has boarded the first set of 34 employees for the plant.

Five suppliers of Micon including SIMTEC are evaluating possibilities to set up their plant in India, according to government officials.

Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said that the Micon facility in Gujarat marks the beginning of an exciting journey in India's semiconductor ecosystem, in making India a semiconductor nation.

"Micon's state-of-the-art modern facility will serve as a beacon for all investors, manufacturers, and participants in the global semiconductor ecosystem, encouraging them to partner with India," Chandrasekhar said. (PTI)

## Positive outlook for Indian Govt Bonds: Edelweiss AMC

**KOLKATA, Sept 23:** Edelweiss Asset Management Company (AMC) expects increased demand and favorable market conditions for Indian Government Bonds (IGBs) over the medium term at current levels. A research note of the mutual fund house said the inclusion of IGBs in JP Morgan global bond indices - Emerging Markets (GBI-EM) is likely to attract more flows to these bonds, primarily due to the lower correlation of IGBs with other emerging market and global bonds.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) are expected to be drawn to IGBs for their relatively higher yields and better secondary market liquidity, it said.

According to the note, the bond market anticipates rate cuts by central banks in developed and emerging economies from the July-September 2024 quarter. Edelweiss AMC recommended 10 to 14-year Fully Accessible Route (FAR) eligible IGBs for their superior risk-reward trade-off. While the positive outlook for IGBs is prevalent, the report acknowledged potential risks that could impact it. These include a sustained increase in US Treasury (UST) yields and elevated crude oil prices, which may affect market flows and the benign inflation outlook for India.

On potential tax incentives

for GBI-EM, the report clarified that the Government of India has not offered any additional tax sops to foreign investors.

The trading of IGBs by Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) will be conducted in India and settled within the country.

All FAR-designated IGBs which matures after December 31, 2026 will be eligible in the index. This amounts to about ₹ 28 trillion worth of IGBs eligible for index inclusion as on September 20, 2023.

JP Morgan global bond indices account for USD 213 billion worth of investments by global investors. A 10 per cent weightage for IGB should attract US 21 billion dollars (₹ 1.7 trillion) worth of investments in IGB by March 31, 2025 assuming investors have zero weight as of now and would like to be index neutral, Edelweiss said.

Index inclusion by JP Morgan may nudge other EM index providers like Bloomberg, FTSE and others which will result in additional inflows in the economy, the research added.

The Association of Mutual Funds of India on Friday welcomed the decision of global financial major JP Morgan to include government bonds in its benchmark Emerging Market Index from next year, saying it will result in more demand for government securities. (PTI)

## I-T dept asks taxpayers to respond to intimation of past tax demands for faster refund processing

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** The income tax department on Saturday asked taxpayers to respond to intimation from the I-T department regarding outstanding demands of previous years to facilitate faster clearance of refunds for 2022-23 fiscal.

With some taxpayers taking to social media about receiving intimation from the I-T department regarding past unsettled tax demands, the department in a post on 'X' said, this is a taxpayer-friendly measure where an opportunity is being provided to assesses in line with "principles of natural justice".

As many as 7.09 crore returns have been filed for income earned in 2022-23 fiscal. Of these, 6.96 crore ITRs have been verified, of which 6.46 crore returns have been processed as on date, including 2.75 crore refund returns. "However, there are a few cases in which refunds are due to the taxpayer, but previous

demands are outstanding, the department said," the I-T department said.

The Section 245(1) of Income-tax Act, 1961, mandates providing an opportunity to taxpayers to make a representation before adjusting the refund against an existing demand. The taxpayer is required to agree, disagree or clarify the status of the demand.

"Accordingly, taxpayers with existing demand(s) in the previous years are being intimated of the same. Taxpayers are requested to avail this opportunity and respond to such intimations to enable cleaning up/reconciliation of pending demands and facilitate timely issue of refunds," it said.

The Income Tax Department further said it is making every effort to complete the processing of Income Tax Returns (ITRs) and issuance of refunds expeditiously. (PTI)

## Truecaller unveils new brand identity and enhanced anti-fraud feature

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 23:** Truecaller has announced a significant corporate rebranding and launched a new app icon, set to be instantly recognizable on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. This rebranding aligns with the ongoing transformation in the digital sphere. The core of this rebranding is Truecaller's renewed sense of purpose, energy, and enthusiasm. Alan Mamedi, co-founder and CEO of Truecaller, expressed his excitement about unveiling the new brand identity and logo, signifying their continued commitment to users and their dedication to constant improvement. Truecaller's mission, to protect communication for all, drives them to develop innovative anti-fraud solutions like Search Context and enhance user privacy. As part of this refreshed identity, Truecaller introduces a powerful new anti-fraud feature called Search Context, integrated into the Truecaller AI Identity engine. This feature provides valuable information to users while looking at search results for any phone number. Users will instantly receive notifications if the name associated with a number has been recently changed or is undergoing frequent changes.

## Ride-hailing service provider inDrive to register EVs in the metropolis

**KOLKATA, Sept 23:** California-based ride-hailing service provider inDrive will start registering electric vehicles (EV) on its platform in the metropolis soon, an official of the company said on Saturday.

inDrive has already started this registration in Delhi where 100-odd driver-partners have already associated with it, Mohan Pradhan, business development manager, India and Bangladesh, inDrive said.

He said that inDrive started operations in India in 2018 and is available across 12 cities in the country including Kolkata. "We have started taking registrations for EVs in Delhi and 100 driver-partners have been already associated. We

will also start taking registrations for EVs in Kolkata and other cities shortly," he said. Pradhan said nearly 10,000 rides in Kolkata are done on a daily basis, adding that the number is approximately 50,000 in other parts of India where it currently operates.

He said unlike other ride-hailing service providers available now, inDrive charges the lowest commission per ride from the driver-partners and gives the freedom to the driver and passenger to decide on the tariff.

inDrive will shortly start discussions with the insurance companies to provide cover both to the drivers and passengers during rides. (PTI)



Apple unveils highly anticipated iPhone 15 series simultaneously in 52 Northeast towns. HT Photo

## 'Lions Haat Bazaar 2.0' inaugurated

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 23:** In a collaborative effort, 21 Lions Clubs under Lions District 322 G in Guwahati organised a significant event called 'Lions Haat Bazaar 2.0' at Sonaram Field, Bharalumukh. This unique project aimed to distribute clothes, bedsheets, household materials, and more to over 5,000 underprivileged and needy individuals on its first day.

The project was inaugurated by Lions 322 Multiple GST coordinator Raj Kumar Agarwala, along with the presence of Lions District 322G governor Nirmal Kumar Bhura, VDG-1 Seema Goenka, VDG-2 Pankaj Poddar, Lions Haat Bazaar chairman Bijay Harlalka, Lion Manoj Bhajanka, advisor, and other Lion district dignitaries, as well as members of all 21 Lions Clubs and prominent individuals from society.

Raj Kumar Agarwala, the chief guest, praised the dedicated efforts of Lions District 322G and all club members. He also commended the hard work of Project chairman Bijay Harlalka and the entire team, including co-chairmen Ritu Banka, Promod Harlalka, Mahesh Sharma, Sanjay Agarwal, Sanjay Santholia, Ashok Goel, Prabha Kothari, and Vishal Beriwal, along with all the Lions Clubs involved in this massive project.

Lions District governor 322G Nirmal Kumar Bhura

applauded the continuous three-month effort of all 21 Lions Clubs in collecting clothes, utensils, toys, and household goods from various donors across the city. These items were sorted based on size and use to benefit the underprivileged.

The Lions Haat Bazaar 2.0 organisers distributed free coupons called 'Lion Currency' to needy people in and around Guwahati. These coupons could be used by individuals to purchase products of their choice and need. Approximately 7,000 coupon books, each with a value of ₹ 2,000 in Lions Currency, were distributed among underprivileged and needy individuals.

The project venue featured about 25 stalls where visitors could use their Lion Currency to make purchases. On the first day, around 4,000 needy families visited and made purchases using Lions Currency, all for free, as mentioned by PDG Sudhir Choudhary.

In addition to shopping benefits, free food was served by the Lions Club of Guwahati Umang under the Feed the Hunger program. A free health checkup camp was also organized at the venue with the assistance of Marwari Hospitals and Lions Eye Hospital.

The two-day Lions Haat Bazaar is scheduled to conclude on September 24 at Sonaram Field, according to chief advisor of the Lions Haat Bazaar, Manoj Bhajanka.

## 95 million Pakistanis under poverty, urgent reforms needed to achieve economic stability: World Bank

**ISLAMABAD, Sept 23:** Poverty in Pakistan shot up to 39.4 per cent as of last fiscal year, with 12.5 million more people falling into the trap due to poor economic conditions, the World Bank has said, as it urged the cash-strapped country to take urgent steps to achieve financial stability.

The Washington-based lender on Friday unveiled draft policy notes that it prepared with the help of all stakeholders for Pakistan's next government ahead of the new election cycle, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Poverty in Pakistan rose within one year from 34.2 per cent to 39.4 per cent, with 12.5 million more people falling below the poverty line of the USD 3.65 per day income level, according to the World Bank. About 95 million Pakistanis now live in poverty, it said.

"Pakistan's economic model is no longer reducing poverty, and the living standards have fallen behind peer countries," said Tobias Haque, the World Bank's lead country economist for Pakistan.

The global lender urged Pakistan to take urgent steps to tax its 'sacred cows' - agriculture and real estate - and cut wasteful expenditures in an effort to achieve economic stability through steep fiscal adjustment of over 7 per cent of the economy.

Pointing out that the increase in poverty was consistent with ground realities, the World Bank identified low human development, unsustainable fiscal situation, over-regulated private sector, agriculture and energy sectors as



the priority areas for reforms for the next government.

It proposed measures - immediately increase the tax-to-GDP ratio by 5 per cent and cut expenditures by about 2.7 per cent of GDP - aimed to put the unsustainable economy back on a prudent fiscal path.

The lender's note on strengthening government revenues showed a host of measures to improve the revenue-to-GDP ratio by 5 per cent through the withdrawal of tax exemptions and increasing the burden of taxes on the real estate and the agriculture sectors.

The World Bank is deeply concerned about the economic situation of today," Haque said.

He added that Pakistan is facing serious economic and human development crises, and is at a point where major policy shifts are required.

"This may be Pakistan's moment for significant policy shift," said Najy Benhassine, the country director for Pakistan at the World Bank.



the absence of use of this idle cash, an amount of ₹ 424 billion was paid in interest, the World Bank said.

For the medium term, it proposed reducing federal development and current expenditures on provincial nature projects, reducing spending on loss-making entities, and improving the quality of development spending to save about ₹ 1.4 trillion. The cumulative impact of these short- to medium-term savings is 2.7 per cent of the GDP.

Pakistan is heavily subsidising the agriculture sector, leading to low productivity, the global lender said, adding that the government can reduce ₹ 328 billion in spending by winding up ministries that fall in the provincial domain.

It said that another ₹ 70 billion can be saved by devolving the Higher Education Commission to the provinces, and ₹ 217 billion savings can be ensured through cost sharing of BISP (Benazir Income Support Programme) with the provinces.

This comes as inflation soared to 27.4 per cent in August after the cash-strapped country received USD 1.2 billion from the Washington-based International Monetary Fund in July, a part of the USD 3 billion bailout programme for nine months to support the government's efforts to stabilise the country's ailing economy.

Pakistan's economy has been in a free-fall mode for the last many years, bringing untold pressure on the poor masses in the form of unchecked inflation. (PTI)



## 5<sup>th</sup> Ayushman Diwas observed in Haflong

**HT Correspondent**  
HAFLONG, Sept 23: Along with the rest of the state the Dima Hasao district also celebrated the 5th anniversary of the "Ayushman Bharat Diwas" in the conference hall of Shiksha Bhawan Haflong.

The programme was attended by principal secretary DHAC, Thai Tsho Daulagupu ACS, deputy secretary DHAC, Rebecca Changsan ACS, superintendent of Haflong Civil Hospital, Dr Kalpana Kemprai and medical officials.

Principal secretary spoke about the scheme and how it has been benefitting the needy from various corners of the country including our district.

Deputy secretary DHAC described the scheme and urged the people to avail maximum benefit out of it. She also highlighted the benefits of Ayushman Bharat card and said that under this policy, private hospitals and state government hospitals may provide up to Rs 5 lakh. Eligible individuals can use the card to avail cashless and



paperless healthcare benefits.

During the programme a certificate of appreciation for the highest E-cards generation in the district

was given.

After the end of the programme, an awareness rally was held participated by the health workers, nursing

students of Holy spirit hospital, nurses and Asha workers. Drawing competition was also organised on the occasion.

## NF Railway takes safety improvement measures



**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Sept 23: NF Railway undertook several track renewals works and other track safety measures during the month of August so as to maintain proper condition of railway tracks that helps providing a safe and secured train journey to rail passengers

with better comfort, a PR stated.

During the month of August through sleeper renewal of 27.42 track kilometre was done, thus achieving a cumulative progress of 120.27 track kilometre. The through turnout renewal of 14 equivalent sets was also done thereby making a cumulative

progress of 53.75 sets.

Moreover, 1654.98 kilometres of track have been tested by USFD (Ultra Sonic Flaw Detection) technique during the month of August. USFD technique is carried out to detect flaws like cracks and timely removal of defective rails for safety reasons.

Also, 637.23 kilometres of track tamping has been done during the month of August, 2023 making a cumulative progress of 2910.29 kilometres. Apart from that, 541 signaling batteries of various capacities have been replaced over NF Railway during this period.

Maintenance of tracks at regular intervals has resulted in smooth operations of trains and provides better riding experience for railway passengers. The increased emphasis over safety measures for railway track has led to safer running of trains with increased speed and better journey experience, the PR further stated.

## Freshers' Day celebrated

**HT Correspondent**  
NAGAON, Sept 23: Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Vishwavidyalaya celebrated the Freshers' Day at Nagaon district library auditorium here on Friday last.

The programme was initiated with a welcome address by Mrinal Kr Bora, registrar of the university. Mridul Hazarika, vice chancellor of the university attended the programme as the chief keynote speaker while Babul Bora, chief coordinator (finance and planning) of the university also graced the programme as a special invitee. The programme was anchored jointly by Koushik Nandan Boruah and Riya Rajkhuwa while Dr Biman Kr Nath delivered the vote of thanks.

Noted Assamese film actor Jatun Bora inaugurated the cultural programme in the afternoon in which district commissioner, Morigaon district Debashish Sarma was present as the chief guest and performed a slew of popular Assamese melodies, a release added.

## Kang-ar Arong residents demand land documents

**HT Correspondent**  
DONGKAMUKAM, Sept 23: The residents of Kang-ar Arong (Kangar Basti) demand land documents from the authority. In a meeting of the Kang-ar Basti Managing Committee held in the village, the advisor of the committee, Dhiren Teron said that the residents should get land documents.

Teron cautioned against indulging in any illegal activity by the villagers. The village is domiciled by mixed communities including Karbi, Garo and Dimas.

Advisor Teron said that the village has recently celebrated its 11th Foundation Day and villagers have been demanding land documents since 2018. He appealed to the villagers to remain united.

Another advisor of the committee, ME Kathar said that the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) authority has informed them that an airport will be built in the area. The villagers are not



against the airport project or any other development project, but land documents are needed to claim compensation and rehabilitation.

Villagers claimed that approximately 8000 bighas of land has been acquired by the authority that includes Kangar Basti in Karbi Ang-

long to construct an airport that will displace 1400 families.

Former member of autonomous council, Seema Ronghangpi; advisor, Pitor Tisso; vice presidents of the committee, Niharsan Sangma and Nilkanta Phonglosa; president of the Committee, Lawrence Kro and others attended the meeting.



Pothols on NH 37 at Kuthori, Kaziranga National Park lead commuters to face harrowing time. HT Photo

## Pre-modern textual reading and textual criticism concludes

**HT Correspondent**  
TEZPUR, Sept 23: A four-day long workshop is underway at Tezpur University organised by Assamese department of the university on pre-modern textual reading and textual criticism was concluded on Saturday by Dr Deben Chandra Barua, professor and director of Centre for Multidisciplinary Research, Tezpur University.

While inaugurating the workshop Dr Barua in his deliberation said that India has put special emphasis on enlightenment of traditional learning and research in New Education Policy-2020 and in view of this Tezpur University has also organised several such programmes from time to time. In his discourse Dr Barua elucidated the need of studying pre-modern literary creations of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradev and his predecessors. He further emphasised on the importance of revival of the traditional knowledge and lifestyle generated during the period of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankaradev. Noted author, assistant professor of Assamese department and coordinator of the programme Dr Sanjib Pol Deka explained the objectives of the workshop and presented a brief account of the activities undertaken by the department on the study of pre-modern manuscripts and textual criticism. In his speech Dr Deka revealed that the number of people who can read

pre-modern manuscripts is decreasing rapidly and urged the new generation to come forward to develop their acquaintance with pre-modern manuscripts and to learn how to command over it. Further he expressed his hope that a new group of researchers and experts on it will emerge in the days ahead from Tezpur University. Prof Farheena Danta, dean of the School of Humanities and Social Science, lauded the efforts undertaken by the Assamese department to dedicate its studies on centuries-old Sanchipat manuscripts and textual criticism of pre-modern manuscripts and she hoped that the commendable journey would continue in the future too. The workshop was attended by Dugdhachandra Goswami of Sri Sri Ahatguri Satra, Majuli as a resource person. The rest of the satras will be conducted by Rajatarangini, researcher of textual criticism and a lecturer in Diet, Nalbari.

Dr Juri Dutta, head, department of Assamese, TU delivered the welcome address attended by several professors, researchers, students of Tezpur University and distinguished people from Tezpur. During the programme Purnada Goswami of Balisatra donated a number of their preserved manuscripts to Tezpur University. The workshop will come to an end on September 23 with a varied valedictory programme.

## Diphu Municipal Board carries out cleaning drive

**HT Bureau**  
DIPHU, Sept 23: Diphu Municipal Board, Karbi Anglong carried out a cleaning drive of the town. The cleanliness drive is part of a competition under the Indian Swachhata League. Indian Swachhata League is an inter-city competition towards building Garbage Free Cities. More than 1,800 cities from Leh to Kanniyakumari participated in the said competition.

The cleaning drive in Diphu was led by the Chairman of Diphu Municipal Board, Rah Kro in which the Ward Commissioners of 14 Wards of the town participated.

## Teenager gets donation for surgery from Bokajan traders

**HT Bureau**  
DIPHU, Sept 23: In a humanitarian gesture Bokajan Traders Association donated ₹ 1,02,500/- for the surgery of a teenager, daughter of a widow. The mother, Kanika Bose, who is a teacher, could not afford the cost of the kidney surgery that her daughter required. She put in an application with the Traders Association of Bokajan. The traders of Bokajan in turn contributed whatever they could as per their capacity and donated ₹ 1,02,500/- by yesterday evening.

## Women with heroin in police net

**HT Correspondent**  
DIPHU, Sept 23: Last evening Diphu police arrested a woman from Dhansiri Railway Station and seized suspected heroin from her possession.

The police on specific information proceeded to Dhansiri Railway Station and searched for a woman coming from Dimapur, Nagaland. The police on searching the belongings of the particular woman recovered 11 eleven identical plastic soap cases suspected to be heroin from her possession. The contraband was kept concealed in her undergarment. The heroin weighing 138.55 grams was seized in the presence of witnesses.

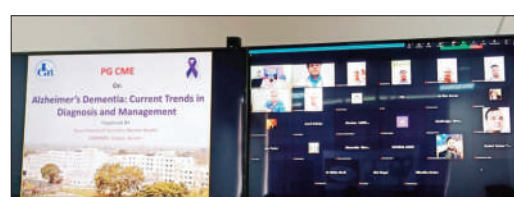
In this connection Jumnino Devi (25), daughter of Lambit Nath, resident of Kachodhora, under Raha police station, Nagaon was arrested.

## LGBRIMH Tezpur conducts online PG CME on Alzheimer's disease

**HT Correspondent**  
TEZPUR, Sept 23: On the occasion of World Alzheimer's Day on September 21, the department of geriatric mental health Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, conducted an online PG CME on Alzheimer's and Dementia.

In the CME, The director of LGBRIMH prof Dr SK Deuri, retd prof of NIMHANS Bangalore Dr Mathew Varghese and retired professor and head of the department of psychiatry, Guwahati Medical College Dr Dipesh Bhagawati, took leading part in the discussion on Alzheimer's disease.

