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Russia to participate in Eastern Maritime Corridor workshop in Chennai

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 12: Union minister of ports, shipping and waterways and Ayush, Sarbananda Sonowal extended an invitation to Russia for an Indo-Russian workshop on Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) at Vladivostok in Russia on Tuesday.

The Union minister was addressing at the session aimed at forging possibilities on early operationalisation of EMC as an alternative trade route between Russian port city of Vladivostok and Indian port city of Chennai, a PIB report stated.

The workshop is proposed to take place from October 30 to November 1 in Chennai

Speaking on the occasion, Sarbananda Sonowal, said, "The operationalisation of Eastern Maritime Corridor will usher a new era of trade relationship between India and Russia. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India remains firmly committed towards making innovative solutions that will enhance and further foster the strong bilateral relationship between our two great nations."

"As our teams hedge their effort for an early operationalisation of EMC, the visit to Vladivostok, Vostochny, Nakhodka and Kozmino was particularly helpful. Taking this forward, I propose for a workshop of all stakeholders at Chennai and extend our invitation to this (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



No recruitment scam during my tenure: Himanta

Ruckus in House over illegal sale of PDS items • Speaker adjourns House over MLA's slogan

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 12: Opposition parties staged a walkout from the Assam Assembly on Tuesday, demanding the constitution of a House committee to inquire into the allegations of illegal sale of food items meant for the public distribution system.

Almost immediately afterwards, Speaker Biswajit Daimary adjourned proceedings for 15 minutes as treasury members took to their feet, demanding an apology from Congress MLA Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha for raising a slogan denouncing the Assam government.

The ruckus started during a question by another Congress MLA Nurul Huda on food items available under the food and civil supplies department through fair price shops.

State food, public distribution and consumer affairs minister Ranjeet Dass, in his reply, said free rice of varying amounts is being provided to beneficiaries of two schemes under the National Food Security Act, 2013, through his department.

Moreover, one kg 'atta' (wheat flour) is

House session-Day 2



also being provided at a minimum price to priority household card holders in 19 districts of the state, he added.

Huda and other Congress members alleged irregularities in wheat flour distribution and urged the Speaker to form a House

committee to look into the matter.

As the question hour came to an end, Daimary moved on to the next business on the list without heeding the demand.

This led the Congress MLAs, and the lone CPI(M) and Independent legislators to stage a walkout, while raising slogans in support of a House panel.

As soon as they left the House, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pijush Hazarika and BJP MLA Prasanta Phukan stood up, claiming that Congress's Purkayastha had raised a slogan denouncing the Assam government.

They demanded that the MLA tender an apology for the words and were unrelenting even when the Speaker said that the slogan would be expunged from proceedings, leading him to adjourn the House for 15 minutes.

When the House re-convened, Deputy Leader of Opposition Rakibul Hussain of the Congress tendered the apology on behalf of Purkayastha, who was also present in the House but kept persisting with the demand for the panel to look into the allegations of 'atta' distribution.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asserted that no scam has taken place in government recruitment in his tenure, and that he is prepared to order a probe if anyone can cite a single instance of such irregularity.

Replying to a motion moved in the state assembly by the AIUDF, Sarma said about 87,000 jobs have been provided in the last two years, and if the opposition can point to a single undeserving candidate, he will initiate an inquiry.

"Earlier, scams used to be about people buying jobs with cash. This time, it is about people paying money, but not getting the jobs," he said, referring to instances where aspirants had reportedly paid bribes, but failed to get jobs.

The CM also asserted that no irregularities will take place in recruitment under his tenure.

AIUDF legislator Aminul Islam said though some transparency has been achieved in the process of government recruitment, there were also (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Contaminated drinking water adds to residents' woes

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Sept 12: Several residents of Bokajan in Karbi Anglong district have urged the authorities concerned to take stern action against two water plants, which have been selling contaminated water in packaged drinking water bottles in the district.

While one water plant is located near the CRPF camp in Bokajan and another is located at Balijan. The water used in these plants is reportedly pumped out directly from the ground and is packaged without undergoing the proper filtration process. The water is then packaged in 20 litre plastic bottles and sold in the local market.

The locals alleged that these bot-



tles also do not have an Indian Standards Institution (ISI) mark. However, many ignorant buyers procure them and consume the contaminated water.

