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- Modi govt crushed hopes, dreams of India's youth leading to rising suicides: Congress

## CM inaugurates Catamaran vessels, tug boats

### New vessels to revolutionize water transport in state

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday inaugurated a fleet of 10 Catamaran vessels, three Tug Boats, and a search and rescue vessel at Lachit Ghat in the city with the aim to improve water transport in the state.

The new fleet of 10 Catamaran vessels is set to bring in a transform the state's water transport system. These vessels are highly efficient and are a safe and sustainable mode of water transportation. Their low-impact design makes them environmentally friendly and economically viable, contributing to Assam's eco-conscious transportation infrastructure.

The vessels have been launched under a joint initiative of the Inland Water Commission and Assam Tourism Commission.

Speaking on the occasion, Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "We have handed over the catamaran ships to the state tourism department. While one ship will be used for tourists in Guwahati, the others will be used for tourists at Silghat, Kaliabor to Biswanath Ghat via Kaziranga to witness the aesthetic beauty."

"We have also taken up a new project to start a cruise service for Guwahati. It is a joint collaboration between ATDC and Sagarmala," said Sarma.

The catamarans have a capacity of 100 passengers and six small four-wheelers each. The



ships will be used in Guwahati division, 3 in Jorhat division and 2 in Dhubri division at a cost of ₹ 38.43 crore. The remaining two ships will be used for tourists from Guwahati and the other for tourists from Shilghat in Kaliabor via Bishwanathghat to enjoy the beauty of Kaziranga. The three tug boats, constructed at a cost

of ₹ 15.75 crore, will be able to provide emergency response in case of any accident. In addition, search and rescue boats dedicated to the service of the public will patrol the inland waterways. The boat addition, constructed at a cost of ₹ 1.79 crore, is expected to boost public confidence in water (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Gauhati High Court dismisses PIL against KAAC

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: The Gauhati High Court on Thursday concluded the proceedings of a public interest litigation (PIL) filed against the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) over the completion of developmental works.

This decision comes after the submission of compelling evidence showcasing the successful completion of projects undertaken by KAAC. A departmental inquiry, accompanied by thorough verification, including photographic evidence, was conducted to assess the veracity of the works carried out by KAAC.

While hearing the case Justice Susmita Phukan Khaund opined that B. Baruah, the counsel representing the petitioners submitted that after going through the affidavits filed by the respondents and the photographs attached thereto, the petitioners are satisfied that most of the roads in question have been constructed.

"However, his prayer regarding the issues of maintenance etc., the petitioners may be given liberty to approach (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Violent protests rock Imphal, DC office vandalized



IMPHAL, Sept 28: Violent protests over the death of two youths in Manipur continued till the early hours of Thursday with a mob vandalizing the deputy commissioner's office in Imphal West and torching two four-wheelers, officials said.

A fresh bout of violence, this time led by students, broke out in the state capital on Tuesday after photos of the bodies of two youths who went missing in July went viral on social media.

Last night, the protesters clashed with security personnel in Uripok, Yaikul, Sagolband and Tera areas, prompting the forces to fire several rounds of tear gas shells to control the situation, officials said.

The protesters blocked roads with burning tyres, boulders and iron pipes to prevent the security forces from entering residential areas, they said. A mob also vandalized the deputy commissioner (DC) office and torched two four-wheelers. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## 3 arrested for necrophilia

KARIMGANJ, Sept 28: Three people, including a railway employee, were arrested on Thursday for allegedly strangling a teenage girl to death and then engaging in sexual acts with the body in Assam's Karimganj district. According to police sources, the minor's body was found beside the Karimganj town bypass on September 9, the same day she was murdered.

A post-mortem examination confirmed necrophilia and a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was registered, Karimganj superintendent of police, Partha Pratim Das said.

During the course of the investigation, police found a phone number in the girl's personal diary, through which the three accused were traced and nabbed from their homes in Karimganj town, the SP said.

"It was found that a newly recruited railway employee had a love affair with the girl and was pressuring her to have a physical relationship with him, but she repeatedly rejected his sexual advances. "On September 9, on finding the girl alone at her home, her lover along with two of his friends, tried to rape her. When she resisted, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## CRPF conducts 'mitti' collection

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 28: The 20 Bn CRPF, Diphu has carried out Mitti (soil) collection in different villages of Chowkhihola, Bokajan and Manja Blocks of Karbi Anglong district as part of the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh: Amrit Kalash Yatra' programme of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' initiative.

The event was led by the unit Commandant Swarn Singh, unit personnel as well as other government officials along with civilians who took great interest in the soil collection. The Commandant addresses the participants about the importance of the event, which is envisaged by paying tributes to all those 'veers and viranganas' who have made the supreme sacrifice for the country.

He also encouraged all to imbibe a sense of pride and unity and appeal to make the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign a grand success.

## Heroin worth ₹ 6 crores recovered

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Sept 28: The police intercepted a car and recovered 575 kg of heroin a kilogram worth Rs 6 crores from Khatkhati in Karbi Anglong on Thursday. Acting on prior information, the police in Khatkhati set up a check point and intercepted a car bearing the registration number 'AS02 J 2001' in the morning. On a thorough search of the vehicle 45 boxes of soap cases containing 575 grams of heroin was recovered from a secret chamber in the dashboard of the vehicle. The police also arrested two individuals in this connection. They have identified as Nur Uddin (43), a resident of Lakharghat village in Nagaon district and Azhar Uddin (24), a resident of Bhokotgaon in Nagaon district.

## Mob tries to attack Manipur CM's ancestral house

IMPHAL, Sept 28: A mob on Thursday night tried to attack the ancestral house of Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh, but security forces foiled the attempt, the police said. The chief minister, however, does not live there and he stays in his official residence.

"There was an attempt to attack the chief minister's ancestral house at Heingang locality in Imphal. Security forces stopped the mob around 100 metres away from the house," a police officer said. Nobody stays in the house now though it is highly guarded, the officer said.

Violent protests by students over the death of two youths in Manipur rocked the state capital on Tuesday and Wednesday. A mob also vandalised the deputy commissioner's office in Imphal West district and torched two four-wheelers in the early hours of Thursday. (PTI)

## DFO arrested for demanding bribe in Dhubri

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: A team of the directorate of vigilance and anti-corruption on Thursday arrested divisional forest officer (DFO) of Dhubri division, Binod Kumar Payeng for demanding a bribe from a person.

According to sources, Payeng allegedly demanded ₹ 50,000 as a one-time bribe from the person to allow unhindered movement of vehicles from his Sand Mahal, within his jurisdiction.

Unwilling to pay the bribe, the person approached the directorate of vigilance and anti-corruption with his complaint. The Dhubri DFO had even directed the complainant to meet his subordinate officers to fix a monthly system of payment of bribe. Accordingly, he met the subordinate officers in the office of the DFO, who further demanded a bribe of ₹ 4 lakhs. However, later they reduced the amount ₹ 2 lakhs.

Based on the complaint, the anti-vigilance team laid a trap was on Thursday in the office of the DFO. Ziaul Islam and Sahabaz Sultan alias Bittu, both grade-I forest officials were also caught red handed immediately after they accepted ₹ 15,000 and ₹ 5,000 respectively, as part of the demanded bribe, in conspiracy



with the DFO. The bribe money has also been recovered from their possession and seized in presence of independent witnesses.

The anti-vigilance team soon arrested them. In this connection, a case has been registered in the ACB Police Station under section 120 (B) of the Indian Penal Code and section 7(a) of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

## AFSPA no solution to Manipur crisis: Irom Sharmila

KOLKATA, Sept 28: A day after the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) was extended in most parts of Manipur, rights activist Irom Sharmila said the "oppressive law" was not a solution to the conflict in the state.

Sharmila, hailed as the 'Iron Lady of Manipur', told PTI in a telephonic interview on Thursday that the BJP-led government at the Centre should respect diversity instead of working for uniformity through proposals like the Uniform Civil Code.

AFSPA was extended by another six months in Manipur on Wednesday, barring 19 police station areas in the Imphal valley and an area that shares its boundary with neighbouring Assam.

"The extension of AFSPA is not a solution to the problems or ethnic violence in the state. The Centre and the Manipur government have to respect the diversity of the region," she said.

"The values, principles, and practices of

different ethnic groups must be respected. India is known for its diversity. However, the central government and the BJP are more interested in creating uniformity through proposals like the Uniform Civil Code," she added. Sharmila questioned why PM Narendra Modi couldn't visit Manipur since the violence broke out in May.

"PM Modi is the leader of the country. If he had visited the state and spoken to the people, the problems would have been resolved by now. The solution to this violence lies in compassion, love and humane touch. However, it seems the BJP is not keen on resolving the issue and wants this problem to linger," she claimed. Criticizing Chief Minister N Biren Singh, she alleged, "Wrong policies of the state government have pushed Manipur towards this unprecedented crisis."

Stating the youths of the state have suffered the most in the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



## Meghalaya bags award for environmental commitment

SHILLONG, Sept 28: Union minister of petroleum and natural gas, Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday presented the Green Ribbon Champions award for outstanding environmental commitment to the Meghalaya government.

The award was received by state minister in-charge of agriculture and farmers' welfare, Amparen Lyngdoh at the 5th Edition of SDG Summit held in New Delhi on September 27 and 28.

"I'm honoured to be part of the 'Green Ribbon Champions' event, where Meghalaya has been recognized for its environmental commitment, I would like to extend our appreciation to Network18 for their recognition of our state's efforts. This platform lets us address multifaceted challenges and seek innovative solutions for our shared future," Lyngdoh said in her speech.

She said Meghalaya's stunning landscape, with 94 per cent of forests that are community-owned, underscores the importance of community participation in reversing climate change.

"Our Chief Minister's visionary leadership has emphasized community involvement in managing our abundant natural resources. Meghalaya, in 2019, became the first state in India to launch an integrated water

policy, followed by the Water Mission, promoting sustainable water management and creating livelihood opportunities," she said.

"Communities have emerged as champions in the conservation of catchment areas. A shining example of their unwavering commitment can be witnessed in the Mawsynram Declaration, where 24 villages from the Mawsynram Block united to preserve critical catchment areas. Communities, exemplified by the Mawsynram Declaration, are champions in conserving catchment areas through collective action, providing a powerful model for other villages," she added.

Recognizing the need for efficient forest landscape management, Lyngdoh informed, "We've initiated Forest Management Plans (FMPs), with 400 in 2022 and 500 more in preparation, to directly benefit our people."

She said with approximately 80 per cent of our population in rural areas and 70 per cent dependent on agriculture, the natural farming initiative promotes nutrition security through multi-cropping, reduced farming costs, and reduced carbon footprint. She further informed that in 2022, the state government launched the payment for ecosystem scheme (PES) to incentivize communities to conserve forests, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## 8 fabric testing centres in state to ensure purity of Assam silk

### Weavers, customers in for unique Assam silk experience

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Sept 28: Silk weavers, entrepreneurs and the public can now put their fears regarding pirated silk products to rest. The soon to come up fabric testing laboratories in the state will be effective in ensuring that only authentic Assam silk products reach the public. The Central Silk Board (CSB) under the Union ministry of textiles will set up eight fabric (finished product) testing centres in the state to ensure the purity of the silk and the fabric in a bid to tackle pirated silk products in the market.

Director of Muga Eri Silkworm Seed Organization (MESSO), CSB Kartik Neog, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the Silk Mark Expo 2023 at Hotel Nikita on Thursday stated that of the eight



proposed laboratories four have been sanctioned.

The Silk Mark Expo, 2023 that began on Thursday will continue till October 2. It has been organized by the Assam Agricultural University (AAU) vice-chancellor, Bidyut Chandan Deka.

The expo in which 30 authorized users and government departments are participating, was inaugurated by the Assam Agricultural University (AAU) vice-chancellor, Bidyut Chandan Deka. Neog said that while two centres

were coming up in Guwahati, one will be set up at Bongshar near Sualkuchi in Kamrup district and another at Jorhat district. Neog said that altogether 20 such laboratories would be set up in the northeastern region with eight in Assam under a plan of the CSB.

"In addition to the proposed fabric testing laboratories, one raw material testing laboratory will also come up in the state. The establishing of such laboratories in the region was aimed at detection of pirated silk products in the market and preventing the customers from being duped along with maintaining the goodwill of silk yarns of Assam, which have a unique place in the market," said Neog. "Organizing the Silk Mark Expo 2023 in (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## World Cup 2023: Indian team lands in Guwahati for warm up matches

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: The Indian Cricket team arrived in Guwahati city on Thursday for the warm-up matches ahead of the ICC World Cup 2023.

The cricket team arrived at the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport in Guwahati at around 5 pm on Thursday.

In the mean time, the England team will show up in the city for the warm-up matches beginning from September 29 to October 3.

It may be mentioned here that on Wednesday, the Sri Lankan and Bangladesh groups showed up in the city for the warm-up matches and have been staying at the Vantara Hotel in Khanapara.

Remarkably, Guwahati will have four warm-up matches ahead of the World Cup.

Guwahati's Barsapara stadium was selected by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for facilitating a World Cup 2023 match when the ICC reported the schedule for the competition to be kept in India down in the long stretch of June. As indicated by ICC's schedule, Guwahati's Barsapara stadium will see four warm-up matches beginning from September 29 and happening till October 3.

Bangladesh will take on Sri Lanka on Friday in the main warm-up match, followed by India facing England in the second warm-up match on September 30.



# Govt working on policy to make national highways pothole free by year-end: Gadkari

**NEW DELHI, Sept 28:** The government is working on a policy to ensure that there are no potholes on national highways by year-end and construction of roads on Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) mode is being preferred as such projects are maintained in a better manner, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday.

With an aim to make the national highways free of potholes by the end of December this year, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry is firming up performance-based maintenance and short-term maintenance contracts.

Generally, road construction is done through three modes -- BOT, Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC), and Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM).

"The roads which are constructed under the EPC mode require maintenance quite early whereas under the BOT mode,



roads are better constructed as the contractor knows that he will have to bear the cost of maintenance for the next 15-20 years.

"That is why we have decided for construction of roads under the BOT mode in a big way," the Road

Transport and Highways Minister said at a media briefing on various initiatives of his ministry.

Noting that rains can cause damage to highways resulting in potholes, Gadkari said the ministry is doing a safety audit of national

highways. A policy is being made to ensure the national highways are free of potholes and young engineers will be roped in to make the project a success, he said.

Road Transport and Highways Secretary Anurag Jain said the ministry has done the mapping of the entire national highways length of 1,46,000 kilometres and is firming up performance-based maintenance and short-term maintenance contracts to remove potholes by December this year.

In BOT projects, private investors take the risk of financing, building and operating highway projects over a concession period of 20-30 years. The developers then recover the investments through user charges or tolls.

In EPC projects, the government pays the developer for constructing the highway while the toll revenues accrue to the government. (PTI)

## Sensex, Nifty plunge nearly 1 pc on weak global cues; RIL, Infosys weigh

**MUMBAI, Sept 28:** Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty fell by nearly 1 per cent on Thursday due to unabated foreign capital outflows amid a largely negative trend in global markets. Besides, heavy selling pressure in index major Reliance Industries, Infosys and ITC also dented market sentiments, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 610.37 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at 65,508.32. During the day, it plunged 695.3 points or 1.05 per cent to 65,423.39. The Nifty declined 192.90 points or 0.98 per cent to end at 19,523.55. "The selling was broad-based, as investors are on alert given the rise of oil prices. If crude continues to stay above the USD 90 level, it will be a threat to inflation and boil the operational margins. Currently, the combination of higher interest rates and US bond yields are influencing FIIs to stay in the selling mode," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

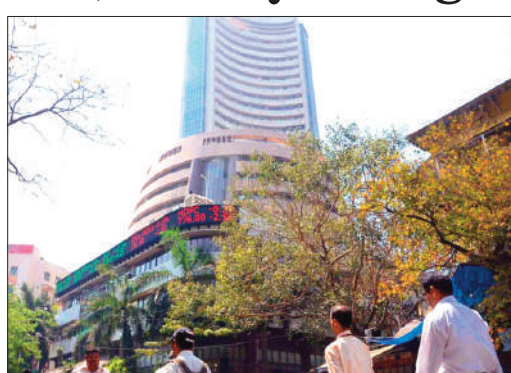
Tech Mahindra was the biggest loser in the Sensex pack, slipping 4.59 per cent, followed by Asian Paints, Wipro, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Infosys, ITC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries and JSW Steel.

In contrast, Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid and Axis Bank were among the gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 1.19 per cent and smallcap index fell 0.34 per cent. "The prevailing weakness in heavyweights across sectors combined with feeble global cues is weighing on the sentiment," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Among the indices, IT declined 1.84 per cent, FMCG fell 1.74 per cent, tech (1.49 per cent), consumer durables (1.29 per cent), auto (1.24 per cent), commodities (1.21 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.15 per cent), metal (1.05 per cent), realty (0.98 per cent) and services (0.89 per cent).

Telecommunication and capital goods were the gainers. "World stocks were on track for their longest losing streak in two years on Thursday as the sight of oil prices heading for USD 100 a barrel compounded



concerns about persistently high global interest rates while persistent fears of higher US interest rates and concerns over China's beleaguered property market also dented sentiments," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In Asian markets, Shanghai ended in the green while Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower. Trading was closed in South Korea for a holiday.

European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended on a mixed note on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.38 per cent to USD 96.18 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 354.35 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"The selling was broad-based, as investors are on alert given the rise of oil prices. If crude continues to stay above the USD 90 level, it will be a threat to inflation and boil the operational margins. Currently, the combination of higher interest rates and US bond yields are influencing FIIs to stay in the selling mode," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

The BSE benchmark had climbed 173.22 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 66,118.69 on Wednesday. The Nifty gained 51.75 points or 0.26 per cent to end at 19,716.45. (PTI)

## Eveready relaunches Ultima brand to push premiumisation

**KOLKATA, Sept 28:** Eveready Industries has relaunched its 'Ultima' brand in a new avatar to tap the dry cell battery market, a growing premium segment.

Company managing director Suvamoy Saha said the company expects a double digit growth in the second half of the current fiscal driven by good monsoon.

Emphasising on the company's focus on the dry cell battery segment, he said, "Our volume from the premium segment is currently just 4-5 per cent, but we expect it to double in the next 3-4 years."

He attributed the growth to the increasing demand for high performance batteries driven by the penetration of new devices.

The premium battery segment, which currently accounts for only six per cent of the total battery market, is rapidly expanding at a

compound annual growth rate of 25 per cent.

The total battery market is estimated to be approximately Rs 3000 crore and Eveready commands 53 per cent market share.

The premium segment presents a significant growth opportunity, the company said.

Anirban Banerjee, the senior vice-president of Eveready said the company aims to reposition and drive premiumisation under its 'Ultima' sub-brand, which high lights its commitment to offering high quality batteries.

The future product launches in the premium segment will be under the 'Ultima' brand, he said.

Saha said that while the battery industry is growing at a modest rate of three to five per cent per year Eveready is expected to achieve high single-digit growth in



the current fiscal year.

The company anticipates a 250-300 basis point margin improvement in the current fiscal year due partly to the easing of raw material costs, he said.

Saha said despite the external challenges related to demand and

## SIDBI to launch app-based 'invoice financing' loans platform 'GST Sahay' for MSMEs: CGM

**PATNA, Sept 28:** With an aim to enhance the economic and financial sustainability of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) is in the process of launching an app-based 'invoice financing' loans platform 'GST Sahay', an official said.

This was announced by SIDBI, Chief General Manager (CGM), Rahul Priyadarshi at a customer outreach programme here on Wednesday.

"The MSMEs are vital for the economic growth and development of India. They (MSMEs) create jobs and contribute enormously to the socio-economic development of the country. Although several measures for the MSMEs have been taken in the past few years by the government, the crunch in working capital credit is one of the major issues for them. Now, SIDBI is in the process of launching an app-based 'invoice financing' loans platform for them," he said.

"The new invoice platform-GST Sahay will reduce the problem of delayed payments and consequential cash flows mismatches for the MSMEs. The GST Sahay will be an invoice-financing marketplace where MSMEs can use their unpaid invoices to get quick working capital loans," said Priyadarshi.

While speaking about industrial growth in Bihar, the CGM said, "There is no doubt that the industrial growth is taking place in the state, but SIDBI wants to take this region at a greater height. There is a lot of scope for agro-processing, medical and agri tourism in the state. We are always focused on such businesses and SIDBI wants this region to prosper further".

SIDBI wants to enhance its loan assistance further in the state, he said, adding the loan book of SIDBI's Patna region has grown at 35 per cent (from March 2023 till the date).



"The jump of 35 per cent in lending (of the Patna region), which is at Rs 232 crore now, is quite satisfactory. We want to increase it further. Now the accelerator of growth is on in this region", he said.

Transparency and trust is the principle on which SIDBI does its businesses, he said. Anubha Prasad, Regional Head of SIDBI Patna, speaking at the event said, "SIDBI is dedicated to fostering strong relationships with its valued customers. SIDBI hopes to aid the development of the two states (Bihar and Jharkhand) through its credit-plus approach, and create stronger footprints for enterprise development at the grassroots level, creating employment and empowering entrepreneurs, as well as work with the two state governments to add value to their initiatives".

SIDBI has appraised 17 proposals involving assistance of approximately Rs 196 crore under Micro and Small Enterprises - Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP) for Bihar Industrial Area Development Authority (BIADA) clusters in the state, she added. Highlighting the bank's comprehensive range of offerings, Prasad said, "SIDBI is also providing financial assistance and support for green projects in the MSME sector as aligned to the nation's commitment to reduce the Green House Gas (GHG) emissions". (PTI)

## Massive write-offs and low recovery ails the banking sector: Amit Mitra

**KOLKATA, Sept 28:** Principal chief advisor to West Bengal chief minister Amit Mitra said on Thursday that massive write-offs in the last nine years and low recovery is presently ailing the banking sector of the country. Speaking at a CII banking session here, Mitra said that in the last nine years from 2014-2023, ₹ 14.56 lakh crore has been written off from the books of the banks.

During 2021-22, the written-off amount was ₹ 1.75 lakh crore, and subsequently ₹ 2.09 lakh crore in the succeeding fiscal.

Mitra, also the former finance minister of the West Bengal government, said that union minister of state for finance Bhagwat Karad had informed Parliament that out of the total written-off amount of ₹ 14.56 lakh crore, ₹ 7.40 lakh crore are for large industry and services segments.

He said, however, the recovery had been low to the tune of ₹ 2.04 lakh crore out of ₹ 14.56 lakh crore, which means more than Rs 12 lakh crore is yet to be recovered.