The resource persons participated in the CME organised at Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, TEZPUR at the efforts of the organising committee headed by the director of LGBRIMH, prof Dr SK Deuri as organizing chairperson and Dr Subhashish Nath, in charge of the department of geriatric mental health as the organising secretary focussed on the theme of World Alzheimer's Day for this year "Never too Early, Never too Late" emphasizing about prevention, early detection and early treatment of Alzheimer's Dementia. The CME was attended by postgraduate students and Psychiatrists from different parts of the country. It is pertinent to mention that Alzheimer's disease International and the World Health Organisation launched World Alzheimer's Day on September 21, 1994.



It was introduced in Edinburgh on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Alzheimer's disease International, founded in 1984. The World Alzheimer's Day is observed worldwide to generate and spread awareness about Alzheimer's Dementia. Observance of World Alzheimer's Day annually on September 21st serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges and complexities associated with cognitive decline. Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, affects millions of lives worldwide, making it a pressing global health concern.

## Coal India Guwahati Half marathon to be held on December 3

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Sept 23: Guwahati is all to host the first-ever Coal India Guwahati Half Marathon on Sunday, December 3. The event will unite the entire community together and add to the city's cosmopolitan identity.

The event is not just about running, but also a celebration of peace and prosperity in the state and is supported by the Indian Army and endorsed by the government of Assam.

The event will witness three race categories - Half Marathon (21.097 km), Open 10 Km and Guwahati Fun Run (Approx. 5Km). Registrations for all three categories start from Sunday, September 24, 2023.

Notably, the Guwahati Half Marathon marks a significant moment to showcase Indian Army's commitment to nation building and Assam Governments' dedication to fostering physical fitness, mental resilience, and the spirit of togetherness.

Speaking at the occasion, Nandita Gorlosa, minister of sports & youth welfare said, "The event has been conceptualised to put Assam on the Marathon map of India and showcase our commitment in promoting a healthy and active lifestyle while fostering a sense of unity and national pride amongst all of us. She also announced that such events being conducted epit-



omises the govt's unwavering dedication to the wellbeing of the citizens."

The world's single largest coal producer and a 'Maharatna' status company, Coal India is the Title sponsor, and this event reflects their commitment to fostering positive change and stands to uphold its motto of "Empowering India, Nurturing Nature, Enabling Life" not just within the Northeast but throughout India. The event witnessed the gracious presence of Renu Chaturvedi, GM, CSR, Coal India.

The Coal India Guwahati Half Marathon will celebrate the different hues of Guwahati. At Coal India Guwahati Half Marathon, there are no limits or boundaries - it's a gateway to anything the runner wants to make of it. Whether you are a seasoned athlete or a

novice runner embarking on your first run, this event welcomes you with open arms. The spirit of Guwahati's people, hailing from diverse backgrounds, unites in the spirit of celebration, involvement, and positive transformation within the community.

Speaking at the occasion lieutenant general Rana Pratap Kalita - general officer commanding in chief, Eastern Command addressed the gathering and said, "the state with its rich natural resources, cultural heritage and strategic location has been emerging as a region with immense potential & growth. The Indian Army wholeheartedly supports the Coal India Guwahati Half Marathon to celebrate long lasting civil military cooperation in building a safe, secure and prosperous Assam." He also lauded contribution of Coal

India as title sponsor of the event and playing a very crucial role in enabling the state government and the Indian Army in conceptualising and planning this event. The event would further strengthen the bond between people of Assam and the Indian Army and will catalyse conduct of similar social and youth development projects in the State of Assam. He also expressed his gratitude to the Hon'ble Cabinet Minister of Power, Sports and Youth Welfare for being present here and contributing towards this mega event.

Vivek Singh, JT MD, Procam International said, "Distance Running is the fastest growing sporting activity in our country and it's exciting to see Guwahati as the next running destination. Our heartfelt congratulations to the Indian Army, Government of Assam, and Coal India for taking the initiative in launching this event. I am sure this event will inspire the community to converge together for - health & fitness, philanthropy, and camaraderie."

The inaugural edition of the Coal India Guwahati Half Marathon is executed with precision by Sportzix, a reputed organiser of participative sporting events. They are led by the dynamic duo of Nishant Maheshwari and Shraddha Mehta, both of whom are Marathoners in their own right, a PR stated.

## Tea garden workers hail state govt's declaration of public holiday on Karam Utsav



**HT Correspondent**  
GUWAHATI, Sept 23: Tea garden workers hailed the decision of Assam government to declare public holiday on the occasion of Karam Utsav.

Tea garden workers of Dehing Tea Estate Margherita along with members of Assam Tea Tribes Student Association (ATTSA) and Assam Tea Tribes Women Association (ATTWA) celebrated the moment by singing and dancing traditional Jhumur dance.

Assam Tea Tribes Student Association (ATTSA) assistant publicity secretary Pranjal Baraik Pranjal Baraik stated that the long pending demand of ATTSA and the tea Tribes community has been finally fulfilled. The ATTSA leader thanked Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sharma, labour and tea tribes minister Sanjay Kishan, also the president and general secretary of ATTSA central committee.

Baraik said the tea garden Karam Utsav is not just a simple holiday as it has been associated with the culture, emotion, sentiments and tradition of the community.



# The courage to speak truth: Dr BR Ambedkar's definition of leadership

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar

**“A ‘Yes man’ is a dangerous man. He is a menace. He will go very far. He can become a minister, a secretary or a Field Marshal but he can never become a leader nor, ever be respected.” ~ Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, MC**

In the annals of history, a vast gallery of figures has graced the stage of leadership, yet among them, there exists a select few who transcend the realms of mere mortality, leaving an indelible and resplendent mark upon the grand tapestry of time. Among these luminaries, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar undoubtedly occupies a place of unparalleled distinction—a visionary whose brilliance illuminated the path to justice, a crusader who tirelessly championed the cause of the oppressed, and a fearless advocate who lent his voice to the voiceless. It is in the profundity of his words, spoken with unwavering resolve on that momentous day of May 31, 1936, within the very heart of Dadar, Mumbai that we find an enduring resonance echoing through the corridors of history—a resonance that compels us to pause, to contemplate, and to reflect upon the transformative legacy he has bequeathed to our world.

“I consider one as a leader who without fear or favor, without wor-

rying about popular acquisition, tells the people what is good and what is bad for them,” declared Dr. Ambedkar. In this resounding proclamation, he articulated a profound and unwavering commitment to the principles of truth and justice. For him, leadership was not a path to popularity, nor was it a quest for personal gain. It was a solemn duty—a calling to guide and to illuminate, regardless of the consequences.

Dr. Ambedkar's words resonate with an unmistakable moral clarity that transcends the confines of time and place—a stark reminder that authentic leadership is an endeavor far removed from the art of pandering to popular sentiment or capitulating to the capricious desires of the masses. It is a profound testament to the enduring courage required to articulate the unvarnished truth, even when it stands at odds with prevailing conventions and entrenched resistance, even when shadowy conspiracies conspire to stifle it. Dr. Ambedkar's vision of leadership is, at its core, a commitment to rise above the temptations of populism, to elevate the pursuit of justice and equity above the cacophony of superficial acclaim. It is a clarion call to champion not just the interests of the privileged few but the rights and dignity of every individual, irrespective of their status in life—a solemn mission that seeks to uplift



society as a cohesive whole, fostering a more just and inclusive world for all to thrive in.

“It is my solemn duty,” Babasaheb Ambedkar unwaveringly declared, “to tell you what is good for you, even if you don't like it.” Within this resolute proclamation lies the heart and soul of Dr. Ambedkar's extraordinary leadership—a profound dedication to the collective welfare, undeterred by the formidable challenges that adversity could pose. He possessed a rare comprehension that the journey towards progress is frequently littered with formidable obstacles, that the relentless pursuit of justice often triggers vehement resistance from the status quo. Nevertheless, amid these turbulent currents, he remained an unwavering bastion of unwavering commitment to his

cause. Dr. Ambedkar's legacy is one defined not by convenience but by the resolute choice to embrace the arduous path, to champion the rights of the marginalized, and to relentlessly strive for a more equitable world. His assertion stands as a poignant reminder that true leadership transcends the boundaries of popularity and personal interests, finding its essence in the courage to speak unvarnished truths, the determination to serve the greater good, and an unyielding allegiance to duty.

“I must do my duty,” he declared, and in those four simple but profoundly resounding words, he encapsulated the unwavering commitment that defined his life's work, weaving an intricate tapestry of purpose and responsibility. Dr. Ambedkar's sense of duty tran-

sceded the boundaries of mere legal or political obligation; it was a sacred moral imperative—an unwavering calling echoing through the annals of time. He understood, with unwavering clarity, that true leadership carried with it a solemn and weighty responsibility. It was a responsibility to unfurl the banner of justice in the face of entrenched injustices that had festered within society for centuries.

Driven by a fierce dedication to the cause, he realized that leadership was not a passive role but an active one, a role that demanded relentless advocacy for the marginalized, an unyielding determination to challenge the oppressive status quo, and an unbreakable resolve to forge a more equitable world for all. In those four words, he laid bare the essence of his lifelong mission—a mission that transcended self-interest, and instead, placed the betterment of society, particularly the downtrodden and oppressed, at its very core. His sense of duty became the guiding star that illuminated his path, inspiring generations to stand up for justice, challenge discrimination, and relentlessly strive for a world where equality and social justice reign supreme.

Dr. Ambedkar's legacy continues to remind us that duty, when embraced with unwavering commitment, has the power to trans-

form not only individual lives but the destiny of nations and the course of history itself.

“And now I have done it,” he proclaimed, the resonance of those words echoing far beyond the immediate moment, marking the culmination of his unwavering dedication to the cause of social justice. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's legacy transcends the confines of mere rhetoric; it stands as a towering testament to the transformative power of leadership that soars beyond self-interest and embraces the nobler pursuit of the greater good. His tireless endeavors, etched into the annals of history, charted a course for transformative change that continues to ripple through the fabric of society.

From his instrumental role in the drafting of the Indian Constitution, a monumental document that embodies the ideals of justice and equality, to his relentless advocacy for the rights of the marginalized, specifically the “Depressed classes” or Dalits, Dr. Ambedkar's contributions form the very bedrock upon which the edifice of a more equitable and inclusive India has been constructed. His legacy is a call to action, a reminder that the pursuit of social justice is not the responsibility of the few, but the collective duty of a society aspiring towards a more egalitarian future.

As we solemnly reflect on these

profound words spoken on that historic day in Dadar, Mumbai, the significance of true leadership becomes even more apparent. It is a stark reminder that the yardstick of leadership is not the fleeting allure of popularity or the pursuit of personal gain, but rather the enduring qualities that lie at its core. True leadership is an embodiment of unwavering moral courage—a willingness to stand unflinchingly in the face of adversity and speak the unadulterated truth. It is a dedication to the greater good, a commitment that transcends self-interest and self-preservation, embracing the noble duty of uplifting humanity.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's legacy, much like a lighthouse in the tempestuous sea of history, continues to shine its radiant beacon. It serves as an eternal source of inspiration, urging us to champion the rights of the marginalized, to fearlessly advocate for justice, and to align our actions with the timeless principles of righteousness, regardless of the personal sacrifices that may entail. In his words and in his tireless deeds, Dr. Ambedkar exemplified the very essence of leadership—a legacy that not only shapes our world today but also serves as a guiding light for generations to come. *(The author is an academician in the Dept of Political Science, Tetso College, Nagaland)*

## A step towards gender equity

By: Dipak Kurmi

For over a decade and three years following the decisive passage of the Women's Reservation Bill by the Rajya Sabha in 2010, it languished, entangled within the intricate web of Indian political corridors. However, as it made a triumphant return on the inaugural day of the maiden session held in the newly constructed Parliament edifice, it heralded an epochal stride ahead. This resurgence magnificently underscores the escalating acknowledgment of the urgent imperative: gender equity within the hallowed chambers of our democratic machinery.

As India forges ahead, basking in the glory of a notable feat—the effective execution of one-third reservation for women in its grassroots panchayats—this accomplishment has ignited fervent calls for additional reservations within the folds of marginalized communities. As the nation's compass points towards the future, Prime Minister Narendra Modi finds himself at the helm, steering through the intricate labyrinth of these paradoxes, all while striving to weave a tapestry of equity and inclusivity that transcends the boundaries of identity. At its core, the Bill's fundamental purpose remains unwavering: to confront the deep-seated gender disparities that have taken root in the sprawling landscape of Indian politics.

Despite being nearly half of the population, women's presence in legislative chambers, be it at the national or state levels, remains glaringly inadequate. Astonishingly, there isn't a single assembly in the nation where women's representation rises above the meager threshold of 15%. This jarring gender asymmetry not only erodes the bedrock of democratic ideals but also obstructs the full integration of women's perspectives into the intricate tapestry of policymaking. The proposition of the Bill, advocating for one-third reservation for women, endeavors to right this longstanding wrong and

cultivate a democracy that truly mirrors the diverse facets of our society. Even in our neighboring Pakistan, a provision for women's representation exists within the legislature, underscoring the imperative nature of such transformative reforms.

In an ideal world, a balanced representation of 50% should be the norm in legislative bodies, achieved either through gender-neutral elections or via reservation mechanisms. Regrettably, within the prevailing patriarchal framework that permeates most political parties, a disheartening perception lingers—that women are less likely to secure victory compared to their male counterparts. This troubling perspective persists even within parties led by women themselves, contributing to a pervasive reluctance when it comes to nominating female candidates. Often, women find themselves thrust into electoral battlegrounds deemed more formidable, perpetuating this unequal electoral landscape.

The resounding success of implementing one-third reservation for women in panchayats stands as a vibrant testament to the revolutionary force of women's political participation. It has become the catalyst for countless women across the nation, emboldening them to actively partake in the decision-making tapestry at the grassroots level. This newfound empowerment has transcended the realm of rhetoric, ushering in concrete and affirmative changes such as enhanced healthcare, education, and infrastructural development in rural landscapes. Notably, the triumph of this reservation policy has not only obliterated age-old gender stereotypes but has also cast a radiant spotlight on the untapped potential of women within the intricate mosaic of democracy. As the clamor for additional reservations within marginalized communities reverberates with increasing intensity, Prime Minister Modi finds himself in the intricate dance of navigating these inevitable paradoxes on the path to progress.

While the noble principles of equity and social justice compel us to confront the glaring underrepresentation of marginalized communities, it remains paramount to tread a careful path. The aim is to ensure that reservations, while addressing historical injustices,

do not inadvertently sow the seeds of division or compromise the meritocratic ideals we hold dear. In this intricate balancing act, Modi's leadership takes center stage, tasked with the responsibility of charting a course that embraces inclusivity while benefiting all segments of our society. It's noteworthy that the proposed Bill, while seeking reservations, notably limits their duration to a span of 15 years. It's also crucial to observe that this proposal makes no mention of extending reservations to educationally and socially disadvantaged groups, often referred to as the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), or to the minority communities such as Muslims and Christians.

In the current landscape, the call for reserving seats for women within the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes quota has gained remarkable momentum. Advocates contend that this measure is essential to elevate women hailing from these marginalized communities, who grapple with the dual burden of gender and caste-based biases. Furthermore, the future may witness similar pleas for reservations emanating from the Other Backward Classes. While these demands authentically echo the aspirations and hardships of these communities, their realization necessitates a meticulous appraisal. The aim is to ensure that these initiatives, while addressing historical injustices, do not unintentionally perpetuate exclusionary practices or fracture the fabric of social unity. Maneuvering through these intricacies will demand resolute political determination and an unwavering commitment to nurturing an all-encompassing society.

At the helm of India's leadership, Modi has wielded a crucial influence in catapulting these longstanding concerns into the limelight of our national discourse. His government's resolute choice to resurrect the Women's Reservation Bill serves as a resounding declaration of their commitment to redress the historical gender imbalances etched in our societal fabric. Through a constructive dialogue with an array of stakeholders, the government possesses the potential to navigate the intricate terrain of competing demands. This strategic approach aims to ensure that reservations are instituted in a manner that fosters genuine empowerment and an equitable landscape of opportunities for all. By treading this path, India can embark on a momentous journey toward achieving a more equitable and inclusive democratic landscape, with the next electoral milestone poised for 2029. *(The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)*

## Student Council: The pillars of academic governance

By: Concerned & progressive students

In the realm of educational institutions, there exists a group of individuals whose role extends far beyond mere representation. They are not merely the voices of students; they are the official partners in the governance and administration of our academic sanctuaries. These individuals, collectively known as the Student Council, hold a unique and vital position within our educational system.

In a world where students often feel like passengers in the journey of their own education, the Student Council stands as a beacon of hope, reminding us all that we have a say in our destinies. They are not just representatives; they are our dedicated collaborators in shaping the future of our institutions.

It is crucial to understand that the authority of the Student Council is not arbitrary; it is mandated by law. The mandate recognizes their pivotal role in maintaining a harmonious and progressive educational environment. These individuals are vested with responsibilities that extend beyond the conventional classroom setting. They are entrusted with the task of fostering a culture of inclusivity, innovation, progress and justice within the institution.

The Student Council's mission is to bridge the gap between students, parents and the administration. They serve as a liaison, ensuring that the concerns, aspirations, and needs of the student

body are not only heard but acted upon. In essence, they function as a two-way channel, where information flows freely, leading to meaningful change.

Moreover, The Student Council, in addition to its multifaceted roles, also shoulders a significant responsibility in ensuring that the educational institution operates in strict adherence to the policies, rules, and regulations set forth by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in the best interest of students. This added dimension of their duty underscores their critical role in safeguarding the integrity and quality of education within our academic institutions.

As official partners in the governance and administration of the institution, the Student Council takes

upon itself the duty of watchdogs, vigilantly monitoring and ensuring that UGC policies are not just words on paper but are actively and effectively implemented.

Also the Student Council makes sure that every policy of the educational institution perfectly aligns with constitutional mandate, UGC directions and should not contravene the settled principles of law of the land. The Student Council are the front-line defenders of our educational standards and ensure that the institution operates within the framework set by the UGC and the law of the land.

The UGC formulates guidelines and standards that are aimed at fostering excellence in education. These policies cover a wide spectrum of aspects, ranging from curriculum design, faculty recruitment, campus discipline to infrastructure development and student welfare. It is the responsibility of the Student Council to see that these policies are not only adopted but also put into action.

By actively participating in the implementation of UGC policies, the Student Council contributes to

the institution's overall growth and development. They collaborate with the administration to identify areas that require attention and improvement, striving to create an environment conducive to both learning as well as multidimensional growth of students.

Moreover, The Student Council plays a pivotal role in ensuring transparency and accountability in the institution's operations. They serve as a bridge between the students, parents and the administration, facilitating a seamless flow of information regarding UGC guidelines and their impact on students' academic experiences.

The Student Council's responsibility is not limited to being the voice of the students; it extends to ensuring that the institution operates in strict accordance with UGC policies, rules, and regulations. Their role as official partners in governance involves active participation in policy formulation, policy approval, policy implementation, fostering a culture of accountability, and advocating for compliance with external bodies. In this manner, they become guardians of educational excellence, driving our institutions towards greater heights of academic achievement and integrity.

Furthermore, the Student Council embodies the principles of democracy within the educational sphere. They conduct elections under UGC mandate that allow students to exercise their right to choose their representatives, reinforcing the importance of civic engagement from a young age. This process not only empowers students but also instills in them the values of responsibility and accountability.

The Student Council's role is not limited to organizing events or advocating for changes in the cafeteria or mess menu. While those tasks may seem trivial to some, they are essential in building a vibrant and holistic educational experience. The Student Council is also a training ground for future leaders. It offers students a chance to develop critical skills such as negotiation, communication, and teamwork. These experiences prepare them for the challenges they will face as they venture beyond the walls of their institutions into the wider world.

It is undeniable that the Student Council is a powerhouse of potential. Their impact is not limited to the confines of their campuses but extends into the broader community. They engage in community service projects, creating a sense of social responsibility and empathy among students.

The Student Council is not a group of mere representatives; they are the official partners in the governance and administration of our educational institutions. Their existence is not just a formality but a legal mandate, acknowledging their pivotal role in shaping the future of education. As students, parents, teachers we must recognize the importance of their work, support their endeavors, and, most importantly, take inspiration from their dedication to make our educational journey truly transformative. Together, we can create a brighter and more empowered future for all.

## 'The Double-Edged Sword: How social media has transformed our lives'

By: Umaish Mudasir Farooqi

Social media plays a vital role in our lives today. When we compare today's era with the past, we observe a stark contrast. In the past, before the advent of technology, life was simple, tranquil, and clean. However, in today's world, we see a more complex society that emphasizes advancement and modernization. The increase in technological advancements has brought about significant changes in our society, with social media being a major driver of this transformation.