"The two water plants do not follow the necessary guidelines and safety measures while packaging drinking water. The ground water (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Heroin, Sampex Plus capsules recovered in Karbi Anglong

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Sept 12: The police recovered heroin and 93 capsules of Sampex Plus from a house at Bokajan in Assam's Karbi Anglong district.

According to Diphu additional superintendent of police, a police team, on a tip off, raided the rented house of Kala Sema alias Irajul Haque at Bokajan's Terang Park area at about 6 pm on Monday and recovered the illegal contrabands. The heroin was hidden in a plastic soap box and five tobacco containers.

The 22 year old accused is the son of Md Hobibur Haque and hails from Dhubaguri Suma Gaonin (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Fresh violence claims three lives in Manipur

IMPHAL, Sept 12: At least three people were gunned down by unidentified men in Manipur's Kangpokpi district on Tuesday morning, an official said.

He said the ambush took place between Ireng and Karam Vaiphei villages in Kangguri area.

"The incident took place in the morning when unidentified men gunned down three civilians in an area between Ireng and Karam Vaiphei," the official said.

Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU), a Kangpokpi-based civil society organization, condemned the attack.

"If the Union government is serious about its appeal for restoration of normalcy, it must

immediately declare all the valley districts as disturbed areas and impose Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958," COTU said in a statement.

The incident comes close on the heels of the violence that broke out at Pallel in Tengenoupal district in which four persons were killed and over 50 injured on September 8.

More than 160 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organized in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Accused ASP remanded to judicial custody



HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Sept 12: Charaideo additional superintendent of police, Subhalaxmi Dutta who has been accused of torturing her domestic help, was remanded to judicial custody for 10 days on Tuesday.

The police officer was produced before the sub-divisional magistrate in Nazira on Tuesday, who rejected her bail petition and remanded her to 10 days of judicial custody. She will be produced before the court in Nazira on September 22. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

AIUDF with opposition bloc INDIA to oust BJP from power

GUWAHATI, Sept 12: AIUDF president Badruddin Ajmal on Tuesday asserted that his party is with non-BJP block INDIA and is working hard to ensure that the saffron party does not return to power in the Lok Sabha elections due next year.

AIUDF, however, did not attend any of the three meetings of the opposition alliance held in Patna, Bengaluru and Mumbai.

"We are in INDIA and with INDIA. We support the alliance of all democratic parties", Ajmal told said after visiting the new Assam Assembly building here.

The sole MP of AIUDF asserted that the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will come to power in the Lok Sabha polls.

The INDIA alliance was formed with a view to preventing division of anti-BJP votes in the parliamentary elections in 2024.

"Modiji is not returning to

power. We are working hard for it," Ajmal added.

He said that his party will contest in at least three Lok Sabha seats from Assam, including Dhubri which he currently represents.

The AIUDF had entered into a Grand Alliance with the Congress and other regional parties in Assam before the last assembly elections, but the grand old party severed the ties with it after the polls which were won by the BJP.

The Assam unit of the Congress has asserted on several occasions that they will not ally with the AIUDF in the state.

The Ajmal-led party, however, was part of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) headed by the Congress at the Centre.

Ajmal claimed that the Assam government is making a mockery of Muslim women and girls in the name of banning polygamy. The Himanta (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Assam Assembly rejects mob lynching bill

GUWAHATI, Sept 12: The Assam Assembly on Tuesday rejected by voice vote a private member's bill on preventing mob lynching as the state government said that offenders could be dealt with relevant sections of existing criminal laws and a new law is not needed.

AIUDF legislator Aminul Islam had introduced 'The Assam Mob Lynching Prevention Bill, 2023' on the second day of the autumn session of the House.

Islam, citing various instances of mob lynching in the state in recent years, said there is always a hue and cry after every such occurrence for a law against it.

The opposition MLA said the proposed law will have provision of imprisonment for all persons involved in any incident of mob lynching, among other steps to prevent it.

State parliamentary affairs minister Pijush Hazarika, responding to the proposed bill, admitted that it deals with an important issue, with mob (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

A FARMER'S DAY OUT



A farmer during Sesame (Til) cultivation at Karbi Anglong on Tuesday. UB Photos

India's law aligns with International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

World can emulate India's law on plant protection: President

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said India's law on the protection of plant varieties and farmers' rights can be emulated for the entire world, as it gains importance amid the challenges of climate change.