According to him, the amount of write-offs in the preceding last nine years (2005-2014) was ₹ 2.20 lakh crore. "Even if this write-off amount of ₹ 2.20 lakh crore is indexed to inflation, the increase in subsequent write-offs is very large", he said. Regarding wilful defaulters, he said that the top 50 in this list owes ₹ 87,295 crore to scheduled banks as on March 31, 2023.

Describing wilful defaulters as those people not willing to pay despite having the capacity to pay, Mitra said it is needed to find out why these defaults and write-offs were happening.

"Are the bankers at fault or the present method of assessment? For whose fault is this happening", he asked.

Referring to West Bengal, he said that the total credit deployed in the state in 2022-23 was ₹ 4.68 lakh crore. Only for the MSME sector, the total credit deployed was ₹ 1.28 lakh crore during 2022-23. Mitra said 37 jobs are created for every ₹ one crore invested in the MSME sector.

"The MSME sector has a massive impact on GDP growth through the multiplier effect. ₹ 1.28 lakh crore will translate into ₹ 4 lakh crore additional GDP for West Bengal. In the first five months of the current financial year, the MSME sector has received credit worth ₹ 87,029 crore," he added. (PTI)

## SBI to encourage corporates to implement emission reduction tech



**KOLKATA, Sept 28:** State Bank of India, the country's largest lender will encourage corporates to implement emission reduction technologies and get better terms for availing finance, an official of the bank said on Thursday.

Ashwini Kumar Tewari, the managing director (risk, compliance and stressed assets resolution group), SBI, said that the bank will see how it can help corporates in this regard but at the moment does not ask them of their plans for net zero.

At present SBI gives 25 basis points concession on interest rates for electric vehicles. At a later stage, corporates with a better ESG (environment, social and corporate governance) score will get better terms for getting finance from it, he said.

"We don't ask for net zero plan from the companies now. Ultimately, we will go to it. We will start conversation with the corporates and that process will start," he said at the sidelines of the banking conclave organised by CII here.

'Net zero' emissions refer to the achieving of an overall balance between greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produced and GHG emissions taken out of the atmosphere.

Earlier speaking at the conclave, Tewari said that banks still remain a major source of funding for the country though

the banking industry is facing competition with the growth of the equity market and NBFCs.

"The banking sector needs to be shepherded. Unlike the NBFCs which can reach the last mile, banks have high cost of operations", he said. (PTI)

## Bandhan Mutual Fund unveils Bandhan Retirement Fund

**GUWAHATI, Sept 28:** Bandhan Mutual Fund has just announced the launch of the Bandhan Retirement Fund, a groundbreaking investment opportunity aimed at helping individuals secure their financial future during their retirement years. This innovative fund is designed to provide long-term capital appreciation by strategically investing in a diversified portfolio of equity, debt, and other financial instruments, all with the primary objective of helping investors achieve their retirement goals.

What sets the Bandhan Retirement Fund apart is its dynamic asset allocation strategy. This approach empowers investors to not only participate in the potential growth of the equity market but also safeguards their investments against market downturns. It's a well-thought-out strategy to ensure your financial security in retirement.

The New Fund Offer for the Bandhan Retirement Fund opens its doors on Thursday, September 28, 2023, and will remain open until Thursday, October 12, 2023.

Investors can seize this opportunity to secure their retirement by participating through licensed mutual fund distributors, online platforms, or by directly visiting the Bandhan Mutual Fund website.

Highlighting the critical importance of retirement

planning, Vishal Kapoor, CEO of Bandhan AMC Limited (Bandhan AMC), emphasized, "With increasing life expectancy, the rising cost of living, and soaring healthcare expenses, it's becoming increasingly vital for individuals to proactively plan for their retirement. Many who take a conservative approach to retirement planning often find it challenging to beat inflation, which could lead to a shortage of funds for their post-retirement expenses.

The Bandhan Retirement Fund offers a compelling solution by providing flexibility through both Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) and lump-sum investments, all while offering the potential for relatively higher growth."

The Bandhan Retirement Fund comes with a lock-in period of five years, designed to encourage investors to stay committed to their financial goals over a reasonable period and benefit from the power of compounding.

The fund's equity investment framework focuses on quality companies with a long-term growth trajectory and justifiable valuations. It maintains a minimum equity holding of 65%, with hedged equity allocation to ensure eligibility for favorable equity taxation. The debt portfolio is diversified across high-quality instruments, including GSec, SDL, Corporate Bonds, and Money Market Instruments.

## FSSAI asks food vendors, consumers not to use newspapers for food packaging

**NEW DELHI, Sept 28:** Food regulator FSSAI has asked food vendors and consumers to immediately stop using newspapers for packing, serving and storage of food items citing significant health risks.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is closely working with state food authorities to monitor and enforce regulations in this regard.

FSSAI Chief Executive Officer (CEO) G Kamala Vardhana Rao has "strongly urged consumers and food vendors across the country to immediately stop using newspapers for packing, serving and storing food items."

He expressed concern over the use of newspapers for wrapping or packaging food and also pointed out significant health risks associated with this practice.

"The ink used in newspapers contains various bioactive materials with known negative health ef-



fects, which can contaminate food and lead to health issues when ingested," FSSAI cautioned on Wednesday.

Additionally, printing inks may contain chemicals, including lead and heavy metals, that can leach into the food, posing serious health risks over time, the regulator said.

"Moreover, newspapers are often subjected to various environmental conditions during distribu-

growth," he said.

Last year, Eveready achieved a commendable growth rate of approximately 14 per cent, Saha added.

In the first quarter ending June 2023, Eveready Industries reported a revenue of ₹ 363.57 crore. During the same period, it posted a net profit of ₹ 24 crore, surpassing the corresponding period's net profit of ₹ 21 crore in FY'22.

Eveready unveiled a new campaign 'Khelenge to Sikehenge,' introducing their improved Ultimate Alkaline battery range to mark the relaunch.

The Ultima range boasts of batteries that are 400 per cent more powerful than the current zinc batteries. The Ultima Pro variant offers a remarkable 800 per cent increase in power, the company said. (PTI)

tion, making them susceptible to contamination by bacteria, viruses or other pathogens that may transfer to the food, potentially causing foodborne illnesses," FSSAI said.

FSSAI has notified the Food Safety and Standards (Packaging) Regulations, 2018 which strictly prohibits the use of newspapers or similar materials for storing and wrapping food.

As per this regulation, newspa-

pers should neither be used to wrap, cover or serve food nor be used to absorb excess oil from fried food.

Emphasising the paramount importance of food safety, Rao urged all food vendors to adopt responsible packaging practices that prioritise the wellbeing of their customers.

He further highlighted that by discouraging the use of newspapers as food packaging materials and promoting safe alternatives, FSSAI reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the safety of the nation's food supply.

FSSAI urged consumers, food vendors and stakeholders across the nation to immediately discontinue the use of newspapers as food packaging material and recommended the adoption of safe and approved food packaging materials as well as food-grade containers, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of consumers. (PTI)



## Governor reviews Health and Family Welfare department's activities & schemes FDA needs strengthening, district-level monitoring vital: Guv Kataria

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria convened a meeting to discuss the activities of the Health and Family Welfare department and the Medical Education and Research department. The meeting was attended by Health and Family Welfare minister Keshab Mahanta and held in the conference hall of Raj Bhavan.

During the meeting, minister Keshab Mahanta provided a brief overview of the department's diverse activities and ongoing infrastructural developments aimed at benefiting the people of the state. He also highlighted various clinical initiatives focused on enhancing public health and hygiene.

Additional chief secretary of the Health & Family Welfare department, Avinash Joshi, delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining the department's activities and its commitment to delivering preventive, palliative, curative, and quality healthcare services to the state's residents.

The presentation covered topics such as the organisational structure, status of public health infrastructure, key health indicators, services provided, the universal immunisation program, schemes



related to maternal health, achievements related to central and state government schemes, national missions, programs implemented by AYUSH, and best practices.

Governor Gulab Chand Kataria expressed satisfaction with the department's performance. He urged that as both the central and state governments prioritise the health and hygiene of the people, the Health and Family Welfare department should go the extra mile to fulfil its mandate. With several medical colleges under construction or recently established, the de-

partment's responsibilities will increase significantly.

The Governor advised the department to establish blood banks with blood storage facilities in every district and maintain the highest quality standards in district hospitals.

He also stressed the importance of cleanliness in district hospitals and the provision of adequate parking facilities. Furthermore, he recommended that nurses receive the best training to enhance neonatal services.

Governor Kataria accentuated

the need to strengthen the Commissionerate of Food and Drugs Administration and to establish regular monitoring mechanisms at the district level to improve performance.

The meeting also included a presentation on medical education and research in the state by commissioner and secretary of Medical Education and Research, Dr Siddharth Singh.

Several high-ranking officials attended the meeting, including commissioner and secretary to the Governor SS Meenakshi Sundaram, commissioner of Food and Drugs Administration Abhijit Baruah, secretary to Health and FW department, Barnali Sharma, mission director of the National Health Mission Dr MS Lakshmi Priya, project director of Assam State AIDS Control Society MN Dahal, VC of SSUHS Dr Dhrubajyoti Borah, secretary to the ME & RD Prakash Ranjan Gharphalia, director of Medical Education and Research Dr Anup Kr Barman, director of Health Services (Family Welfare) Kamaljit Talukdar, director of AYUSH Dr Indranoshee Das, director of Health Services Dr Nilmadhab Das, and other senior officers.

## CEM Pramod Boro inaugurates new building at Bodoland University

**HT Correspondent**  
KOKRAJHAR, Sept 28: Pramod Boro, the chief executive member (CEM) of Bodoland Territorial Region, officially inaugurated the newly constructed Science Building at Bodoland University in Debargaon, Kokrajhar. The event witnessed the presence of the vice-chancellor of Bodoland University and officials from the education department.

Bodoland University is recognised as a premier educational institution in the Bodoland region, serving students from various parts of the region and different districts of the state, offering higher education opportunities.

CEM Boro affirmed the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) government's commitment to ensuring educational excellence in higher education institutions within the Bodoland region. He highlighted that the Science Building is equipped with cutting-edge technology and state-of-the-art laboratories.

The BTR government has been stressing on the importance of quality educational upliftment across the region and has launched various missions, particularly in education, aimed at providing training and skill development to the younger generation.

Boro stated, "The newly con-

structed Science Building will serve as a beacon of learning and innovation. It will provide our students with an environment conducive to in-depth exploration and experimentation, enabling them to push the boundaries of scientific knowledge."

Additionally, on the same day, CEM Pramod Boro inaugurated the newly constructed Office of the Superintendent Engineer of PWD, Kokrajhar Roads & Building Circle, and the Office of the Executive Engineer of PWD, Kokrajhar & Chirang District Territorial Division. These offices are significant steps towards enhancing infrastructure in Kokrajhar.

## ASJU executive meeting held in Morigaon

**HT Correspondent**  
SIVASAGAR, Sept 28: The Assam State Journalists Union (ASJU) held an emergent executive meeting in Kala Bithika Bhawan, Morigaon, under the auspices of the Morigaon district committee of ASJU. The meeting commenced with an inauguration ceremony, during which Morigaon MLA Ramakanta Deori shared his views on the Fourth Estate's role in society. MLA Ramakanta Deori spoke about the importance of self-appraisal and introspection within the Fourth Estate, especially in the present context. He expressed hope that journalists' conferences would generate positive signals to drive societal progress.

The felicitation program, presided over by Ratul Deka, featured addresses from various dignitaries, including Mahendra Saikia, the president of Morigaon Sahitya Sabha, and Jitu Sarmah Rajkhowa, the president of ASJU. A souvenir was released by Jivon Konwar, CEO of the Autonomous Council, while DC

Morigaon, Debasish Sarmah, released a book written by Haramohan Kalita. Debasish Sarmah also expressed his gratitude to ASJU for hosting the meeting in Morigaon.

During the event, the Morigaon district committee of ASJU felicitated several individuals, including Dr Nitul Das, Khagen Das, Utpal Bania, Dr Ranjit Kumar Nath, Paresh Deka, Anowar Hussain, Pawanjyoti Deka, and Jyotirmoy Goswami for their contributions.

The executive meeting, presided over by Jitu Sarmah Rajkhowa, was attended by Manoj Kumar Borthakur, executive president; Jyotirmoy Hazarika, adviser; Haramohan Kalita; Abdul Aziz, and members from 22 districts. Pradip Deka, secretary of ASJU, presented amendments to the ASJU constitution. The committee invited suggestions from member districts for innovative ideas and annual plans, such as an education conclave, talks, award ceremonies, seminars, and more.

## Mock drill conducted at Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited

**HT Correspondent**  
DIBRUGARH, Sept 28: The Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited (BCPL) conducted a Level-III Offsite Mock Drill in Lepetkata on Wednesday. The scenario for the drill involved a major chlorine leak from a chlorine tonner's valve, which had fallen off from a loading truck at BCPL in Lepetkata, Dibrugarh.

The mock drill was conducted in the presence of various officials, including Gaurab Dutta, field officer (Disaster Management), Dibrugarh West Revenue Circle; SK Gurung, inspector of factories, Dibrugarh; A Pujari, inspector of factories, Dibrugarh; and T Haokip, DC-CISE.

Vijay Kumar Pal, chief operating officer of BCPL, Pranjal Changmai, general manager in-charge of Operations, and other BCPL officers and staff actively



participated in the Level-III Offsite Mock Drill. Mutual Aid teams from various organisations, including Oil India Limited Duliajan, Indian Oil Corporation Digboi, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, Sib-sagar, Assam Gas Company Limited Duliajan, BVFCL Namrup, Hindustan Oil Exploration Company Digboi, Duliajan Numaligarh Pipeline Limited (DNPL) Duliajan, Assam Petrochemical Ltd

(APL), and Coal India Ltd, Margherita, also participated.

The mock drill aimed to assess the preparedness of BCPL's Emergency Management System in the event of an emergency. The exercise was successfully concluded and followed by a review meeting with all participating agencies, receiving appreciation from district administration, statutory authorities, and mutual aid teams.

## Morigaon DC inaugurates book 'Natakar Rong'

**HT Correspondent**  
MORIGAON, Sept 28: District commissioner Devashis Sharma presided over the inauguration of the book 'Natakar Rong' by dramatist Binod Ch Sarmah. The event took place at the district commissioner's office, where Devashis Sharma spoke about the significance of the book in enriching the field of drama, considering

it a path for the next generation.

Jyotish Barman moderated the event and discussed Binod Ch Sarmah's work, shedding light on its importance. The event witnessed the presence of Birinchi Kumar Sharma, president of the Morigaon District Journalists Association. Several notable figures attended the gathering, including Tiwa writer and researcher

Maneshwar Deuri, senior journalist Upen Deka, Dalim Phukan, Ajit Sharma, Jagdish Nath, Jitumani Nath, Ritumoni Mahanta, Dr Robin Sharma, Amit Boro, publisher Neelima Sharma, and various other dignitaries.

Later in the function, superintendent of police Hemant Kumar Das also joined the event, further enhancing its significance.



## RED RUN ASSAM 2023

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**CATEGORY: MALE, FEMALE, TRANSGENDER  
AGE : 18 - 25 YEARS ( ONLY FOR STUDENTS )**

**30 September 2023 | 6:00 AM**



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**Veterinary College Playground,  
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**Organized by:**  
**Assam State AIDS Control Society  
(ASACS), Khanapara, Guwahati - 22**



**Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
Chief Minister, Assam

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## QUOTE OF THE DAY

There are people who have money and people who are rich. - Coco Chanel

## Bihar's complex caste politics

**I**narguably, Bihar stands as India's most economically challenged state. The primary contributor to Bihar's quagmire of extreme poverty and underdevelopment rests squarely on the upper castes of the state, who historically treated it as their fiefdom. The formation of Bihar in 1912 was a significant step towards establishing a distinct Bihari identity. Sadly, this new statehood was swiftly hijacked by the landed elite to further their narrow class interests. By 1930, the formation of Triveni Sangh, a political party uniting the intermediate castes of Yadavs, Koiris, and Kurmis, marked a pivotal moment in Bihar's caste politics. This coalition aimed to voice the political solidarity of "middle peasant castes" and secure a place for lower castes in democratic politics. Prominent leaders like Yadunandan Prasad Mehta, Shivpujan Singh, and Jagdev Singh Yadav championed the cause as the official mouthpiece of Triveni Sangh. However, Triveni Sangh's momentum waned as most of its leaders aligned with the Congress, which also had substantial upper-caste representation. The movement lacked a clear direction, despite gaining significant traction, and eventually dissipated. The 1960s witnessed the resurgence of backward caste politics, with Ram Manohar Lohia leading the charge. Yet, this was a fractured movement, more concerned with recognising sub-caste identities than unity. Bihar experienced a significant caste war during this division. Following the Mandal and Kamandal clashes, OBC politics resurfaced in Bihar. Ram Bilas Paswan and Lalu Yadav emerged as prominent figures in the Mandal movement. However, their efforts primarily focused on electoral gains, especially among Yadavs and Muslims, rather than broader emancipation or the state's development. Despite its location in the Gangetic trough, Bihar missed opportunities for industrial development. Paswan and Lalu did not address this issue, and efforts by some Congress leaders to establish educational institutions were marred by caste and class conflicts.

The OBC community, especially the lower sections of Yadavs, remained largely excluded from government schemes. Paswan and Lalu's rise served as inspiration but did not translate into tangible gains or empowerment, even for Dalits. Koiris and Kurmis managed to secure some government support due to their entrepreneurial spirit. It was during Nitish Kumar's rule that these three castes, Koiris, Kurmis, and Yadavs, formed a potential power bloc. Nitish emerged as an unassailable leader among backward castes and Mahadalits. He also led the mahadalits and extreme backward castes, albeit with internal feuds. Nitish's leadership extended to Jitan Ram Manjhi, Upendra Kushwaha, and Mukesh Sahani, but their differences led to their separation from Nitish's alliance. Amit Shah's efforts to bring them into the NDA fold to counter Nitish's influential caste coalition within the opposition alliance had limited success. Modi's reluctance to expand reservations hindered the BJP's prospects, as Sahani's demand for upliftment of the fisherfolk community could open a Pandora's box. This alienated EBCs and Mahadalits from the BJP. In contrast, the Jharkhand government, led by the mahagathbandhan, increased reservation in state jobs, benefiting SC, ST, backward classes, OBC, and economically weaker sections. This move strengthened the government's position and heightened the aspirations of marginalized communities. The proposed job reservation policy further seeks to address these concerns, but it faces political hurdles.

Undoubtedly, India grapples with issues like wealth concentration, staggering wealth inequality, rampant unemployment, and systemic discrimination against lower castes, OBCs, and tribals. Bihar's complex caste politics and reservation dynamics remain central to addressing these challenges.

## Biden joining striking auto workers picket is a first in US history

By Satyaki Chakraborty

**T**he international labour movement witnessed a unique spectacle on September 26 when on the 12th day of the strike by the United Auto Workers (UAW), the United States of America President Joe Biden visited the picketing workers in Michigan for extending support. This never happened in the US history even during the regime of the President Franklin Roosevelt who was known for his pro-labour views.

The Biden visit might have been prompted by the President's compulsions to be on the right side of the labour and the powerful labour organization AFL-CIO to seek support in his bid for November 2024 presidential elections, but this unusual position taken by the President has the potential of angering the Wall Street lobby in the Democratic Party who are the major fund givers to the Party kitty. The President's open support to the demands of the strikers and the US labour department's efforts to persuade the auto companies owners to come to an agreement, have brightened the prospects for an early settlement.

The UAW strike has led to national turbulence as the former president and the Republican presidential aspirant Donald Trump also plans to visit the striking workers in Detroit though the UAW union leaders earlier termed Trump as anti-workers. Republican sources said that Trump is showing his usual playing to the gallery attitude since he cannot take a position in support of the striking workers.

The three auto owners are big funders to the Republican Party campaign. There is a big interest among the political circles about what finally Trump tells the picketers. President Biden visited the picketers at a time when his acceptability in the opinion polls has dipped as against his contender Trump and AFL CIO; the biggest labour organization of the USA has not yet announced its endorsement of Joe Biden as the Presidential candidate. Biden camp is now hopeful that after

this visit, the AFL-CIO will be officially endorse Biden as their candidate.

The leftwing Senator Bernie Sanders who is in charge of labour committee of the US senate has also put pressure on the President Biden to extend his support to the strikers. Sanders has already come out against the three CEOs of the auto giants by telling them that they have to share the profits with the workers. He has extended his support to the demands of the striking union. Under Sanders direction, the labour department has taken pro worker attitude in a number of strike actions throughout the country including Amazon and Starbucks.

At Bernie Sanders' instance, President Biden told the picketers "I think the UAW gave up an incredible amount back when the automobile industry was going under. They gave everything from their pensions on, and they saved the automobile industry". He said workers should benefit from carmakers' riches "now that the industry is roaring back." Biden also supported the unionization of workers in key industries which is now sweeping the American big conglomerates for ensuring decent living wages.

In 2023, the labour unions in a number of US industries have carried out protest movements against the managements successfully by getting the US labour department support in most cases. The nearly five month old writers strike in Hollywood is ready for a settlement in favour of the strikers. The Hollywood actors strike is still continuing but hopes are there for an early settlement. If the UAW strike ends in an agreement favourable to the workers, that will give a big impetus to the labour movement as a whole in the USA. That way, the success of the UAW strike action has the potential to give a boost to further unionization efforts among the American labour and the consolidation of the support base of the Democratic Party among the US labour on the eve of the coming Presidential elections. (IPA Service)

# RSS to play key role in strategising BJP policy for 2024 Lok Sabha polls

**N**ot the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, instead the RSS chief Mogan Bhagwat would leadplay the key role from behind to lead the saffron brigade to the 2024 Lok Sabha electoral battle. This is a major departure from the old practice when RSS led by its predecessors used to provide electoral wherewithal to the BJP and deploy the cadres and pracharakas for the victory of its political outfits, Jan Sangh or BJP.

The socio political and economic situation under which Bhagwat operates is not the same under which his predecessors used to work. Not only the nature and content of the political discourse has undergone a major change, but the philosophical and political thrust and the face and functioning of the key players have also been completely transformed. With these changes the political-economic priorities of the electorates, the people of India have also altered.

While in the last century, veteran RSS ideologue Govindacharya had labelled Atal Behari Vajpayee as the Mukhauta (mask) of the RSS, in the same manner Modi is the Mukhauta of the present day RSS. The change of the shape and size of the mask underlines the basic structural and philosophical change of the RSS. In real sense while Modi is ruling the country, it is Bhagwat and his RSS that is enjoying the power.