Life before social media was undoubtedly pure and simple, but it was also somewhat isolated from the world's current events. People led good lives, but there was a lack of exposure to the broader world. Their knowledge remained static, and they were often unaware of the realities beyond their immediate surroundings. Many relied on superstitions and irrational beliefs, creating their own mythologies. While some were literate and could discern right from wrong, others followed irrational beliefs.

The advent of social media brought



about a global revolution that impacted the lives of every individual. People became more connected and began to lead more organized lives. It also had a significant influence on mental health, reforming and renovating the way people thought. As people became familiar with social media, they started craving more technological advancements to improve the world further.

Today, people have become heavily reliant on social media. It has both positive and negative impacts, depending on its usage. When utilized for the betterment of society, social media can be a powerful tool for edu-

cation. Many students prefer online learning through social media platforms, and numerous channels provide educational content. Social media has made it easier for remote areas to access business opportunities through communication and transportation.

Moreover, social media has not only revolutionized education but also transformed the way we consume news and information. It has become a primary source of news for many, shaping public opinion and driving social and political discourse. However, it has also given rise to concerns about the spread of misinformation

and “echo chambers” where people are exposed only to like-minded views.

However, social media also has its limitations and drawbacks. Excessive use can negatively affect mental and physical health. Addiction to social media can lead to a loss of focus on personal goals and priorities. It's crucial to recognize these negative aspects and use social media responsibly.

In the context of businesses, social media has revolutionized marketing and customer engagement. Companies utilize various social media platforms to reach a global audience, promote their products and services, and engage with customers in real-time. This has opened up new avenues for entrepreneurship and created a more level playing field for small businesses to compete with larger corporations.

As Aubaid Akhoo, the renowned columnist, once said, “As we navigate the digital landscape of the 21st century, let us remember that social media is a double-edged sword, capable of connecting hearts and minds, but also of blurring the lines between reality and illusion. Its true power lies

not in the platform itself, but in how we choose to wield it—either to illuminate the path to progress or to deepen the shadows of distraction. Let's use it as a tool to enlighten our minds, connect with others, and nurture our society's growth, all while preserving the gems of wisdom we encounter along the way.”

Education plays a significant role in how individuals use social media. It's not just about accumulating information; it should also involve character development and life-building experiences. We must apply the knowledge we gain from social media to make a positive impact on society by changing negative behaviours and attitudes.

Bottom line: social media provides a platform for self-expression and connection. To make the most of it, we should use it responsibly and contribute positively to our society. Just like a valuable gem, we should preserve and utilize this resource wisely. Social media has reshaped our world in profound ways, and its influence continues to evolve as technology advances and society adapts to these changes. *(The author is a student of Class 11th who can be reached at umaishmudasir18@gmail.com)*



# It's their day off

By: Kamal Baruah

As he entered the lobby, he found no way to reach for a token. The hall was so packed that he couldn't find a seat. There has been a much higher footfall during the first week of a month. Long waiting hours, minimal breaks and angry crowds have a lot of pressure on bank employees. It also draws the ire of the milling crowds. While D Mahanta, a retired Engineer was impatient to be on his way to the single window. "Where is the priority token for senior citizen?"

However the Service Manager responded to his grin with a smile. He apologized for customers' inconvenience and politely conveyed him to wait awhile to catch up with the next call and also whispered into his ear that those waiting customers are all senior citizens only. The aggrieved customer realized the

situation and sat on the corner waiting for his turn, no matter how long it takes place.

Obviously there are inconveniences in PSU banks, but what makes them to go there for cash regardless of ATM or UPI based payment apps. Banking sectors witnessed a rise in cases of fraud despite the fact fraudsters often deceive under pretext of helping senior citizen. But that isn't the only reason, yet customers rather surprisingly especially pensioners' love for banks' ambience. In point of fact the place gives them the opportunity of meeting friends. Having a cell-phones completely changed social life. Young people are constantly using all texting and tweeting but the older people come out for social interaction where it's open and accessible to all, regardless of differences. Thus they spend a day with friends rejoicing at drawing pension.

People discover their common

passions in pubs and restaurants. College Street 'Coffee House' in Kolkata has been for a long time a regular hangout and a renowned meeting place for intellectuals and students. The 'India Club' (Restaurant) in London, a meeting place for writers, intellectuals associated with India's Independence movement has just closed its shutters recently. The fact people are there, something connected with public places such as post offices, banks etc. that makes them feel happy and probably the reason for going there. A soulful platter of paratha-sabji and tea at 'Mahamaya' was just more than a food joint. The corner of the busy chowk at Panbazar Guwahati had now lost its luster.

The Georgian-style architecture of circles and radial roads at Connaught Place witnesses lots of energetic activities. I was posted there in the 90s and remembers coming for a bite. We

would go to the movies at 'Regal', and put in our young energy in running around the circles on Saturdays. We go out during the night and sleep by day. That was a lot of fun. It's one of the most happening and chilled out places in New Delhi. Attractive offers and discounts on top brands are the delights of shopping lovers. Back then it took few hours at CP and we would come for some sambhar vada, idli, or upma, at 'Coffee Home' by the side of Baba Kharak Singh Marg.

The eatery spread over a huge area. Having a cutting chai was a quite a regular affair for many. The affordable cost of the filter coffee makes it appeal to most people in Delhi and become a popular destination. On my first visit, I noticed that one side of all the tables were occupied by senior citizen mostly by Punjabis and Haryanvi people except one table with bags hanging on top backs over four chairs. Soon I



tried to grab that place; I heard something loud from an adjacent table. "Puttar (son), that's reserved". They drop in for a chat over tea and snacks for the entire day, where others aren't welcome despite it left vacant. They play bridge and sipping the last drop of coffee until dusk. It's amazing; the restaurant serves them hot cutting chai in special kind of glasses instead of cups. That was something worthwhile.

Others don't expect to be get-

ting a table at Coffee Home. No matter how seating inconvenience faces during lunch hours of the day. We would rather sit at garden outdoor table under a Peepal tree. Soon the pendulum clock struck at 5 O'clock in the evening, they all started leaving. At that time it was our turn to get some place to eat over there. Even food servers heaved sigh of relief from urban platter, when they left. But we would go out after their departure, order more kadak chai and burgers be-

fore it downsits shutters at 8 pm. It's an everlasting reminder of those evenings while the senior citizen used the most of their time at post retirement life. One cutting chai please, it's a line that every person in metros is well versed with. Having a cutting chai is quite regular affair at Coffee Home. You don't get to see a full glass instead of half glass. It's their day off that day. Senior citizens make their best part of passing time at post-retirement life.

## From extravagance to essence: Rediscovering Kashmiri weddings



By: Aubaid Ahmad Akhoo

And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly but hold a just balance between those (extremes)." - Quran, 25:67

As the summer sun relinquishes its fiery grip on the beautiful valleys of Kashmir, a unique trend has emerged this year. With scorching temperatures making traditional summer weddings a challenge, many Kashmiri families have wisely chosen to delay their marriage ceremonies, opting instead for the cooler months of September to November. This shift not only brings respite from the heat but also offers a valuable lesson in celebrating love and togetherness with simplicity.

Kashmir, often described as "Paradise on Earth," has long been renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality. The grandeur of Kashmiri weddings, with their rich traditions, elaborate rituals, and opulent feasts, is equally well-known. However, the soaring temperatures in recent summers have taken their toll, making these celebrations more about extravagance than the love and unity they represent.

This change in wedding timing provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the essence of marriage ceremonies. The common message to the public, both in Kashmir and beyond, should resonate with the idea of embracing simplicity and shunning extravagance.

"Indeed, Allah loves not those who are self-deluding and boastful." - Quran, 4:36

### Religious Teachings:

Incorporating the wisdom of religious texts into our plea for simplicity in Kashmiri weddings, we find strong support for this noble cause:

### Islamic Perspective:

In Islam, simplicity is highly regarded, and extravagant spending is discouraged. The Quran mentions moderation and avoiding excessiveness in spending, as it encourages Muslims to give to those in need and to prioritize helping others over lavish expenditures (Quran 7:31).

"The most blessed marriage is the one with the least expenses." - Prophet Muhammad (Al-Mu'jam al-Awsat)

### Hindu Perspective:

Hinduism, with its diverse traditions, also promotes simplicity in weddings. The ancient scriptures, such as the Manusmriti and the Bhagavad Gita, stress the significance of modesty and frugality. The Bhagavad Gita, for instance, teaches detachment from material possessions and the value of inner contentment.

### Sikh Perspective:

Sikhism, founded on the principles of equality, humility, and selflessness, advocates for simple and meaningful ceremonies. The Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of Sikhism, emphasizes the importance of humility and avoiding extravagance.

By aligning our plea for simplicity in Kashmiri weddings with these religious teachings, we honor our faith, promote so-

cial harmony, and contribute to the well-being of our community.

### Additional Benefits for the Community:

**Financial Stability:** Extravagant weddings often result in financial burdens not only for the immediate families but also for the community at large, diverting resources from more essential needs.

**Community Development:** By practicing frugality in weddings, families can allocate resources toward community development initiatives such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

**Social Equality:** Extravagant weddings can inadvertently create disparities within the community. Encouraging modest weddings fosters social equality, where all members can participate equally.

**Cultural Preservation:** Simplifying weddings better preserves cultural aspects, ensuring they are passed down to future generations intact.

**Environmental Responsibility:** A focus on eco-friendly weddings aligns with the global movement toward sustainability, contributing to a cleaner and healthier environment for everyone.

**Social Cohesion:** Shared values of simplicity in weddings create stronger bonds among community members, enhancing social cohesion and harmony.

**Education and Empowerment:** Resources saved from extravagant weddings can be channeled into educational programs, scholarships, and skill development initiatives, empowering the youth.

**Philanthropy and Charity:** Wedding celebrations can be an opportunity for charitable acts, supporting local charities or less fortunate community members in need.

**Mental Health and Well-being:** Simplifying weddings reduces stress and anxiety associated with planning extravagant events, leading to happier and more productive individuals.

**Setting a Positive Example:** Prominent community members choosing simplicity set a positive example for others to follow, fostering a culture of responsible celebration.

### Tailpiece

In conclusion, embracing simplicity in weddings benefits not only individual families but the entire community. By making conscious choices to avoid extravagance, we pave the way for a stronger, more united, and prosperous community that can collectively address its challenges and build a brighter future for all.

"Simplicity is the keynote of all true elegance." - Coco Chanel

The message is clear: It's time to rekindle the true spirit of Kashmiri weddings by making them more about love, togetherness, and shared moments of joy. Let us cherish the memories we create, not the extravagance we display. In doing so, we will pave the way for a brighter future filled with meaningful and sustainable celebrations. (The author is a renowned Columnist & Motivational Speaker and an Associate Editor of the Weekly Publication 'Education Quill.' He can be reached at akhoo.aubaid@gmail.com)

## Captivity as both metaphor and material reality: Catherine Ingrassia's domestic captivity and the British subject

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

"It seems like a narrative from a distant past, but we are very much the heirs of the 18th century," said Catherine Ingrassia, Professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University, during her interview with VCU News on her recently published book, "Domestic Captivity and the Eighteenth-Century Subject, 1660-1750," from Virginia Press. I had the pleasure of meeting her at VCU, where I joined as Affiliate Faculty in English. As the Chair of the English Department, she plays a central role in the humanities at VCU. Her book delves into seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain, exploring how captivity became both a metaphor and a reality during this time. By examining this perspective on British life, she calls for a re-evaluation of how literary texts, which contain connections to the slave trade or other forms of captivity, are understood.

Catherine Ingrassia began her career at VCU in 1992 as an Assistant Professor of English and steadily progressed to become an Associate Professor in 1998 and a full professor in 2005. In 2019, she was appointed as the Chair of the Department of English, bringing nearly 30 years of experience to this role. Her extensive experience includes serving as the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Executive Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Affairs in the CHS Dean's Office from 2005 to 2011. Her leadership and multi-pronged approach have enhanced the visibility, accessibility, and personality of the institution. She has strategically used social media, focused on intentional branding, and improved student development experiences. Within the College, she has been instrumental in creating the interdisciplinary PhD in Media, Art, and Text (MATX) and the Humanities Research Center. Her contributions have been recognized with the CHS Distinguished Service Award.

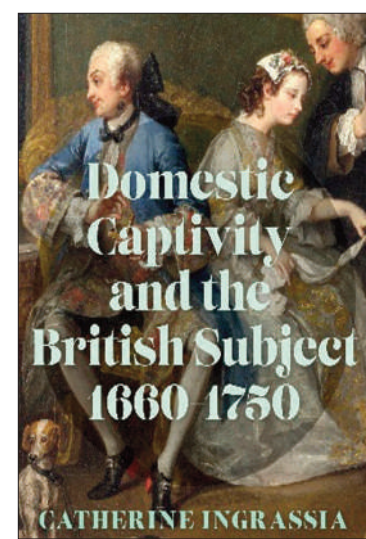
Beyond VCU, Catherine Ingrassia

has held various leadership positions, including serving as the Founding President of the International Eliza Haywood Society and chairing the Modern Language Association's Executive Committee for Restoration and Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature. She has also served as an editor and advisor for prestigious journals in her field, such as PMLA, Eighteenth-Century Studies, and Eighteenth-Century Novel. Her teaching career has been equally impressive, earning her the Innovative Course Design Competition Award from the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies. Her courses, such as "The Persistence of Pride and Prejudice" and "Cultures of Captivity in the Long Eighteenth Century," have captivated a wide audience.

Catherine Ingrassia's first book, "Authorship, Commerce, and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century England: A Culture of Paper Credit," published by Cambridge University Press, set the stage for her promising career, which continues to expand. Her research profile includes notable publications such as "Teaching Beyond the Heteronormative: Fantomina and Queering Eliza Haywood," "Adaptation and the 'invisible world' of Jane Austen," and "Gendered Dialogues in Satire." Her exemplary research, with numerous well-placed articles and essays in prominent journals and essay collections, serves as an inspiration to her colleagues in the field.

Additionally, her work as an editor for influential essay collections, including "British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century," "Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel and Culture," and "Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789," further solidifies her reputation as one of the most respected scholars in her subfield.

Her latest book, "Domestic Captivity and the British Subject, 1660-1750," continues Catherine Ingrassia's commitment to research, historical contextual scrutiny, and feminist



methodologies. It explores how captivity shaped identity, actions, and human relationships for white British subjects, as depicted in fictional texts by British authors of that period. Through an analysis of the popular press, unpublished personal correspondence, and archival documents, she provides a rich cultural description that contextualizes these literary texts within the material world of captivity.

The book highlights the interconnectedness between "domestic captivity" and England's systematic enslavement of kidnapped Africans, which early fictional narratives either suppressed or ignored. Catherine Ingrassia's insightful analysis prompts a reevaluation of literary texts, shedding light on their connection to the slave trade or other forms of captivity.

According to Dr Ingrassia, captivity, much like British involvement in the trade of enslaved people, was so prevalent and normalized during the period that it became unremarkable in literary texts. However, she urges readers to recognize the discrepancy between the notion of "liberty" central to British national identity and its limited application in the lives of British subjects. She emphasizes that the experience of being a captive subject was not con-

fined to enslaved people at a geographic distance; it also influenced other aspects of life in Britain. The book also uncovers the particularly oppressive conditions faced by women held captive within colonial and domestic spaces. Dr Ingrassia believes that even today, the inequities and power imbalances along the lines of race and gender are still prevalent, both in Britain and other parts of the world.

Through her work, Catherine Ingrassia hopes to encourage readers to reconsider the true meaning of "liberty" in British society and to recognize how captivity shaped the lives of marginalized individuals, including children, impressed sailors, indigent labourers, indentured servants, and married women. She highlights that Britain's financial system, reliant on the labour of enslaved people, permeated various aspects of life, even if those individuals lived geographically distant from Britain. The publication of her book catalyzes critical reflection and a call to acknowledge and understand the historical and ongoing impacts of captivity and systemic inequalities. (The author at present is an Affiliate Faculty in English Dept Virginia Commonwealth University who can be reached at bhattacharj@vcu.edu)

## All About Love

By Bipul Chandra Kalita

Love is deleted from the account of relationships:  
Material matters must matter  
Later is better than never  
If it's fragrance is to be enjoyed  
If it's depth is to be really realized  
In air conditioned hearts  
Or, in fiscally squeezed minds;  
Brotherly, sisterly, motherly and fatherly signs are conditional.

Mutual signatures can put an end to conjugal life:  
No dirt  
No heart  
Or, no mind claims to be responsible for the wreck;  
Smiling separations, speedily heading ahead of time  
Rebuild castles  
Comfortable zones  
For so-called post modern artificially intelligent couples.

Children?  
Who cares?  
Will be artificially brought up  
To engrave traditional emotions...

Now, I am restlessly cooling myself under a huge tree:  
Its thickly leafy branches  
Its proudly worn royal green turban  
Or, its resolute stand for its inclusive growth  
Will not delete love from its beautifully earned totality;  
Gradually I've begun to feel how speedily I am drying!

## What is the name of that animal?

Original: Assamese: Nilim Kumar  
Translated by: Mowsam Hazarika

What is the name of that animal?  
whose appetite is not quenched

Who doesn't know the size of his stomach  
I don't know how much it takes  
Food for him!  
The beast is omnivorous  
What is the name of the ?

What doesn't he eat  
The lands, the houses, the bridges  
There are many ways to get away from these things.

What is the name of that animal?  
whose appetite is not quenched  
It's constant

Hungry !  
He eats with a smile  
The papers, the TVs, the fields  
The mountains , the gardens  
People's dreams.

His whole family  
Now I'm hungry

What is the name of that animal?  
whose appetite is not quenched ,  
Whoever doesn't know  
Hunger for the stomach!

Everyone pray for him  
to get rid of his deadly hunger ,  
so that the fire in his stomach may be quenched ,  
So that everyone can breathe a sigh of relief!

## Charity

By: Khemu Parashar

God created us  
it becomes our duty  
Dedicate this body to good deeds,  
Adapt this human body to good works,  
may not support violence,  
Be a supporter of nonviolence,  
destroy negativity,  
allow positive

Raise your voice against Annay,  
This body is made of clay,  
One day it will turn into dust,  
Selfishness doesn't matter here,  
Don't give any room to deceit and dishonest people,  
Have to reach the destination with the stairs of honesty,  
this should always be tried,  
This will benefit us,  
Obstacles will be easily destroyed,  
Only charity will sting all around





*Ukraine has increasingly targeted naval facilities in Crimea in recent weeks*

## Ukraine targets key Crimean city a day after striking the Russian navy headquarters

**KYIV, Sept 23:** Ukraine on Saturday morning launched another missile attack on Sevastopol in occupied Crimea, a Russian-installed official said; a day after an attack on the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet left a serviceman missing and the main building smouldering.

Sevastopol was put on air raid alert for about an hour after debris from intercepted missiles fell near a pier, Gov. Mikhail Razvozhayev wrote on the messaging app Telegram. Ferry traffic in the area was also halted and later resumed.

Loud blasts were also heard near Vilne in northern Crimea, followed by rising clouds of smoke, according to a pro-Ukrainian Telegram news channel that reports on developments on the peninsula. Crimea, illegally annexed by Russia in 2014, has been a frequent target for Ukrainian forces since Russian President

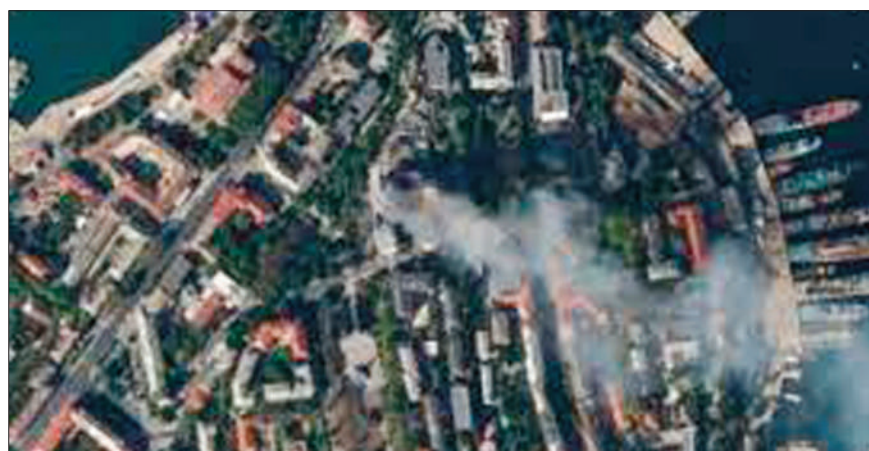
Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of the neighbouring country almost 19 months ago.