Addressing the first-ever global symposium on farmers' rights at the Pusa complex in the national capital, the President said India took the lead in bringing the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Act (PPVFR) way back in 2001, which is aligned to the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to protect farmers.

The four-day symposium from September 12-15, being held for the first time since the adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 2001, is expected to



have a participation of around 500 delegates including farmers from India and abroad.

Under the PPVFR Act, India provides a range of rights to farmers that include use, reuse, save, share and sell the unbranded seeds of a registered variety. Besides,

farmers can register their own varieties which get protection, she said.

The President said, "Such an Act can serve as an excellent model worthy of emulation for the entire world."

This also gains importance amid

challenges posed by climate change and also to fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, she added.

Stating that the challenges of climate change have put an onus on the conservation of traditional farmers' varieties, Murmu said the varieties including millets are not only endowed with inherent tolerance to various stresses on the ecosystem but also hold nutritional profiles that could be key in providing a solution to the food and health requirements of a large population.

The declaration of the year 2023 as the Year of Millets by the United Nations is a step in this direction, she said.

The President also inaugurated the Plant Authority Bhawan and an online portal for processing registration of (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Protestors forcibly shut down CAU in Manipur

IMPHAL, Sept 12: Another Central institution in Imphal East district was forced to close down on Tuesday as the campaign of shutting down institutes under the Central government entered its second day.

Joining the demand for withdrawal of Assam Rifles from Manipur, a group of protesters announced indefinite closure of all the institutions in the state on Monday.

While announcing the stir, residents of Iroisemba of Imphal West district on Monday locked down the Central Agricultural University (CAU) campus in Iroisemba with a padlock.

While locking down the CAU campus, the locals also shouted various slogans against the paramilitary force and the Central government.

Supporting the stir, residents of Singamei area of Imphal East on Tuesday closed down the campus



of the National Institute of Electronic and Information Technology (NIELIT) at Akampat in Imphal East.

A group of people, mostly women of the area who turned up at the NIELIT campus, locked down both the administrative and academic block of the institution around 9.30 am.

Before locking down with padlocks, the protesters tried to meet the director of the institution who

was unavailable.

The protestors asked all the teaching and non-teaching staff of the institution to move out of the campus. They also asked the students to leave the campus while informing that the institution is closed indefinitely.

The protestors could be heard shouting various slogans like "Go back Assam Rifles", "Long live Manipur", etc. A spokesperson of the local (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Gadkari talks of 10 pc more tax on diesel vehicles

Only to clarify later that there is no such proposal currently under active consideration by the government

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday spoke of the need to levy an additional 10 per cent tax on diesel-run vehicles to help cut emissions, but later clarified that there was no proposal under government consideration to impose such a tax.

Speaking at the annual convention of automobile manufacturers body SIAM, Gadkari said rising pollution level is a serious health concern and there is a case for increasing taxes to dissuade sale of diesel vehicles.

"I am requesting the finance minister to impose an additional 10 per cent GST on diesel engines/vehicles. This is the only way to phase out diesel vehicles," he said, indicating a meeting was scheduled with the finance minister for handing over a letter he had drafted on the issue.

But soon after, he took to X, formerly known as Twitter, to clarify the government's position.

"It is essential to clarify that there is no such proposal currently under active con-

sideration by the government," he said in a post on X, referring to media reports quoting him as suggesting an additional 10 per cent GST on diesel vehicles.

He emphasised that there was a need to embrace cleaner fuels to cut emissions.

"In line with our commitments to achieve Carbon Net Zero by 2070 and to reduce air pollution levels caused by hazardous fuels like diesel, as well as the rapid growth in automobile sales, it is imperative to actively embrace cleaner and greener alternative fuels. These fuels should be import substitutes, cost-effective, indigenous, and pollution-free," he said on X.

At the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) convention, he had warned that the government would increase taxes so much that it would become difficult to sell diesel vehicles.

Most of the commercial vehicles in the country currently run on diesel.

In the passenger vehicle segment, various carmakers including Maruti Suzuki India and Honda have already stopped



manufacturing diesel cars.

Gadkari said the contribution of diesel cars has already come down drastically in the country and the manufacturers need to stop selling them in the market.

The minister also highlighted that India

is utilising a major portion of fossil fuels in the transport sector which is posing a big economic as well as pollution challenge.

He suggested alternatives such as bio-fuels, ethanol and green hydrogen in addition to electric vehicles.

At the SIAM annual convention, the minister said the country is making good roads across the country, which is leading to the growth of the automobile industry.