In the past the RSS never came across any opportunity where it could strive to give a shape to its primary mission of turning India into a Hindu Rashtra. But now it is just a step away from its cherished dream. The RSS would be celebrating its foundation centenary in 2025 and it plans to herald ushering in of Bharat as the Hindu Rashtra coinciding with its birthday. In this backdrop the RSS, more than the BJP leadership, is desperate to win the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and to attain this it could go to any extent and would not dither in resorting to any trick.

The recent RSS summit held in Pune has dropped enough hint to this effect. The BJP and RSS have in fact started preparations in the right earnest. It is not that Bhagwat and his team of trained strategists are not aware of the challenges from INDIA, but they are also busy evolving a mechanism to counter that. The most important step in this direction was the holding of yet another national meet of the RSS in Lucknow from September 22 to 24.

Uttar Pradesh which elects 80 Lok Sabha members has been key state for BJP. During his six year rule, the chief minister Yogi Adityanath, though not a RSS member, has done his best to anchor the organisation in the state, but the assembly election of 2022 in which Samajwadi Party performed quite well, has left the RSS and BJP scared. They are not sure that the BJP would repeat its performance of 2019.

Incidentally this time too RSS is contemplating to ignite the communal passion. They are unable to use the soul of nationalism as the issue is being well articulated by INDIA. State level meeting of the senior pracharakas and leaders are being held. Though it sounds loathsome, the RSS think tank and Bhagwat nurse the view



### DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Arun Srivastava

that inauguration and Pran over the Dalits the RSS has decided to play the old card. However the chances are quite bleak that they will succeed in their mission.

The RSS is also scared that in case the BJP precisely Narendra Modi loses the election, its spread will be clogged. At successive meetings chaired by Mohan Bhagwat, it has been clear to the pracharakas and cadres that 2024 election is very crucial for RSS as it comes just before the 100th foundation anniversary of the Sangh. The RSS must do everything to foil the attempt of INDIA to defeat the BJP. The Sangh wants to reach out to more and more people and ought to be told that nation is above all and also the identity of Hindus must be preserved at any cost.

Rural India would be the target of RSS. With the INDIA bringing in its fold the regional parties, there is a major realisation in the RSS circle that the rural voters must be made aware of the minority communal threat. Sangh's electoral message would be to tackle anti-social and anti-national elements especially at the

succeeded in their mission. The RSS is also scared that in case the BJP precisely Narendra Modi loses the election, its spread will be clogged. At successive meetings chaired by Mohan Bhagwat, it has been clear to the pracharakas and cadres that 2024 election is very crucial for RSS as it comes just before the 100th foundation anniversary of the Sangh. The RSS must do everything to foil the attempt of INDIA to defeat the BJP. The Sangh wants to reach out to more and more people and ought to be told that nation is above all and also the identity of Hindus must be preserved at any cost.

Rural India would be the target of RSS. With the INDIA bringing in its fold the regional parties, there is a major realisation in the RSS circle that the rural voters must be made aware of the minority communal threat. Sangh's electoral message would be to tackle anti-social and anti-national elements especially at the

rural level through quick awareness building and outreach. A senior RSS leader said: "A win in the Lok Sabha elections has to be ensured and we will focus on Dalits, OBCs and women".

Modi's letting down the intensity of his attack on Nehru and other national leaders is the part of the RSS strategy. The RSS leaders also feel that a major section of the rich and upper middle class, though sympathetic to the RSS and the principle of Hindu Rashtra, do not approve of Modi's strident attack on Nehru and other leaders. The RSS nurses the feeling that if this is allowed to continue then in that case it may cost the support of this decision making section. With this in view they have also decided to get more women within the ambit of the RSS. The RSS has a strong presence in the south and in Maharashtra, now efforts will have to be made in the north.

According to the sources, the RSS has entrusted a core of senior leaders and intellectuals to evolve a counter narrative to take on Rahul Gandhi's narratives. The RSS pracharakas could do nothing while Rahul Gandhi was on his Bharat Jodo Yatra with his own narrative.

After the formation of India, the RSS leadership is determined to come out with its alternative narrative focusing on civilisational importance of RSS concept of Hindutva and how India will be turned into an advanced nation under the leadership of BJP.RSS will be deploying more than three crore workers to help the BJP in 2024 Lok Sabha polls. (IPA Service)

## G20: India shines on global stage

By: Dipak Kurmi

**T**he G20 summit, skillfully presided over by India, marks a pivotal moment in the country's global reputation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has effectively capitalized on this occasion to highlight India's growing economy and its increasing impact on the world stage.

This article presents a detailed examination of the complex dynamics associated with India's leadership of the G20. It delves into important subjects like financing for climate transition, efforts to promote peace in Ukraine, the restructuring of international development organizations, the governance of cryptocurrencies, diplomatic negotiations with Bangladesh, and the notable absence of Chinese President Xi Jinping. It's hard not to contemplate the possibility of India's ability to inspire G20 leaders to reach a consensus on a groundbreaking "New Delhi Leaders Summit Declaration."

The accomplishment of securing consensus among G20 nations regarding the leaders' declaration, especially the contentious part addressing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is undeniably noteworthy.

The joint declaration of the G20 Leaders takes on a nuanced position. The New Delhi Leaders Summit Declaration specifically discusses the "consequences of the conflict in Ukraine" concerning "worldwide food and energy security, supply chains, macroeconomic stability, inflation, and economic growth," all of which play a role in advancing a durable peace in Ukraine.

The declaration underscores a commitment to upholding the principles set forth in the UN Charter. It highlights the importance of all nations refraining from employing or threatening to use force to pursue territorial gains, while respecting the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of every state.

Furthermore, the declaration unequivocally deems the use or threat of using nuclear weapons as unacceptable, in alignment with its principles. Prime Minister Modi's announcement, extending permanent membership to the African Union within the G20, stands as a strategic triumph, receiving unanimous support from member nations at the beginning of the summit. This move represents a significant accomplishment

during India's leadership of the G20.

Modi's assertion that the inclusion of the African Union will strengthen both the G20 and the representation of the Global South is a perspective worth pondering. India's invitation to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holds significant political significance. Timed strategically during a crucial period in Bangladesh's elections, it can be seen as a brilliant move.

This gesture conveys a clear message to the Western world: India's foreign policy is based on independent evaluations and remains steadfast and resolute. Additionally, this action seamlessly aligns with India's "Neighbourhood First" policy, bolstering its influence in the Global South. Sheikh Hasina's attendance at the G20 holds historical importance as it marks Bangladesh's inaugural participation in this esteemed global forum. This placement elevates Dhaka to a pivotal position in the Indo-Pacific region, highlighting the nation's growing geopolitical influence.

It not only strengthens regional relationships but also underscores India's unwavering dedication to promoting its neighboring countries on the global stage. At the same time, this invitation enhances Hasina's standing within Bangladesh, amplifying her influence and reputation.

The disruption caused by the conflict in Ukraine has had an impact on the G20 proceedings. India's approach, characterized by a focus on dialogue and diplomacy, differs from the Western nations' demand for a strong condemnation of Russia's actions. Striking a careful balance between these opposing viewpoints is of utmost importance during India's G20 presidency.

The conspicuous nonattendance of Xi Jinping at the G20 summit represents a noteworthy development, as it's the first instance where he has chosen not to participate. This highlights the ongoing rivalry between China and India, a rivalry that has become evident in recent territorial disputes.

Even though Beijing has conveyed its readiness to cooperate for a favorable summit outcome, Xi's nonattendance has cast a shadow over the event. China's previous opposition to conducting the G20 meetings in Jammu & Kashmir adds an additional layer of complexity to the already intricate diplomatic environment surrounding the event.

India's choice to host the G20 meetings in Jammu & Kashmir carries significant symbolic significance, reaffirming India's sovereignty over the area and reasserting its territorial integrity.

However, from China's geopolitical perspective, this decision is seen through a strategic lens. Beijing's objection may be rooted in its vested interests in the region and historical border disputes with India. Furthermore, China's objection highlights the broader competition for influence in South Asia between India and China. The selection of J&K as the G20 meeting location may have been perceived by China as a calculated move by India to establish dominance in a region that has long been a focal point of regional tensions.

Nevertheless, India's decision stands as a strategic move. New Delhi's selection of Jammu & Kashmir as the host for the G20 meeting carries extensive implications for regional geopolitics. In the days ahead, it will not only impact India-China relations but also mold perceptions of India's position on territorial disputes and its determination to assert influence on the global stage.

Concerning Xi's choice to forgo the G20 summit, analysts across the globe have presented a spectrum of interpretations. These interpretations span from potential diplomatic tensions with India to a preference for avoiding meetings perceived as lacking sincerity with the United States, as well as managing domestic challenges and economic slowdown within China.

Nonetheless, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has reaffirmed its endorsement of India's role as the host of the event, suggesting a willingness to collaborate. However, the failure to achieve a joint declaration at the G20 summit could have been perceived as a setback for India's ambitious G20 presidency. Nevertheless, India managed to persuade a range of member nations to support a cohesive statement.

India's successful presidency underscores its capacity to cultivate consensus and become a unifying presence on the world stage. With skillful diplomacy, India has the potential to make a lasting impression within the G20, reinforcing its role as a global leader. In pursuit of this objective, PM Modi encouraged global leaders to address the current "global trust deficit."

## Understanding cardiovascular disease on World Heart Day

By: Pooja Yadav

**E**very year on September 29, people all around the world mark World Heart Day to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease (CVD), encourage heart-healthy living, and provide educational opportunities. Worldwide, cardiovascular disease (CVD) stands as the primary contributor to mortality. However, the good news is that heart diseases can be avoided by living a healthy lifestyle and by getting regular check-ups covered by your comprehensive health insurance.

It is imperative to lead a healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise, a nutritious diet, and suitable health insurance that offers all-encompassing protection against CVD and other serious illnesses. Besides, planning for a financially secure future with the appropriate insurance plan is equally important to everyone as knowing about a healthy heart and lifestyle.

**Champion a Heart-Friendly and Active Lifestyle:** Advocating and actively promoting a heart-friendly and active lifestyle is crucial for reducing the risk of heart disease and enhancing overall well-being.

**Prioritize Physical Activity:** Engaging in regular physical activity strengthens your heart, decreases the chances of becoming overweight, and lowers high blood pressure. Target for 150 minutes or more of moderate-intensity exercise per week. Additionally, maintaining a healthy weight is crucial for staying fit and preventing chronic health issues in the long run.

**Maintain a Heart-Healthy Diet:** Consume ample fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats while limiting saturated fats, trans fats, salt, and added sugars.

**Quit Smoking:** Giving up smoking is a tremendously effective step to reduce the risk of heart disease, as smoking greatly increases the chances of cardiovascular problems. In addition, moderating alcohol consumption is also essential for heart health, as excessive drinking can lead to heart-related issues. So, quitting smoking and controlling alcohol intake are both vital actions for maintaining a healthy heart.

**Manage Stress:** Chronic stress contributes to heart problems. Practice stress-relief methods like meditation, yoga, or deep breathing exercises. While adopting a healthy lifestyle mitigates CVD risks, comprehensive insurance coverage remains vital to protect against unforeseen medical expenses. Seek health insurance policies that encompass these essential components:

**a. Inpatient coverage:** Inpatient coverage is a vital facet of health insurance plans, providing individuals with peace of mind during hospitalization or intensive medical care. This coverage ensures that policyholders can access a wide range of inpatient services without the financial strain of hospital expenses. It covers room and board, surgical procedures, diagnostics, medications, and essential medical interventions. This security

allows individuals to concentrate on recovery without financial worries. Inpatient coverage acts as a safety net, allowing patients and families to prioritize health without the stress of medical bills.

**b. Enhanced Sum Insured:** Enhanced Sum Insured provides a significant benefit by doubling your coverage to 100% of the sum insured when diagnosed with a serious illness. There are also certain plans where the base sum insured gets recharged unlimited times. This extra financial support eases the burden of additional medical costs, ensuring comprehensive coverage and peace of mind during a challenging and costly period of illness.

**c. Ailments Related to Heart:** For individuals diagnosed with heart-related conditions, having access to high-quality medical care is absolutely crucial. Specialized insurance plans tailored to heart ailments can offer invaluable financial assistance in such situations. These plans are designed to provide comprehensive coverage for diagnostic tests, surgeries, medications, and ongoing treatments related to heart health. Furthermore, mentioning a critical illness-specific plan is relevant, where upon diagnosis of a critical illness, the insured member receives a lump sum benefit to aid in their recovery and financial needs.

**d. Top-up plan:** Individuals can opt for top-up insurance policies to provide an added layer of protection in cases of exceptionally high hospitalization costs. These plans offer the flexibility of covering higher claim amounts beyond the regular health insurance limits, ensuring financial security during severe medical emergencies. What makes them even more attractive is that they come at a relatively low premium, making them affordable for a wide range of individuals. In essence, top-up policies act as a cost-effective safety net, offering peace of mind and financial stability during extreme healthcare situations.

On this World Heart Day, let's make our heart health a top priority. Start by embracing a lifestyle that promotes a healthy heart. Incorporate regular exercise and a well-balanced diet into your daily routine. Remember, quitting smoking and managing stress are also crucial steps in reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Additionally, safeguard yourself and your family's financial well-being by investing in comprehensive health insurance. Choose a plan that offers enhanced sum insured for critical illnesses, and coverage for heart-related ailments, to ensure you have the peace of mind and protection for your heart's health.

Don't wait until it's too late - take proactive steps to ensure a healthy heart and financial security for the future. Celebrate World Heart Day by making informed choices for a heart-healthy life and by securing the peace of mind you and your loved ones deserve. Your heart deserves nothing less. (The author is the Chief Product Officer, Zuno General Insurance)



# C295 for India-Third time's the charm?

By: Angad Singh

No less storied than the hundreds of fighters produced by Indians hands-on Indian soil since the 1940s, are the humble transports. The Indian Air Force's Aircraft Manufacturing Depot (AMD) at Kanpur began producing the Avro 748 turboprop as a replacement for the WWII-era Dakota in 1961. In 1964, AMD was transferred to a newly reorganised PSU formed by the merger of Aeronautics India and Hindustan Aircraft, forming Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). HAL would continue production, eventually building nearly 90 of the type for the IAF as well as Indian Airlines.

By the 1980s, the Indian government was shopping around for a short-haul airliner to enable regional connectivity, and the IAF was looking to replace its Devons and Otters in the passenger/utility role. The Dornier 228 was selected for this combined requirement, and the programme expanded to include the Coast Guard and Navy. The first German-built Do 228 was delivered in 1984, and the first HAL-built example was handed over to government-owned Vayudoot in 1986.

The contract, like the Avro before it, ensured that the Dornier

228 would be a near-completely indigenous aircraft. Crucially, however, unlike the Avro agreement, HAL had nearly unrestricted marketing and export rights for the Do 228. Unfortunately, no arm of the government ever took advantage of this flexibility, and even though HAL produced over 150 of the type in different variants, only a small handful were ever operated outside India.

Finally, in September 2021, the Indian government signed a contract with Airbus for 56 C295MW (MW for the winglet-equipped military transport variant) transport aircraft, under the so-called 'Avro replacement programme'. The first of these formally entered service with the IAF on 25 September, and after Airbus delivers the next 15 from Spain, 40 more will be produced in partnership with Tata at a facility in Vadodara, Gujarat.

That it has taken over 60 years to begin replacing an aircraft design dating back to the 1950s is now entirely par for the course and does not merit further examination or exhortation. However, the C295 procurement offers other opportunities to learn from the Avro and Dornier programmes.

First, the Dornier programme did address one major shortcoming of the Avro, and this should

be repeated with the C295—adapting it for more roles. While the Avro was essentially an airliner, some attempts were made to modify it for military transport, with an enlarged door to allow the loading of cargo, including vehicles, as well as paratroopers and materiel. However, the design of the aircraft was inherently unsuitable for these tasks, and it is typically used for passenger transport and light cargo to this day.

A single aircraft was modified for airborne radar development, but a fatal crash in 1999 ended the project. The Dornier, on the other hand, benefited from starting life as a civilian aircraft that was always intended to be modified for military customers. India was an enthusiastic adopter of the maritime variant, with various specialised configurations being used extensively by the Indian Navy and Coast Guard.

The C295 offers similar flexibility off the shelf, with enhanced payload, range, and endurance—though admittedly these do come at a premium compared to the venerable Do 228. However, with a C295 assembly line and substantial detail manufacturing planned in the country, it would make sense to leverage this capacity and standardise this platform for as



many roles as possible. Replacing at least a portion of the Navy and Coast Guard's Dornier fleet would be a start, but it is also important for the Services to begin considering other special missions that have hitherto been under-served or relied on a menagerie of different aircraft types. The obvious low-hanging fruit beyond the maritime domain include overland surveillance (communications and electronic intelligence), dedicated search and rescue, and electronic warfare.

With some of these modifications (principally maritime but also applicable to surveillance and jamming) already certified by the OEM, the focus should be

on ruthless cost optimisation across variants by prioritising either commercial grade or military grade off-the-shelf (COTS/MOTS) mission hardware to start with. This will allow for the services' paltry modernisation funds to afford these C295 variants. Phased indigenisation of imported mission equipment, if needed, would allow for greater sovereign control and exportability down the line.

All this development, integration, testing, and production by Indians in India will also begin creating parallel capabilities and capacities in the private sector. With these hitherto concentrated only within the public sector, an

expanded set of roles for the C295 in India will also stress test the private sector (or at least Tata) as a viable second option to the PSUs.

This finally brings us to where the rubber meets the road (or runway, in this case). The biggest letdown of Indian aerospace in the past 70-odd years has been its inability to move beyond its captive customer. Defence PSUs produce almost exclusively for the Defence Ministry, which owns them—not just an unholy exercise in self-gratification, but also a self-defeating enterprise that relies solely on stunted capital spending from a defence budget overburdened by revenue expenses.

Defence exports, though markedly improved in recent years, are still far short of the government's own targets. The Dornier case is instructive, where competitor aircraft have sold globally in the hundreds, if not thousands, while HAL-built Do 228s have struggled to find a market outside a tiny handful of exports to regional militaries.

The C295 already has the advantage of widespread acceptance around the world and the credibility of a global aerospace OEM, Airbus, behind it. A wider range of variants with the backing of the Indian Armed Forces will only enhance the platform's appeal. Strong domestic adoption of the aircraft will underpin its export potential, but the Ministry of External Affairs and its missions around the world will also need to take up marketing and promotion activities much more robustly than they ever have to date.

The multi-national nature of the programme will mean working with geopolitical partners to ensure the Indian assembly lines are humming at capacity for decades. If the C295 is to succeed, for the OEM, for the Indian production partner, and for India's aerospace ambitions, the government must throw more weight behind it, both at home and abroad. (Courtesy: ORF)

## The opium of Nationalism

By: Neera Chandhoke

In the 1988 film *The Accused* directed by Jonathan Kaplan, the protagonist, Sarah Tobias, played to perfection by Jodie Foster, is gang raped by three men in a bar. The courts fail to do justice by her, and one of the rapists harasses her in a parking lot. She subsequently persuades an attorney, played by Kathryn McGillin, to reopen the case by charging not only the three rapists, but also the men who stood around, watched, clapped, cheered, and goaded the rapists, with criminal intimidation. The rapists are sentenced by the court, as are the bystanders who laughed when a woman was being gang raped. And the message, 'when a woman says no she means no', became a part of feminist lexicon.

The film came to mind as we watched two 'honourable' members of the Lok Sabha laugh as their party member heaped the most disgusting, despicable, and sickening slurs on another member Danish Ali on the floor of the house. Are the people who stood around, watched, clapped, and cheered when a fellow citizen of this country and his community were dishonoured, not complicit in brutal hate speech that tars an entire community? I forced myself to watch the video just to understand the perverse mindset of not only the man who uttered these slurs, but also the mindset of two members of his party; a party that owes much of its success to fostering anti-minority sentiments.

We see the same glee when Muslims are lynched or tied to trees and compelled to chant *Jai Shree Ram* (Hindustani slogan) on the faces of bystanders who take pictures of humiliation and violence on their phones. We saw the same excitement and clapping when a mob of men stripped two women and made them march naked in Manipur, while they openly molested them.

Something very ugly has been set off in our society. And this is a society that brandishes the platitude 'the world is one family' as its unique contribution to world history. Let us make no mistake, silence or laughter at nauseating comments and violent acts, is acquiescence. One day future generations will ask why our generation was silent when this was happening in our country, the way the young in today's Germany ask their grandparents how they could be part of the 'final solution' masterminded by Hitler. They ask these questions despite the rise of a right-wing neo-Nazi movement in the country.



The question has perplexed many historians of modern Germany. On the basis of some hard work and time spent on perusing personal correspondence and diaries, historians tell us that not all Germans were active participants or supporters of the Holocaust. Some were rankly sceptical of Hitler's project of creating a country free of the Jewish community but remained silent, and some approved of what was taking place before their eyes. The question of how Germans responded to the final solution is complex and complicated.

The conditions imposed upon a defeated Germany after World War I by the victors created and sustained deep rooted grievances, and were a blow to national pride. This generated a strong sense of nationalism in most people.

As the Germans were wracked by turmoil in the period between the two wars, a strong sense of victimhood loomed large over the country. Hitler wanted to create a global power dominated by the Aryan race by conquering the Slav nations and exterminating the Jewish community by evoking disquiet and mortification coupled with the development of strong nationalism in the country. Many might not have supported the concentration camp, but they became silent spectators of the horror being inflicted on the Jewish community. Families broke up and friendships were sundered over the Nazi project. But national pride, survival of the nation, and the importance of race as a marker of the identity of the nation absorbed the population to a large extent.

We should learn the lessons that history teaches us. Once politicians, skilled in manipulating insecurity and national pride, organise the political community on the issue of identity—whether racial or religious, ethnic or linguistic—on selective remembrance of history, exaggerated grievances and rabid nationalism, societies seldom recover.

Cynical politicians use these weapons to radicalise

societies for their own ambitions and the pursuit of absolute power. Societies suffer, and this suffering does not heal easily. It might never heal. Hate becomes a part of personal and collective psyche as weak and unacknowledged sentiments get translated into strong passions. In India, hate speech and its supporters have acted as a trigger to translate unarticulated prejudices into violence. And this is justified in the name of one of the most destructive ideologies—nationalism and pseudo-histories. Nationalism that exploits the past and targets communities on this basis in the present, is terrible to behold.

British historian Donald Sassoon has edited and written a preface for a collection of essays by fellow historian Eric Hobsbawm.

According to Sassoon, Hobsbawm was fond of saying that there might have been a time he believed that historians, who fed into the nationalist project, unlike architects and civil engineers could not cause disasters. Hobsbawm eventually recognised that history in the hands of nationalists can kill more people than incompetent builders. "History is the raw material for nationalist or ethnic or fundamentalist ideologies, as poppies are the raw material for heroin addicts," he wrote.