Ukraine's intelligence chief, Kyrylo Budanov, told Voice of America on Saturday that at least nine people were killed and 16 injured as a result of Kyiv's attack on the Black Sea Fleet on Friday.

He claimed that Alexander Romanchuk, a Russian general commanding forces along the key southeastern front line, was "in a very serious condition" following the attack.

Budanov's claim could not be independently verified, and he did not comment on whether Western-made missiles were used in Friday's strike.

The Russian Defense Ministry initially said that Friday's strike killed one service member at the Black Sea Fleet headquarters, but later issued a statement that he was missing. Ukraine's military also



offered more details about Friday's attack on Sevastopol. It said the air force conducted 12 strikes on the Black Sea Fleet headquarters, targeting areas where personnel, military equipment and weapons were concentrated. It said two anti-aircraft missile systems and four Russian artillery units were hit.

Crimea has served as the key hub supporting Moscow's invasion of

Ukraine. Sevastopol, the main base of Russia's Black Sea Fleet since the 19th century, has had a particular importance for navy operations since the start of the invasion of Ukraine.

Ukraine has increasingly targeted naval facilities in Crimea in recent weeks while the brunt of its summer counteroffensive makes slow gains in the east and south of Ukraine, the Institute for the Study of

War said. Military experts say it is essential for Ukraine to keep up its attacks on targets in Crimea to degrade Russian morale and weaken its military.

Elsewhere, Ukraine's military said Saturday that Russia launched 15 Iranian-made Shahed drones at the front-line Zaporizhzhia region in the southeast, as well as Dnipropetrovsk province farther north. It claimed to have destroyed

14 of the drones.

Separately, Zaporizhzhia regional Gov. Yuri Malashko said that Russia over the previous day carried out 86 strikes on 27 settlements in the province, many of them lying only a few kilometers (miles) from the fighting. Malashko said that an 82-year-old civilian was killed by artillery fire.

In the neighbouring Kherson region, Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said at least one person died and three were injured over the past day because of Russian shelling. Russia fired 25 shells targeting the city of Kherson, which lies along the Dneiper River that marks the contact line between the warring sides, Prokudin said.

Residential quarters were hit, including medical and education institutions, government-built stations that serve food and drinks, as well as critical infrastructure facilities and a penitentiary, he said. (AP)

## Pak's PM says manipulation of coming elections by military is 'absolutely absurd'

**UNITED NATIONS, Sept 23:** Pakistan's interim prime minister said he expects parliamentary elections to take place in the new year, dismissing the possibility that the country's powerful military would manipulate the results to ensure that jailed former premier Imran Khan's party doesn't win.

In an interview with The Associated Press on Friday, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said it's the Election Commission that is going to conduct the vote, not the military, and Khan appointed the commission's chief at the time, so "why would he turn in any sense of the word against him?"

Pakistan has been in deepening political turmoil since April 2022 when Khan was removed from office following a no-confidence vote in Parliament. He was arrested in early August on corruption charges and sentenced to three years in prison, later suspended though he still remains in jail.

The country is also facing one of the worst economic crises in its history and recovering from last summer's devastating floods that killed at least 1,700 people and destroyed millions of homes and farmland.

The commission announced on Thursday the elections would take place during the last week in Janu-

ary, delaying the vote which was to be held in November under the constitution.

Kakar resigned as a senator last month after outgoing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and opposition leader Raza Riaz chose him as caretaker prime minister to oversee the elections and run the day-to-day affairs until a new government is elected.

Kakar said that when the commission sets an exact election date his government "will provide all the assistance, financial, security or other related requirements."

Asked whether he would recommend judges overturn Khan's conviction so he could run in the elections, the prime minister said he wouldn't interfere with decisions by the judiciary.

He stressed that the judiciary should not be used "as a tool for any political ends".

"We are not pursuing anyone on a personal vendetta," Kakar said. "But yes, we will ensure that the law is appropriate. Anyone, be it Imran Khan or any other politician who violates, in terms of their political behaviour, the laws of the country, then the restoration of the law has to be ensured. We cannot equate that with ... political discrimination." (AP)

## Pope Francis insists Europe doesn't have a migrant emergency and challenges countries to open ports

**MARSEILLE (FRANCE), Sept 23:** Pope Francis challenged French President Emmanuel Macron and other European leaders to open their ports to people fleeing hardship and poverty, insisting Saturday that the continent does not face a migration "emergency" but rather a long-term reality that governments must deal with humanely.

For a second straight day in the French port city of Marseille, Francis took aim at European countries that have tried to close their doors to migrants and tried to shame them into responding with charity instead.

"May we let ourselves be moved by the stories of so many of our unfortunate brothers and sisters who have the right both to emigrate and not to emigrate, and not become closed in indifference," Francis told Macron and others at a Marseille conference centre where Mediterranean region Catholic bishops are meeting.

"In the face of the terrible scourge of the exploitation of human beings, the solution is not to reject but to ensure, according to the possibilities of each, an ample

number of legal and regular entrances."

The pope's visit to the city in southern France comes as Italy's far right-led government has reacted to a new wave of arriving migrants by threatening to organise a naval blockade of Tunisia and to step up repatriations.

The French government has beefed up patrols on its southern border to stop migrants in Italy from crossing over.

Macron greeted Francis on a wind-swept promenade overlooking Marseille's old port, and helped him walk into the Palais du Pharo.

With his wife by his side, the French leader listened as a young Italian volunteer working in Greece and the bishop of Tirana, Albania, who fled to Italy during Albania's communist rule, spoke of the welcomes they received in foreign countries.

Macron's centrist government has taken a harder line on migration and security issues after coming under criticism from French conservatives and the far right.

With elections for the European Union's parliament set for next year, Macron is pushing for the EU

to strengthen its external borders and to be more efficient in deporting individuals who are denied entry.

Macron and Francis then held a private meeting on the sidelines of the Mediterranean bishops' conference.

The Vatican has stressed that Francis is not on an official state visit to France but rather a visit to Marseille, in keeping with his refusal to visit the European centres of global Catholicism before he visits smaller communities where the church is either a minority or facing difficult social situations.

Francis' two-day trip was scheduled months ago, but it is taking place as mass migration to Europe is once again making headlines. Nearly 7,000 migrants came ashore on the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa within a day last week, briefly outnumbering the resident population.

Francis said talk of a migration "emergency" only fuels "alarmist propaganda" and stoke peoples' fears.

"Those who risk their lives at sea do not invade, they look for welcome, for life" he said. (AP)

## Taiwan factory fire leaves at least 5 dead, more than 100 injured

**BEIJING, Sept 23:** A fire and subsequent explosions at a golf ball factory in southern Taiwan killed at least five people and injured more than 100 others, and five people are still missing.

The fire began on Friday night at the factory in Pingtung county and raged overnight. Three firefighters were among the dead, authorities said. Rescuers were still looking for four factory workers and one firefighter who remained unaccounted for, officials said.

More than 100 people were taken to the hospital with injuries.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen in a speech in Taipei on Saturday expressed her condolences to the families of the victims and said she would travel to Pingtung to visit those affected by the disaster, according to Taiwanese news outlet Focus Taiwan.

Tsai said the Pingtung county government had set up an emergency operation centre to offer assistance to those impacted by the fire.

Chou Chun-mi, magistrate of Pingtung county, said in a Facebook post that the cause of the fire was still under investigation. (AP)

## Netanyahu tells UN that Israel is 'at the cusp' of a historic agreement with Saudi Arabia

**UNITED NATIONS, Sept 23:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the U.N. General Assembly on Friday that Israel is "at the cusp" of a historic breakthrough leading to a peace agreement with Saudi Arabia, without outlining a clear path over the significant obstacles facing such an accord.

He struck an optimistic tone throughout his roughly 25-minute address — and, once again, used a visual aid. He displayed contrasting maps showing Israel's isolation at the time of its creation in 1948 and the six countries that have normalized relations with it, including four that did so in 2020 in the so-called Abraham Accords.

"There's no question the Abraham Accords heralded the dawn of a new age of peace. But I believe that we are at the cusp of an even more dramatic breakthrough, an historic peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia," Netanyahu said. "Peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia will truly create a new Middle East."

There are several hurdles in the way of such an agreement, including the Saudis' demand for progress in the creation of a Palestinian state — a hard sell for Netanyahu's government, the most religious and nationalist in Israel's history.

The Saudis are also seeking a defense pact with the United States and want help in building their own civilian nuclear program, which has fueled fears of an arms race with Iran.

Netanyahu told Fox News on Friday evening that the "window of opportunity" for a deal with the Saudis was "the next few months."

"If we don't achieve it in the next few months, we might delay it by quite a few years," Netanyahu said.

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in an interview with Fox News this week that the two sides are getting closer to an agreement, without providing much detail about the U.S.-led negotiations. He declined to specify what exactly the Saudis are seeking for the Palestinians.



Netanyahu said the Palestinians "could greatly benefit from a broader peace," saying: "They should be part of that process, but they should not have a veto over the process."

Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians broke down more than a decade ago, and violence has soared over the past year and a half, with Israel carrying out frequent military raids in the occupied West Bank and Palestinians attacking Israelis. Netanyahu's government has approved thousands of new settlement homes in the West Bank, which Israel captured in the 1967 war and which the Palestinians want for the main part of their future state.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who addressed the General Assembly on Thursday, made no direct reference to efforts to reach a normalization agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia. But he reiterated the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has only worsened since the Abraham Accords were signed.

"Those who think that peace can prevail in the Middle East without the Palestinian people enjoying their full and legitimate national rights are mistaken," Abbas said.

Netanyahu has often seemed to revel in using the podium of the General Assembly to lambast Israel's enemies. He famously held up a picture of a cartoon bomb in 2012 to illustrate Iran's advancing uranium enrichment. In 2020, he claimed Hezbollah was stockpiling explosives near Beirut's airport,

prompting the Iran-allied militant group to organize an immediate visit by journalists, who saw heavy machinery but no weapons.

The map he held up this year made no reference to the West Bank, Gaza or east Jerusalem, territories Israel captured in 1967 that the Palestinians want for their future state. The map appeared to show Israel encompassing all three.

The chamber was largely empty during his address, though there was a group of Netanyahu supporters who clapped several times during his speech. Protesters and supporters of Netanyahu demonstrated across the street from the U.N. headquarters.

Netanyahu referred to the cartoon bomb when he held up the maps, pulling out a red marker and drawing a line showing a planned trade corridor stretching from India through the Middle East to Europe. The ambitious project, unveiled at this month's Group of 20 summit, would link Saudi Arabia to Israel.

He also reprised his longstanding criticism of Iran, which Israel views as its greatest threat. Netanyahu referred to Iran's crack-down on protests, its supplying of attack drones to Russia for use in Ukraine, and its military activities across the Middle East.

Netanyahu called for stepped-up sanctions over Iran's nuclear program, which has steadily advanced since the United States withdrew from a landmark agreement with Iran and world powers to which Israel had been staunchly opposed. (AP)

## Niger's junta accuses United Nations chief of blocking its participation at General Assembly

**ABUJA, Sept 23:** The military government that seized power in Niger has accused United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of "obstructing" the West African nation's full participation at the UN's annual meeting of world leaders in order to appease France, Niger's former colonizer, and its allies.

The decision to not allow the junta's envoy to speak at the UN General Assembly in New York could "undermine any effort to end the crisis in our country," Col. Maj. Amadou Abdramane, a spokesman for the officers who deposed Nigerian President Mohamed Bazoum in a July coup, said late Friday.

The junta had wanted Niger's former ambassador to the United Nations, Bakary Yaou Sangare, who

was made foreign minister after the coup, to speak on its behalf at the General Assembly.

However, Bakary did not receive credentials to attend after the deposed Nigerian government's foreign minister sent the world body a letter "informing of the end of functions of Mr. Bakary as permanent representative of Niger to the United Nations," Stéphane Dujarric, Guterres' spokesperson, said.

The junta spokesman accused the former minister, Hassoumi Masoudou, of "high treason" and alleged that Guterres' only interest was "keeping with the determination of France and the European Union to punish Niger and its people at all costs for their patriotic choice."

Abdramane also accused the



West African regional bloc ECOWAS of interference.

"With the complicity of France and the two French-speaking heads of state of ECOWAS, the secretary general of the United Nations went astray in the exercise of his mission by obstructing the full participation of Niger in the work of the 78th

Session of the UN General Assembly," Abdramane said.

The junta appointed civilians to serve as prime minister and in some other posts as part of a transitional government that it said may remain in place for up to three years, but ECOWAS and foreign powers such as France still recognise Bazoum as Niger's rightful leader.

The deposed president appealed to a regional court this week to order his release and reinstatement as president. Bazoum took office in 2021 in the country's first transfer of power between elected leaders since the country's independence from France in 1960.

ECOWAS has said it considers a military intervention an option for restoring Bazoum as president. (AP)

## Pak court to hear jailed ex-PM Imran Khan's post-arrest bail plea in Cipher case

**ISLAMABAD, Sept 23:** The Islamabad High Court on Saturday fixed September 25 as the date for hearing jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's post-arrest bail in a case related to the alleged disclosure of state secrets.

Khan, 70, filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against the rejection of his post-arrest bail by a special court that is proceeding against him and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the case. The special court on September 13 extended the judicial remand of Khan and two-time foreign minister Qureshi till September 26 in the cipher (secret diplomatic cable) leakage case. Both Khan and Qureshi have been accused of violating the secret laws of the country regarding a document sent by the Pakistan embassy in March last year that has gone missing.

According to a cause list issued by the IHC registrar for the coming week, IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq will hear the Pakistan Tehreek-

e-Insaf party chief's bail petition on Monday (September 25). The News reported. Earlier this week, the court issued a notice to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), seeking arguments in the case. The special court — established under the Official Secrets Act — had rejected the post-arrest bail pleas of Khan and his party's Vice Chairman Qureshi in the case.

Last month, the FIA booked the PTI chief and his party's vice chairman under the Official Secrets Act for allegedly misplacing and misusing the classified document for vested political interests. Subsequently, both leaders were arrested in connection with the investigation into the case and a special court was established under the Official Secrets Act to try the accused. Khan has been kept in the Attock Jail since Aug 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. (PTI)

## A court in China sentences a famed Uyghur scholar to life in prison, foundation says

**BEIJING, Sept 23:** A prominent Uyghur scholar specializing in the study of her people's folklore and traditions has been sentenced to life in prison, according to a U.S.-based foundation that works on human rights cases in China.

Rahile Dawut was convicted on charges of endangering state security in December 2018 in a secret trial, the San Francisco-based Dui Hua Foundation said in a statement Thursday. Dawut appealed but her conviction was upheld, the foundation said.

"The sentencing of Professor Rahile Dawut to life in prison is a cruel tragedy, a great loss for the Uyghur people, and for all who treasure academic freedom," John Kamm, executive director of the Dui Hua Foundation, said in a statement.

Dawut was a professor at Xinjiang University and founder of the school's Ethnic Minorities Folklore Research Center. She disappeared in late 2017 amid a brutal government crackdown aimed at the Uyghurs, a Turkic, predom-



inately Muslim ethnicity native to China's northwest Xinjiang region.

For years, her exact status was unknown, as Chinese authorities didn't disclose her whereabouts or the nature of the charges against her. That changed this month when the Dui Hua Foundation saw a Chinese government document disclosing that Dawut was sentenced to life in prison.

Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning said she had "no information" on Dawut's case at a regular press briefing Friday, but added that China would "handle cases in ac-

cordance with the law."

Dawut was internationally renowned for her work studying sacred Islamic sites and Uyghur cultural practices in Xinjiang and across Central Asia, authoring many articles and books and lecturing as a visiting scholar abroad, including at Cambridge and the University of Pennsylvania.

She is one of over 400 prominent academics, writers, performers and artists detained in Xinjiang, advocacy groups say. Critics say the government has targeted intellectuals as a way to dilute, or even erase, Uyghur culture, language and identity.

"Most prominent Uyghur intellectuals have been arrested. They've been indiscriminate," said Joshua Freeman, an Academia Sinica researcher who used to work as a translator for Dawut. "I don't think it is anything about her work that got her in trouble. I think what got her in trouble was that she was born a Uyghur."

News of her life sentence shocked Freeman and other academics in Uyghur studies, as Dawut didn't engage in activities opposing the Chinese government. Dawut was a member of the Chinese Communist Party and received grants and awards from the Chinese Ministry of Culture before her arrest.

Dawut's daughter, Akeda Pulati, said she was stunned by the news and called on the Chinese authorities to release her mother.

"I know the Chinese government is torturing and persecuting the Uyghurs. But I didn't expect them to be that cruel, to give my innocent mother a life sentence," Pulati said. "Their cruelty is be-

yond my imagination."

Pulati called Dawut "the hardest working person I've ever met," saying that since she was a child, she had been inspired by her mother's dedication to her career.

"She's a very simple person — all she wants in her life is just to find enjoyment in her work and her career and do something good for society, for the people around her," Pulati said.

Mukaddas Mijit, a Uyghur ethnomusicologist based in Brussels, said Dawut had been an important advisor to her and many other scholars early in their careers. Dawut was a critical bridge between global academia and Uyghur culture, Mijit said, mentoring a generation of prominent Uyghur scholars across the world.

"She was a guardian of Uyghur identity, and that's something the Chinese government is after," Mijit said.

"They want to erase everything, and they want Uyghurs to forget how beautiful and colorful a culture they had." (AP)



## Cancel free movement regime along border with Myanmar, demands Manipur CM



**IMPHAL, Sept 23:** Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Saturday said that his government has urged the Union Home Ministry to cancel the free movement regime along the India-Myanmar border and complete its fencing.

The free movement regime allows people residing close to both sides of the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km deep into each other's territory without any document. Addressing reporters here, he said the government will continue to deal with the influx of "illegal immigrants" and stressed the need for complete fencing of the India-Myanmar border.

"The Union Home Ministry has taken steps to fence 60 km of the international border in Manipur," he said. The CM claimed that the present situation was a result of unplanned policies of the previous governments, and not an immediate aftermath of any recent decision.

"Our government has requested the Union Home Ministry to cancel the free movement regime. Also, security forces have not properly guarded the border. Instead of being deployed at zero point, they were found guarding the border 14-15 km inside Indian territory," he claimed.

"We have to stay focused on real

issues in the state, namely dealing with influx of illegal immigrants, taking up welfare activities for internally displaced people and fighting massive poppy cultivation," he said.

More than 175 people have been killed and several hundreds injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts.

There are allegations that illegal immigrants from Myanmar were behind the recent violence. Manipur shares around 390-km-long border with Myanmar.

A Meitei organisation has also asserted that the over four-month-long strife is a manifestation of the tension over deforestation, illegal opium poppy cultivation and change in demography in certain areas of the state mainly caused by illegal immigrants from Myanmar.

It is alleged that firearms were supplied to militants in Manipur from Myanmar. (PTI)

## Nagaland govt school teachers threaten pen-down strike

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIMAPUR, Sept 23:** The All Nagaland School Teachers Association (ANSTA) and the Nagaland Government Higher Secondary Schools Employee's Association (NGHSSEA) have threatened to go on a pen-down strike owing to the "regular delay" in payment of their salaries.

In a letter to the commissioner secretary, school education department and SCERT, the associations also urged for immediate disbursement of the pending salaries of the teachers and sought a written assurance that such delays will not recur in the future.

The letter dated September 21, signed by ANSTA president Kasheto Sumi and general secretary Pekingto Y Jimo and NGHSSEA president Karen Sumi, said failure to do so will leave the teachers of Nagaland with no choice but to initiate a pen-down strike two weeks from the date of issue of the letter in accordance with the principle of 'no pay, no work'.

"This decision reflects our deep concern for the well-being and financial stability of



our fellow educators," the letter said.

It expressed dismay that despite the request letter by the ANSTA on September 14, the teachers' salaries have not yet been released.

The letter said this delay, especially in a month when the entire nation comes together to celebrate Teacher's Day, not only undermines the hard work and dedication of the teaching community but also portrays a lack of regard for the principles set forth by Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.

The associations urged the department to rectify this situation by promptly releasing the pending salaries and providing assurances that such delays will not recur in the future.

"We have shown patience and understanding, but now we find ourselves compelled to take a stand," they added.