"The auto industry is growing at 15-18 per cent and it is also leading to enhanced usage of fossil fuels. If this goes on like this, you (companies) will be happy, but pollution will make the people of this country sad. So quickly leave petrol, diesel. Please focus on alternatives, this is my request to you," Gadkari said.

He further said, "I will request the finance minister for 10 per cent pollution tax as additional GST on all such engines utilising diesel, from generator sets to vehicle engines."

Seeking cooperation from the auto industry, Gadkari said, "I think you will not

force me to push this proposal... this is the appropriate time, it is not rocket science, this is already everywhere in the world... so I will request you all to take suo moto initiative and cooperate with us in moving away from diesel/petrol, this is my humble request."

Terming diesel as a hazardous fuel, he noted that the country has to import the fuel to meet the demand.

"Say goodbye to diesel... Please stop making them, otherwise, we will just increase the tax so much that it would become difficult to sell diesel cars" Gadkari said. He said he would propose additional GST on diesel-powered generators as well.

Automobiles are currently taxed at 28 per cent GST, with additional cess ranging from 1 per cent to 22 per cent depending on the type of vehicle.

SUVs attract the highest GST at the rate of 28 per cent along with a compensation cess at 22 per cent.

Gadkari also asked the industry to focus on environment-friendly alternative

fuels like ethanol.

He also asked the industry to focus on green hydrogen.

Gadkari reiterated that India needs to move away from fossil fuels in order to meet its carbon neutral target, which cannot happen without the cooperation of the auto industry.

Later, addressing the gathering, SIAM Vice President and Managing Director Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Shailesh Chandra said, "The need from the automotive industry to reach net zero ahead of nations pledge of 2070 is pretty much an imperative and the industry will strive to deliver as per the vision of the government."

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He also asked the industry to focus on green hydrogen. (PTI)

'Khulumbai' Foxtail Millets inaugurated in Assam

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 12: A significant step towards transforming agriculture and enhancing the livelihoods of farmers in Assam was taken on Tuesday with the inauguration of the Millet Dehusking Machine and the unveiling of the 'Khulumbai' Foxtail Millets brand. This initiative, under the Model Millets Programme, has been made possible through the generous support of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) Regional Office Guwahati and the dedicated efforts of ACCESS Development Services. The event witnessed the participation of over 100+ Farmers, symbolizing unity and progress in the agricultural sector. The inaugural ceremony took place at Pannapathar Baksa, where distinguished guests, experts, and farmers gathered to celebrate this remarkable achievement.

Masanda Magdalini Pertin, IAS, district commissioner of Baksa, graced the event as the Chief Guest, and was joined by Utpal Bezbaruah,



district development manager of NABARD Baksa, and Pranjal Das, lead district manager (LDM) of Baksa. Representatives from ACCESS Development Services were also present to mark this significant occasion.

The Millet Dehusking Machine, a crucial component of the Model Millets Programme, will play a pivotal role in streamlining the millet processing and production process. This machine, equipped with modern technology, will help farmers in Baksa and the surrounding regions

efficiently dehusk millets, saving both time and labor.

It is anticipated that this initiative will enhance the quality of millet production and make millet-based products more accessible to consumers. In conjunction with that, the Baksa Block Farmers Producer Company Limited proudly introduced their Foxtail Millets brand, "Khulumbai." This brand represents the dedication and hard work of local farmers and emphasizes the commitment to producing high-quality millets. "Khulumbai" is set to become a trusted name in the market, providing consumers with healthy and nutritious millet products.

Speaking at the event, Masanda Magdalini Pertin, IAS, DC Baksa, highlighted the importance of millets in ensuring food security and improving the lives of farmers. He commended the collaboration between various stakeholders and expressed his confidence in the success of the Model Millets Programme.

Sensex extends rally to 8th day; Nifty falls marginally after hitting record level



MUMBAI, Sept 12: The BSE Sensex extended its rally for the eighth day running on Tuesday, while Nifty ended marginally lower after scaling its fresh all-time high level amid mixed global market trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 94.05 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 67,221.13. During the day, it jumped 412.02 points or 0.61 per cent to 67,539.10.

The Nifty, however, pared all its gains and ended marginally lower by 3.15 points or 0.02 per cent at 19,993.20 in a volatile trade. During the day, it climbed 114 points or 0.57 per cent to hit its all-time high of 20,110.35.