Nationalism in the wrong hands can scar a nation. Politicians should be careful in evoking primordial passions, for the consequences for human societies are serious. The politicisation of religion or ethnicity leads to unimaginable tragedies. Some might participate in these tragedies; others might watch, but witnesses are by no means innocent.

The issue of how we remember history came up sharply in the period that followed the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. The 1990s witnessed a series of ethno-nationalist wars that swamped the Balkans and then major parts of the world. The rise of fanatical nationalism based on selective historical memory that resulted in hate and mas-

sacres, motivated a number of scholars to try to understand the politics of selective remembrance or memory.

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who belongs to the tradition set by the inter-war Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, has written extensively on memory. Habermas uses the phrase collective memory to persuasively argue for dialogue and communication between contested world views. This is one way of recovering from the past, and learning from it. He searched for an expansive political community within which these debates are conducted to disable the devastating effects of nationalism. Accordingly, Habermas defends the need for post-national forms of political community, i.e., the European Union, so that the blood-spattered history of the nation can be transcended, and we are able to reach beyond the nation state.

Many scholars who subscribe to critical theory have struggled with the idea of memory. Max Horkheimer, one of the most distinguished members of the school, had written that 'past injustice has occurred and is completed. The slain are really slain'. The underlying conviction is that we cannot forget the past. To forget the past is to repress it in the Freudian sense.

What is repressed will at some point or the other emerge as a sickness. What we can best do is to come to terms with the past to ensure that atrocities committed many centuries ago are not repeated in the present or in the future.

In India however, we deal with another more troubling phenomenon—the legitimisation of state power through selective remembrance and hyper-nationalism. This does not let people come to terms with the past, it pries open old wounds, targets minorities, and tries to build a nation through muscular and aggressive nationalism whether in the form of hate-speech, lynching of Muslims, or destruction of churches. A nation built on tolerance of hate speech, or open support for such

speech as we saw in the Lok Sabha, cannot but be scarred. For violence hurts not only the victim but the perpetrator.

The manipulation of a common past explodes on the consciousness of the people, and manufactures an enemy with whom there can be neither truck nor transaction. This is the tragedy of our times. The Urdu poet Bashir Badr wrote: 'dushmani jam kar karo lekin ye gunjaish rahe / jab kabhi hum dost ho jaaen to sharminda na hon' (be my enemy with all the passion you command, but leave enough scope, for if we become friends, we should not be ashamed). In the language of political theory: no matter how deep the social divide is, there should be some space for reconciliation.

The project of reconciliation, or even leaving scope for future friendships, is difficult. The manoeuvring of historical memory has become a convenient weapon to hide mis-governance, hunger and poverty.

The forcible exclusion of memories that tell stories of a culture of fusion in the mediaeval times—from classical Hindustani music, miniature Mughal paintings, magnificent Mughal architecture, to the way all communities worshipped at roadside shrines of Sufi saints, the formation of a beautiful common language, Urdu, to folk music of love and longing, to great works of literature and poetry—has torn apart communal solidarities. This, it is expected, will create fictional solidarity among the dominant community; a solidarity that is used for ignoble ends such as securing a majority in the next election.

For Tagore, nationalism was one of the most pernicious exports of the West. He argued that nationalism is not a child of liberty or reason but the opposite—of fervent romanticism and the idea of political messiahs whose consequence is invariably the annihilation of freedom. He believed in a world that had not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls. In his essay on nationalism, Tagore wrote that 'my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity'.

Finally, it is a pity that the new building housing the Indian parliament, which should have been inaugurated by a renewed commitment to the Constitution, has been inaugurated by vulgar hate speech. It does not augur well for a parliamentary democracy, or whatever is left of it. (Courtesy: The Wire)

## Handling row with Canada to protect relations with the West: 3 lessons for India



By: Deepanshu Mohan

Almost a week after Canadian PM Justin Trudeau alleged a possible Indian involvement in the assassination of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June, confirmed reports of shared intelligence emerged from the 'Five Eyes' alliance that made Trudeau speak up on the issue in his own Parliament.

The disclosure of a shared intelligence input, with the confirmation coming from the US Ambassador to Canada, brings a larger focus on New Delhi's relations with the West in the coming election year.

Domestic context matters more for Modi and the BJP at this point though. The anti-West, decolonisation sentiment is riding high in India's hyper-nationalist socio-political domestic scenario. The recently concluded G20 summit was hailed as a success for India's assumed role in 'anchoring' the concerns of the developing Global South.

The ability of New Delhi to get a declaration passed in a highly uncertain, multi-polar global power dynamics—while getting China and Russia on board—strengthened India's case as a strategically important actor that can ally with the West and members in the East too.

### Why the West is Vital for India

For the West, India is vital for its plan in Asia, to counter China and give access to investment/trade frontiers for a debt, recession-affected Europe, and so countries like the US and those in the EU were more accommodative to let India get a win on the deliverables it sought out to achieve as part of the summit.

Now, a toughened stance against Canada—and the disproportionate blowing up of the Khalistan issue domestically—may simply appear to be part of a domestic electoral strategy for Modi to score 'high' in an election year where the search for a 'foreign enemy' helps develop a cohesive national (security) narrative for the BJP. Remember how it was Pakistan that was vilified, post-Pulwama (sans evidence), in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

But Canada is not Pakistan. We are talking here about a G7 member country that is a close ally to the US and is part of the industrially advanced world which is also a significant destination for India's skilled (e)migration pattern, from young students to mid-career professionals which allows higher remittances into India, even though India's own export/import-trade exposure to Canada is less than 1 percent of its overall export share. The Khalistan issue too isn't that big a concern in defining the domestic politics of India or of/in Punjab's Sikh

community at this point.

And so, what's rather more vital for New Delhi to consider is the larger implications of its unwarranted toughened, tit-for-tat aggressive posture against Canada which shouldn't endanger its relations with the West, and vice-versa.

### 3 Important Lessons

From the West's perspective, in context to the current bilateral tension between Canada and India, some things are becoming clear even if the truth remains shrouded in the fog of allegations and counter-allegations.

First, the US, the UK and Canada's other key allies are reluctant to burn bridges with India, which they see as a vital partner in balancing the rise of China.

Second, it would equally be naïve to expect that this time around, the US and its friends will pick India over Canada. The very architecture and credibility of the US-led alliance system hinges on members standing by each other on questions of national security, whatever may happen. Canada's Five Eyes partners aren't just passively sticking by Ottawa; they are actively sharing intelligence that helps Trudeau strengthen his case against India.

This brings us to the third and most important lesson from the past week. For all the public bonhomie that Western leaders demonstrate when meeting Indian counterparts or speaking of ties with New Delhi, they're only too happy to snoop on their friends.

Also, if India doesn't handle this moment more deftly through instruments of quiet, back-channel diplomacy with Canada and its security collaborators (the 'Five Eyes'), it risks of being increasingly viewed in the West as an 'undependable friend'.

New Delhi will then find it tougher to get the West's support on some of the other key issues, such as its balancing game with Russia and Ukraine, facing China and its security risk in its own neighbourhood in South Asia, finding partners for capital mobility and technology-transfers that are key to India's economic growth engine (where the US is a key partner), and finally, being able to stick to the implementation of its own promises driven by different multilateral and plurilateral platforms (including the G20).

As a senior journalist reports, "Hugging world leaders and speaking in their parliaments might create feel-good moments for cameras, but the frost in India-Canada ties is a reminder that at the end of the day, international diplomacy is still very much a game of 'gotcha'—and India." (Courtesy: The Quint)



*SKorea will continue to expand its military cooperation with the US & Japan and work closer with other international partners to increase pressure on NKorea*

## North Korean leader urges greater nuclear weapons production in response to a 'new Cold War'

**SEOUL, Sept 28:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called for an exponential increase in production of nuclear weapons and for his country to play a larger role in a coalition of nations confronting the United States in a "new Cold War," state media said on Thursday.

The Korean Central News Agency said Kim made the comments during a two-day session of the country's rubber-stamp parliament which amended the constitution to include his policy of expanding the country's nuclear weapons programme.

The Supreme People's Assembly's session on Tuesday and Wednesday came after Kim travelled to Russia's Far East this month to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and visit military and technology sites.

The trip sparked West-

ern concerns about a possible arms alliance in which North Korea would supply Putin with badly needed munitions to fuel his war on Ukraine in exchange for economic aid and advanced Russian technologies to enhance North Korea's nuclear and missile systems.

As North Korea slowly ends its pandemic lockdown, Kim has been actively boosting his partnerships with Moscow and Beijing as he attempts to break out of diplomatic isolation and join a united front against Washington. He has described the world as entering a "new Cold War" and that North Korea should advance its nuclear capabilities in response. KCNA's reports on Kim's comments came a day after North Korea confirmed the release of US Army Pvt. Travis King, who is now being flown back to America,



two months after he sprinted across the heavily fortified border into the North.

King's relatively swift expulsion defied speculation that North Korea might drag out his detention to squeeze concessions from the United States, and possibly reflected the North's disinterest in diplomacy with Washington.

KCNA said members of the assembly gave unanimous approval to a new clause in the constitution

to "ensure the country's right to existence and development, deter war and protect regional and global peace by rapidly developing nuclear weapons to a higher level."

North Korea's "nuclear force-building policy has been made permanent as the basic law of the state, which no one is allowed to flout with anything," Kim said in a speech at the assembly. He stressed the need to "push ahead with the work for exponentially boosting the production of

nuclear weapons and diversifying the nuclear strike means," KCNA said.

Kim pointed to what he described as a growing threat posed by a hostile United States and its expanding military cooperation with South Korea and Japan, accusing them of creating the "Asian version of NATO, the root cause of war and aggression."

"This is just the worst actual threat, not threatening rhetoric or an imaginary entity," he said.

Kim urged his diplomats to "further promote solidarity with the nations standing against the U.S. and the West's strategy for hegemony."

South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles relations with North Korea, said the North Korean constitutional amendment confirms Kim's unwillingness to relin-

quish his nuclear weapons program and his unwavering commitment to advancing that arsenal.

It said in a statement that South Korea will continue to expand its military cooperation with the U.S. and Japan and work closer with other international partners to increase pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest level in years as North Korea has test-fired more than 100 missiles since the start of 2022 and the U.S. has expanded its military exercises with its Asian allies, in tit-for-tat responses.

Last year, the assembly passed a new nuclear doctrine into law which authorises pre-emptive nuclear strikes if North Korea's leadership is perceived as under threat. (AP)

## Trudeau apologises after Nazi unit war veteran honoured in Canadian Parliament

**OTTAWA, Sept 28:** Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has apologised for the Canadian Parliament's recognition of a man who fought for a Nazi unit during World War II, an incident that drew global condemnation and was termed by the Opposition as the "biggest single diplomatic embarrassment" in the country's history.

Trudeau, already under pressure for jeopardising Canada's relations with India over the killing of a Khalistani separatist in Canada, said the Canadian government has reached out to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was present during the event last Friday, in the wake of the incident.

Russia has painted his enemies in Ukraine as "neo-Nazis" after the incident although Zelenskyy is Jewish and lost relatives in the Holocaust. Speaker Anthony Rota, who has assumed responsibility for inviting Yaroslav Hunka, 98, resigned on Tuesday. The incident has drawn global condemnation.

Hunka, who fought with a Nazi unit in World War Two, got a standing ovation and was praised as a Ukrainian and Canadian "hero". He served in the 14th Waffen-SS Grenadier Division, a voluntary unit made up mostly of ethnic Ukrainians under Nazi command. Division members are accused of killing Polish and Jewish civilians, although the unit has not been found guilty of any war crimes by a tribunal.

"This was a mistake that has deeply embarrassed Parliament and Canada. All of us who were in this House on Friday regret deeply having stood and clapped even

though we did so, unaware of the context," Trudeau told reporters, indicating his plans to personally address the House of Commons about the controversy for the first time since it exploded.

He called the incident a "horrendous violation" of the memory of the millions of people who died in the Holocaust and said it was "deeply, deeply painful" for Jewish people, as well as members of the Polish, Roma, and LGBTQ2S+ communities who were also "targeted by the Nazi genocide", CTV News reported.

"Every year, there are fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors to share firsthand the horrors of what they experienced. And it is therefore incumbent upon us all to ensure that no one ever forgets what happened," Trudeau added before entering the chamber to offer similar remarks.

It was the first time the prime minister personally addressed the House of Commons about the controversy since it exploded. Facing a series of pointed questions about the internationally condemned situation that transpired during Zelenskyy's address last Friday, Trudeau noted the Speaker was "solely responsible" for Hunka's recognition.

Still, Trudeau said Canada is "deeply sorry" for the position this has put Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian delegation in, calling it "extremely troubling" that such an egregious error, and the images captured of the moment, are being used as propaganda by Russia and its supporters to amplify false narratives about what Ukraine is fighting for. (PTI)

## Half of Nagorno-Karabakh's population flees as separatist govt says it will dissolve

**YEREVAN (ARMENIA), Sept 28:** The separatist government of Nagorno-Karabakh announced on Thursday that it will dissolve itself and the unrecognized republic will cease to exist by the end of the year, and Armenian officials said more than half of the population has already fled.

That is after Azerbaijan carried out a lightning offensive to reclaim full control over its breakaway region and demanded that Armenian troops in Nagorno-Karabakh lay down their weapons and the separatist government dissolve itself.

A decree to that effect was signed by the region's separatist President Samvel Shakhramanyan. The document cited an agreement reached last week to end the fighting under which Azerbaijan will allow the "free, voluntary and unhindered movement" of Nagorno-Karabakh residents and disarm troops in Armenia in exchange.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of Azerbaijan that came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces, backed by the Armenian military, in separatist fighting that ended in 1994. During a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan took back parts of

the region along with surrounding territory that Armenian forces had claimed during the earlier conflict.

Following the latest offensive and a cease-fire agreement brokered by Russian peacekeepers, Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh separatist authorities have begun talks on "reintegrating" the region back into Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani authorities have pledged to respect the rights of ethnic Armenians in the region and restore supplies after a 10-month blockade. Many local residents, however, fear reprisals and have decided to leave for Armenia. By Thursday morning, more than half of Nagorno-Karabakh's population - over 65,000 people - had fled to Armenia, according to Armenian officials. The massive exodus began on Sunday evening, and the only road linking Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia quickly filled up with cars that created an hours-long traffic jam.

On Monday night, a fuel reservoir exploded at a gas station where people seeking to leave were lining up for gas that due to the blockade had been in short supply. At least 68 people were killed and nearly 300 injured, with over 100 more

still considered missing.

It isn't immediately clear if any of the ethnic Armenians that have populated the region will remain there. Shakhramanyan's decree on Thursday urged Nagorno-Karabakh's population - including those who left - "to familiarize themselves with the conditions of reintegration offered by the Republic of Azerbaijan, in order to then make an individual decision about the possibility of staying in (or returning to) Nagorno-Karabakh."

On Thursday, Azerbaijani authorities charged Ruben Vardanyan, the former head of Nagorno-Karabakh's separatist government who was arrested a day earlier, with financing terrorism, creating illegal armed formations and illegally crossing a state border. Azerbaijani officials said Vardanyan, a billionaire who made his fortune in Russia, was detained as he was trying to cross into Armenia from the breakaway region along with thousands of others. He was escorted to Azerbaijan's capital, Baku. His arrest appeared to indicate Azerbaijan's intention to quickly enforce its grip on the region. (AP)

## Chinese ambassador: Australian lawmakers who visit Taiwan are being utilized by separatists

**CANBERRA (AUSTRALIA), Sept 28:** China's ambassador to Australia on Thursday criticised Australian politicians who visit Taiwan, saying they are being utilized by separatists on the self-governing island.

Ambassador Xiao Qian was commenting in Sydney after an Australian parliamentary delegation visited Taiwan this week, and as a former prime minister plans to deliver a speech in Taipei next month. China considers Taiwan to be part of its territory. Xiao said Australian parliamentarians and former prime ministers who visit Taiwan "carry political significance."

"It might be easily utilised by the political forces in Taiwan for their independent forces movement, for their secession movement, and I don't want to see that happen," Xiao told reporters.

"I hope they will stick to the one-China policy" in words and indeed, refrain from engaging with Taiwan in whichever form or capacity so that they will not be politically utilized by people in the island with political motives," Xiao said. (AP)

## Over 50 arrested after mobs ransacked Philadelphia stores; Dozens of liquor outlets are shut down

**PHILADELPHIA, Sept 28:** Dozens of people faced criminal charges on Wednesday after a night of social media-fueled mayhem in which groups of thieves, apparently working together, smashed their way into stores in several areas of Philadelphia, stuffing plastic bags with merchandise and fleeing, authorities said.

Police said they made at least 52 arrests. Burglary, theft and other counts have been filed so far against at least 30 people, all but three of them adults, according to Jane Roh, spokesperson for the Philadelphia district attorney's office.

The flash mob-style ransacking Tuesday night at dozens of stores including Foot Locker, Lululemon and Apple came after a peaceful protest over a judge's decision to dismiss murder and other charges against a Philadelphia police officer who shot and killed a driver, Eddie Iirizarry, through a rolled-up window.

Those doing the ransacking were not affiliated with the protest, Interim Police Commissioner John Stanford said at a news conference, calling the group "a bunch of criminal opportunists."

At least 18 state-run liquor stores were broken into, leading the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board to close all 48 of its Philadelphia retail locations and one in suburban Cheltenham on Wednesday. No employees were hurt on Tuesday night, but "some were understandably shaken," said liquor board spokesperson Shawn Kelly.

The stores were "closed in the interest of employee safety and while we assess the damage and loss that occurred. We

will reopen stores when it is safe to do so and when the damage is repaired," Kelly said.

Video on social media showed masked people in hoodies running out of Lululemon with merchandise and police officers grabbing several and tackling them to the sidewalk. Photos of a sporting goods store at a mall showed mannequins and sneakers scattered on the sidewalk. The thefts and unrest stretched from downtown to northeast and west Philadelphia, leaving smashed display windows and broken storefront coverings. Police said seven cars were

stolen from a lot in the northeast. One of the cars had been recovered as of Wednesday afternoon. Six businesses in a single retail corridor of North Philadelphia were looted, including three pharmacies, a hair salon, a tax preparation company and a cellphone store, according to the North 22nd Street Business Corridor, a business group.

Benjamin Nochum, the pharmacist and store manager at Patriot Pharmacy, said it was the third time since 2020 his business had been hit. "When looters steal from us, what they don't seem to understand is that they are also stealing from our neighbors," Nochum said in a statement. "It makes you question how much longer you can hang on." People appeared to have organized efforts on social media, according to Stanford, the interim police commissioner.

Police are investigating "that there was possibly a caravan of a number of different vehicles that were going from location to location." (AP)



## US secures the release of the soldier who crossed into North Korea 2 months ago

**WASHINGTON, Sept 28:** The U.S. has secured the release of a U.S. soldier who sprinted across a heavily fortified border into North Korea more than two months ago, and he is on his way back to America, officials announced on Wednesday. U.S. ally Sweden and rival China helped with the transfer.

Left unanswered were questions of why North Korea — which has tense relations with Washington over the North's nuclear program, support for Russia's war in Ukraine and other issues — had agreed to turn him over and why the soldier had fled in the first place. North Korea had abruptly announced earlier Wednesday that it would expel Pvt. Travis King — though some had expected the North to drag out his detention in hopes of squeezing concessions from Washington at a time of high tensions be-



tween the two countries.

"U.S. officials have secured the return of Private Travis King from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a statement. "We appreciate the dedication of the interagency team that has worked tirelessly out of concern for Private King's wellbeing."

Swedish officials took King to the Chinese border, where he was met by

the U.S. Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns, the Swedish ambassador to China, and at least one U.S. Defense Department official. Biden administration officials insisted they provided no concessions to North Korea to secure the soldier's release.

"We thank the government of Sweden for its diplomatic role serving as the protecting power for the United States in the DPRK and the government of the People's Republic of China for its assistance in facilitating the transit of Private King," Sullivan added. King was flown to a U.S. military base in South Korea before being returned to the U.S. His expulsion almost certainly does not end his troubles or ensure the sort of celebratory homecoming that has accompanied the releases of other detained Americans. He has been declared AWOL from the Army,

which can mean punishment military jail, forfeiture of pay or a dishonorable discharge. In the near term, officials said that their focus would be on helping King reintegrate into U.S. society, including helping him address mental and emotional concerns, according to a senior Biden administration official who briefed reporters on the transfer.

The soldier was in "good spirits and good health" upon his release, according to one senior administration official. He was to be taken to Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston in Texas, and was expected to arrive overnight, officials said. King, who had served in South Korea, ran into North Korea while on a civilian tour of a border village on July 18, becoming the first American confirmed to be detained in the North in nearly five years. (AP)

## Israel's High Court hears challenge to law that makes it harder to remove Netanyahu from office

**JERUSALEM, Sept 28:** Israel's Supreme Court on Thursday was hearing a challenge to a law that makes it harder to remove a sitting prime minister, which critics say is designed to protect Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who has been working to reshape the justice system while he is on trial for alleged corruption.

The hearing is part of several pivotal court challenges against a proposed package of legislation and government steps meant to alter the country's justice system. It comes as Israel has been plunged into months of turmoil over the plan and deepens a rift between Netanyahu's government and the judiciary, which it wants to weaken despite unprecedented opposition. The hearing is the second by the High Court on the law but was being heard Thursday by an expanded 11-judge panel, underscoring the importance of the deliberations.

Netanyahu's governing coalition — Israel's most religious and nationalist ever — passed the "incapacitation law" in March which allows a prime minister to be deemed unfit to rule only for medical or mental reasons. It also gives only the prime minister or his government the power to determine a leader's unfitness. US allows Israeli citizens to travel to US visa-free as Israel joins a select group of countries

The previous law was vague about both the cir-

cumstances surrounding a prime minister being deemed unfit as well as who had the authority to declare it, leaving open the possibility that the attorney general could take the step against Netanyahu over claims that he violated a conflict of interest agreement.

Critics say the law protects Netanyahu from being deemed unfit for office because of his ongoing corruption trial and claims of a conflict of interest over his involvement in the legal overhaul. They also say the law is tailor-made for Netanyahu and encourages corruption.

Based on those criticisms, Thursday's hearing is focusing on whether the law should come into effect after the next national elections and not immediately so that it isn't interpreted as a personalized law. A ruling is expected by January.

Dozens of protesters opposed to the overhaul gathered outside Netanyahu's private residence in Jerusalem ahead of the hearing, while Netanyahu's allies defended the law.