The letter added that timely resolution of the matter will not only restore the teachers' faith in the system but will also foster a more conducive environment for teaching and learning.

## Tipra Motha calls for 12-hr bandh on Sept 30 in Tripura



**AGARTALA, Sept 23:** The Tipra Motha, the main opposition party in Tripura, has called for a 12-hour bandh in tribal areas of the state on September 30 to press for an "early constitutional solution" to the demand for 'Greater Tipraland' statehood.

The Tipra Motha, riding on the demand for 'Greater Tipraland', bagged 13 of the 42 seats it contested in assembly elec-

(TTAADC) areas only, and appealed to the Tiprasa people to participate in it.

Tipra Motha-run TTAADC governs the tribal areas, which comprise around 70 per cent of the state's geographical area and house around 30 per cent of the population.

"Tripura is a small state... The Centre has to look after so many things. We want an early solution from the Centre for the survival and existence of our community," he said.

Asked whether Tipra Motha would accept any other proposal by the Centre instead of 'Greater Tipraland', he said, "Let the Centre officially come up with a proposal, we will take a decision after consultation among party leaders."

"I am confident that the Centre is not against the interests of the indigenous people. If Bodo and Dimas people could get a constitutional guarantee, why would Tripura be deprived?" he added. (PTI)

## BJP to use women's reservation bill for political gain in LS polls: Manik Sarkar

**AGARTALA, Sept 23:** Former Tripura chief minister and CPI(M) leader Manik Sarkar on Saturday claimed that the BJP-led NDA government passed the women's reservation bill in Parliament this week so that the saffron camp could try to use it to gain political mileage in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

He also said the Left parties have been battling for women's reservation in Lok Sabha and state assemblies since 1996.

Questioning the timing of the introduction of the bill in Parliament, the veteran CPI(M) leader said, "It was introduced in Parliament nine years after the formation of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre. Why did he not make the same move before? It is clear that the BJP is set to use the passage of the bill in the next general elections."

The BJP is "trying to win the hearts of women by the bill before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls but it will only come into effect after the completion of a delimitation exercise and the census," he claimed.

The watershed bill to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women received the Parliamentary nod on Thursday as the Rajya Sabha voted unanimously in favour of it.

Unlike the Lok Sabha, where two of the 456 MPs present in the House had voted against the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, all the 214 lawmakers present in the Rajya Sabha voted in its favour.

The 128th Constitution amendment bill, referred to as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, will now require the approval of a majority of state assemblies. It will be implemented after a delimitation exercise to redraw parliamentary and assembly constituencies based on census which the government has said will be commissioned next year.

Sarkar also alleged that the "Centre had left no stone unturned



to gain political mileage through the G-20 Summit".

"The Centre created hype about the G-20 Summit and promoted the conference as if it was a rare event. But member countries host the summit rotationally. The ruling party tried to project Prime Minister Narendra Modi as viswa guru," Sarkar said at a CPI(M) party programme here.

He also accused the Centre of taking credit for ISRO's success in the Chandrayaan mission.

"The way ISRO's success was projected as if the central government had done it. The fact is that the mission was successful because of the tireless and persistent efforts of scientists for decades," he said.

In a giant leap for its space programme, Indian Space Research Organisation's Moon mission Chandrayaan-3 touched down on the lunar south pole on August 23, propelling the country to an exclusive club of four and making it the first country to land on the uncharted surface.

Claiming that the BJP has been facing a "tough time since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Sarkar said the party would do everything for the next general elections to retain power in Delhi.

The CPI(M) politburo member urged the people to come together against the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre to restore democracy in the country. (PTI)

## M'laya minister explains slow progress in implementing smart city projects

**SHILLONG, Sept 23:** Meghalaya deputy chief minister-in-charge of urban affairs Sniawbhalang Dhar has said the reason for the Ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA) placing Shillong amongst the 10 worst performers in terms of implementing Smart City projects is due to the fact that Shillong Smart City Ltd (SSCL) was selected as 100th Smart City, the last Smart Cities to be selected in June, 2018.

"All other 99 Smart Cities were selected between the years 2016 and January 2018. Hence, it is not fair to compare Shillong with other cities as other cities had started work much earlier," Dhar said in his reply to a starred question tabled in the Assembly on Friday. He said another reason was due to regular changes by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in the ranking methodology adopted.

Further it is brought out that Shillong Smart City Ltd that was ranked 69th ranked in the year 2022 and has dropped down in its rankings in the year 2023 due to change in the ranking methodology adopted by MoHUA in the year 2023, he added. (NNN)

## Sonitpur organises district level folk dance competition

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, Sept 23:** Inspectorate of Schools, Sonitpur in association with SCERT, Assam, Jorhat campus organised a district level folk dance competition on Thursday at Tezpur Govt Higher Secondary School.

The best groups of the competition held here have been selected to participate in the state level competition to be held at Sankardev Kalakshetra, Guwahati on September 27.

Student groups from different schools of Sonitpur participated in the inter-school competition where Chandra Nath Sarma Higher Secondary School, Pithakhowa was adjudged the best group. The dance group from Chandra Nath Sarma Higher Secondary School, Pithakhowa presented Bihu dance on the theme "Role of Joint Family in the development of a Child" scripted and directed by Munindra Kumar Nath, assistant teacher of the School. Trishna Devi, assistant teacher of the school dedicated her consistent support in guiding the students securing the place as the best group in the competition. Tupia High School near Jamugurihat and Keherukhanda High School near Dhekiajuli bagged the second and third prizes in the competition respectively.

Inspector of Schools SDC Tezpur, Prabhat Das, noted cultural figure of Tezpur and retired subject teacher of Hem Barua Higher Secondary School, Ghoramari Anil Bhattacharyya and headmaster of Rashtabhasha High School Bijooy Kumar Kandulna took the seat of judges in the district level dance competition.

## Pragjyotishpur Literature Festival from September 29

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, Sept 23:** Pragjyotishpur Literature Festival organised by Shankardev Education and Research Foundation slated to be held from September 29 to October 1 in Guwahati District Library Auditorium and Sahitya Sabha Bhavan is all set to be one of the most promising literature festivals of the hour.

Talking to the media here one of the organisers Brikam Kalita of the programme stated that the three day event would witness motley of events like Keynote Talk, panel discussions, author speak, workshop on creative writing, prize money quiz, in conversation, multilingual poetry session, book launching etc.

"The topics for discussions including Exploring Tradition through Literature, Regional Indian Literature: Lost and Found in Translation, Contemporary Nature Writing, Assam through the Cinematic Lens among others will attract the audiences." Kalita said and highlighted that writers from the state as well as from across the country will deliver on these as panelists. Apart from panel discussions there will be interactive sessions with authors Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, a renowned poet, critic, children's literature writer from Delhi and Sahitya Akademi awardee Anuradha Sarma Pujari.

Chairperson of National Book Trust Milind Sudhakar Marathe a versatile writer and critic will be the chief guest in the inaugural session while Padmashree awardee Lil Bahadur Chetri notable Gorkha writer from Assam will be the guest of honour. The keynote speech will be presented by eminent news anchor Rubika Liyaquat. Award winning authors and critics like Suvash Chandra Satapathy (Bhubaneshwar) and Dr Bhushan Bhawe (Goa) will deliver in various sessions on pertinent topics and discussions.

## The UNC Peace Committee urges to ensure rule of law in Manipur

**IMPHAL, Sept 23:** As the Meitei and Kuki-Zo violence prevails nearly for five months now in the state of Manipur, and fear and anxiety continue to grip among the various communities, the United Naga Council (UNC) Peace Committee has urged both the state government and the central government to "tirelessly work without fear and favour to ensure the rule of law". The UNC Peace Committee also urged both the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities to refrain from further engaging in "hostile acts and to hold an immediate ceasefire from intermittent firing".

In a statement issued to Newmai News Network tonight, the UNC Peace Committee said that "it has been at a loss and short of words" to make any comment on the ongoing conflict. The UNC Peace Committee, however, "strongly believes" that to any conflict, there should be a solution anywhere and everywhere.

The Committee then said the "violent conflict between the Meiteis and the Kuki-Zo communities we witness today is unprecedented". It is a matter of deep anguish and grave concern for the establishment and the people of the state in general, the UNC Peace

Committee also said. Several lives and properties worth thousands of crores of rupees have been lost and damaged on both sides. "More than four months have passed now but the situation remains tense. Now, notwithstanding the causes behind and the bitterness of the results, we surely need a pause and find time to re-think because life must go on and lives must be saved at any cost from further loss and casualties," the UNC Peace Committee added.

In this given situation, therefore, the UNC Peace Committee urged both the communities to refrain from further engaging in hostile acts and to hold an immediate ceasefire from intermittent firing.

The UNC Peace Committee then expressed its unequivocal stand for peace. The Committee also said it is ready to render its services towards that goal. "Mahatma Gandhi said, 'There is no way to peace, peace is the only way'" the UNC quoted, while adding, "And truly, we can only wish and pray that the 'sun of peace will rise once again with healing in its rays' upon both the communities". (NNN)



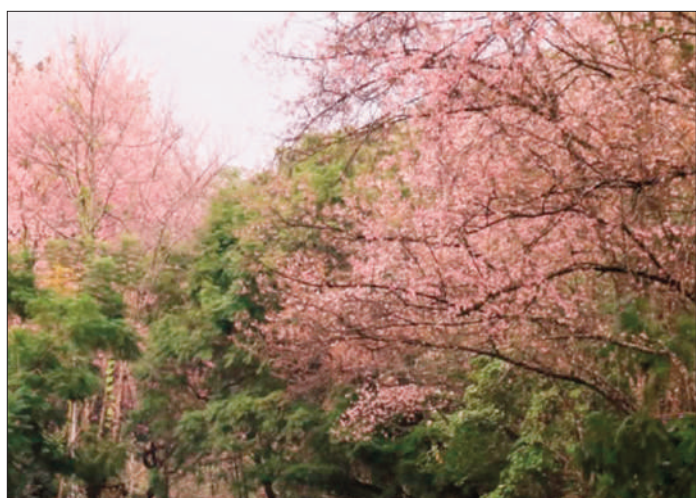
## Cherry Blossom expected to generate up to ₹ 2 crore: M'laya Toursim min

**SHILLONG, Sept 23:** Meghalaya minister-in-charge of tourism, Paul Lyngdoh said that Cherry Blossom Festival is expected to generate funds of up to ₹ 2 crore from the sale of tickets.

"This year, we anticipate securing funds through ticket sales of up to 2 crores, depending on the lineup of performers, which is currently being finalized," Lyngdoh said while replying to a zero-hour notice tabled by VPP North Shillong MLA Adelbert Nongrum in the Assembly.

Nongrum had wanted to know from where the state government will arrange the funds for the tourism department to organize the cherry blossom festival in India and Thailand from October 1 to 30 and the cherry blossom mega music contest on November 17.

Lyngdoh said it should be noted that these festivals are not solely funded by the Government of Meghalaya but are financed through a combination of funds secured through ticket sales amounting to 1.25 crores before the festival. "Additionally, we received corporate sponsorships of 1 crore".



He informed that this year's Cherry Blossom Festival, in addition to the Mega Music Contest aims at nurturing and launching local talent into the music industry, a choir competition will also be organized to provide a platform for local choirs and vocal groups to showcase their musical prowess, creativity and harmonious talents. It is an opportunity for these talented groups to gain recognition

and appreciation from both local and visiting audiences.

Stating that the impact of these events over the years has been significant, the minister said the last Cherry Blossom Festival in 2021, attracted approximately 45,000 attendees, of which 25 per cent were tourists, equating to more than 10,000 tourists in just three days.

Similarly, the Megong Festival hosted last year drew a crowd of

3.5 lakh people.

According to data available from the department, a substantial portion of the tickets sold in 2022 were purchased by tourists.

Moreover, virtually all available accommodations were fully booked during the festival period, generating additional revenue for the hospitality industry in the state, in addition to the income earned by locals through setting up stalls, food counters, transportation services, and more, he said.

He said that the curtain raisers organized both nationally and internationally are aimed at increasing ticket sales and attracting high-value tourists.

Meanwhile, Lyngdoh further highlighted that the government has made adequate provisions amounting to ₹ 7.5 crore to meet the expenditure for the festivals under expenditure head 104, promotion & publicity, which received approval from the Assembly during the budget session in March. The cost associated with these events will be covered under this budget head, he added. (NNN)

## AFFIDAVIT

I'm Indu Datta Baruah, W/O: Rajib Datta R/O-Chinapatty Ward No-12, Mouza-Town, P. O. / P. S. and Dist. Nagaon (Assam), That, in some of Documents my name is mistakenly recorded as Naina Datta in place of Correct name Indu Datta Baruah. Vide affidavit before the Notary Nagaon Assam on 22/9/2023 hereby declared that Indu Datta Baruah and Naina Datta are the names of one and single person.

Sincerely,  
Indu Datta Baruah



## Cauvery issue: Farmers' and pro-Kannada outfits observe bandh in Mandya

**BENGALURU/MANDYA (K-TAKA), Sept 23:** In the wake of a call by various farmers and pro-Kannada outfits for a 'bandh' to oppose the release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu from dams in Karnataka, most of the shops in the district headquarters town of Mandya, the Cauvery heartland, remained closed on Saturday.

Irrigation department officials told PTI that Karnataka was releasing 5,000 cusecs water to the neighbouring state as per the Cauvery Water Management Authority's direction. Raising slogans alleging injustice to Mandya, where the Krishnaraja Sagar Dam on the Cauvery river is located, the protesters took out a march here.

They appealed to the people, especially shopkeepers and owners of various other commercial establishments including petrol and diesel service stations, to cooperate by observing a total bandh.

Extending their support, most of the shops remained shut and those who opened the shops, later closed down following the appeal by the activists.

A major protest took place at Sanjay Circle in the town where members of Mandya Rakshana Vedike, a fringe outfit, reached after a bike rally.

They took out a march, raised slogans, staged a sit-in demonstration and rolled on the road alleging injustice to Mandya and Karnataka.



Security has been beefed up in the town with heavy deployment of police personnel at important places. The opposition BJP staged a protest in Bengaluru alleging the failure of the state government with regard to the Cauvery water sharing issue.

Former chief ministers B S Yediyurappa, Basavaraj Bommai, former ministers, sitting MLAs and several other leaders and activists took part in the protest at the Mysore Bank Circle. Holding placards, party flags and empty pitchers, the protesters raised slogans saying Cauvery water belonged to Karnataka.

The leaders were later detained by the police.

Speaking to reporters, Yediyurappa said the state government

should file a petition in the Supreme Court with a request to send a team of experts to see the ground situation and the water level of the dam.

"In the present situation, when we are unable to provide drinking water to Bengaluru and Mysuru, we are not in a position to release water," Yediyurappa said.

To a question on the state government's appeal to the BJP asking the Centre to intervene, the BJP stalwart said that former chief minister and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy has spoken to the Union home minister Amit Shah regarding the Cauvery issue.

The Janata Dal (Secular) has extended its support to the Mandya bandh. Former chief minister and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy

on Saturday visited the KRS Dam and met the protesting farmers and pro-Kannada activists. Regarding his meeting with Amit Shah in New Delhi on the Cauvery issue, Kumaraswamy said, "It's (Cauvery) a sensitive issue. I told him (Shah) about the injustice happened to us (Karnataka)."

Reacting to the BJP and the JD(S) allegations that the Congress government's failure to do secure to Karnataka, state deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar said the state government has been making all efforts to save the interests of the state as much as possible.

The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) had on Monday asked Karnataka to continue releasing 5,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu for another 15 days, after the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) made such a recommendation last week.

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with orders of the CWMA and CWRC directing Karnataka to release 5,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu, following which protests erupted in different parts of the state.

Amid continuing protests in the state over the Cauvery issue with neighbouring Tamil Nadu, the Karnataka government on Friday said it will take all necessary steps to protect the interests of the people of the state and its farmers, by ensuring water for both crops and drinking water. (PTI)

## Cong says new Parl building architecture 'killed' democracy

### BJP slams 'pathetic mindset'

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** The Congress on Saturday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the architecture of the new Parliament building alleging that it has killed democracy and conversations, a charge the BJP slammed as an insult to the aspirations of 140 crore Indians. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that the new Parliament building should be called a "Modi Multiplex or Modi Marriot".

"Perhaps a better use for the new Parliament building will be found after regime change in 2024," Ramesh claimed in a post on X.

"The new Parliament building launched with so much hype actually realises the PM's objectives very well. It should be called the Modi Multiplex or Modi Marriot. After four days, what I saw was the death of confabulations and conversations both inside the two Houses and in the lobbies. If architecture can kill democracy, the PM has already succeeded even without rewriting the Constitution," Ramesh said.

Hitting back, BJP president J P Nadda said, "Even by the lowest standards of the Congress Party, this is a pathetic mindset. This is nothing but an insult to the aspirations of 140 crore Indians."

"In any case, this isn't the first time Congress is anti-Parliament. They tried in 1975 and it failed miserably," Nadda also said on X.

Joining the BJP's counterattack, Union minister Giriraj Singh said "dynastic dens" all over India need



to be assessed and rationalised.

"For starters, the 1, Safdarjung Road complex be immediately transferred back to the Government of India considering all Prime Ministers have their space at the PM Museum now," he said.

The address houses Indira Gandhi Memorial Museum, which was the then prime minister's residence where she was gunned down. It was converted into a museum. Ramesh also alleged that binoculars are needed to see each other since the halls in the new Parliament building are simply not cozy or compact.

"The old Parliament building not only had a certain aura but it facilitated conversations. It was easy to walk between Houses, the Central Hall, and the corridors. This new one weakens the bonding needed to make the running of Parliament a success," he claimed.

The Congress leader said quick coordination between the two Houses is now exceedingly cumbersome.

"In the old building, if you were lost, you would find your way back again since it was circular. In the new building, if you lose your way, you are lost in a maze. The old building gave you a sense of space and openness while the new one is almost claustrophobic."

"The sheer joy of simply hanging out in Parliament has disappeared. I used to look forward to going to the old building. The new complex is painful and agonising. I am sure many of my colleagues across party lines feel the same," he said. Ramesh claimed that he has also heard from the staff in the Secretariat that the design of the new building has not considered the various functionalities required to help them do their work. (PTI)

## Probe unsavoury conduct of Danish Ali too: BJP MP to Speaker

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** BJP MP Nishikant Dubey said on Saturday the Lok Sabha Speaker should also probe the "unsavoury" conduct and remarks of Danish Ali, who was recently at the receiving end of ruling party member Ramesh Bidhuri's derogatory words in the House.

In a letter to speaker Om Birla, Dubey accused Ali of offering a running commentary during Bidhuri's speech in Lok Sabha on Thursday and making unsavoury remarks aimed at instigating him to lose his composure. Dubey alleged that Ali also made a "highly objectionable and blasphemous" remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He used "neech" barb, the BJP leader claimed, saying it was more than enough for "any patriotic public representative to lose his calm and fall into his trap by uttering unsavoury words."

Dubey was, however, categorical in condemning Bidhuri's comments, saying no decent society can justify them and they cannot be condemned enough.

"But the Lok Sabha Speaker should also probe the unsavoury remarks and conduct of Danish Ali. Under Lok Sabha rules, obstructing another MP during the time allotted to him, speaking while sitting and giving a running commentary also call for punishment," he posted on X. In his letter, Dubey said TMC and DMK members also made comments about faith of another community. What he has written is a verifiable fact, he claimed.

If Bidhuri has committed an inappropriate act, then other members, including Ali, have also contributed in spreading enmity amongst communities. (PTI)

## If we imagine 'Ram Rajya', it should have good and free education, healthcare for all: Kejriwal

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** If one imagines 'Ram Rajya', it should have good and free education and healthcare for all, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday and announced a major expansion plan for health infrastructure in the city. Addressing a gathering at an event here, he also said that everybody should have access to good education and healthcare and the AAP-led Delhi government is trying to work in that direction.

He inaugurated a new OPD building of the Delhi government-run Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital on Saturday and also interacted with the patients there.

Healthcare and education are the focus areas of the Delhi government and expansion is going on in a major way, he said, adding that there are currently around 10,000 beds at all city government-run hospitals put together.

Eleven new hospitals are being built and the infrastructure of old facilities is being upgraded, he said, adding 16,000 new beds will be added.

Referring to the upcoming Dussehra and Diwali festivals, the Delhi chief minister said, "We worship Lord Ram."