Among the Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, UltraTech Cement, ICICI Bank, Nestle, ITC and Sun Pharma were the major gainers.

Power Grid, NTPC, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra

and Reliance Industries were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Tokyo settled in the green while Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US stocks ended in positive territory on Monday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Monday as they bought equities worth ₹ 1,473.09 crore, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.74 per cent to USD 91.31 a barrel.

The 30-share BSE benchmark regained the 67,000 level on Monday. The benchmark jumped 528.17 points or 0.79 per cent to settle at 67,127.08. The Nifty ended at 19,996.35, reflecting a gain of 176.40 points or 0.89 per cent. The Nifty scaled the record 20,000 mark for the first time ever in intra-day trade. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: India and the US have agreed to set up a joint monitoring mechanism to enable domestic exports of at least 3.36 lakh tonnes of certain steel and aluminium products in a year to America without paying extra duties, an official said on Tuesday.

Indian exports of these products were attracting additional duties in the US as Washington, in 2018, imposed a 25 per cent import duty on steel products and 10 per cent on certain aluminium products on grounds of national security.

In retaliation, India in June 2019 imposed additional customs duties on 28 American products.

The US is allowing these imports from India without paying the extra 25 per cent and 10 per cent duties in return for New Delhi's decision to remove retaliatory duties on eight American products like apple and walnut.

Additional Secretary of the commerce ministry Peeyush Kumar said that officials will meet twice a year to review the arrangements.

"We will have a biennial meeting... We have requested steel and mines ministries to designate an officer from their side who will be talking to stakeholders and exporters that applications are being properly processed," Kumar told reporters here.

If Indian exporters would face any bottleneck or problem, it would be conveyed to the commerce ministry and will be taken up with the US during the meetings of the joint monitoring mechanism (JMM), he added.

As a goodwill gesture, the US started approving applications for



the import of these items from January this year because the two countries were talking about mutually ending the trade disputes at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"On the exclusion part, applications of minimum 3.36 lakh tonnes of steel and aluminium per year will be permitted... This is the minimum quantity, they can approve more also... the US allowed imports from some tested players," he said.

During the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June, the two countries decided to remove trade irritants and as part of that, both sides agreed to end six trade disputes at the WTO.

They have mutually resolved those seven disputes and India has decided to remove additional duties on eight US products, including chickpeas, lentils and apples, which were imposed in 2019.

The US, on its part, has agreed to provide greater market access to certain Indian steel and aluminium products, a development which would help increase outbound

shipments of these goods. The US has agreed to grant market access to steel and aluminium products under the exclusion process of Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act 1962.

This market access will restore opportunities for Indian steel and aluminium exporters, which were restricted since June 14, 2018, because of the US 232 measure under which additional duties were levied on steel and aluminium products respectively.

The commerce ministry had earlier said that the move would provide significant impetus to raise India's steel and aluminium exports by about 35 per cent.

These applications will be made under the exclusion process of Section 232 by the importers on behalf of the exporters.

The US had imposed these duties using Section 232 of an act that permits the president to restrict imports.

The additional tariffs had impacted USD 1.21 billion worth of India's exports of steel and alu-

minium to the US in 2018. The duty burden on exports due to additional US tariffs amounted to USD 241 million.

The US had settled a similar dispute with Canada and Mexico at the end of 2019. While steel and aluminium imports from these countries got exemption from the extra tariffs, called Section 232 tariff, the agreement provided for aggressive monitoring and a mechanism to prevent surges in imports of steel and aluminium.

Further talking about removal of an additional 20 per cent duty on US apples and walnuts, the additional secretary said that the move would not impact local players.

The government has sufficient policy space to support growers if there is any implication of the move.

Kumar said that only the additional duty has been removed and the basic duty of 50 per cent will continue besides the minimum import on apples.

Import of apples from the US decreased sharply from USD 145 million (127,908 tonnes) in 2018-19 to only USD 5.27 million (4,486 tonnes) in 2022-23.

It indicates that the market share of the US apples was taken by other countries due to imposition of additional retaliatory duty on American apples, as the imports from countries other than the US increased from USD 160 million in 2018-19 to USD 290 million in 2022-23.

The US's import share in the import market segment was taken by countries like Turkey, Chile, New Zealand and Italy. (PTI)

'Foodpro' exhibition to start from Sept 14 in city

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 12: CII is organising the first edition of Foodpro North-East 2023, scheduled from September 14-16 at the Maniram Dewan Trade Centre in Guwahati.