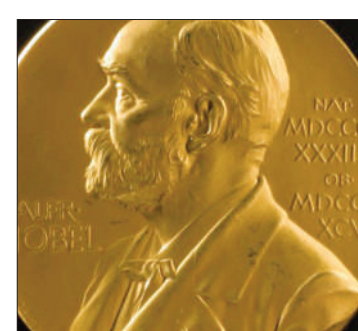
Simcha Rothman, a main driver of the overhaul, told Israeli Army Radio that the court's decision to hear the case over the fate of a sitting prime minister was harmful to Israeli democracy and challenging the law was akin to throwing out the results of a legitimate election. (AP)

## The laureates will be recognized at an award presentation in Stockholm on November 29 4 environmental, human rights activists awarded 'Alternative Nobel' prizes

**COPENHAGEN (DENMARK), Sept 28:** The Right Livelihood Award — known as the 'Alternative Nobel' — was awarded on Thursday to environment activists from Kenya and Cambodia, a human rights defender from Ghana and a humanitarian group that rescues migrants in the Mediterranean Sea.

The 2023 laureates "stand up to save lives, preserve nature and safeguard the dignity and livelihoods of communities around the world," the award foundation said, adding that they "fight for people's right to health, safety, a clean environment and democracy."

This year's prize went to Phyllis Omidio from Kenya and the groups Mother Nature Cambodia and SOS Mediterranee. They will share a cash prize but for security reasons its size cannot be disclosed, the award foundation said, in a statement.



dation said. The 2023 honorary award was given to Eunice Brookman-Amisshah from Ghana.

"They care for their land and each human life connected to it: be it indigenous communities or people risking their lives to get to safety," Ole von Uexkull, the head of the Stockholm-based Right Livelihood foundation, said in a statement.

The Cambodian advocacy group was cited for its "fearless and engaging activism to preserve Cambodia's natural environment in the context of a highly restricted democratic space," while the non-profit charity that operates in international waters north of Libya was credited with carrying out "life-saving humanitarian search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea."

Kenyan grassroots environmental activist Omidio received the award "for her groundbreaking struggle to secure land and environmental rights for local communities while advancing the field of environmental law," it said.

The foundation said Brookman-Amisshah was honoured "for pioneering discussions on women's reproductive rights in Africa, paving the way for liberalized abortion laws

and improved safe abortion access," This year there were 170 nominees from 68 countries, the foundation said. It said the laureates will be recognized at an award presentation in Stockholm on November 29.

Created in 1980, the annual Right Livelihood Award honours efforts that the prize founder, Swedish-German philanthropist Jakob von Uexkull, felt were being ignored by the Nobel Prizes. To date, 190 laureates from 74 countries have received the award. Ole von Uexkull is a nephew of the prize founder.

Previous winners include Ukrainian human rights defender Oleksandra Matviichuk, Congolese surgeon Denis Mukwege and Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. Matviichuk and Mukwege received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022 and 2018, respectively. (AP)

## EAM Jaishankar to meet Blinken amid India-Canada diplomatic row

**WASHINGTON, Sept 28:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is scheduled to meet US Secretary of State Antony Blinken here on Thursday, amid the diplomatic rumpus between India and Canada stirred over the killing of a Khalistani separatist.

Although officials from both sides are tightlipped about the agenda of the meeting, the latest diplomatic crisis between two of America's friends, its traditional ally Canada and India, is expected to come up prominently during the talks.

"I don't want to preview the conversations he (Blinken) will have in that meeting (with Jaishankar), but as we've made clear, we've raised this; we have engaged with our Indian counterparts on this and encouraged them to cooperate with the Canadian investigation, and we continue to encourage them to cooperate," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters. He was responding to questions about the meeting between Jaishankar and Blinken at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the State Department here on Thursday afternoon (which is about mid-night local India time).

The two leaders are expected to pose for pictures ahead of the meeting and are not expected to take any questions from the media. While the meeting between the two top diplomats was scheduled much before the Canadian crisis broke out, the US has been urging India to cooperate in the Canadian investigation into the killing of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia early this year.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has alleged that the Indian government was behind the killing of Nijjar, 45, outside a gurdwara in Surrey in British Columbia on June 18. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020. India has 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. India has also asked Canada to crack down on terrorists and anti-India elements operating from its soil and suspended visa services for Canadians. Miller said that the issue did not come up for discussion in New York during the Quad ministerial that involved foreign ministers of the US, India, Japan and Australia.

"It was a meeting of a number of countries and it did not come up in that meeting. But we have engaged with our Indian counterparts on this issue and urged them to fully cooperate with the Canadian investigation," the State Department spokesperson said. (PTI)



# Militants seen moving around openly and instigating mobs in Imphal

*A serious concern for security forces*

**NEW DELHI/IMPHAL, Sept 28:** The worst fears for security agencies seem to have come true as militants have been seen moving around openly and instigating mobs in Imphal valley which have been on a rampaging spree after pictures of two missing teenagers surfaced on social media.

According to officials, during attacks carried out on a police party Wednesday evening, armed men dressed in black uniform were seen giving directions to the agitated youths to attack the police and many vehicles were then torched.

The security agencies have been warned that militants belonging to United National Liberation Front (UNLF), People's Liberation Army (PLA) and other banned groups had become part of the mobs and carrying out sneak attacks on security forces as well as giving directions to the agitators.

Recently, the presence of insurgents was found within a mob that carried out an attack on security forces injuring a Lt Col of army near Pallel in Tengnoupal.

As reported by PTI on September 11, central security agencies had warned about the possibility of militants mingling with crowds during any protest to stoke tensions in restive Manipur.

The burning down of a police vehicle saw the presence of armed militants directing the crowd. Besides this, miscreants in the crowd used iron pieces which were fired towards security personnel with the help of automated slingshots.

## Manipur: Govt doctor suspended for social media post

**IMPHAL, Sept 28:** A government doctor was suspended in Manipur for allegedly making an "inappropriate comment" on social media, a notification said. He was a medical officer posted at the Tamenglong district, it said. The doctor was suspended with immediate effect for "posting/ sharing inappropriate comment on social media which is conduct unbecoming of a government servant", it added.

He shall not leave the headquarters at Imphal without obtaining prior permission from the government, the notification issued on Wednesday said. The nature of the post was, however, not clarified in the notification. (PTI)

## Tripura: Woman poisons son to death, ends life

**AGARTALA, Sept 28:** A 25-year-old woman allegedly ended her life after poisoning both her sons in Tripura's Khowai district, police said on Thursday.

The woman, identified as Pramila Munda, and her nine-year-old son died while being taken to Khowai hospital, while her 11-year-old son is battling for his life at GBP Hospital in Agartala, Sukramoni Debbarma, office-in-charge of Champahowar police station, said.

Her husband, Manu Debbarma, a daily wage labourer, claimed he was not present at their house when the incident took place. (PTI)

# Parents of murdered Manipuri youths cry for their last rites

*Plea to govt to locate remains of their kids*

**IMPHAL, Sept 28:** Parents of both the murdered youths, viral pictures of whose bodies caused widespread protests in Imphal valley for two days, on Thursday pleaded with authorities to locate the remains of their children so that the last rites of the boy and the girl can be conducted "with the dignity they deserve."

They hoped that with sleuths from the CBI joining the investigation into the kidnapping and death of the duo who went missing in July this year, the mystery of where their bodies lie will be solved.

The 18-year-old girl's father, Hijam Kulajit, in an interview to PTI said, "We just want to see our children one last time and conduct their last rites with the dignity they deserve. Nothing can substitute the loss. According to Meitei custom, at least a small portion of the clothes they wore is needed to perform the last rites and give them a farewell."

"Whenever I see her photo, it makes me completely restless and I can't find peace in my heart. Her mother has lost her senses and become bed-ridden while embracing a photo of our



Over a dozen police personnel including an officer of the rank of additional superintendent of police have been injured in these clashes that erupted in Imphal valley after surfacing of pictures of missing teenagers, who are suspected to have been killed during the ethnic clashes.

The officials reiterated that the current unrest has seen resurgence of near dormant banned groups like UNLF, PLA, Kanglei Yawol Kanba Lup (KYKL), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) and People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) in the state.

The officials have also warned that the recent release of four youths, who were possessing deadly weapons looted from police armoury, was a dangerous sign and efforts should be intensified to nab and book them under relevant sections of law.

They said at present, UNLF has a cadre strength of 330 followed by PLA with 300 and KYKL with

25 who are active within the groups of the majority community.

On June 24, Army and Assam Rifles, based on specific intelligence, nabbed 12 members of KYKL in East Imphal including self-styled 'Lt colonel' Moirangthem Tamba alias Uttam. Uttam was one of the masterminds of the ambush on 6 Dogra regiment in 2015 that left 18 army soldiers dead.

The officials said there was every likelihood that the arms and ammunition looted from the Manipur police armoury could have landed with these terror groups.

Among the arms looted included .303 rifles, Medium Machine Guns (MMG) and AK assault rifles, carbines, Insas Light Machine Guns (LMG), Insas rifles, M-16 and MP5 rifles. The officials said around 4,537 arms and 6.32 lakh bullets were missing mainly from Manipur Police Training Centre (MTPC) at Pangei in East Imphal, 7th India Reserve battalion and 8th

Manipur Rifles, both located at Khabeiso in Imphal city.

According to them, out of the stolen weapons, 2,900 fell in the lethal category whereas others comprised teargas and mini flare guns.

Repeated calls by politicians have yielded no results as none of the looted weapons have been deposited back except for those returned in the last week of July.

There has been no forward movement on disposal of dead bodies and opening of supply routes from Imphal to hill areas.

More than 180 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. A fresh bout of violence, this time led by students, broke out in the state capital on Tuesday after photos of the bodies of two youths who went missing in July went viral on social media.

Violent protests continued till the early hours of Thursday with a mob vandalising the deputy commissioner's office in Imphal West and torching two four-wheelers, officials said.

On Wednesday night, the protesters clashed with security personnel in Uripok, Yaikul, Sagolband and Tera areas, prompting the forces to fire several rounds of tear gas shells to control the situation, they said. (PTI)

## UNC continues to be against 'creation of 7 new districts' in Manipur

**SENAPATI, Sept 28:** The United Naga Council (UNC) has reiterated its stand against the "creation of 7 new districts" in Manipur on December 8, 2016.

"In the wake of the ethnic conflict that has engulfed the state of Manipur since May 3, 2023, and the violently manifested geographical and demographic contestation between the conflicting parties, it has become critical for the Nagas to bring out into the public domain the unsettled issue of the rejection of the creation of 7 new districts on 8/12/2016 by the then ruling Congress State Government of Manipur," the UNC said in a statement issued to Newmai News Network tonight.

The UNC said the Nagas have rejected the declaration of 7 new dis-

tricts on December 8, 2016, and strongly demonstrated the rejection with the mass rally held in Naga district headquarters on December 15, 2016, and the 139 days of economic blockade along the national highways. The UNC further said the 10 rounds of tripartite talks between the government of Manipur, the United Naga Council (UNC) and the government of India on the issue of the above creation of new districts was based on the recognition that "there was non-adherence to the 4 (four) memorandum of Understanding" signed by the government of Manipur with Naga organisations and the assurance of the Government of India on the matter.

The United Naga Council also said it had clearly placed in the public domain and in its memorandum to the

Government of India that the Nagas will not accept any disintegration of Naga land or any act that will adversely affect the interest of the Nagas while attempting to address demands by any other community.

The United Naga Council hereby reiterated its position against the arbitrary, undemocratic, unconstitutional and divisive declaration of 7 new districts on 8/12/2016 by the then government of Manipur and any subsequent decision or ruling passed by any institution or authority on the matter stands rejected and shall be vehemently opposed till the same is withdrawn. "To rectify the errors of the past will surely prove to be beneficial to all concerns and restore confidence and goodwill in the system," the Naga body added. (PTI)

## NSD to set up campus in Tripura



**AGARTALA, Sept 28:** The Tripura government has allocated a plot of 2.36 acre to the National School of Drama (NSD) to set up a campus in the state, officials said on Thursday.

The campus will be set up at

Ranirbazar in West Tripura district, and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed regarding it, they said.

"Following NSD's request, the state government has provided a plot of 2.36 acre. A

MoU was signed between the two sides on Tuesday," Subir Roy, NSD Agartala centre's programme coordinator, told PTI.

"Now, we will do mutation of the land, before starting the work for setting up a full-fledged NSD Centre in Tripura. Presently, the NSD Centre is functioning from Nazrul Kalashetra," he said. At present, the Agartala centre is offering a one-year course in 'Theatre in Education', which will be extended to two years, he added.

There are 20 students who are studying the course, Roy said. (PTI)

## Manipur: Committee formed to probe 'excessive use' of force on protesters by police

**IMPHAL, Sept 28:** The Manipur government on Thursday constituted a committee to verify complaints of alleged use of excessive force on protesters, mainly students, by security forces here over the last two days, an official order said.

The order issued by the DGP said, "There have been various reports/allegations of use of excess force by the security forces to maintain law and order over the last few days in Imphal area."

The committee will be headed by IGP (Administration) K Jayanta, the order said, adding that it will "submit the report at the earliest."

Violent protests rocked Manipur's capital for two days on Tuesday and Wednesday as thousands of students protested the kidnapping and killing of two youths, pictures of whose bodies had gone viral. On Tuesday night, a clash occurred between RAF personnel and locals over the murder of the duo, prompting the law enforcers to lob tear gas shells and fire rubber bullets at the agitators and baton-charge them, leaving 45 of the protesters, mostly students, injured.

On Wednesday, around 20 protesters were injured in similar clashes with security forces.

Meanwhile, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) has condemned the "brutal act of RAF and security forces" against student protesters on Wednesday and termed it as a "violation of human rights." (PTI)

## RPP asks Nagaland edu dept to withdraw notification to teachers

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Sept 28:** The Rising People's Party (RPP) on Thursday asked Nagaland's directorate of school education to immediately withdraw its September 15 notification ordering the government teachers not to make any communication with the press nor call a public meeting to discuss "their conditions".

The party, in a release, alleged that after the All Nagaland School Teachers Association and Nagaland Government Higher Secondary Schools Employee Association called for a pen-down strike for non-payment of salaries, the directorate was now resorting to "dirty tricks" to intimidate the teachers in the form of the notification laying out Rule 25 of the Nagaland Government Servants Conduct Rules, 1968.

It said instead of trying to resolve the issue through meaningful engagement, the department issued the notification which is highly insensitive and condemnable.

## Popular Manipuri actor Rajkumar Somendra quits BJP

**IMPHAL, Sept 28:** Celebrated Manipuri actor Rajkumar Somendra popularly known as 'Kaiku' on Thursday resigned from the primary membership of BJP over the state government's "inept handling of the current ethnic turmoil and the brutal murder of two students", party sources said.

Kaiku, who has acted in around 400 films, submitted his resignation to the leadership of the party's state unit even as its top leaders requested him to reconsider his decision.

A resident of Thangmeiband area in Imphal West, Kaiku contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls as an Independent candidate and later joined the BJP in November 2021.

In his resignation letter, Kaiku said, "My priority is 'public first and party second' for which I applied my mind to incline with the public in these hard times."

It is disheartening to notice that the government is yet to take up proactive measures to resolve the unceasing public disorder besetting the state for more than four

months now, said Kaiku.

"To be honest, I joined the BJP thinking that the party would bring a significant change in our state with its double-engine government. Of course, it brought changes in different sectors like tourism under CM N Biren Singh. With this in mind, I thought the central leaders would act swiftly over the ongoing issue and put to an end to the conflict and trusted them. But, the central leaders seem like paying no attention to the pain and misery of the people and they were against every expectation of the people," he said.

Kaiku appealed to all sections of society to bring an everlasting solution to the current turmoil. "As I have left BJP, now I'm a free citizen to join the people's campaign to restore public order," he said.

On the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls, the actor said, "I have no specific decision on electoral politics but I'll go together with the people to restore normalcy in the state." (PTI)



## AFFIDAVIT

My correct name is Mamata Kumari Chauhan and my mother's correct name is Siratani Chauhan. In some documents, my name has been erroneously recorded as Mamata Kr. Chauhan instead of Mamata Kumari Chauhan and my mother's name was erroneously recorded as Rongkut Chauhan Gaon instead of Siratani Chauhan.

Therefore, my correct name is Mamata Kumari Chauhan, and my mother's is Siratani Chauhan.

Mamata Kumari Chauhan, D/o- Ram Narayan Chauhan and Siratani Chauhan, Vill.- Cherapathar No. 2, P.O- Menmeji, P.S- Kheroni, Dist.- West Karbi Anglong, Assam

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT:: DIPHU :: ASSAM.



The above are photographs of missing minor children in connection with Diphu PS Case No.97/2023 u/s-363 IPC. Please make an all out effort to trace out the missing minor children. If found intimate to Police control Room (PCR), Karbi Anglong either at 60269-00775 & 93659-72436 for follow up action.

Sd/-  
Superintendent of Police,  
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

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- 1) A self-owned or leased shop space of 120 sq. ft and above, with all legal documents in place.
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**Note:** The Scheme provides for incentives upto Rs. 5 lakhs per Kendra. The complete details may be seen at the website [janaushadhi.gov.in](http://janaushadhi.gov.in)

Date: 15th to 22nd September, 2023  
Time: 11:00 AM  
Venue: Room No. 17  
DC's Office,  
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.



# Amit Shah, Nadda hold discussions with BJP's Rajasthan leadership on upcoming assembly polls

'Discussions on election strategy were held in the meeting last night'

JAIPUR, Sept 28: Union home minister Amit Shah and BJP president J P Nadda wound up their Rajasthan visit Thursday morning after meetings with the party's state leadership that went late into the night, discussing strategy for the upcoming assembly elections. The meetings began at a hotel late on Wednesday evening and continued till 2 am, party sources said.

The discussions were held amid a buzz that two central ministers might be asked to contest the upcoming polls. The speculation follows the BJP's decision to name three Union ministers and four MPs in its second list of candidates for poll-bound Madhya Pradesh.

Following the meeting, both Shah and Nadda left for Delhi on Thursday. A meeting with local RSS leaders was not held, party sources said.

"Discussions on election strategy were held in the meeting last night," Gajendra Singh Shekhawat told reporters at the hotel on Thursday. Shah and Nadda arrived in Jaipur on a special plane on Wednesday evening and headed to the hotel near the airport for the core committee meeting. Party sources said that Shah and Nadda first held a meeting with former



Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje for around 15 minutes.

It was followed by a meeting with senior leaders in which the party's election strategy was discussed. Feedback on the four 'Pari-vartan Yatras' that the BJP held recently was also discussed.

Union minister and the party's election in-charge for Rajasthan Pralhad Joshi, co-in-charge Nitin Patel, BJP's in-charge for Rajasthan Arun Singh, state unit president C P Joshi, union ministers Gajendra Singh, Arjun Meghwal, Kailash Chaudhary, leader of opposition in Assembly Rajendra Rathore, deputy leader of opposi-

tion Satish Poonia and other leaders were present at the meeting, the sources said.

The meeting continued for around three hours. Poonia and MP Rajyavardhan Rathore were the first to leave the venue after the first round. Nadda and Shah held the next round of meeting with the BJP's national general secretary (organisation) B L Santosh, Union minister Pralhad Joshi, Nitin Patel, Arun Singh, Kuldeep Vishnoi and Vijaya Rahatkar, among others, the party sources said.

"The leaders held discussions on the assembly constituencies and brainstormed on ways to win the

maximum number of seats in Mewar, Vagad, Shekhawati, Hadauti and Marwar regions and in eastern Rajasthan in the assembly and Lok Sabha elections," a source said.

"During the meeting, a clear message was sent out that the party organisation is supreme and all have to work together to ensure victory of the party in the elections." Some leaders said that ticket distribution and other poll-related issues were discussed in the meeting.

Sources in the BJP's Rajasthan unit said Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal may be fielded in the assembly polls, along with some other MPs.

However, the party leaders who came out of the hotel refrained from sharing details of the meeting with the media. Convener of the election management committee Narayan Panchariya said the party's authorised person will share details of the meeting with the media.

There is speculation that senior RSS pracharak Prakash Chand may be given certain responsibilities in the upcoming Assembly election. (PTI)

# Modi govt crushed hopes, dreams of India's youth leading to rising suicides: Cong



NEW DELHI, Sept 28: The Congress on Thursday targeted the Narendra Modi government over the issue of unemployment alleging that it has crushed the hopes and dreams of India's youth, leading to rising suicides among them.

Congress general secretary communications Jairam Ramesh alleged that the government, instead of dealing with the crisis of demographic dividend turning into a demographic disaster, might want to "manipulate" the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data due for 2022 to hide the alarming suicide rate among the youth. In a statement, he said unemployment in India remains a severe problem as well as the hidden under-employment.

Ramesh cited the interactions of Rahul Gandhi with porters at the Anand Vihar Terminal here where he had noted that large numbers of educated youth, including those with engineering degrees, were unable to find formal employment and were forced into precarious informal jobs such as porters. The Congress general secretary said the massive failure of the Modi government to provide sufficient formal-sector employment has led to this situation.

Ramesh cited data from the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) for 2021-22 that shows that formal sector employment remains 5.3 per cent lower than it was in 2019-20. Further, the number of formal employers has declined by a massive 10.5 per cent from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

According to a report from Azim Premji University, the Congress leader said, 42 per cent of graduates

under 25 were unemployed in 2021-22. Jobs in manufacturing dropped 31 per cent between 2016-17 and March 2023, according to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data.

"The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for Jan-March 2023 shows that even in urban areas, less than 50 per cent of workers are salaried. The latest all-India PLFS data, including rural areas, is much worse - in 2021-22, just 21 per cent of workers have formal jobs, which is still lower than the pre-pandemic period of 23 per cent. Instead, self-employment and casual employment have risen.

"These numbers show that the unplanned lockdown, in combination with disastrous economic policies and the cronyism of the Modi government, have actually shrunk formal employment opportunities for educated youth," he noted.

Ramesh said in such a scenario a situation has arisen when in January this year, 8,000 candidates applied for 92 clerk positions at Gujarat University, including those with M.Sc and M.Tech degrees. In June 2023, 10.5 lakh people applied for 4,600 clerk posts in Maharashtra, including MBAs, engineers and PhD holders, he said.

With economic distress reducing jobs in the private sector, highly educated youths are being forced to compete for a minuscule number of government posts, he noted.

To make matters worse, even the public sector has been shrinking under the Modi government, he claimed. As of August 2022, he said, 9.8 lakh Union government posts were vacant; CMIE data shows that

government jobs declined 20 per cent between 2015-16 and 2022-23; India now has one of the lowest numbers of public employees per 1000 population, lower than the US, Brazil, and even China.