"Ram Rajya is being spoken of. I cannot say that we can reach near 'Ram Rajya'. But if we imagine 'Ram Rajya', it should have good and free education and good and free healthcare for all," Kejriwal said.

Good education and healthcare should be there for all, whether rich or poor, and "our government is trying to work in that direction," he added.

Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bhargava, local MLA Parlat Singh Sawhney and senior officials of the health department were also present on the occasion.

Kejriwal, in his address, also said that



building of new hospitals and augmenting of infrastructure and facilities at existing hospitals will align Delhi's health system with international standards and the WHO's parameters.

The Delhi government has spent approximately ₹ 22.8 crore to construct the three-storey new OPD block at Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital, apart from the ground floor.

The block houses 25 consultation rooms, two elevators, and two staircases. It took nearly a year to complete this construction, the chief minister's office (CMO) later said in a statement.

The old block lacked required space and other facilities. The new block is spacious, centrally air-conditioned with availability of rooms for specialists, he said. Previously, around 800-1,000 patients were coming to the hospital daily, now this number could increase 2-3 times after the opening of the new OPD block, the chief minister said.

"On one hand, we tried to improve the condition and quality of government hospitals, built many mohalla clinics and polyclinics...on the other side, we have managed to provide healthcare facilities for free. All medicines, tests, treatment, and operations are free in government hospitals," he added.

Earlier, these facilities were free for

the sake of being free as medicines were often out of stock and many machines used to be defunct, but now it's not the case, Kejriwal said.

"We may not reach the ideal of 'Ram Rajya', but our government is striving in that direction," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

The construction of this new OPD block is one step closer to the target, he added.

Located along Rajpur Road, Aruna Asaf Ali Hospital is a 100-bed multispecialty hospital providing round-the-clock services, and 45 major surgeries and 38 emergency surgeries are conducted at it per month, it said.

The CMO in the statement shared data about the upcoming 11 hospitals.

The 11 hospitals being built will have 10,000 beds.

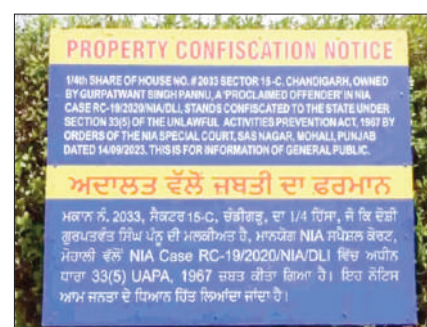
These include hospitals at Siraspur (1,164 beds), Jwalapuri (691 beds), Madipur (691 beds), Hastal (691 beds), Shalimar Bagh (1,430 beds), Sultanpuri (525 beds), Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsalaya Annexe (610 beds), GTB Hospital Annexe (1,912 beds), Sarita Vihar (336 beds), Guru Gobind Singh Hospital Annexe (1,565 beds) and Kirari (485 beds), the statement said.

Under brownfield projects, 10 hospitals being taken up, adding 6,505 beds.

These projects include a new block at Lok Nayak Hospital (1,570 beds) and augmentation of beds at Satyawadi Raja Harish Chandra Hospital, Narela (773 beds); Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital, Rohini (1,063 beds); among other hospitals, besides a casualty block at Lok Nayak Hospital (with 384 beds), the statement said.

Currently, 537 Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinics are functional, out of which five are Mahila Mohalla Clinics, it added. (PTI)

## NIA confiscates Canada-based SFJ terrorist Pannu's properties in Amritsar, Chandigarh



**NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH, Sept 23:** Tightening its noose around Canada-based "designated individual terrorist" Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, the NIA confiscated a house and land of the self-styled general counsel of the outlawed Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) outfit in Punjab's Amritsar and the Union Territory of Chandigarh on Saturday, an official said.

The action, which comes as a big boost to the country's crackdown on the terror and secessionist network being operated from various countries, including Canada, followed confiscation orders passed by the Special NIA Court, SAS Nagar, Mohali (Punjab), a spokesperson of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) said.

The official said the properties confiscated include a 46-kanal (5.7 acres) agricultural land at Khankot village in Amritsar and a one-fourth share of a house in Chandigarh's sector 15C area. These properties were earlier attached following orders passed by the government in two different cases, the spokesperson said, adding that they have now been confiscated on the court's orders under the relevant section of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in a case registered on April 5, 2020.

This is the first time that properties of an absconding accused of the NIA have been confiscated under section 33(5) of the UAPA. The case was originally registered on

October 19, 2018 under various sections of the Indian Penal Code at the Sultanwind police station in Amritsar city and later, transferred to the NIA. A total of 10 accused, including Pannu, have so far been chargesheeted in the case.

Pannu has been on the NIA's radar since 2019, when the anti-terror federal agency registered its first case against the terrorist, who has been playing a major role in promoting and commissioning terror acts and activities, and spreading fear and terror in Punjab and elsewhere in the country through his threats and intimidation tactics. Non-bailable warrants of arrest were issued against Pannu by the Special NIA Court on February 3, 2021 and he was declared a "Proclaimed Offender" (PO) on November 29 last year.

"Investigations have revealed that Pannu's organisation, Sikhs for Justice, was misusing cyberspace to radicalise gullible youth and instigate them to undertake terrorist crimes and activities," the NIA spokesperson said.

The official said the investigations have further revealed that Pannu was the main handler and controller of the SFJ, which was declared an "Unlawful Association" by the Centre on July 10, 2019.

"Pannu, who was declared a 'designated individual terrorist' on July 1, 2020, has been actively exhorting Punjab-based gangsters and youth over the social media to fight for the cause of the independent state of Khalistan, challenging the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country," the spokesperson said. In recent days, the official said Pannu has been in the news for issuing blatant threats to senior Indian diplomats and government functionaries in public forums.

The NIA action came amid an escalating diplomatic row between India and Canada over the issue of the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar by unidentified assailants in British Columbia in June. (PTI)

## Union minister rebuts CPI(M)'s charges against ED in cooperative bank scam

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Sept 23:** Union minister V Muraliedharan on Saturday rejected ruling CPI (M)'s claim that the investigation into the multi-crore Karuvannur bank scam was a deliberate move by the Centre targeting the Cooperative sector of Kerala.

Around ₹ 150 crore, invested by common people in the Karuvannur Cooperative Bank, were looted by some fraudsters but the Chief Minister, his cabinet colleagues and CPI (M) state secretary were justifying it, he alleged. Addressing media persons here, the BJP leader also sought to know if senior CPI (M) leader and MLA A C Moideen had done nothing wrong, then why was he not appear before the Enforcement Directorate despite repeated summons. Why even the former minister was afraid to answer the questions of the central investigating agency? he asked. Muraliedharan warned that those who looted the life savings of the poor would not be spared. He questioned the allegations raised by the CPI (M) that a witness in the case was assaulted and threatened by the ED officials so that he would name senior party leaders in the case.

On September 11, CPI(M) leader Moideen, was interrogated for over nine hours by the ED in connection with its probe into the ₹ 150 crore Karuvannur Cooperative bank scam which triggered a political row in Kerala recently. The case relates to the alleged fraud in the CPI(M)-controlled Karuvannur Cooperative Bank.

The ED has been questioning those involved in the case since it conducted raids at their premises last month. The ED had earlier issued freeze orders against bank and fixed deposits worth ₹ 28 lakh of Moideen, the former Kerala minister for Cooperation and Industries and his wife, apart from the seizure of 36 properties valued at ₹ 15 crore -- "proceeds of crime" in this case. After the Kerala Police registered the FIR in July 2021, the registrar in their audit found "diversions" of more than ₹ 100 crore. (PTI)

## Large number of vacancies in juvenile institutions having debilitating effect: SC judge S Ravindra Bhat

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** Supreme Court judge S Ravindra Bhat on Saturday expressed concern over every institution in the juvenile justice system working "below" its strength, saying such a large number of vacancies have a debilitating effect which could turn these bodies into "paper tigers" on matters of child protection.

The apex court judge, who heads the Supreme Court Committee on Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare, placed the issue "at the centre stage" during the inaugural session of its two-day national consultation and cautioned against "breakdown of the system" if the institutions become non-functional due to shortage of staff and officials. The national consultation is being organised by the Committee on September 23 and 24 on best practices followed in states and to further strengthen the justice system for children in conflict with law. The inaugural event was attended by Union Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani, Supreme Court judge B V Nagarathna and other dignitaries including Cynthia McCaffrey, Representative of UNICEF India.

"Every institution - whether juvenile justice boards or child welfare committees or other such institutions - are running below their strength in the sense that most of them have a large number of vacancies."

"These vacancies are actually very debilitating and they paralyse the system. Without the full strength of the child welfare committee or the appropriate available quorum, the committees are unable to function," said Justice Bhat in his keynote speech.

"Unless we establish and come out with a common protocol which makes it binding upon all the states, these institutions will become just paper tigers. They will be meaningless if you have to provide for the protection of children," the apex court judge stated. Justice Bhat said that the approach and initiative should be that a child delinquent can and should be reformed and therefore reformation must be the primary driver of all decisions taken for them.

The judge added that measures like "group counselling" and "community services" should be adopted within the judicial framework for juveniles, stating that institutions are the last resort that must be as far as possible. He also said that due focus should be put



on providing education to children in such institutions.

"Analysis revealed that in terms of the judgement passed on children in conflict with law, being dealt with a 'fine' emerged as the most prevalent followed by 'sent home after advice or admonition'...."

"We need to encourage group counselling and community services as relevant within the judicial framework and in our judgements. In all cases, children released on probation are likely to be placed back with the family. While the child is in the institution even if the short-term efforts must be undertaken to facilitate education, counselling, sports and life skills education," he stated.

Justice Bhat called for a "multi-stakeholder approach" to achieve the objectives set out under the Juvenile Justice Act and to realise the best interest of the child.

He also pressed for the identification of barriers to "equitable and timely justice for children" and to establish closer coordination among different stakeholders, improving the capabilities of stakeholders as well as implementing child-friendly procedures and

adopting the "prevention approach".

"Due to their dependent status, children are most vulnerable when they come in contact with the justice system, either as children in conflict with the law or as a need of care and protection."

"A child who has come into conflict with the law is a child who has been in or continues to be in difficult circumstances. It is, therefore, imperative for us to prioritise a prevention approach," Justice Bhat said.

"In transitioning from being stakeholder to shareholders in the care and protection of all children, especially the most vulnerable, prevention of child offending must receive the utmost attention," he added. In his address, Justice Bhat also shared his concern with respect to a young person living in a care institution seeking to be a "child" at the age of 18 and said information about the assistance available to them must be widely disseminated.

"The world is uncertain for them (after turning 18), especially from the point of view of a child who has been in a care institution, who has seen no parent or parents. When he or she comes out, he's in the void," the judge said.

"I'm told that some financial assistance is given. I think it is our duty to ensure that whatever resources are available information about these are disseminated to them in the widest possible manner," he stated. The judge also underscored the important role of an "empowered family and community" as a "safety net" for children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence and harmful practices.

"We must as individuals, citizens and duty bearers, leverage knowledge, technology and social resources to identify vulnerabilities and mitigate them in our joint endeavour to prevent children from coming into conflict with law," Justice Bhat said.

The Supreme Court has been conducting national stakeholder consultations annually, bringing partners from the Ministry of Women and Child Development and other relevant government sectors, the national and state commissions for the protection of children's rights and others. The aim is to bring momentum, attention, oversight and direction to priority areas related to the protection of children in the country, an official release has said. (PTI)



# When our govt comes in 2024, first we will amend women's reservation bill: Cong chief Kharge

**JAIPUR, Sept 23:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday said his party would amend the women's reservation bill if it comes to power at the Centre in 2024. There are no major legal complications in implementing the bill right now but the Narendra Modi government putting it off for 10 years, he said.

While supporting the bill in Parliament, the Congress demanded that it be implemented with immediate effect and a quota for women from Other Backward Classes (OBC) be included in it.

"When our government comes in 2024, the first thing we will do is make amendments to the bill," Kharge said, addressing a party rally in Jaipur in poll-bound Rajasthan.

The Constitution (128th Amendment) Bill, which seeks to reserve a third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, was passed by Parliament earlier this week. It was the first bill to be taken up and passed in the new Parliament building. In his address, Kharge alleged that the then president Ram Nath Kovind was not invited for the foundation laying of the new Parliament building because he is "untouchable".

"If the foundation laying was done by an untouchable, then naturally it would have to be washed with Gangajal (water from the Ganges)," he said, referring to the former president's caste.

Kharge said President Droupadi Murmu was not invited for the inauguration of the new Parliament building while many others, including actors, were invited.

"This is an insult to the president," he said.

## 'BJP spent ₹ 6.93 crore on Amrit Mahotsav programmes but did not invite freedom fighters'

**SHIMLA, Sept 23:** Himachal Pradesh chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday said the BJP government spent ₹ 6.93 crore on 'Amrit Mahotsav' programmes but did not invite families of freedom fighters to official functions.

Replying to a question from party member Sanjay Rattan in Vidhan Sabha, Sukhu said Amrit Mahotsav was a programme of the central government but the money was spent from the state budget.

The programmes should have been dedicated to freedom fighters and martyrs who fought for freedom, he said, adding that the importance of these programmes would have increased if families of freedom fighters were also invited and honoured.

Such functions should not have been politicised. Rattan who is from the family of freedom fighters was also not invited to function in his constituency, Sukhu said.

The government should not stop such programmes but ensure that families of our freedom fighters are invited. Leader of the opposition, Jai Ram Thakur said Amrit Mahotsav programmes were organised across the country and Himachal also conducted programmes and spent money but the government is making it an issue.

He said not inviting Rattan's family could have been an error which should be corrected and asked whether the government would implement any scheme or programme brought by the Centre.

Thakur also urged the state government to restore the rescinded "Loktantra Prashasti Samman Yojana" - providing for a monthly pension of ₹ 11,000 per month to persons, who were jailed during the emergency. (PTI)

# Maharaja Hari Singh's birth anniversary celebrated across Jammu

**JAMMU, Sept 23:** The 128th birth anniversary of last Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh was celebrated with enthusiasm across Jammu on Saturday with various political and social groups holding public events to pay rich tributes to the "great social reformer" of his times.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration had last year declared the last Dogra ruler's birth anniversary as a public holiday in response to a long agitation headed by the Yuva Rajput Sabha (YRS).

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha paid his tributes to the maharaja and expressed hope that his "legacy continue to guide us towards a brighter future".

"Humble tributes to Maharaja Hari Singh Ji on his Jann-Jayanti. He was a towering man of ideas & ideals, a harbinger of change, who dedicated his life to welfare of people & made remarkable reforms to uplift society. May his legacy continue to guide us towards a brighter future," Office of LG J&K wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Ranvijay Singh, the trustee of Dharmarth Trust, founded by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846, visited



"...Lok Sabha is summoned by the president and not by the prime minister. But there is no place for (the president) and then they say that they respect women a lot," he said. The Congress leader also questioned the Narendra Modi government's intention behind bringing the women's reservation bill, saying the BJP does not want to give reservation to women even though it does not say so.

Kharge said Sarojini Naidu was the first woman president of the Congress and asked, "In 100 years, has any woman become president of BJP or RSS?"

He said the BJP thought of the women's reservation bill just ahead of elections as several opposition parties have formed the INDIA bloc.

"When Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and I together came up with the idea of INDIA, the women's bill came to their mind," he said. Kharge said the special session of Parliament was called for five days because Prime Minister

Modi had to show off the new Parliament building and it ended in four days. Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are for discussion on people's issues and resolving them, not for the purpose of "exhibition", he added. Targeting the BJP over the women's reservation bill, Kharge said when the erstwhile Congress-led government brought a bill for women reservation the BJP had opposed it.

"...it was stopped because of them and today they are roaming around as heroes. These people are smart," he said.

"These people neither have clear intentions nor clear policies. They just make speeches. We supported the bill, but it will be implemented in 2030.... In 10 years, neither Modi nor others will be there," he said.

Kharge said all the women who fought for the country's independence were in the Congress.

"Mahatma Gandhi said: 'I will try to build such an India in which even the poorest of the poor will

feel that this country is theirs and where there will be no discrimination and women will have equal rights as men.' Did (RSS leader M S) Golwalkar say this? Have the people of Jana Singh or BJP said so?" he asked.

"If there is any party that respects women, it is Congress. The first woman governor was Sarojini Naidu, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was in the United Nations, Meira Kumar was the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the first woman prime minister was Indira Gandhi, the first woman president was Pratibha Patil," he said.

"What respect the BJP gives to its women leaders, you have seen that in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh," he said, without elaborating. He also took a swipe at the prime minister over the ethnic violence in Manipur.

Kharge also asked people to protect the Constitution and democracy and warned that if this is not done, then people will become slaves.

"If you don't want to become a slave, then vote for Congress. If you don't want to become a slave, then protect the Constitution and democracy," he said.

He said the Prime Minister and BJP leaders always ask what the Congress did in 70 years. "How many times will you ask the same thing, it's been 10 years. I have an account of what we did, it is a long list," he said.

Kharge also alleged Prime Minister Modi pitches four candidates against the Congress - one each of BJP, Enforcement Directorate (ED), Income Tax Department and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). (PTI)

## Women and poor cornerstones of Modi's policies, says last MP to take oath in old Parl Dinesh Sharma

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** Welfare of the poor and empowerment of women are two cornerstones of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies, BJP leader and newly elected Rajya Sabha member Dinesh Sharma has said, lauding the passage of the women's reservation bill. Sharma, the former deputy chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, holds the distinction of being the last entrant of the historic old Parliament building when he took oath as member of the upper house on Monday during the special sitting.

"I was the last person to take oath as member of Rajya Sabha on Monday. In fact, I was the only person to take oath in either of the houses on the last day of working in the old Parliament building. On Tuesday, the very next day, we moved to the new building," Sharma told PTI in an interview.

"I was congratulated by the house chairman (Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar) for the distinction of being the last parliamentarian in the old building," he said.

However, the BJP leader said what made the day more historic for him was the introduction of the bill for reserving one-third of the seats in Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women.

After its passage in Lok

Sabha this week, the Rajya Sabha unanimously voted in its favour on Thursday. It will now require the approval of a majority of state assemblies.

The 128th Constitution amendment bill, referred to as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, will be implemented after a delimitation exercise to redraw parliamentary and assembly constituencies based on the census which the government has said will be commissioned next year.

Sharma claimed the new bill "did not come overnight or suddenly" but were extension of Modi's policies and initiatives since 2014 that were focused on women empowerment and welfare of the poor.

He cited examples of initiatives like Jan Dhan bank accounts, Ujjwala Yojana for LPG supply, Saubhagya Scheme for power connections, subsidies given for building homes and toilets, law against triple talaq as game-changing policies.

"The women's reservation bill has been brought now. Whether LPG, or toilets, or giving homes registered in the name of family's women, or law against instant divorce. All such initiatives were largely focused on women," he said.

"Ever since Modi became the prime minister nine years

ago, welfare of poor and women empowerment have remained the cornerstones of his initiatives and schemes. There is no caste or class distinction in government policies," Sharma said.

He also came down heavily on the Congress over claims that its leaders had proposed reservation for women legislators in the past.

"The Congress likes to dream. It wakes up and goes back to sleep once again to dream something new. PM Modi, on the other hand, fulfills what the public dreams about. Congress leaders just dream and are never committed to realizing it. This is the difference (between BJP and Congress)," Sharma said.

"Had they (Congress) really wanted to do it, then why did they not do it when the Congress-led alliance had its government for straight 10 years. If he (Rahul Gandhi) could tear a bill brought by the Manmohan Singh government, why could he not help bring a new bill," the BJP leader wondered.

"Inki neeti aur neeyat hamesha sandighd rahi hai (Their policy and intention have also been under doubt). How would they know the suffering of women? They only wanted votes of women and minorities," Sharma claimed. (PTI)



the life-size statue of Hari Singh near the main Tawi bridge in the heart of the city and celebrated the birth anniversary of his great grandfather with 128 kg laddu.

"I am praying to god to help us tread the path shown by the Maharaja and keep Jammu and Kashmir prosperous," he said.

The YRS activists, attired in their traditional dress with some carrying swords, took out a huge motor rally from Bantalab to Tawi bridge, covering a distance of over 10 km and garlanded the ma-

haraja's statue amid chants of "Maharaja Hari Singh Ji Amar Rahe" (Long live Maharaja) and "Jai Duggar Jai Dogra".

Besides social organisations, the leaders and workers of different political parties, including the BJP, Congress and Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) visited the venue separately and paid floral tributes to the maharaja. They also organised cake-cutting ceremonies amid drum beats.