The theme of Foodpro North-East 2023 is "Growing the Market for Food Processing in North-East", and the event is chaired by Mr B Thiagarajan, managing director of Blue Star Ltd.

India's picturesque North-Eastern region (NER), known for its breathtaking natural beauty and fertile lands, is set to become a thriving hub for food processing. With an agro-friendly climate and a rich agricultural heritage, NER is poised to emerge as a sunrise zone for food processing, thanks to the various incentives offered by the Government of India. These initiatives are not only benefiting agricultural producers but also creating employment opportunities in transportation, packaging, advertising, and marketing.

This initiative is supported by the Ministry of Food

Processing Industries (MOFI) and has received participation from other government nodal agencies like the Spices Board and the CFTRI - Central Food Technological Research Institute.

Foodpro North-East features a 3 Days Exhibition with the participation of over 50 exhibitors from all over India besides sectoral conferences, B2B, B2G & B2C meetings. The expo is expected to attract over 6,000 business and trade visitors from across the country. On the sidelines of the exhibition, a Conference on Food Processing is scheduled for 14th September 2023. The conference expects to host more than 200 senior management personnel from the food processing and agricultural industries.

The conference aims to promote technology-based knowledge among stakeholders in the Agro and Food Processing sectors in the Northeast being with the inaugural session at 10:00 hrs and will cover various sessions by agriculture minister Atul Bora, and industries minister Bimal Borah.

Gold, silver trade flat in line with global trends

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: Gold prices remained flat at ₹ 60,000 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, according to HDFC Securities. Silver also ruled flat at ₹ 74,400 per kg in line with global trends ahead of inflation data. "Gold traded flat on Tuesday, with spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets trading flat at ₹ 60,000/10 grams, unchanged from its previous close," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the global market, gold was quoting lower at USD 1,922 per ounce while silver was flat at USD 23.12 per ounce ahead of the US consumer inflation data for August. (PTI)

Developing Sustainable mobility ecosystem in harmony with environment need of the hour: PM

Environmentally-conscious and economically viable mobility is the future

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday stressed the need to develop a mobility ecosystem that is sustainable and in harmony with the environment while also asking the Indian automobile industry to draw a pathway towards achieving the goals of 'Amrit Kaal'.

In his message to the annual convention of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), Modi acknowledged the role of the auto industry in the country's growth.

"In today's India, mobility in its various forms is a key driver of growth. As crores of people move out of poverty into the neo-middle class there is social and economic mobility," the Prime Minister said in the address, which was read out by SIAM President Vinod Aggarwal.

He further said, "As they push the nation's growth through their aspirations,

they power our economy to be the fastest growing in the world. Due to this, from being the 10th largest economy, India has become the 5th largest economy. Soon, we are poised to reach the top 3."

Modi reiterated that the automobile industry is both a catalyst and a beneficiary in the value-creation cycle.

The industry has contributed to income growth by employing crores of people, he added.

"At the same time, the automobile industry too has been a beneficiary of greater demand generated by economic growth. The need of the hour today is to develop a mobility ecosystem that is sustainable and in harmony with the environment. Environmentally-conscious and economically viable mobility is the future," Modi wrote in his address.

The Prime Minister also stated that the Indian automobile industry's efforts

towards decarbonisation through the introduction of vehicles with a wide range of powertrain technologies are noteworthy.

He further said, "The period till the year 2047, when we celebrate 100 years of Independence, is an opportune time to realise the vision of building a strong, sustainable, self-reliant and developed India. I am confident that the discussions among industry experts and key stakeholders at this convention will help draw a pathway for the automobile industry towards achieving the goals of Amrit Kaal."

Modi also stressed the need to continue and enhance concerted efforts for reducing both carbon emissions and India's dependence on oil imports citing multiple alternative technologies such as ethanol, flex fuel, CNG, bio-CNG, hybrid electric and hydrogen which are in use at present. (PTI)



Nagaland Assembly passes resolution for exemption from UCC

KOHIKA, Sept 12: The Nagaland Assembly on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution strongly urging that the state be completely exempted from the purview of the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

The 14th house of Nagaland legislative Assembly unanimously resolves for exemption from the proposed enactment of UCC in its application to the state of Nagaland, chief minister Neiphiu Rio said moving the government resolution on the second day of the monsoon session of the House.