"Rather than dealing with the employment crisis, the Modi government is busy hiding and distorting data and focusing on gimmicks. With the EPFO data, rather than rely on the stable annual estimates, they are touting unreliable monthly data, intentionally ignoring the fact that the monthly data is revised continuously by over 50 per cent at times and has major discrepancies," Ramesh said.

"To further cover up its failures in providing government employment, the prime minister personally holds Rozgar Melas making a complete mockery of routine government workings. Despite massive gaps in the public sector, of close to 10 lakh vacancies, the Modi government makes a big show of 50,000 job letters for posts that were already sanctioned, and claims that it is generating employment.

"Further, RTI data from The Telegraph shows that while all job letters at Rozgar Melas are being presented as 'new recruits', a sizeable number are actually just promotions," he alleged. Most disheartening of all is a statistic from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) April 2023 report, he said.

A full 33 per cent of India's youth neither has a job nor is taking educational or training courses, and this number rises to over 50 per cent for women, he said, alleging that "the Modi government has crushed the hopes and dreams of India's youth to the point that they do not have jobs and have given up on the future and to the point that they refuse to invest in education or training".

"The tragic consequence of this is that the youth suicide rate (age below 30) has been growing sharply since 2016 and has reached 4.9 per lakh population in 2021, the highest in 25 years.

"Instead of dealing with the crisis of demographic dividend turning into a demographic disaster, we should not be surprised if the Modi government's next move is to manipulate the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data due for 2022 to hide the alarming suicide rate amongst the youth," Ramesh said. (PTI)

## PM pays tributes Bhagat Singh

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday paid rich tributes to freedom fighter Bhagat Singh on his birth anniversary, saying he will forever be a symbol of India's relentless fight for justice and liberty.

"Remembering Shaheed Bhagat Singh on his birth anniversary. His sacrifice and unwavering dedication to the cause of India's freedom continue to inspire generations. A beacon of courage, he will forever be a symbol of India's relentless fight for justice and liberty," Modi posted on X. Bhagat Singh was executed by the British in 1931 at the age of 23.

His courage and spirit of sacrifice in the face of likely death, and his idealism made him one of the most popular icons of the freedom movement. (PTI)

## Farmers in Punjab begin three-day 'rail roko' protest

AMRITSAR, Sept 28: Members of various farmers' bodies on Thursday squatted on train tracks at several places in Punjab as they began a three-day 'rail roko' agitation over their various demands, including financial package for losses caused by recent floods, legal guarantee to MSP and debt waiver.

According to protesters, the agitation against the Centre will continue till September 30. The farmers have planned to hold agitations in Moga, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Tarn Taran, Sangrur, Patiala, Ferozepur, Bathinda, and Amritsar.



In Amritsar, farmers squatted on the Amritsar-Delhi railway track in Devidas Pura. Several farmer bodies, including the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, Bharti Kisan Union (Krantikari), BKU (Ekta Azaad), Azaad Kisan

Committee Doaba, BKU (Behramke), BKU (Shaheed Bhagat Singh), and BKU (Chottu Ram), were participating in the protest.

Their demands include a financial package for flood-affected people in north India, a legal guar-

antee for minimum support price on all crops and a debt waiver for farmers. In Amritsar, farmer leader Gurbachan Singh said the farmers are demanding a ₹ 50,000-crore flood relief package for north Indian states and MSP as per the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission report.

The entire debt of farmers and labourers should be waived, he said and also demanded ₹ 10 lakh compensation and a government job for the family of each farmer who died during the agitation against the now-repealed three farm laws. (PTI)

## Punjab: Cong MLA Sukhpal Khaira arrested in 2015 drugs case

Police recovered two kg of heroin, 24 gold biscuits, one country-made pistol, a .315-bore pistol and two Pakistani SIM cards

CHANDIGARH, Sept 28: Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira was arrested by the Punjab Police in connection with a 2015 drugs case on Thursday morning, official sources said.

A team led by Superintendent of Police Manjeet Singh raided the Chandigarh residence of Khaira around 6 am. The MLA's son went live on Facebook showing that a team of Punjab Police has reached their residence to apprehend Khaira. In the video, Khaira could be seen arguing with the police team and asking them to show him the arrest warrant.

The Bholath legislator could also be seen asking for the identity cards of the police officers who were part of the raiding team.

He was told by the police official that he was being arrested in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act case. When Khaira asked the team where he was being taken, a police official told him that he was being taken to Jalalabad in Fazilka. According to official sources, a special investigation team (SIT) led by Deputy Inspector General of Police Swapn Sharma was formed in April 2023 and Khaira was arrested based on its investigation into the 2015 case.

Slamming the Bhagwant Mann government, the Congress MLA, who has been critical of the AAP government on various issues, claimed that he was being apprehended in a "false" case and that "jungle raj" was prevailing in the state. Meanwhile, the Punjab Congress hit out at the AAP government, accusing it of indulging in political vendetta. The Congress state unit chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring and Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa strongly condemned the arrest of Khaira.

The ruling Aam Aadmi Party, however, rejected the allegation and asserted that the action against the Bholath MLA was taken as per law. Warring visited the residence of Khaira after his arrest and met his son Mehtab Khaira and other family members. He said they stand by the Bholath MLA.

The Punjab Congress chief questioned the police action, asking what

kind of probe was conducted by the Punjab police which led to Khaira's arrest after eight years.

"It shows that 'jungle raj' is prevailing in the state," Warring said and questioned the absence of Chandigarh Police during the Punjab Police action.

In a post on X, Warring said, "The recent arrest of MLA Sukhpal Khaira ji smacks of political vendetta. It is an attempt to intimidate the opposition and is a ploy of the AAP government in Punjab to distract (people) from core issues. We stand strongly with Sukhpal Khaira and will take this fight to its logical conclusion."

Bajwa said, "The arrest of senior Congress leader Sukhpal Khaira is extremely deplorable. The AAP government in Punjab has stooped to an all-time low and resorted to vendetta politics. Sukhpal Singh Khaira has been outspoken and raised his voice against the wrongdoings and irregularities committed by CM Bhagwant Mann's government."

"The Punjab Congress under the ambit of law will leave no stone unturned to get him released," he added. Interacting with reporters, the AAP's Punjab unit chief spokesperson Malvinder Singh Kang, however, said, "There is no political vendetta in this matter. We are going by the law."

He informed the reporters that the SIT, which was formed in April 2023, carried out an investigation into the matter and discovered some new facts in the case.

"Khaira was found to be involved in drug smuggling and that is why he was arrested by the Punjab Police today. There is zero tolerance against drugs," Kang added.

The drugs case was registered in March 2015 at Jalalabad in Fazilka. Nine people, including Gurdev Singh who was allegedly a close aide of Khaira, were booked in the case and later convicted under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Police had recovered two kg of heroin, 24 gold biscuits, one country-made pistol, a .315-bore pistol and two Pakistani SIM cards from them. Khaira's name cropped up later during the police probe. (PTI)

## Rewarding spread of hatred: Danish Ali on BJP giving poll duty to Bidhuri in Tonk

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: With the BJP giving poll responsibility to its Lok Sabha MP Ramesh Bidhuri in Rajasthan's Tonk amid a row over his derogatory remarks, BSP lawmaker Danish Ali on Thursday said this was akin to "rewarding" spread of hatred and that the ruling party's true character had been "exposed" by the move.

Ali also said he was hopeful that action would be taken by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla against Bidhuri in line with the traditions of the Lower House and the Constitution.

Bidhuri's remarks targeting Ali during a discussion on the success of the Chandrayaan-3 lunar mission last Thursday had sparked a furore, with opposition leaders calling for stringent action against the BJP MP.

The BSP MP's comments on Thursday came after the BJP tasked Bidhuri with poll responsibility in Tonk district of Rajasthan.

"The BJP should have maintained some decorum. The people of the country have expectations of some ethics from the party which calls itself the world's largest party. You issued a show-cause notice to him (Bidhuri), either make his reply public or say that we legitimise and reward hate," Ali told PTI.

"The hatred that was being spread by your people on the road, he (Bidhuri) did that in the temple of democracy. You are rewarding that spread of hatred. The 'chaal charitra aur chehra (the real intentions, character and face)' of the BJP have been exposed," he said.

The MP from Amroha said it is the BJP's misunderstanding that they will consolidate the vote of the majority by promoting such people.

"My understanding is that besides the hate-mongers, the common persons of the country will never accept this kind of language. And you wait and watch they (the

BJP) will have to pay the price (for such behaviour), otherwise the world will believe that our society has rotted, if such people are rewarded by the public," Ali said.

"The people of Gurjar community have come and met me, they are embarrassed by such remarks, Hindus have come and expressed solidarity with me. So it can be the BJP's thinking that they will get some benefit out of such actions (giving responsibility to Bidhuri in Tonk) but the common people are hurt by this," he said.

Asked about his letter to Speaker Birla demanding that the matter be sent to the privileges committee for inquiry and no action being taken till now, Ali said he is awaiting action by the Speaker.

It has been seen in the past in the Lok Sabha that when such incidents have taken place, even incidents of smaller magnitude than this, there has been action, he said. (PTI)

## Akhilesh slams Chouhan govt on 'atrocities' against women

BHOPAL, Sept 28: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday slammed the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh for the "injustice" meted out to women and termed the Ujjain incident involving the rape of a 12-year-old girl "beyond imagination."

The girl, who was raped and found bleeding on a street in MP's Ujjain city, was on Wednesday operated upon by a team of specialist doctors and her condition is critical but stable, an official has said. The assault on the minor has sparked massive public outrage.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister also said his party would file candidates in the year-end Assembly polls with the aim of defeating the Bharatiya Janata Party. The party had won from Bijawar seat in Chhatarpur in the 2018 polls but the MLA, Rajesh Shukla, later switched sides and joined the BJP.

"Despite BJP being in power (in MP) for nearly 20 years and at the

Centre for 10 years, Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of cases of injustice and atrocities against women in the country. This is not the figure of the Samajwadi Party, but that of NCRB (National Crime Records Bureau)," said Yadav.

The former UP chief minister arrived here on Wednesday to take part in a rally at Sirmour in Rewa district in favour of his party candidate Laxman Tiwari.

"Can anybody imagine that in a state where 1.2 crore women are associated with the Ladli (Behna) scheme, there is an incident with a 12-year-old girl (referring to the Ujjain rape incident)... such a situation is prevailing," Yadav told reporters in Khajuraho.

The MP government has formed a special investigation team (SIT) to probe into the Ujjain incident and a suspect has been detained, state home minister Narottam Mishra said on Wednesday. (PTI)

## Eutelsat, OneWeb merge to create GEO-LEO space connectivity company



NEW DELHI, Sept 28: Eutelsat on Thursday announced the completion of a merger with OneWeb, creating the world's first geostationary-low earth orbit (GEO-LEO) satellite space connectivity company.

The completion of Eutelsat Communications' all-share combination with OneWeb was announced following the approval of the Ordinary and Extraordi-

nary General Meeting of Eutelsat shareholders, a statement from Bharti Enterprises said.

Headquartered out of Paris, the merged entity will have Bharti Enterprises as its largest shareholder with a 21.2 per cent share.

The Bharti Group is committed to being a long-term strategic investor in the Eutelsat Group, the statement said

"Today we have created a company, which will bring connectivity to all people around the world and will help us achieve our mission of last-mile connectivity," Sunil Bharti Mittal, founder and chairman of Bharti Enterprises and vice president (co-chair) of the board of directors, Eutelsat Group, said in a statement.

Sunil Bharti Mittal will be the vice president (co-chair) and Shrawin Bharti Mittal, who spearheaded the OneWeb investment, taking it out of Chapter 11, will be Bharti's lead as a director on the Board of Eutelsat.

Akhil Gupta will continue to serve as a Director on the Board of OneWeb, now a 100 per cent subsidiary of Eutelsat, it said. OneWeb will be a subsidiary operating commercially as Eutelsat OneWeb with its centre of operations remaining in London. The company remains listed on the Euronext Paris Stock Exchange and has applied for standard listing on the London Stock Exchange.

Christened as the Eutelsat Group, the new entity will be the first GEO-LEO integrated satellite group, transforming space communications and addressing the fast-growing connectivity market. (PTI)

## Goa CM pledges to donate his organs

PANAJI, Sept 28: Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant on Thursday pledged to donate his organs as part of a pan-India initiative launched by Bharatiya Janata Party's medical cell.

CM Sawant, in the presence of BJP's Goa medical cell convener Dr Shekhar Salkar and others, signed an online application pledging to donate his organs. He was immediately given a certificate for it.

Addressing a press conference here, the chief minister said he has pledged to donate his kidneys, liver and corneas as part of the drive.

Sawant praised the Union Health Ministry and Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya for taking up the initiative of organ donation across the country.

Organs can be donated online by anyone, who is above 18 years of age, he said.

Thanking the Union government and BJP medical cell for giving him an opportunity to pledge his organs, he said, "Everyone should come forward and pledge to donate organs, which will save other lives in the future."

Sawant said the Goa government has held four successful organ extraction programmes, which have helped the patients in the state and also outside. Soon, an eye donation bank would be inaugurated in the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), he said.

"There is a growing demand for kidneys by patients. There are 46 patients in Goa who are waiting for kidneys to be donated to them," he said. (PTI)



# Iconic agricultural scientist M S Swaminathan passes away

**CHENNAI, Sept 28:** M S Swaminathan, renowned agricultural scientist and the driving force behind the nation's 'Green Revolution', passed away here on Thursday.

He was 98 and is survived by three daughters including Dr Soumya Swaminathan, the former chief scientist of the World Health Organisation.

The celebrated agriculture icon, who was being treated for age-related illness for quite some time passed away today at 11.15 AM at his residence here.

Condolences poured in with Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailing Swaminathan saying his groundbreaking work transformed lives of millions, ensured India's food security.

Indian Agricultural Research Institute Director A K Singh said an era of agricultural research, education and extension marked by disruptive innovations has come to an end with the death of Swaminathan.

Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi, chief minister M K Stalin, leaders of farmers' bodies including P R Pandian condoled Swaminathan's death. The Congress party described him as the key scientific architect of the Green Revolution and hailed his contribution to the agriculture sector.

Modi said on X: "Deeply saddened by the demise of Dr MS Swaminathan Ji. At a very critical period in our nation's history, his



groundbreaking work in agriculture transformed the lives of millions and ensured food security for our nation."

Beyond his revolutionary contributions to agriculture, Dr Swaminathan was a powerhouse of innovation and a nurturing mentor to many. His unwavering commitment to research and mentorship has left an indelible mark on countless scientists and innovators.

"I will always cherish my conversations with Dr Swaminathan. His passion to see India progress was exemplary. His life and work will inspire generations to come. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti," he said.

Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda expressed grief over the demise of Swaminathan and said he was greatly benefited from

his advice on many occasions.

Swaminathan who founded the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation here has been described by the United Nations Environment Programme as "the Father of Economic Ecology" acknowledging his leadership of green revolution movement.

Singh said: "In passing away of Prof. Swaminathan, ends an era of agricultural research, education and extension that was full of disruptive innovation. If God appears to poor and hungry in form of bread as said by Mahatma Gandhi, that God is Dr. Swaminathan who should be worshipped by every citizen while taking daily meals."

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said Swaminathan made India self-sufficient in rice and wheat by the mid-70s.

He has received 84 honorary doctorate degrees from universities around the world. He is a Fellow of many of the leading scientific academies including the Royal Society of London and the U S National Academy of Sciences.

AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said he was deeply saddened to hear about the demise of Swaminathan.

"His contribution to Indian agriculture transformed the lives of millions. We are committed to take his vision forward every opportunity we get," he said.

Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah expressed grief and said his contribution to India's agricultural progress and economy is immense.

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait said India will always remember the positive changes that Swaminathan brought to the country's agriculture and farmers, and his contribution to food security.

Swaminathan was a part of every key initiative connected to food security and agriculture and his stellar contributions are pioneering including the focus on millets for nutrition security as well.

He was a former Rajya Sabha member (2007-13).

Javier Perez de Cuellar, former secretary general of the United Nations, said as "a living legend who will go into the annals of history as a world scientist of rare distinction". (PTI)

## 'Dummy schools' adversely affecting Delhi students: HC

**NEW DELHI, Sept 28:** Unchecked growth of 'dummy schools' is adversely affecting students who genuinely fulfil the 'local education' criterion and allows ineligible candidates to secure seats under the Delhi state quota, the Delhi High Court has said. The high court issued notice and sought the response of the Delhi government, Central Board of Secondary Education, Directorate General of Health Services, Delhi University (DU) and Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU) on a petition for prohibition of proliferation of dummy schools. It listed the matter for further hearing on November 29. The high court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the eligibility criterion applied by both DU and GGSIPU for allotting MBBS or Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) seats under the DSQ. The PIL filed by Rajeev Aggarwal claimed the idea behind 'dummy schools' is to provide a 'virtual platform to students to show that they have migrated to Delhi after passing class 10th exam with the sole purpose of somehow availing the benefit of Delhi state quota seats, which otherwise ought to be allocated amongst the bonafide residents of NCT of Delhi". Delhi govt standing counsel Santosh Kumar Tripathi submitted there was no concept of 'dummy schools' in Delhi. As per the criterion, only candidates who have completed their class 11 and 12 education from a recognised school located in Delhi are considered for grant of seats under the DSQ, the plea said. (PTI)

## BJP not in mood to hold polls in J-K: Omar

**SRINAGAR, Sept 28:** National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on Thursday claimed that the BJP does not want to hold any elections in Jammu and Kashmir as it knows that people will punish them through ballot.

"They (BJP) are not in a mood to hold elections because they know that people are not with them. Leave Kashmir aside, BJP will be at the receiving end from the people in Jammu as well. That's why they do not have courage to hold polls," Abdullah told reporters at the party headquarters here.

The former chief minister said the current dispensation does not seem to be in favour of even holding the local bodies and panchayat elections, which the government played up in the Supreme Court.

"Assembly is a far cry, perhaps they are not willing to hold local bodies and panchayat elections which they talked about a lot in the Supreme Court. The only election that we believe will be held is the one to Parliament. They might find it difficult to defer that. Other than that they don't seem to be in a mood to hold any other election because the mood of the people is to punish them through votes," he said. Asked about deferring of the local bodies elections, Abdullah said the government will deny it.

"If you ask them (Government), they will tell you how can the elections be deferred when we have not announced it," he said.

In response to a question, Abdullah charged that Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and some bureaucrats were the only people who do not want assembly elections to be held in Jammu and



Kashmir.

"There is only one person, and may be a few officers around him who will be going from here when the LG leaves, who does not want elections. Ask anyone on the road. I am not saying they will vote for my party or a particular party but everyone wants elections. There are few yes men who visit the Raj Bhawan to mislead the LG. I also headed a government for six years, these turncoats used to come to my office as well," he added.

Abdullah was referring to a recent statement made by Sinha in which he claimed that 80 per cent of people in Jammu and Kashmir were happy with the current dispensation and did not want any change.

He said a meeting of opposition parties has been convened in Jammu next week to review the current situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

"A meeting has been called, we will sit and discuss. The situation of Jammu and Kashmir will be reviewed. If there is a need for doing

something, it will be decided there. The good thing is that the meeting has been convened in Jammu as sometimes it is claimed that all decisions are taken in Kashmir," he added.

Asked about Director General of Police Dilbag Singh's statement about terror-free Jammu and Kashmir, Abdullah said his party will play its role in achieving this goal.

"Who can object to it, other than the terrorists? No one will say that the DGP has said anything wrong. Please make Jammu and Kashmir terror-free, we will also play whatever role we can in this regard. But noting can be achieved by just making statements. How terror-free we are is evident from the Kokernag incident. After such a long time, losing a Colonel, a major, a DySP of JK Police and a jawan is not an ordinary incident," he said.

"Your aim is to make (JK) terror free, please do it. Let it be proved on the ground. Then remove the AFSPA. We will be the first ones to cheer for you," he added. (PTI)

## Cauvery issue: Normal life likely to be affected during Karnataka bandh today

**BENGALURU, Sept 28:** Normal life is likely to be affected, especially in the southern part of the state, with pro-Kannada and farmers' organisations calling for 'Karnataka Bandh' on Friday to protest the release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu.

'Kannada Okkuta', an umbrella organisation for Kannada outfits including factions of Karnataka Rakshana Vedike, Kannada Chhalavali (Vatal Paksha) and various farmers' bodies have given a call for the statewide dawn-to-dusk shutdown.

There will be a massive protest procession from Town Hall to Freedom Park in the city, in which people from all walks of life are likely to participate, the organisers said. They have said that the bandh is for the entire Karnataka and that they will try to shut highways, toll gates, rail services, and also airports.

The opposition BJP and JD(S)

too have extended their support to the bandh, as also hotels, autorickshaws and hail riders associations in Karnataka.

"Autorickshaw Drivers' Union and Ola Uber Drivers and Owners' Association (OUDOA) are supporting the bandh. We will take out a rally from Nayandahalli to the Freedom Park tomorrow," its president Tanveer Pasha told PTI.

An office bearer of the Karnataka State Private Schools' Association told PTI that they were extending 'moral support' to the bandh.

"We have told our association members to use their discretion regarding the bandh. We have communicated to our students that there are chances of schools remaining shut," the office-bearer said.

The Bruhath Bangaluru Hotel Association has extended its 'moral support' to the strike. However, they were holding a meeting

to take a final decision on whether to keep the restaurants and eateries shut for the whole day on Friday.

Meanwhile, the State Transport Department has issued directions to the state transport corporations to continue their services as usual.

Farmers and traders in the northern part of Karnataka such as Ballari, Kalaburagi, Bidar, Bagalkote, Vijayapura, Yadgir, Hubballi-Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri, Koppal and Davangere have extended their 'moral support' to the bandh but said they will not shut down their businesses.

Meanwhile, a few activists on Thursday staged protests in the Cauvery heartland of Mandya against the release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu. They have been staging agitation for the past 15 days.

They alleged that the state government had been lenient towards Tamil Nadu and had not been pursuing the matter properly. (PTI)

*Contd. from Page 1...*

## Gauhati High Court dismisses

the principal secretary or secretary of the public works department as and when the need so arises. In view of the submissions so made, the proceedings of this PIL are closed with the liberty, as prayed," the Justice added.

## Violent protests rock

CRPF personnel brought the situation under control, they added. Curfew was re-imposed in the twin districts of Imphal East and West as the security forces combatted the violent protests, which saw 65 demonstrators being injured since Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a BJP office at Khongjam in Thoubal district was set on fire, police said. In a statement, the Manipur police said that a mob targeted a police vehicle and burnt it, while assaulting a policeman and snatching his weapon.