"Maharaja is a torch-bearer for us and we will continue to follow

his path," Jammu and Kashmir BJP chief Ravinder Raina said.

Jammu and Kashmir Congress president Vikar Rasool Wani accompanied by other party leaders also paid rich tributes to the maharaja at Tawi bridge and recalled his contributions to the region as a ruler. Wani said that Jammu and Kashmir became an "integral part of India" under the maharaja's signature.

"Unfortunately, the historical state that he ruled has been disbanded, divided and downgraded, and all rights and protection to the permanent residents of his state have been removed arbitrarily and unilaterally by the BJP government at the Centre," he said.

Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession with India on October 26, 1947, to repulse an attack by Pakistan army-backed tribals on Jammu and Kashmir.

Wani demanded that the historical state be given full statehood and rights as well as democracy be restored in Jammu and Kashmir without any delay.

The maharaja's birth anniversary was also celebrated in several other districts, including Samba, Kathua and Udhampur. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Govt making sincere attempts

He should consider the law his own." Modi said there had been a practice of drafting laws in a complex manner. One of the aspects of justice delivery on which there is very little discussion is the language and the simplicity of law, the Prime Minister noted. He said the government is trying to make laws simple and understandable to the common man but the system has been born and brought up in the same framework and he was trying to pull it out of that. Modi said that he has a lot to do and a lot of time for it. "So I will keep doing it," he said. "We have made the first beginning in the Data Protection law," the Prime Minister said, referring to attempts to draft laws in simple language. He also welcomed the Supreme Court's decision to provide the operative part of a judgment to the litigant in his language. Dubbing the Indian Penal Code and the Evidence Act as colonial-era laws, the government had recently introduced the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill to replace the IPC, Evidence Act and the Code of Criminal Procedure. The Hindi renaming had evoked criticism from various quarters, including parties from Tamil Nadu. Lauding the legal fraternity, he said the judiciary and the Bar have long been protectors of India's justice system and noted that they played a pivotal role in India's Independence. The likes of Mahatma Gandhi, B R Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were lawyers, the Prime Minister said.

The conference, he said, is happening at a time when India has witnessed several historic moments. Referring to the passage of the women's reservation bill in Parliament, he said this will give new direction and energy to women-led development. He also spoke of the G20 Summit and the successful Chandrayaan mission.

With India working hard to achieve the goal of becoming a developed country by 2047, it requires the base of a strong and impartial justice system, he said. Impartial justice has a big role in the growing faith of the world in India, Modi added. Speaking on alternate dispute resolution, the Prime Minister said with the increasing complexity of commercial transactions, the ADR mechanism has gained currency all over the world.

To systematise the informal tradition of dispute resolution in India, the government has enacted a law on mediation. Similarly, Lok Adalats are also playing a big role and they have settled nearly seven lakh cases in the last six years. (PTI)

## State inks ₹ 3,214cr investment

Apart from the representatives of the enterprises which entered into MoUs with the government of Assam, Saturday's event was also attended by industries minister Bimal Bora, tourism minister Jayanta Mallabaruah, revenue & disaster management minister Jogen Mohan, labour department minister Sanjay Kishan, chief secretary Paban Kumar Borthakur and additional chief secretary Ravi Kota.

## CM's wife files ₹ 10-crore

agricultural land at Darigaji village in Kaliabor in Nagaon district was reclassified as industrial land within a month after it was bought by Pride East Entertainments, in which the chief minister's wife is the chairman and managing director. Following this, Gogoi, in a series of tweets for several days, brought allegations of corruption against Sarma and his wife in getting a central government subsidy for the project. The Deputy Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha sought the intervention of Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in bringing facts out in the open regarding subsidy for the project under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) and Scheme for Creation of Infrastructure for Agro Clusters.

The Assam MP also pointed out that on March 22, 2023, Goyal in a reply to questions in Lok Sabha on the government's initiative to invest in Assam in order to support the promotion of industries, provided a list of food processing projects supported under the component of PMKSY as on January 31, 2022. "At Serial No 7 of the list, the name of M/S Pride East Entertainment Pvt Ltd has been mentioned. Pertinently, the amount of approved Grant-in-Aid is mentioned as ₹ 10 crore. The list of beneficiaries can also be found on the website of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries," he added. His wife had threatened to sue the MP alleging defamation. (PTI)

## Govt of Assam shells out

reasons for loan repayment defaults. With these challenges in the past, he stressed the importance of building a healthy credit habit in the state. Regarding recent media reports alleging backtracking on promises to provide relief to microfinance loan defaulters, chief minister Sarma clarified that only loans that had become non-performing as of March 31, 2021, would be eligible for coverage under AMFIRS 2021. The event was attended by various ministers from the Assam Cabinet, senior officials, and representatives of microfinance institutions.

## Canada shared evidence of

Australia, Canada and New Zealand. It is both surveillance-based and signals intelligence (SIGINT). "He (Cohen) made this comment while denying a Washington Post report alleging that weeks before Trudeau's bombshell declaration, Ottawa asked its closest allies, including the US to publicly condemn the murder and that overture was rebuffed," the CTV said. "Very bluntly, I will say that — and you know me well enough — that I'm not in the habit of commenting on private diplomatic conversations," Cohen was quoted as saying.

"Look, I will say this was a matter of shared intelligence information," he said and added: "There was a lot of communication between Canada and the United States about this, and I think that's as far as I'm comfortable going," Cohen said. Cohen's comments came as Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US is "deeply concerned" about the allegations raised by Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau against India and Washington was "closely coordinating" with Ottawa on the issue and wants to see "accountability" in the case.

Speaking at a press conference in New York on Friday, Blinken said the US has engaged directly with the Indian government on the issue and the most productive thing would be the completion of this investigation.

"We have been consulting throughout very closely with our Canadian colleagues — and not just consulting, coordinating with them — on this issue. From our perspective, it is critical that the Canadian investigation proceed, and it would be important that India work with the Canadians on this investigation. We want to see accountability, and it's important that the investigation run its course and lead to that result," Blinken said. India also said it has very "specific evidence" about criminal activities by individuals based on Canadian soil and it has been shared with the Canadian authorities on a regular basis but has not been acted upon. (PTI)

## Simultaneous poll panel to

recognised national parties, parties having governments in states, those having their representatives in Parliament and other recognised state parties "for seeking suggestions or viewpoints on the issue of simultaneous elections in the country".

In addition, the committee will also invite the Law Commission for its suggestions and viewpoints on the issue of simultaneous elections, according to a statement issued by the law ministry. The government notification had said the panel will make recommendations "at the earliest", but not specified a time-frame for the submission of the report. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been pitching for "one nation, one election", asserting that it will save a lot of money and resources. In Parliament, the government has batted for holding simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, saying it would result in a huge saving to the public exchequer. It had also listed out the "imperatives", such as amending the Constitution and bringing all political parties on board, before carrying out the gigantic exercise. The committee will examine and recommend specific amendments to the Constitution, the Representation of the People Act and any other laws and rules that would require amendments for the purpose of holding simultaneous elections. It has also been tasked to suggest a framework for synchronisation of elections and "specifically suggest the phases and time-frame within which simultaneous elections may be held if they cannot be held in one go..." It will also examine and recommend if the amendments to the Constitution would require to be ratified by the states. Certain amendments to the Constitution require a ratification by at least 50 per cent of the state assemblies. The committee will also analyse and recommend possible solutions to scenarios such as a hung house, the adoption of a no-confidence motion or defection or any such event in case of simultaneous elections. The panel has also been asked to recommend "necessary safeguards for ensuring the continuity of the cycle of simultaneous elections and recommend necessary amendments to the Constitution so that the cycle of simultaneous elections is not disturbed". The issue of logistics is also on the agenda of the panel as the massive exercise would require an additional number of electronic voting machines (EVMs), paper-trail machines and polling and security personnel. It will also examine and recommend the modalities of the use of a single electoral roll and electoral identity cards for identification of voters in elections to the Lok Sabha, state legislative assemblies, municipalities and panchayats. A parliamentary committee had recently said a common electoral roll will help reduce expenses and prevent manpower being deployed for a work on which another agency is already working.

While the Election Commission (EC) is mandated to hold the parliamentary and Assembly polls, the state election commissions (SECs) hold the local body elections. The EC and the SECs are separate bodies under the Constitution with a fixed mandate. The original proposal was for simultaneous elections to all three tiers of democracy — Lok Sabha (543 MPs), Vidhan Sabha (4,120 MLAs) and panchayats and municipalities (30 lakh members). The notification had pointed out that the elections to the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies were mostly held simultaneously from 1951-52 to 1967, after which the cycle got broken and now, elections are held almost every year and within a year too at different times, which result in a massive expenditure by the government and the other stakeholders. It also leads to a diversion of security forces and other officers engaged in elections from their primary duties for significantly prolonged periods. Frequent polls, it said, disrupt developmental work on account of a prolonged application of the Model Code of Conduct. (PTI)

## NIT Silchar students call

Friday but it was not possible due to protests and now it will be held on Monday in the campus. Registrar K L Baishnab has also issued a notice appealing to the students to call off the hunger strike. A notice was issued by the Registrar on Friday appealing to the students to call off all agitation and resume classes as well as other academic activities so that the academic environment of the institute is maintained. The students had also written to President Droupadi Murmu demanding that the college administration should lodge an FIR to ensure a proper investigation into the alleged suicide of the student whose family should also be extended comprehensive support, including financial, legal, security and emotional support. The students have been alleging that Roy had insulted the victim who got six backlogs in his first-semester examination, which was held in 2021. (PTI)

## Mobile internet services

state, which was the reason why his government launched a 'war on drugs' in 2018. "This will continue... it will be carried out more strongly to destroy poppy plantations in the hills," he said. Singh said that incidents of extortion, kidnappings and perpetrating other crimes by miscreants impersonating policemen have increased.

"We have to stay focused on real issues in the state, namely dealing with influx of illegal immigrants, taking up welfare activities for internally displaced people and fighting massive poppy cultivation," he said. "With the objective of establishing the rule of law in Churachandpur, Kangpokpi, Moreh and Imphal, our government is taking up multiple initiatives," Singh added. More than 175 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts. (PTI)



## Pankaj Tripathi, Richa Chadha decode 'Fukrey' series success, challenge of starring in franchise

**MUMBAI, Sept 23:** Unique characters and absurd storyline are the qualities that have made "Fukrey" a successful film franchise, believe actors Pankaj Tripathi and Richa Chadha as they gear up to return for the third part.

The buddy comedy film franchise began in 2013 with "Fukrey" and was followed by a 2017 sequel, titled "Fukrey Returns". The series revolves around four friends -- Hunny (Pulkit Samrat), Choocha (Varun Sharma), Laali (Manjot Singh), and Zafar (Ali Fazal), who get together to make quick money.

Tripthi and Chadha play the characters of Pandit ji and Bholi

Punjaban, respectively. They will be reprising the roles in the upcoming third film, set to release on September 28. Chadha credited director Mrighdeep Singh Lamba and writer Vipul Vig for creating quirky characters and the attention to detail. "The audience like the films because each character is unique. My character had so much detailing, like her Nigerian henchmen has a barcode on his neck, she wears leopard print jacket.

Pankaj ji's character of Pandit ji

worked because whenever he would speak in English, people loved him.

"The writing is very detailed, and it shows that the writers have worked so hard and have written with a lot of love with the intention to make the audience laugh. Mrighdeep has worked very hard; he focuses on every little detail. The audience liked the film because they feel the characters are fleshed out from real life," the actor told

PTI in an interview here. According to Tripathi, the "absurd" plot-line of



"Fukrey" worked in the favour of the youth-comedy franchise. "There was a certain kind of absurdity in the story... We do a lot of absurd things in real-life, so maybe that is one of the factors why people loved the film. Besides, the film entertained the audience in a big way and is hugely popular among kids," he added. Returning for the third part, however, was challenging for Chadha. The actor said to perform in sequels one needs to "relearn" a lot of things. (PTI)

## Need to find a story where mystery is secondary: Sujoy Ghosh

**NEW DELHI, Sept 23:** With "Kahaani" and "Badla", fans have come to expect a certain kind of cinema from Sujoy Ghosh but the director says he is always looking for stories where mystery is not the primary plotline.

Through "Jaane Jaan", his latest film, the director has achieved a long-cherished dream of adapting Japanese author Keigo Higashino's novel "The Devotion of Suspect X", a story so dear to him that he held on to it for years. "I need to find a story where mystery is secondary. For me, 'Jaane Jaan' was a love story. I did not see any mystery in it," Ghosh told PTI in an interview.

The filmmaker said he saw the Vidya Balan-led "Kahaani" as a story of a woman searching for her husband and "Badla", for him, was about the struggle of a woman trying to find what happened to her son. In "Jaane Jaan", he was intrigued by the selfless devotion of man towards the woman he loves.

"If you give me these things and if there is a mystery underneath, then it's an icing on the cake. Otherwise, it becomes very boring because we all have grown up on those detective novels where there are multiple suspects and at the end, one of them is the murderer," he added.

Asked why he was so keen to adapt this story, the filmmaker quipped, "Pyaar (love)."

"When you fall in love with something, it's very hard to get them out of your life," he said, describing how his friends presented him the book as a great murder mystery.

"But all I found was a love story. I couldn't find anything beyond the love story in the book. I thought that was amazing for a book to have such different perspectives," he added. (PTI)



## ASHUTOSH GOWARIKER TO CREATE FILM BASED ON ADI SHANKARACHARYA

**MUMBAI, Sept 23:** Filmmaker Ashutosh Gowariker is collaborating with the Acharya Shankar Sanskritik Ekta Nyas to "bring the life and wisdom of Adi Shankaracharya" to the screen.

Titled "Shankar", the forthcoming film promises to be a mesmerising journey through the annals of time, providing audiences with a unique insight into the life of one of India's most profound philosophical luminaries, the makers said in a press note issued on Friday.

Gowariker, known for films such as "Lagaan", "Jodhaa Akbar" and "Panipat," said he is honoured to get the opportunity to work on the project.

"Adi Shankaracharya was a remarkable figure in Indian history, and his teachings continue to resonate with people around the world. I am deeply honoured to have the opportunity to illuminate his life and wisdom on the cinematic canvas in collaboration with Nyas and Ekatma Dham," the director said.

The announcement comes a day after Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan unveiled a 108-feet tall statue of Adi Shankaracharya at Omkareshwar in Khandwa district of the state as part of its Rs 2,141 crore 'Statue of Oneness' project. (PTI)



## Guru Randhawa signs with international talent agency CAA

**MUMBAI, Sept 23:** Popular singer-songwriter Guru Randhawa has signed with the US-based Creative Artists Agency (CAA) for international representation. The singer, who started his career as an independent musician in early 2000s, is known for his Punjabi and Bollywood chart-buster songs such as "Same Girl", "Patola" and "Lahore".

"More than anything, I'm grateful to be associated with an international agency. This is going to facilitate a greater global reach for our Indian music, ensuring that we are heard by every ear.

"It will make our music more accessible to audiences worldwide, and I couldn't be more excited to be a part of this step," Randhawa said in a statement. The 32-year-old singer has won awards such as track of the year and best male act. He has also collaborated with popular American rapper Pitbull on the song "Slowly Slowly". (PTI)



## Haven't seen 'The Kashmir Files', 'The Kerala Story': Filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj

**MUMBAI, Sept 23:** National award-winning filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj says he didn't watch movies like "The Kashmir Files" and "The Kerala Story" as he wanted to stay out of such sensitive subjects.

Both "The Kashmir Files" (2022) and "The Kerala Story" (2023) were huge commercial hits but kicked up a political storm with many in the Opposition calling them propaganda films.

"I didn't see 'The Kashmir Files', 'The Kerala Story' and I didn't see them consciously. The kind of things I was hearing about these films, I didn't want to get impacted by it. I was hearing that they are propaganda films from my friends and people I

know...

"So, I just wanted to stay out of it because, for me, it is a very sensitive subject. If there's so much negativity I want to remain out of this negativity. I love my peace. So, I didn't want to see them," the filmmaker, who won critical acclaim for depicting the Kashmir conflict in his Shahid Kapoor and Tabu-starrer "Haider", told PTI in an interview.

"The Kashmir Files", starring Anupam Kher, Darshan Kumar, Mithun Chakraborty, and Pallavi Joshi in major roles, revolved around the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley in the 1990s. It was directed by Vivek Agnihotri.

"The Kerala Story", helmed by

Sudipto Sen, depicts how women from Kerala were forced to convert and recruited by the terror group Islamic State (IS).

Bhardwaj urged his fellow filmmakers to deal "sensitively" with stories that are inspired from real-life tragic incidents.

"I want my community of filmmakers to treat such stories sensitively and not use it as propaganda," he added.

Asked whether the objective of filmmaking has changed over the years in Hindi cinema, the 58-year-old writer-director said it is bound to as society is also changing.

"Cinema is such a thing that you can use it the way you want. If people are accepting it and seeing it, then we should accept that

people are changing. We are changing as a society," he added.

Citing numerous tragic lynching incidents that have occurred in the country, Bhardwaj said people now don't seem as affected by them as they would earlier.

"Did we ever think that we will get used to the news of lynching? Earlier, when it happened, we were like, 'How can this mobocracy happen? How can some people gather and kill someone? Where is law enforcement? Where is the law?'"

"Now, we are used to this. Now, it is like, 'Lynching has happened here or there'. It doesn't affect us because we are accepting it. We are not reacting to it anymore," he said. (PTI)





## Second ODI: Pressure mounts on Iyer, Ashwin for performances that count

**INDORE, Sept 23:** Shreyas Iyer will be desperate for some runs after missing out on a flat track while the skillful R Ashwin will be searching for wickets in the middle overs when India take on Australia in the second ODI here on Sunday.

Despite missing four first-XI players, including skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, India were able to win the first ODI rather comfortably and look on course to secure the series at the Holkar Stadium which usually produces high-scoring games.

Rain in the city has brought the temperature down which will be welcomed by the players from either side after experiencing unusual heat and humidity in Mohali. The game on Friday had

enough positives for India, mainly the performance of Mohammad Shami and Suryakumar Yadav, but few questions still need to be answered ahead of the World Cup, beginning October 5. India's designated number 4 Iyer, whose fitness came under the scanner in the Asia Cup even though he was coming back from a long injury-lay off, has not been able to get time in the middle due to different reasons.

While a back spasm ruled him out of the business end of Asia Cup, an avoidable run out on Friday ended his nervy 8-ball stay in the centre.

The right-hander will be hoping for a bagful of runs in the coming two games which would make him and his team feel



much better going into the global event. Ashwin, on the other hand, came up with a tidy bowling effort in his comeback game but was not able to put the Australian batters in much discomfort on a flat track. He was not able to generate much turn and his flatter deliveries were easily negotiated by the opposition.

The champion spinner could still make a last minute entry into India's World Cup if Axar Patel doesn't get fit in time but the team management expects more from the 37-year-old than what he managed on Friday.

It also remains to be seen if another off-spinner Washington Sundar gets a game. If that happens on Sunday, Ashwin might have to warm the bench.

Shardul Thakur too would be looking for an improvement from the first game, having conceded 78 runs in 10 overs while all the other bowlers returned frugal figures.

He does have a knack of picking wickets and coming up with a useful cameo with the bat but he has not been able to do that consistently in the ODI format.

Thakur will only be used sporadically in the World Cup and therefore, he would be keen to make the most of the chances he gets in the ongoing series.

In the batting department, world's best T20 batter Suryakumar Yadav seems to have cracked the ODI code after a prolonged lean patch.

The management has told him

to consume 45-50 balls every game, which is enough for someone like him to make a telling impact on the match. He just did that on Friday with a well paced half-century.

Like India, Australia too were missing some of their key players in the opener including Mitchell Starc, Glenn Maxwell and Josh Hazlewood. Skipper Pat Cummins hinted after the game in Mohali that they might only be ready by the third game in Rajkot on September 27.

Australia won the series in India earlier this year and find themselves in a must-win situation on Sunday. Josh Inglis showed promise with a run a ball 45 but the middle-order needs to be more consistent. (PTI)

## INDIA'S CONTINGENT IS LED BY NIKHAT AND LOVLINA

# Indian boxers aim to better medal count and grab Olympic berths

**HANGZHOU, Sept 23:** The coveted Olympic berths will serve as extra motivation to the India boxers when they step in the ring in the Asian Games here from Sunday, eager to better the two medals secured in the previous edition.