Stern action will be taken against those indulging in such crimes, it said, adding that a search operation was underway for the recovery of the snatched arms and the arrest of the accused. The Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights, meanwhile, urged the security forces not to use lathi charge, tear gas shells and rubber bullets "arbitrarily and abruptly" against teenagers. More than 180 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was 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)

## WHO South-East Asia Region

diabetes under standard care by 2025 is the largest cover of non-communicable diseases for primary health care in the world. Accelerating the control of cardiovascular diseases is a priority and the WHO South-East Asia Region has called for action in four key areas, Singh underlined.

First, countries need to place cardiovascular diseases high on their agenda and expand efforts through commitment and leadership at both the policy and the programme levels, she said.

Countries have to continue implementing evidence-based tobacco control laws, in line with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its MPOWER package. Promote healthy diets with a specific focus on salt reduction and eliminating trans-fatty acids by implementing WHO SHAKE and WHO REPLACE technical packages.

Fourth, scale up programmes and service delivery models that improve the detection, diagnosis and management of hypertension and diabetes in primary health care with referral mechanisms, she added.

The goal should be to achieve full implementation of the WHO HEARTS technical package, along with a seamless care continuum for patients with cardiovascular diseases, with an emphasis on reducing complications and managing acute emergencies with proper care coordination, according to Singh.

Countries need to demonstrate impact through utilizing digital solutions for better coverage and control rates, she further said. "These actions are critical not only for public health but also for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets related to non-communicable diseases and universal health coverage. With only seven years left until the 2030 SDG target deadline, on this World Heart Day, it's a call for all of us to take action and empower ourselves to address cardiovascular disease risk factors and improve disease outcomes," she said. (PTI)

## Meghalaya bags award for

covering over 17,000 hectares in its first phase, aiming for 50,000 hectares in five years. "Our living root bridges, in over 70 villages, are recognized by UNESCO, symbolizing a sustainable balance between our economy and ecology. The seedball initiative engages over 75,000 children to enhance our green cover," she said.

Recognizing the importance of grassroots natural resource management, the minister said the Meghalaya government had introduced amendments to the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act 2005, establishing the Natural Resource Management Committee (NRMCS) within every village employment council (VEC). These committees ensure effective and sustainable natural resource management, with an expenditure reaching 45 per cent.

"Our journey towards a sustainable future is built on collaboration, supported by the Meghalaya State Council on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, led by our Chief Minister. We've implemented diverse initiatives guided by scientific principles to conserve our environment and combat climate change. Let's embrace the possibilities, harness community spirit, and address climate change's impacts. Together, we can forge a path towards a nature-positive, sustainable future," she asserted. (NNN)

## 3 arrested for necrophilia

they strangled her to death and took turns to engage in sexual acts with the corpse," the SP said. The accused had disposed of the body beside the bypass, from where it was later recovered and identified by her parents, he added. (PTI)

## AFSPA no solution to

ethnic violence, Sharmila said the deaths of the young man and woman that triggered widespread protests brought tears to her eyes. She also hit out at the Centre over the condition of women in the Northeastern state.

"Women of Manipur have been facing the brunt of AFSPA and this ethnic violence. The talks of women's empowerment, and the women's reservation bill would serve no purpose if you can't protect the dignity of the women. Are the women of Manipur any different from those of mainland India? Just because we look different doesn't mean we can be treated like this," she said.

Sharmila, who was on a 16-year-long hunger strike demanding the repeal of AFSPA, wondered how long the law would solve the problems in the Northeast.

"India is a democratic country. For how long should we carry forward this colonial law? In the name of fighting insurgency, crores of rupees are wasted, which could have been utilized for the overall development of the Northeast. The internet is suspended for months, and basic rights are taken away. Can you impose AFSPA if there is a law and order problem in Mumbai or Delhi?" she questioned. Sharmila had started her hunger strike against AFSPA after ten civilians were allegedly killed by security forces at a bus stop in Malom near Imphal in 2000. She waged her peaceful resistance for 16 years before ending it in 2016. The 51-year-old rights activist got married in 2017, and the mother of twin girls is now settled in Bengaluru. (PTI)

## Weavers, customers in for unique

this historic city of Jorhat was a long-standing demand of the entrepreneurs, weavers and general public. It is part of the measures initiated by the CSB to safeguard the purity of silk in the silk industry through introduction of labels, which are not only a mark of purity, but also inspire confidence in the buyers to purchase only the Silk Mark-labeled products," Neog added.

The CSB has been organizing the Silk Mark expos across the country involving Silk Mark authorized users, who include weavers, manufacturers, NGOs, prominent dealers, exporters and government supported agencies.

Bidyut Chandan Deka said, "Different activities should be undertaken to promote silk products and create awareness amongst the people about pure silk. Organizing such expos across the country would contribute immensely to the growth of the industry."

The vice-chancellor also offered to provide space at the AAU campus to set up an outlet for silk products.

KM Vajaya Kumari, director of Central Muga Eri Research and Training Institute, CSB, Lahdoigarh, Jorhat, deputy director of SMOI, Guwahati chapter, N Giridhar Srinivas and Lohit Kumar Dutta, professor (Retired) of the department of sericulture of AAU and participants attended the inaugural function.

## CM inaugurates Catamaran

transport services. The search and rescue vessel that has been launched will play a crucial role in responding swiftly to emergencies, ensuring the safety and security of those traveling through the various waterways in the state. Speaking on the occasion Parimal Suklabaidya, state minister of transport, exciseand fisheries, stated on microblogging site X, "Hon'ble CM Dr. @himantabiswa will be dedicating 10 Catamaran vessels, 3 Tug Boats & 1 search & rescue vessel today to the people of Assam, taking the state a step forward in promoting sustainable & eco-friendly water transportation system."

## Nanomaterials, vegan leather among technological innovations on display at CSIR exhibition

**NEW DELHI, Sept 28:** An air purifier that can be retrofitted to A/Cs, vegan leather, nanomaterials with wide-ranging applications and automated drones that do not need operators were displayed at a CSIR exhibition held here to showcase its achievements in the past decade.

The exhibition was held as part of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR) Foundation Day celebrations at Pragati Maidan on September 26 and 27.

It featured works of scientists from various CSIR institutes, including the Institute Of Genomics And Integrative Biology (IGIB), National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL), National Physical Laboratory (NPL), Structural Engineering Research Centre, and the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI).

Mansi Gupta, the founder of Calm The Chaos, an ayurveda-based cosmetics company, said that such exhibitions help lend visibility to the product as well as the institutes providing technical and research support to start-ups.

"Through similar exhibitions, CSIR has helped me showcase my product across India, including in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Goa and Ahmedabad," she said, adding that the Indian Institute Of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), Jammu, a CSIR institute, is providing research support to her start-up. "I have tied up with the government to test my ayurvedic products because testing in private labs is very expensive," she told PTI. IIIM is also helping her find seed funding. Ravi Kaushik, the founder and CEO of Airth, a start-up producing air purifiers that can be retrofitted to A/Cs, is regularly engaged with CSIR labs -- the Indian Institute of Toxicology Research, Central Drug Research Insti-



tute and the National Physical Laboratory -- to test his initial product, a standalone air purifier unit. Kaushik eventually pivoted to air purifiers that can be retrofitted to air conditioners.

"The relations built with them during research and development helped them understand that I am working in the domain of providing solutions for air pollution," he told PTI. Kaushik's start-up Airth is currently incubated with the Indian Institute of Toxicology Research which is helping him with product testing for a nominal charge.

N Usha Kiran was pursuing PhD in material sciences at another CSIR lab -- the Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (IMMT) when he founded and registered his company Reseaprolabs Pvt. Ltd in 2022. The start-up creates advanced nanomaterials composed of titanium, silicon and carbon which are termed mxene and maxphases. He has invented the flash sintering technique, drastically cutting down the time required to generate these materials.

These materials, having applications in energy and biomedical sectors and competing with graphene in terms of its electrical conduc-

tivity, can profoundly enhance the performance of Lithium-ion batteries, Usha Kiran said.

His start-up venture was recently incubated with the Innovative Technology Enabling Centre (Intec), an incubation centre run by IMMT.

"India is full of inventions, inventors and innovations. However, there is a big gap in translating our research into practical outcomes," said T. Pavan Kumar, a senior scientist at IMMT, who is also involved in running Intec.

"Usha Kiran's initiative is the 14th start-up venture, which incubated with us just 10 days back. He gets infrastructural, technical and intellectual support from us at a nominal charge. We also helped him file a patent by fast-tracking the paperwork processing," Kumar said.

He said the incubation centre is also involved in sensitising the community, including other agencies and institutes, about intellectual property rights and their awareness. "This way, we also enhance our visibility and try to attract start-ups who wish to incubate with us."

At the National Physical Laboratory (NAL), another CSIR lab, its wind tunnels are being used by private aerospace firms such as AgniKul Cosmos Private Limited.

"They need testing to validate their (aircraft) design. We do the testing and they bear the expenses charged as per CSIR guidelines," said Venu Ganaparam, the principal scientist at NAL, where ISRO's Chandrayaan-3 underwent 3,000 wind tunnel tests. Even as CSIR labs and incubation centres seek to ease the burden of start-ups by providing testing and mentoring support, funding for testing and then for making the product market-ready is, however, still hard to come by, start-up founders said. (PTI)



# MAKERS UNVEIL 'ANIMAL' TEASER ON RANBIR KAPOOR'S BIRTHDAY

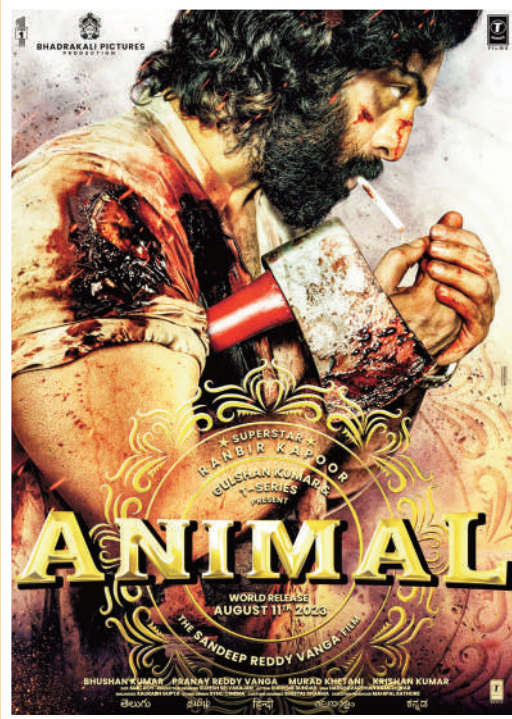
**MUMBAI, Sept 28:**

The makers of the Ranbir Kapoor-starrer *Animal* released the teaser of the upcoming film on Thursday on the occasion of the actor's 41st birthday.

The pan-India film, directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga of Arjun Reddy and Kabir Singh fame, also stars Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol and Rashmika Mandanna. It arrives in cinema halls on December 1 in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam.

The 2.26 minute-long teaser of *Animal*, shared on social media, appears to show Ranbir Kapoor and Anil Kapoor's characters in a troubled father-son relationship.

"*Animal*' is a cinematic wildfire that's sure to take you on a wild ride



through a realm where thrill and passion collide," the makers said in a press release. In a previous interview with PTI, Ranbir Kapoor had called *Animal* a "new territory" for him.

"It's a crime drama and a father-son story. It's something audiences don't expect me to do. It has got shades of grey. He is very alpha, again something I'm not. So, I'm looking forward to it," the actor had said.

Also starring Triptii Dimri, *Animal* is produced by Bhushan Kumar and Krishan Kumar's T-Series, Murad Khetani's Cine1 Studios, and Pranay Reddy Vanga's Bhadrakali Pictures. (PTI)

## Audio launch event of superstar Vijay's 'Leo' called off



**CHENNAI, Sept 28:** The audio launch event of superstar Vijay's upcoming movie "Leo" has been cancelled due to "overflowing passes requests and safety constraints". Production banner Seven Screen Studio shared the news on Tuesday evening in a post on microblogging site X. The audio launch event was set to be held here on September 30.

"Considering overflowing passes requests & safety constraints, we have decided not to conduct the Leo Audio Launch. "In respect of the fans' wishes, we will keep you engaged with frequent updates," the studio posted.

The banner also said the event's cancellation is not "due to political pressure or any other reasons". It comes weeks after the organisers of music maestro A R Rahman's concert 'Marakkuma Nenjam' received backlash over poor set-up, overcrowding and bad experiences of attendees. "Leo", a Tamil film which will also release in Hindi, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada, marks a reunion between Vijay and filmmaker Lokesh Kanagaraj after the 2021 blockbuster "Master".

Actor Trisha Krishnan, who earlier worked with Vijay in Tamil hits "Ghilli", "Kuruvi", "Thirupachi" and "Aathi", features opposite the actor in the film. (PTI)

# 'Dunki' is all funny and emotional: Shah Rukh Khan

**MUMBAI, Sept 28:**

Rajkumar Hirani's "Dunki" is completed and a "little like life itself", says superstar Shah Rukh Khan, who is currently riding high on the back-to-back success of his two movies, "Jawan" and "Pathaan".

During an #AskSRK session with his fans on X on Wednesday, the actor received few queries about the comedy drama film, which will mark his first collaboration with Hirani.

"#Dunki is done and very beautiful. A little like life itself," the 57-year-old actor said in response to a fan who asked about the film's status.

Also featuring actor Taapsee Pannu, "Dunki" is directed by Hirani from a script he co-wrote with Abhijat Joshi and Kanika Dhillon. The movie is currently set for release on December 22. One fan asked Shah Rukh will *Dunki* feature any action sequences, which were aplenty in *Pathaan* and *Jawan*. To this, the actor replied, "#Dunki is all funny and emotional. It's



Raju sirs world mere bhai. Thoda sa action maine daal diya hai...pata nahi sir rahein na rakhein....woh editor bhi hain na.' Another fan asked if the Christmas release date of *Dunki* has been locked and the actor said, "#Dunki Fixed hi hai. Aur kya karoon Maathe pe gudwa loon." The session also witnessed a friendly banter between SRK and Hirani. 'Sirji ab bathroom se bahar aa jao. Kya kar rahe ho? Trailer dikhana hain. #AskSRK,' said the filmmaker, known for *Munna Bhai* movies, *3 Idiots* and *Sanju*. (PTI)

## Fast-paced music, isolation of song from story leave no space for memorable lyrics: Javed Akhtar

**NEW DELHI, Sept 28:** Poet-lyricist Javed Akhtar says lyrics today don't work the way they did earlier because they are not rooted in a film's story and its emotions.

The 78-year-old has written some immortal lyrics for songs such as "Yeh Kahan Aa Gaye Hum" for "Silsila" (1981), "Ek Ladki Ko Dekha" for "1942: A Love Story" (1994), and "Jashn-e-Bahara" for "Jodhaa Akbar" (2008) to name a few.

"It is not that writers can't write good songs, it's that they are not getting an opportunity to write good songs. There are a number of reasons why songs have become forgettable. One, the tempo and beat has become very high. Two, most songs are in the background today, there is no lip-sync anymore," Akhtar told PTI.

Akhtar said that since the songs are no longer a part of the story, they lack personal feelings of sadness, happiness, and heartbreak.

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Akhtar said that since the songs are no longer a part of the story, they lack personal feelings of sadness, happiness, and heartbreak.

"Songs today are played in a generic situation, it's playing in the background. Earlier, songs used to capture a particular human emotion and would be part of the story. The character would lip-sync so it used to become a part of the drama. A song was like a scene," he said.

According to the lyricist, most of the songs are set to high tempo music where the human mind gets only a fraction of seconds to register the word.

"The tempo of songs has become high and frantic that the voice loses its value. Words only go deep into your psyche or your hearing when there is some space for the words. When you have a fraction of seconds to register the word, if the tune is so fast, the words become irrelevant," Akhtar noted. He was recently in the city to attend a session and book signing event organised by real estate developer The Anant Raj Corporation (TARC). He talked about his conversational biography "Talking Life", written by Nasreen Munni Kabir. (PTI)

## Rajkummar Rao, Triptii Dimri to star in 'Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video'



**MUMBAI, Sept 28:** Actors Rajkummar Rao and Triptii Dimri will collaborate for the first time in a quirky family drama titled "Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video", the makers announced Thursday. Billed as a "pure masala entertainer set in the swinging 90s", the movie will be directed by Raaj Shaandilyaa of "Dream Girl" franchise fame.

In an Instagram post, Rao unveiled the official poster of "Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video" and captioned it: "Yeh kaise bahar aa gaya???" Dimri also shared the same post from her social media account.

The movie is produced by T-Series, Balaji Telefilms and Wakao Films in association with Thinkink Picturez. (PTI)



## I find adapting a book easier, says filmmaker Sriram Raghavan

**MUMBAI, Sept 28:** Filmmaker Sriram Raghavan believes bringing alive a book on the big screen is a far easier process than coming up with an original story which takes time. In his career, the acclaimed director has tackled two book adaptations -- 2007's "Johnny Gaddaar", which was based on French novel "Les mystifiés", and "Badlapur", adapted from Italian novel "Death's Dark Abyss".

At the Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival's panel discussion, titled 'Adaptations - the Stories We Choose to Tell', Raghavan said he reads a lot of books which helps him during the writing process.

"When I try to write my own stories they take time, sometimes they get stuck at some point and you are not able to move ahead. So, I find adapting a book a far easier thing because the basic material, the kernel or the premise is strong enough

that it attracts me. Then the rest is my work, at least I know I'm not inventing things. So, I read as much as I can," the filmmaker told reporters here.

Raghavan revealed that his next feature film, "Merry Christmas" starring Katrina Kaif and Vijay Sethupathi, is based on a novel. The director, however, didn't name the book.

"This is (based on) a novel. I can't reveal the name, but it is there in the film's credit. We have taken the rights. What I liked about it is there in it (film)," he said about the movie which will come out in theatres on December 15.

The 60-year-old director believes it is important to ensure that the core substance of the story is not lost when turning a book into a movie. "The film also has to work with people who have read the story so you try and see what you

can do without disturbing the essence of the book. Me and a couple of friends check what is being published, some are old books. So, I do a lot of research trying to find stories," he added.

Raghavan further said that he was keen to adapt Vikas Swarup's novel "Q&A" and Hussain Zaidi's "Mafia Queens of Mumbai" for the big screen. Both the books were made into feature films -- Danny Boyle's Oscar-winning film "Slumdog Millionaire" and Sanjay Leela Bhansali's period drama "Gangubai Kathiawadi", starring Alia Bhatt.

"I wanted to do 'Mafia Queens' but it was done. Then Vikas Swarup's book, 'Q&A', when I read the book I loved, and went to meet him, and he said, 'The rights are sold'. So, it is not that I don't like Indian stories, it's just that I have not found an Indian book to adapt. I'm sure it will happen."

Film producer Siddharth Roy Kapur said there is a dedicated team at his production banner Roy Kapur Films that identifies books which have the potential to be turned into films or shows.

"What our team does is we have a whole lot of books coming, so you have someone to identify whether something should be adapted (to screen) or not. A book can be daunting because it can be longer read so a lot of things fall through the cracks, a lot of very interesting material falls through the cracks." Zaidi, one of the most prolific crime writers, is best known for his books such as "Black Friday", "Dongri to Dubai: Six Decades of the Mumbai Mafia", "My Name is Abu Salem" and "Byculla to Bangkok", among others. Many of his books have been turned into movies and shows. (PTI)



# Aiming for rich haul of medals, Chopra-led India set to begin athletics campaign

**HANGZHOU, Sept 28:** Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will be the cynosure of all eyes as India begins its athletics campaign in the Asian Games here on Friday, targeting to surpass last edition's 20 medals.

Chopra will lead a 65-strong team, with the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) hoping to win at least 25 medals. Three athletes from the original 68, the largest in the Indian contingent, were left out due to injuries. As usual, athletics is likely to account for the lion's share of India's total medal count. In the 2018 Asian Games, athletics had contributed 20 medals (8 gold, 9 silver, 3 bronze) out of India's

total of 70.

"The target is minimum 25 medals. Anything more is a bonus," an AFI official said.

It may, however, be difficult to match the eight gold the country had won in the 2018 Asian Games.

Chopra, shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor, 3000m steeple-chaser Avinash Sable, the men's and women's 4x400m relay teams are strong gold medal contenders. Toor and the men's 4x400m relay team are Asian record holders.

The 25-year-old Chopra, who recently became world champion in addition to his Olympic gold, is the best bet for a gold in athletics. He is defending his gold he won in 2018.

Pakistan's World Championships silver medalist Arshad Nadeem, who claimed a bronze in the 2018 Asian Games, will be his main rival here.

With a personal best throw of 84.77m while finishing a creditable fifth in his maiden World Championships last month, 28-year-old Kishore Jena is also a medal contender in men's javelin. He has the third-best throw among Asians this season. The 28-year-old Toor is the favourite to defend the gold medal he won in 2018. He is the lone Indian Asian record holder in individual events. Toor's only concern is that he has been injury prone in the last few years.

The burly Punjab athlete rewrote his own Asian record by

hurling the iron ball to a distance of 21.77m while winning gold in the National Inter-State Championships in June.

Sable can be considered a sure-shot medal contender. The 2022 Commonwealth Games silver medalist holds the national record of 8 minutes 11.20 seconds. His season's best time is 8:11.63, placing him in second position among Asians behind Miura Ryuji (Season's Best: 8:09.91) of Japan.

In men's long jump, Murali Sreeshankar will be aiming to redeem himself after his disappointing show at the World Championships. His personal and season's best of 8.41m puts him in the fourth spot in the world and second among

Asians behind compatriot Jeswin Aldrin.

Chinese Taipei's Asian champion Lin Yu-Tang (SB: 8.40m) and China's Wang Jianan (8.34m) will be his main rivals, besides Aldrin.

Aldrin was the world season leader before the World Championships with his national record jump of 8.41m early in the season. But he was inconsistent throughout the season with fitness issues also dogging him, due to which he pulled out of the Asian Championships. He is still the season leader among Asians and third in the world. With the Asian record time of 2 minutes 59.05 seconds in the qualification round of the World Championships in

August, India is a gold medal contender in the men's 4x400m relay. The Indian quartet's time is also the eighth best in the world this season. The country finished second behind Sri Lanka in the Asian Championships in July with a time of 3:01.80. Gold winner in the 2018 Asian Games, India is again title contender in mixed 4x400m relay after winning the event in the Asian Championships in July with a time of 3 minutes 14.70 seconds, the best in the continent this season.

Praveen Chitravel is a medal contender in men's triple jump as he is the season leader among Asians and number 6 in the world with his national record 17.37m jump. But he has

not touched 17m in his last three events, including the World Championships in August where he failed to make it to the finals, with a disappointing 16.38m jump in the qualification round.

Reigning men's 1500m Asian champion Ajay Kumar Saroj is also the second best timer in the continent this season. He clocked a personal best of 3 minutes 38.24 seconds in the World Championships in August. Among women, 100m hurdler Jyothi Yarraji is a sure-shot bet for a medal. The country's first ever Asian champion in 100m hurdles, Yarraji won the Asian Championships gold in July with a time of 13.09 seconds. (PTI)

## MARRAN'S TWIN STRIKES ENDED INDIA'S CAMPAIGN

# MEN'S FOOTBALL: SAUDI ARABIA PROVE 'TWO GOOD' FOR INDIA

**HANGZHOU, Sept 28:** A formidable Saudi Arabia didn't bring their 'A' game to the fore yet were strong enough to ward off a gutsy challenge from India winning their pre-quarterfinal match 2-0 in the men's football competition here on Thursday.

There was no doubt about Saudi Arabia's supremacy as forward Mohammed Khalil Marran's opportunistic twin strikes in the 51st and 57th minute ended Sunil Chhetri-led India's campaign at the continental event.

However, Igor Stimac's players can hold their heads high with the kind of performance that they put in despite so much uncertainty and with AIFF sending a second string side due to the obstinate attitude from the Indian Super League (ISL) organisers who refused to release top players.

A victory against Saudi Arabia would have been a miracle but considering that this bunch of players haven't even been in a camp together, holding the potential gold medal contenders to a goalless deadlock for the first 45 minutes was a laudable effort from them.

The defence marshalled by



Sandesh Jhingan kept its shape but it was the better stamina, stronger legs and superior skills of the Saudis that prevailed in the end. Just like it happened during the China match, the wheels came

off just after the 50th minute.

The only difference from that match was that the players were well rested and hence floodgates didn't open after the winners had scored a brace.

In the 51st minute, Mohammed Al Abu Shamant sent a perfect cross from the right flank and Khalil outwitted his marker Jhingan to powerfully nod it home giving his team the lead.

The goal did create a bit of panic in the Indian ranks and the second goal was completed in five touches.

After snatching the ball in the Indian defensive third, a defence splitting through pass freed the former Al Nassr striker on the right side of the penalty box.

The fourth touch was an outside dodge beating the outstretched hands of goalkeeper Dheeraj Singh and the fifth touch was a cool slotting of the ball into the back of the net.

To be fair to the Indian team, the defence didn't operate from too deep and although they didn't have numerical advantage in the opposition attacking third, Saudi can't claim that they had too many scoring chances.

One goal that they missed was a Musab Al-Juwayr's snap right-footer that beat Dheeraj and dipped only to hit the horizontal bar. This happened in the 22nd minute of the first half. The other close chance was when Zakaria Hawsawi had a clear look at the goal from close range but Jhingan put his body in line with perfect anticipation to avert the danger. (PTI)



**HANGZHOU, Sept 28:** For India's Naorem Roshibina Devi the silver medal in women's 60kg sanda event of wushu was a victory for the victims of Manipur violence that has been raging in her native state since May this year. Hailing from the Meitei community in Kwashiphai village in Bishnupur district adjoining Churachandpur, which is dominated by the rival Kuki ethnic community, Roshibina fought a valiant fight against local heavyweight Wu Xiaowei before going down 0-2 in two rounds in the final.

The conflict between the two communities in Manipur has killed scores of people and injured so many more.

"Manipur is burning. Fighting is going on in Manipur. I can't go to my village. I want to dedicate this medal to those who are protecting us and suffering there," said Roshibina after clinching the silver. The Manipuri athlete was crying inconsolably as she added: "I don't know what will happen, the fighting has been continuing. When will it stop and return to normal life of earlier times."

China has dominated the women's 60kg category and an ultra-aggressive Wu ensured that the hosts defended their gold medal of the Jakarta-Palembang edition.

Roshibina's effort was good enough for the 22-year-old to up-

grade her bronze from the Asian Games 2018. She had confirmed at least a silver on Wednesday when she put up a terrific fight to knock out world championship silver and bronze medallist Thi Thu Thuy Nguyen of Vietnam 2-0. She spoke to her parents on Wednesday and they asked her to focus on the final without getting distracted by the Manipuri violence.

"They told me to focus on the match and not on other things. My family is fine. I don't speak to them regularly as my coaches say the violence at home will distract me. "We prepared very well and we could do well here and won a silver," she added.

The Indian found the going tough against Wu Xiaowei, the reigning champions in the category, allowing the Chinese to get off to a strong start. Wu was declared winner by the judges after two rounds. Trying to get her opponent off the mat, the local favourite had an aggressive first round and began with a splendid take down.

The Manipuri athlete tried to bounce back and got hold of Wu's leg to push her out to the edges but was unsuccessful as round one belonged to the Chinese who had a 1-0 lead.

A watchful Wu sealed the issue with an attack on Roshibina Devi's torso in the second round. (PTI)

## Mohun Bagan edge out 9-man Bengaluru FC 1-0



**KOLKATA, Sept 28:** Mohun Bagan Super Giant edged out a 9-man Bengaluru FC 1-0 in their scrappy Indian Super League match here on Wednesday.

In a match that witnessed several tense moments, Hugo Boumous scored the winner for Bagan in the 67th minute.

Bengaluru FC in fact enjoyed better possession in the initial phase of the match, forcing the home side to hang in there with all their strength.

However, the Kolkataans soon slipped into their own and tus-

sled with their opponents more effectively.

In the 67th minute, BFC's Jovanovic made an error while clearing the ball, which was collected by Bagan's Jason Cummings.

Cummings passed it to Boumous, who placed the ball past BFC custodian Gurpreet Sandhu.

But thereafter the match saw some skirmishes which ended in BFC's Suresh Singh and Naorem Singh getting marching orders in the 75th and 92nd minutes respectively. (PTI)

## Shakib Al Hasan hints at retirement after 2025 ICC Champions Trophy

**DHAKA, Sept 28:** Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan wants to call time on his illustrious international career after the 2025 Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

He has also asserted that while he plans to retire from Tests following the forthcoming ICC Cricket World Cup in India starting next month, he is also likely to quit T20Is after the ICC T20 World Cup next year in West Indies and the United States of America.

Talking to T-Sports, as reported by ESPNcricinfo, Shakib said, "The 2025 Champions Trophy for ODIs and the 2024 T20 World Cup for T20Is. Tests may be sooner. Maybe (after the World Cup)." "I will retire all at once, but I will stop playing each format one by one. I will announce my retirement after the 2025 Champions Trophy."

Shakib will be leading Bangladesh during the World Cup, having also captained the side during the Asia Cup earlier this month in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

It was his second stint as the



unit's leader. Under him, the Tigers did make it to the Super 4 of the Asia Cup, but failed to make it to the final.

In the meantime, Shakib has confirmed that his outing in the upcoming World Cup will be his last as the skipper and will be quitting captaincy as a whole.

"Given the current reality, I am captain only till the World Cup. Not a day more."

"I resigned from the captaincy on the 17th [of September]. The reasons were the same when I didn't want to captain ahead of the

Asia Cup."

"I don't think my captaincy is adding value at this stage of my career. I wanted to just bowl my 10 overs, give my best in fielding, and do my batting."

"The easiest thing to do for me would have been not to take the captaincy. At this age, I didn't want to take this pressure. I want to smile, enjoy my game, perform for Bangladesh," he added.

Bangladesh take on Afghanistan in its opening fixture of the World Cup on October 7 in Dharamsala. (PTI)

said.

"Malaysia have also produced excellent results this year, but certainly our results at the world stage make us the one to beat," the Italian reiterated.

The team had a month-long camp at SAI Sonipat and Pagni is happy with the way things have panned out.

"The preparation has gone exactly as I had planned, we have had no injuries and that's a great thing," he said.

"From a physical and technical perspective, the athletes have worked very hard and have stood out in their commitments on and off the field. No changes need to be made, the team is in a great condition." (PTI)

## I didn't think I would last this long: Virdhawal Khade

**HANGZHOU, Sept 28:** He could not stand on the podium in his fourth Asian Games appearance but former bronze medallist Virdhawal Khade never thought his swimming journey "would last this long".

The 32-year-old Khade competed in 50m freestyle and 50m butterfly events at the Hangzhou Asian Games, finishing 5th and 7th respectively in his heats.

He had won a rare Asian Games bronze medal in 2010 in 50m butterfly while missing out on a podium finish by narrow margin in the men's 50m freestyle final in 2018.

"This is my fourth Asian Games. My first was in 2006 Doha where I was a teen.

In 2010 Guangzhou, I won a bronze. And in 2018 Jakarta, I just missed out on a medal," Khade said.

"I started as a junior in the team, now I am the senior most. This is something I am really proud of. In 2006, I would not have thought I would last this long and go on to become an icon in Indian swimming."

There was a break in his ca-

reer after 2012. He took up a Maharashtra government job and missed the 2014 Asian Games as he was involved in election-related official work.

"After 2012, I started working with the state government, finding time to train was really difficult. From 2012 to 2018, I must have only two years of good training and that was six years back.

"In a sport like swimming, that makes a big difference. I had to cut out on my events, to focus only on 50m. There were a lot of hurdles in my way. Despite all that, I could train hard and come back to that level."

"A medal would have been great but I was very proud of myself that I could make it happen. 2018 was the fastest year of my life, I got my best time in 50m freestyle and butterfly. I was pretty fast in the 100m freestyle as well. But not having a medal made me a better and tougher person."

Khade, who had thought about quitting the sport during the COVID-19 lockdown, opted to train without a coach earlier this year but he found it tough. (PTI)

## We'll be the ones to beat at Asian Games: India compound archery coach Sergio Pagni

**NEW DELHI, Sept 28:** Boasting three reigning world champions, India's compound archery team will undoubtedly start as favourites and the opponents will be gunning to "beat" the side at the ongoing Asian Games here, said the country's head coach Sergio Pagni.

For the first time, 10 medals will be at stake in archery at the Asian Games with the addition of mixed events in recurve and compound sections.

And going by their dominance at the world level this year, India will be firm favourites to finish on the podium in all five events in the compound section.

"Everyone knows what we have achieved this year, not only

at the World Championships but throughout the season," Pagni told PTI from SAI Sonipat before the team left for Hangzhou in the early hours of Thursday.

"...We are the ones to beat, and perhaps the only issue is that some teams will be putting extra effort against us."

"However, we know how to handle this kind of pressure and the World Cup in Paris demonstrated that quite well," added the two-time World Cup Final winner. India had a windfall of medals in the compound section this year which was headlined by 17-year-old Aditi Swami's feat of becoming the youngest-ever senior world champion.

Ojas Deotale also annexed the

men's world crown, while the women's compound team scripted Indian archery's watershed moment with aplomb in Berlin.

The Indian women's team of seasoned Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Aditi and Parneet Kaur dropped just five points between them to beat Mexico in the final.

From the four stages of the World Cup this year, the compound archers have bagged seven gold and four bronze medals.

India have also won one silver (Pratham Jawkar) in the World Cup Final and one bronze in the World Games, taking their overall medals tally in the world events to seven gold, one silver and five bronze.

"I don't want to make predictions, it's not my style. This year we brought home about 50 per cent of the gold medals from the World Cups and the World Championships. I leave the predictions to other teams," said Pagni.

The coach feels that recurve heavyweights Korea, who are making a rapid improvement in compound section, will be a formidable force while Malaysia are also competitive.

"China is not considered very strong, but Korea has had excellent results in recent years. This year we have outperformed them in all competitions, but they remain formidable opponents, our real opponent on the field," Pagni



CHINA SURPASSED 150 MEDALS ON DAY 5 OF THE TWO-WEEK EVENT

# HOST CHINA CONTINUE ASIAN GAMES DOMINANCE

**HANGZHOU, Sept 28:** China blew past the 150-medal mark Thursday on Day 5 of the Asian Games, more than double the number of second-place South Korea as the home nation continued its decades-long domination of the event.

The hosts were bolstered by multiple golds in a home sport on Thursday, as Chinese athletes won the men's 70-, 60- and 56-kilogram finals in Wushu martial arts, as well as the women's 60- and 52-kilogram finals.

He Feng, who took gold in the 70-kilogram final by beating former Asian Games gold medalist Mohsen Mohammaseifi of Iran, was trailing in the first round and credited his coaches for helping him adjust.

"It is mainly the result of the tactics and training by the coach, then the most important thing is mentality, which determines success or failure," he said. "I always tell myself not to give up, persistence is victory." Host nations traditionally get a 'homefield' 'medal bump,' and He said the crowd also helped keep him going.

"Seeing so many people cheering for me, I think I can't give up, no matter how tired I am," He said.

China won almost 300 medals — 132 gold — five years ago at the Asian Games in Indonesia,



with South Korea and Japan the main challengers.

Similarly, the two countries were in second and third place for overall medals on Day 5 this year with another 10 days to go.

The Asian Games feature 12,500 participants from 45 nations and territories — more than the 10,500 from about 200 delegations expected at next year's Paris Olympics.

Despite its early dominance, China will have to settle for a battle for bronze in the popular League of Legends online video game after falling Thursday to the strong South Korean team led by Lee Sang-hyeok.

Lee, better known in the online gaming world as "Faker," is commonly called the League of Legends GOAT — Greatest Of All Time — and the South Korean

team has yet to lose a game.

China was thought to be a challenge in the closely-watched match, but South Korea was able to win the best-of-three series 2-0.

"I hope we can learn from today's lessons and play better tomorrow," said Chinese player Tian Ye, also known as "Meiko." "I hope the players can adjust themselves well after today."

As the global games market con-

tinues to boom in numbers of players and revenue, esports takes its place this year at the Asian Games as a competition sport for the first time and so far it has been an audience favorite.

It joins other "mind games" like bridge and chess.

League of Legends is one of the most popular games, where two teams of five face each other in a bid to destroy the other's base.

China plays Vietnam on Friday for the bronze, while South Korea and Taiwan will battle for gold.

"Although we won today's match against China, we still can't take it lightly in tomorrow's final," South Korean coach Kim Jeong-gyun said.

Kazakhstan won two golds and a silver in shooting events on Thursday, while North Korea earned a gold, silver and bronze.

Kazakhstan won gold in both the women's 10-meter running target and the skeet mixed team competition. It took silver in the women's team 10-meter running target as well. North Korea won gold in the women's team 10-meter running target, and silver and bronze in the individual version of the same event. In other shooting competitions, India won gold in the men's team 10-meter air pistol event, and Vietnam won gold in the individual version of the same event. (AP)

## Anush clinches India's first ever Bronze in individual dressage event



**HANGZHOU, Sept 28:** Anush Agarwalla won India's first-ever individual medal in the dressage competition of the equestrian event at the Asian Games here on Thursday.

Astride Etro, Agarwalla scored 73.030 to finish third and claimed his second medal of the Asian Games. India has won 13 medals in the Asian Games equestrian event since 1951, including the dressage team gold here on Tuesday. But, the country had never won an individual medal in dressage in the past. Bin Mahamad Fathil Mohd Qabil Ambak of Malaysia won the gold with a total score of 75.780, while Jacqueline Wing Ying Siu of Hong Kong bagged the silver scoring 73.450.

The other Indian in fray, Hriday Vipul Chheda, who topped the qualifying on Wednesday, was eliminated after blood was spotted on the left foreleg of his horse Chemxpro Emerald and did not feature in the medal competition.

"There was a small scratch on the left foreleg of Vipul's horse and so little bit of fresh blood could be seen. So under the rules,

he was eliminated. It was very unfortunate, we were also hopeful of him (a medal)," team manager and doctor Mohd Adil Yakub told PTI.

On Tuesday, Agarwalla had teamed up with Chheda, Divyakriti Singh and Sudipti Hajela to win the dressage team gold after 41 years. "I knew that it would be good. I had a good partnership with my horse. In the morning when I woke up, I texted my mother that it will be good and we will get something today. My horse was amazing," Agarwalla said after winning the historic bronze. "It has been a long journey, a very difficult one. A lot of time, I thought maybe I am not good enough. But holding this medal today, it's all worth it. I am very happy how it all went."

He said he spent some nervous moments when he finished his competition and the last rider just after him was on the field.

"When the last rider went, I knew I was third (at that time). I knew he (the last rider) was a very strong competitor. It was very difficult for me in those six minutes before his result came out." (PTI)

## Pakistan is a weaker team than India at this moment, says Waqar Younis

**CHENNAI, Sept 28:** Legendary pacer Waqar Younis rated India a better side over Pakistan going into the World Cup while basing his observation on the better preparation of the Rohit Sharma-led team ahead of the quadrennial big bash.

India had recently won the Asia Cup and handed a massive 228-run defeat to their arch-rivals in a Super 4 match at Colombo.

In the World Cup, India will face Pakistan on October 14 in Ahmedabad, and Younis said pressure will be there on both the outfits but said Men in Blue just could have an edge. "As we all know, it (India vs Pakistan) will be the biggest game, mother of all the games. So, when you play in Ahmedabad, you will have to control your nerves, and not only Pakistan will be under pressure since it is a weaker team as compared to India.

"But India will also be under pressure because the crowd in the stadium will create pressure on both the teams," Younis told Star Sports.

"However, if we judge purely based on the team's performance, India definitely will be a better

team," he added.

Younis was also mindful of the Pakistani's unstable form, and said the injury-enforced absence of pacer Naseem Shah could put them in a significant disadvantage.

"If I talk about Pakistan, they are a miss and hit this time. The absence of Naseem Shah will be a big disadvantage because Naseem and Shaheen (Afridi) used to complement each other with new ball."

"Though Hasan Ali has been declared as his replacement; he has got a lot of experience and gave brilliant performances in the past, but I feel, to suddenly come and perform on this kind of big stage will not be an easy task for him," said Younis.

Analysing the Indian squad, Younis said the team has great spinners, while its bench strength is equally potent.

"If we only talk about ticking the boxes then we will see no other team can match India right now because they have good spinners, who are playing right now in the starting XI such as Kuldeep, Jadeja. But they also have strong bench strength." (PTI)

## Indian men's 10m air pistol team strikes Gold at Asian Games



**HANGZHOU, Sept 28:** The men's 10m air pistol team extended India's impressive show at the Asian Games by shooting another gold but individual success eluded Sarabjot Singh and Arjun Singh Cheema, who fizzled out in the final here Thursday.

The team of Sarabjot, Cheema and Shiva Narwal narrowly beat the Chinese team to take the top podium, earning India's fourth gold medal from the shooting ranges. With Thursday's success, Indian shooters have so far won four gold, four silver and five bronze medals.

The Indian trio's aggregate score of 1734 was just one better than the Chinese team, which settled for the silver medal, while Vietnam, with a score of 1730, bagged the bronze. Sarabjot and Arjun also made it to the eight-shooter individual finals but finished fourth and eighth respectively. Vietnam's Pham Quang Huy won gold with a score of 240.5, while South Korea's Lee Wonho (239.4) and Uzbekistan's Vladimir Svechnikov (219.9) took the silver and bronze, respectively.

Sarabjot, 21, scored 199, while Arjun ended up eighth and last, exiting on the second elimination shot. It was another fruitful day for Indian shooters, with Sarabjot, who will be celebrating his 22nd birthday on Saturday, giving himself an early birthday gift as he led the air pistol trio to team gold, scoring 580 in

the qualification round, while Cheema shot 578 and Narwal amassed 576 to aggregate 1734. In the qualification round, whose aggregate score decides the team medallists, Sarabjot shot cards of 95, 95, 97, 98, 97 and 98 to aggregate 580 and entered the finals at fifth place. (PTI)

## Pakistan cricketers floored by 'unexpected' welcome, hit nets 12 hours after arrival

**HYDERABAD, Sept 28:** "Zabardast. Maza aa gaya," responded premier Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf as he walked into the main nets of the Hyderabad Cricket Association ground and asked about "the overwhelming" welcome his team received at the airport barely 12 hours ago. Indians' love for the game is unmatched, therefore, fans chanting Pakistan skipper Babar Azam's name at the Hyderabad airport should not come entirely as a surprise. After all, one of the leading batters in the game had set foot on Indian soil for the first time alongside most of his teammates, marking Pakistan's return to India after seven years.

The perpetual tension between the nations was clearly forgotten as fans were left in awe of Babar and Co. Within no time of their arrival, the Pakistan cricket team was "trending" in India.

Babar was clearly the fans' favourite but the entire Pakistan squad was floored by the unexpected welcome. Barring



Mohammad Nawaz and Salman Agha, it is the first visit to India for the rest of the squad.

"We did expect people to turn up at the ground but a proper welcome at the airport from fans, we did not see that coming. They had lined up for the team. It was wonderful to witness that, even the players got emotional about it," a team source told PTI.

Insta stories from Babar and Shaheen Afridi upon their arrival in the heavily guarded

team hotel in Banjara Hills summed up their emotions. "Overwhelmed with the love and support here in Hyderabad," wrote Babar. Shaheen added "great welcome thus far".

Pakistan arrived here less than 48 hours before their opening World Cup warm-up fixture against New Zealand on Friday and fully aware of the task at hand, as many as 10 players including two travelling reserves turned up at the ground for the optional training


session.

After warming up in the field of play, Babar Azam and Iftikhar Ahmed were the first batch of batters to hit the nets. Bowling to them were the fearsome pace duo of Shaheen Afridi and a fit-again Haris Rauf, who bowled for the first time since the game against India in Asia Cup on September 10. The experienced Hasan Ali, making a comeback into the team following Naseem Shah's injury, also hit his stride under the supervision of bowling coach Mome Morkel. The pace trio was in good spirits and was seen joking with the net bowlers provided by the local association HCA.

Notwithstanding the diplomatic tensions, the cricketers from both India and Pakistan get along really well and that was evident when Rauf was curious to know about the cricketing structure in India. And he knew that rival pacer Mohammad Siraj was also from Hyderabad.

The team spent close to 2.5 hours at the ground. (PTI)





**WORLD HEART DAY**  
29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023

USE HEART, KNOW HEART


This year's theme emphasizes the importance of understanding our own hearts as the first step in protecting them.

The five common cardiovascular diseases are heart attacks, strokes, heart failure, arrhythmia, and heart valve issues. To maintain heart health, it's crucial to identify and manage risk factors such as high blood pressure, unhealthy diet, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, smoking, air pollution, kidney disease, inactivity and excessive alcohol consumption.


  
Don't smoke or use tobacco

  
Engage in physical activity

  
Adopt a heart-healthy diet

  
Prioritize quality sleep

  
Maintain a healthy weight

  
Get regular health screening tests

  
Manage stress

On this World Heart Day 2023, let us commit to maintain an active lifestyle and nurture our hearts for optimal well-being.

Call 104 for any Health related Information

Call 108 for Ambulance Service

(NHM/D/2023-24/1319)