India have fielded a strong contingent led by two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen and Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain. In the men's section, the trio of world championship medallists -- the experienced Shiva Thapa, Deepak Bhorla and Nishant Dev -- will look to add an Asian Games medal to their kitty and secure their passage to Paris. The Asian Games are the first Olympic qualifying event for boxers from the continent. There are a total of 34 quotas up for grabs across the 13 weight classes.

In the women's events, the semifinalists in the 50kg, 54kg, 57kg, and 60kg while the finalists in the 66kg and 75kg will qualify for the Paris Games. The gold and silver medallists in each of the seven weight divisions in the men's event will receive quotas. The women's events have doubled from three to six since the 2018



edition, where the Indian female pugilists returned empty handed.

However, alongside Zareen (50kg) and Lovlina (75kg), world championship bronze medallist Parveen Hooda (57kg), Commonwealth Games medallist Jaishine Lamboria (60kg) and Preeti Pawar have shown the stomach for fight.

Zareen has been in scintillating form for the past two years. However, she has been handed a tough draw as she opens her campaign against two-time Asian Champion Nguyen Thi Tam of Vietnam in a rematch of March's World Championships final.

She could potentially face two-time world bronze medallist Chuthamat Raksat of Thailand in the semifinals. Lovlina is still learning the tricks of the trade in the middleweight category having bulked up from 69kg.

Winning the Asian and World Championships in her new 75kg category has boosted her confidence and the Assam boxer has been working extensively on increasing her power and looks good for a medal. The Assam boxer, who has been handed a first round bye, is one bout away from a medal, and she will face Seong

Suyeon of Korea in the quarterfinals. Jaishine has also received an opening round bye, and will begin her campaign against Saudi Arabia's Ashour HGS.

In the 66kg event, Arundhati Chaudhary has a tough first round as she has drawn reigning world champion local favourite Yang Lui.

Preeti will face Jordan's Alahsanat Silina while Parveen will take on Xu Ziehuo of China in the 54kg and 57kg opening rounds respectively. Of the seven male pugilists competing, Shiva is the only one with prior experience of competing in the continental event. The six-time Asian Championship medallist will be keen to seal an Olympic quota having missed out on the Tokyo Games. Shiva has been handed an easy draw and should reach the final. He is likely to face Chu-en Lai of Chinese Taipei in the semifinals.

Much will be expected from Deepak, who outperformed last time's light flyweight champion Amit Panghal to make the cut for the Games. The Hissar boxer has a penchant for fearless boxing and defeating some of the giants of the game. (PTI)

## Indian shooters to aim for the bullseye at Asian Games

**HANGZHOU, Sept 23:** Indian shooters' heartening performance at the recently-concluded ISSF World Championships is a huge assertion that they cannot be taken lightly at the Asian Games, though, over several editions of the continental event, their calibre hasn't quite matched the expectations.

India won 14 medals, including six gold and eight bronze, at the World Championships.

As the Asian Games gets underway, expectation will once again be sky high from the big shoot contingent, which will look to improve upon the nine medals, including two gold and four silver, they won during the 2018 edition in Jakarta and Palembang.

With India producing dozens of world-class shooters, especially in pistol and rifle, every year it does not come as a surprise that, barring a handful of athletes, the contingent is largely comprised of Games first-timers. Both the gold medallists at the previous Asian Games -- Ravi Kumar (25m sports pistol) and Saurabh Chaudhary (10m air pistol) -- are missing from the contingent, and so are several stalwarts such as rifle marksman Sanjeev Rajput, Apurvi Chandel and Heena Sidhu, among others.

But new faces, such as world champion 10m air rifle shooter Rudranksh Patil, Esha Singh (10m air pistol), Sift Kaur Samra and Ashi Chouksey (50m rifle 3-positions) are some of the brightest prospects in the team with a potential to aim for gold, notwithstanding the extremely tough challenge the Chinese will pose in the coming fortnight. Rudranksh is among the best in the business with the World Championships gold and a 2024 Olympic quota place in his pocket at the age of 19. Expectations would certainly be very high from him after his consistent performance all through the year, including the half-a-dozen national trials the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has organised. For the Maharashtra shooter, the aim is not just to set sights on gold in Hangzhou but to perform "consistently" and have faith in the process to achieve the bigger goal of winning the Olympic gold next year in Paris. "Our main focus is on the consistency of process, to keep ourselves maintained and to grow. Sometimes we find new methods to grow... I think all that (Asian Games) is helping (prepare for the Olympics)," Rudranksh had told PTI, when asked if the continental showpiece would be a stepping stone to winning gold in Paris. Olympian Divyansh Singh Panwar would be another strong contender in 10m air rifle, while young Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar would be hoping to forget the World Championships disappointment and get back his rhythm.

Sift has emerged as a serious medal contender and her rivalry with the seasoned Anjum Moudgil in 50m rifle 3-positions lived up many a national trial in the run-up to the World Championships and the Asian Games. (PTI)

## Pakistan awaits India visa for World Cup travel

**INDORE, Sept 23:** Players and team officials of Pakistan's World Cup-bound contingent are yet to get visas for their scheduled travel to India on September 27, two days before their opening warm-up fixture.

The Pakistan squad was supposed to reach Hyderabad via Dubai where a two-day team bonding exercise was planned before travelling to India on September 27. The Babar Azam-led side is scheduled to play its first warm-up game against New Zealand on September 29.

PCB sources told PTI that the team bonding trip to Dubai has been cancelled as players await their visas from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.

Sources also confirmed that the PCB has raised the matter with the International Cricket Council (ICC). Pakistan last visited India for the T20 World Cup in 2016. The arch-rivals only play each other in Asia Cup and ICC tournaments due to the tense relations between the two countries.

"PCB had sent its officials to Islamabad for passport collection yesterday but the visas are still in process. That has forced the board to cancel the team bonding trip to Dubai. If the visas come through, the team will reach Hyderabad on September 27 via Dubai," said a source. Another source privy to the matter added: "the visas will come through after due vetting process. When it comes to issuing an Indian visa to a Pakistan passport holder, clearances need to come from three ministries -- home, external affairs and sports. That process takes time but it will happen."

A total of 33 members of the Pakistan contingent, including players, three travelling reserves and team officials, are awaiting their visas. Tournament host BCCI could not be reached for a comment. Pakistan's second warm-up will be against Australia on October 3, also in Hyderabad. (PTI)

## Bhullar fires 5-under 67, stays in close title race behind Poom

**CHINESE TAIPEI, Sept 23:** Ace Indian golfer Gaganjeet Bhullar stayed in contention for his 11th Asian Tour win, adding a wonderful bogey-free 5-under 67 to get to 16-under here at the Yeangder TPC on Saturday.

Bhullar, whose 10 title wins on the Asian Tour are the most by an Indian, is two shots behind Thailand's Poom Sak-sansin, who sensationally holed his third shot from 112 yards on the par-five 18th for an eagle.

Saksansin's eight-under-par 64 took his total to 18-under which opened up a lead over defending champion Travis Smyth (68) from Australia, Chinese Taipei's Lee Chieh-po (66), the runner-up last year, and Bhullar (67), the 2012 winner here.

Another Indian making waves on the third day was Rashid Khan (66) as he moved to tied sixth alongside Thailand's Chaphai Nirat (67) and Pachara Khongwatmai (68) and American Micah Lauren Shin (67).

Among other Indians, Karan

deep Kochhar (67-71-68) at 206 was tied 15, Veer Ahlawat (68-70-70) at 208 was tied 27, S Chikkarangappa (68-71-70) at 209 was tied 30 and Khalin Joshi (69-70-71) was at tied 38.

Yuvraj Singh Sandhu (69-71-71) and Ajeetesh Sandhu (70-71-70) at 211 are tied 46 and Viraj Madappa (74-66-72) at 212 is tied 53.

Overall, nine Indians made the cut, while five others, Honey Baisoya, Kartik Sharma, Jeev Milkha Singh, SSP Chawrasia and Rahil Gangjee missed the cut.

Bhullar made five birdies and was bogey free. He is looking for his first win since last year's Mandiri Indonesia Open -- which was his 10th Asian Tour title.

"Today I had a little shaky start. I thought I hit the ball well but just missed fairways. Three straight pars but then birdie on

four gave me some momentum.

"After that I made some more good birdies and kept attacking the flags. My swing feels great and the goal is to try and keep the ball in play. I know this course demands you to hit the ball straight," said Bhullar.

Bhullar has been showing decent putting form with no three-putts so far and his rounds of 66-67-67 show a level of consistency that could fetch him a 11th Asian Tour title.

Poom is a three-time winner on the Asian Tour whose most recent victory came in 2018 at the Indonesian Masters.

He made six birdies in his first 10 holes before his explosive finish with an eagle.

Smyth is attempting to become the first back-to-back winner of the event. (PTI)



## From air travel for horses to renting boats, Indian athletes eye glory at Asian Games

**MUMBAI, Sept 23:** From transporting the horses by air to renting canoes and kayaks or even carrying them as luggage, Indian athletes for equestrian, canoe and kayaks disciplines have made their way to the Asian Games hoping to bring laurels to the country.

While Fouaad Mirza ended the country's drought of medals in equestrian in the last Asian Games in Indonesia by winning the silver in individual jumping, India is waiting for its next medal in canoeing and kayaking since the 1994 Hiroshima Games. India has only one medal in canoeing from the pair of Siji Kumar Sadanandan and Johnny Rommel who won the bronze, six editions and 24 years ago in Japan.

The horses bound for Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, for equestrian have undergone one-week mandatory quarantine from September 12-19 in Aachen, Germany, from where they were taken to the venues. "The transportation of the horses for any event is done by air, which also includes elaborate quarantine procedures that need to be followed," said Shyam Mehta, president of the Amateur Riders' Club in Mumbai, which has hosted several events organised by the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI). "Keeping the horses fit and healthy is a huge task especially keeping in mind the quarantine guidelines and the travel time," Mehta said. "The quarantine zones

can sometimes be in another country, for example with the Asian Games which is in China, the quarantine centres are abroad -- where you travel first, stay in quarantine and then travel to China," he said.

"These quarantine centres are equipped with riding areas and paddocks to keep the horses fit and healthy throughout their time there, post which, they travel to the event location and practice to get acclimated with the conditions there before performing," Mehta added.

On the query of the other equipment required by the riders during events, Mehta said, "The equipment required depends on the discipline, whether it is dressage, showjumping or eventing." "Each discipline re-

quires different saddles, bridles and bits which are the main equipment. Furthermore, in dressage, they use accessories to dress up their horses and braid their hair. In the end it depends on the discipline when it comes to equipment," he added.

"For riders, the gear and equipment stays more or less the same. The only difference (here) being (that) the Eventers will wear body protectors in addition and Dressage riders will dress up to look good," Mehta explained.

Apurva Dabhadre, Vikas Kumar and Ashish Limaye comprise the Indian equestrian team for eventing and Anush Agrawalla, Hriday Chheda, Divyakriti Singh and Sudipti Hajela are the members of

the dressage team. The individual jumping team includes Kirat Singh Nagra, Yash Nensee and Tejas Dhinagra. India has won a total of 12 medals -- three gold, three silver and six bronze medals -- in equestrian, which has been a part of the Asian Games calendar since 1982 Delhi Games. Canoe was included in the Asian Games in 1990 and has been a part of the itinerary ever since. In a canoe, the paddler uses a single-bladed paddle whereas a double-bladed paddle is used in a kayak.

At the Games, Sumant Shyam Kulshreshtha will be the team physiotherapist for canoeing and kayaking, while Kazakhstan's two-time Olympian Aleksandr Dyadchuk will be the Indian team coach. (PTI)

## You shouldn't feel low if you are not in playing XI: Shami

**MOHALI, Sept 23:** "When I was playing regularly, there must have been someone, who had to sit out and I wasn't guilty. So you can't feel low if you are sitting out because the team is winning," a pragmatic Mohammed Shami said when asked about the sporadic chances he has been getting in 50-over cricket of late.

The Indian team management has indicated that when it plays full strength during the upcoming World Cup, Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj will be the two frontline pacers. But after his match-winning figures of 5 for 51, Shami said that rotation isn't a bad thing when you play so many matches on the bounce.

"This is the team's plan and it is important to stick with it. You can't be always in the playing XI because a lot depends on the team combination," Shami said.

"If you are playing, well and good and if you are not in the playing XI, then you should be supportive of those, who are playing. I think there is no point feeling low and I am ready to play the role the team gives me," Shami said as he steered clear of anything that could be remotely controversial. He was also asked if he approves of this rotation policy where he has to sit out.

"What you are trying to know is beyond my comprehension but obviously when you build a team, (the) coach has a role to rotate players and, based on the situation, it is decided," Shami said with a wry smile.

He made it clear that rotation before a big event like the World Cup is a good thing.

"You have seen we have (had) got results due to rotation and I believe before the World Cup, you shouldn't

put too much workload in back-to-back games, and its going well and we are getting good results."

Shami had taken a break after the World Test Championship final and he didn't travel to the West Indies for the two Tests and three ODIs.

"It was important to take that break because I had played back-to-back games continuously for 7-8 months. At the back of my head, I felt I needed a break for a series."

"I discussed with coach (Rahul Dravid) and captain (Rohit Sharma) and took a break (from the West Indies series). But my break never seemed like a break for me because I have an elaborate training set-up at home (Sahaspur in UP's Amroha) and I end up training more at home than when I am with the Indian team," he stated.

He was asked if he did anything special to dismiss Steve Smith, but his answer was in the negative.

"Just tried to do my basics right and hit the top of off-stump and wait for the batters to make a mistake."

The conditions were humid and Shami was used in small spells. Could it be a template going into the World Cup?

"It depends on the situation. How a partnership (is) going and how well you are bowling at that time. Sometimes, you end up bowling a six-over spell as well while sometimes you bowl only three overs."

He admitted that heat does play a role. "The heat does play a part and we are also human beings. It takes a toll on our bodies and on stamina. But when you have played international cricket for so long, it will not affect your fitness but it depends how much effort we are putting in," he concluded. (PTI)



# Hangzhou Asian Games opens with futuristic ceremony



**HANGZHOU, Sept 23:** Blending elements of artificial intelligence and environmentally friendly technology, the Hangzhou Asian Games began here on Saturday with a one-of-a-kind opening ceremony, headlined by a spectacular futuristic light show.

The dazzling programme, held amid a diplomatic row over the denial of entry to three Indian athletes from Arunachal Pradesh, was a melange of technology, cultural history of China, and the spirit of the continent's unity.

In keeping with the main theme of 'Tides Surging in Asia', the ceremony was about the intermingling of China, Asia and the world in the new era, as well as the unity, love and friendship of the Asian people.

The water element through the surging tide of Qiantang river -- which flows through Hangzhou -- was the underlying theme of the grand evening which lasted nearly two hours.

The ceremony sought to portray a distinctly Chinese and an uniquely Asian flair, capturing the country's cultural heritage and romantic imagery through the blending of its thousands of years old civilization and modern technology, through stunning visuals.

It portrayed the efforts of China's path to modernisation in a presentation that combined Eastern aesthetics and a viewpoint that connects with a global audience.

The technological might of China was written all over with the lighting of the cauldron -- the Games' Flame -- being done in a unique way.

Digital technology was utilised as torchbearers in the virtual and physical worlds jointly lighted the cauldron.

Chinese President Xi Jinping declared the Games open as more than 12,000 athletes from 45 countries gear up to fight for top honours till October 8.

The Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA) acting president Randhir Singh, International Olympic Committee (IOC) head Thomas Bach, heads of several countries, officials of National Olympic Committees and host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Games are being held belatedly due to a surge in Covid cases in China last year.

In keeping with the concept of 'Green Asian Games' or carbon-neutral Games, the opening ceremony used digital fireworks instead of real ones. It, nevertheless, created a thrilling atmosphere.

The nearly-packed 80,000 capacity 'Big Lotus' stadium was decked up elegantly for the occasion and welcomed the athletes from the participating countries, including India, with loud cheers.

After three wushu players from Arunachal Pradesh were denied visa by the Chinese government, India had cancelled the visit of its sports minister Anurag Thakur. Indian Olympic Association President PT Usha was not present as she is currently in Paraguay as part of a Parliamentary delegation, though other officials attended the ceremony.

Loud cheers greeted the nearly 100 Indian athletes and officials as they marched into the stadium, led by flag-bearers Harmanpreet Singh and Lovlina Borgohain. The Indian contingent walked out for the athletes' parade in eighth position.

From the tennis team, only Ramkumar Ramanathan participated in the parade since the other players have matches on Sunday.

The male athletes were clad in bandhgala jacket and khaki kurta while their female counterparts donned high-necked blouse and khaki-textured saree made from recycled fabrics.

India is fielding 655 athletes in the

Games.

To begin with, the theme 'Water in Autumn Glow' depicted water as the heart and soul of Hangzhou, where water comes in many forms -- West Lake, Qiantang Tidal Bores, the thousand-year-old Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, and the water conservation system of the Archeological Ruin of Liangzhu City.

In a bid to use culture as a medium of blending the power of technology and the beauty of art inspired by traditional Chinese culture, the opening ceremony combined the flavour of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province imagery and elements unique to the country.

Through innovative modern technologies, the ceremony also showcased the attractiveness, appeal and unique nature of Eastern aesthetics, as well as the profound impact culture has, the power of science, and the encompassing reach of art.

After around an hour-long protocol part of the ceremony, a cultural programme of 30 minutes enthralled the crowd. That was followed by the lighting of the Caudron and playing of the official song.

By hosting the continent's biggest multi-sporting event, China has heralded its opening from the pandemic with a giant competition, the largest ever in its history.

No doubt, the Olympics is the pinnacle multi-sporting event in the world but more athletes compete in the Asian Games, with more than 12,000 taking part in Hangzhou.

About 11,000 participated in the Tokyo Olympics two years ago and about 10,500 will do so in the next year's Paris Games.

The 2018 Asian Games had seen a little over 11,000 athletes taking part, which will be surpassed in Hangzhou.

Besides Hangzhou, the 19th edition of the continental showpiece will be held in five other cities -- Huzhou, Ningbo, Shaoxing, Jinhu and Wenzhou.

Forty-five nations and territories in Asia will compete for 481 gold medals from 40 sports and 61 disciplines, including Esports which is making its debut in the Games. Competitions in football, volleyball, cricket, rowing, sailing and modern pentathlon began before Saturday's opening ceremony. (PTI)

## Highlander brigade set to unveil Asia's largest handmade tifo during Northeast United's first home game of ISL season



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 23:** Highlander Brigade, the omnipresent supporters' group of NorthEast United FC, will unveil Asia's largest-ever handmade tifo during the club's first home match of the Indian Super League (ISL) against Mumbai City FC on September 24.

The 12,375 sq ft tifo will incorporate the heritage of the region. This will be Asia's largest ever handmade tifo unveiled during a football match. The size of the tifo would be 165ft x 75ft. "It has taken us around 15 days to prepare the tifo so far which included drawing, painting, tailoring of the clothes used for it," the Highlander Brigade said.

"We faced a lot of challenges during the entire process. Owing to the huge size of the tifo, finding a space big enough for our tifo had been a stumbling block, but NEUFC were kind enough to allow us to prepare the tifo at the stadium itself. The work for the tifo had been going on at the Sarusajai stadium for the last few days but because of incessant rains in Guwahati, we had to shift the tifo,

which is around 60kgs in weight, from Guwahati to Abhayapuri, Bongaigaon. Now, our members in Abhayapuri are working day and night to complete everything on time. In this regard, we would also like to convey our heartfelt gratitude to Abhayapuri Kala Parishad Bhawan for assisting us with a space to complete the tifo," the Highlander Brigade said.

"We aim to foster an environment of passion, love and solidarity for the beautiful game of football in our region and a fan culture akin to top footballing nations in the world. The passion of our members who have been working tirelessly since days, right from self-funding the tifo to preparing the necessary artworks, working by braving the rain, transporting the whole setup almost 200 kms away, and resuming work at Abhayapuri, has reassured us that we're going in the right direction. Be it rain or storm, we'll brave them all and do everything to showcase our heritage on the stage of football."

## Executive meeting of Assam Yoga Association today

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 23:** An executive meeting of Assam Yoga Association, affiliated to Assam Olympic Association as well as Yoga Federation of India has been convened on September 24 at the Conference Hall of Assam Olympic Association.

In a press note here, Prabhat Ch Bora, general secretary of the organization stated that the meeting will be held at 2pm and urged all the stockholders to be present in the meeting. It is stated that during the meeting, the yoga association will discuss various issues regarding the upcoming events as well as other and will also take needful a slew of decisions to make it a successful one in the days to come.

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