"The Nagaland government and Naga people are of the view that the UCC will pose a threat to customary laws, social practices and the religious practices of the Naga people, which will be in danger of encroachment in the event of imposition of UCC," he said.

The apparent objective of the UCC is to have a single law on personal matters like marriage and divorce, custody and guardianship, adoption and maintenance, succession and inheritance, he said.

The Nagaland government through a cabinet decision submitted its views on the subject to the Commission on July 4 conveying its opposition on the grounds of the "unique history" of Nagaland since the pre-Independent British era, the assurance of non-interference policy starting since pre-Independence times and continued by the Centre in the social and religious practices and customary laws of the people and the constitutional guarantees given under Article 371A, Rio said.

He also recalled that in the consultative meeting with various stakeholders on the subject of UCC organised by the state government on September 1, the representatives of the various tribal organisations and civil societies have expressed their strong resentment and objection to the idea of having UCC.

The Government of India (GoI) ap-



pointed the 22nd Law Commission of India on February 21, 2020 and extended its term up to August 31, 2024. It issued a public notice on June 14, 2023 inviting views and ideas from all stakeholders on the subject matter of having a UCC throughout India, he said.

Article 371A of the Constitution mainly states that no act of Parliament will apply to the state of Nagaland in a matter relating to religious or social practices of Nagas, Naga customary law and procedure administration of civil or criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law and ownership and transfer of land and its resources will apply to the state unless its Assembly decides so by a resolution, he said.

The legislators on Monday deliberated on the consequences of implementing UCC in the state and the Nagaland Speaker Sharingain Longkumer had granted leave to the government to bring a resolution on Tuesday.

Longkumer put the resolution to vote and it was adopted unanimously by voice vote without any amendment.

Earlier on Monday, Nuklutoshi, partic-

ipating in the discussion regarding the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), expressed concerns about its potential impact. He contended that the UCC could be seen as a violation of the 16-Point Agreement that led to the creation of the state. Additionally, he asserted that the UCC might infringe upon Article 371(A). Nuklutoshi emphasized the importance of the role of people's representatives in advocating for the interests and concerns of the public. He stressed that as representatives, they should vigorously defend the voices and rights of the people they serve.

Achumbemo Kikon said that the UCC governs matters including marriage and divorce, succession and inheritance, adoption including other personal laws, though it is not enforceable in the court of laws. Therefore, UCC should not come to our land for whosever reasons, he stated. Dr. Neisato Mero, said the idea of uniform civil code is one nation one vote. It is also a threat to our social, religion, customary laws, and direct indulgence to our personal laws besides contradicting Article 371 (A), he added. Jwenga Seb, said UCC would have negative implications on our personal laws and traditions though its protection is clearly incorporated in the constitution of India. Therefore, UCC be exempted for the state of Nagaland by passing a resolution in the NLA.

Advisor, Labour, Employment Skill Development and Excise, Moatoshi Longkumer, who participated in the debate, said that the state government should oppose the introduction of UCC as it not only overshadows the tenet of regulation but it also threatens the pluralistic society. As such, he suggested that a resolution be passed to oppose the introduction of UCC by the NLA. Advisor, KT Sukhalu and MLA, Er. Picto also took part in the discussion and in support for exemption of the Uniform Civil Code. (With inputs from NNN & PTI)

Raksha Mantri inaugurates Nechiphu tunnel among 36 BRO projects in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, Sept 12: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday virtually inaugurated 36 road and bridge projects in Arunachal Pradesh, including the strategically located Nechiphu tunnel connecting Tawang with Assam's Balipara.

The defence minister dedicated to the nation a total of 90 key border infrastructure projects across the country virtually from Jammu.

The 90 projects of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) along the Line of Actual Control with China are worth ₹ 2,941 crore. Singh virtually inaugurated 22 roads, 63 bridges, Nechiphu tunnel, two airfields and two helipads across the nation, BRO officials said.

Chief minister Pema Khandu and Director General of Police Anand Mohan witnessed the event from Sessa in West

Kameng district.

Situated at an altitude of 5,700 feet, Nechiphu tunnel on the Balipara-Charduar-Tawang road in West Kameng district is a unique D-shaped single-tube double-lane tunnel that will provide all-weather connectivity to the strategic Tawang region and will be beneficial for both armed forces and tourists, officials said. The tunnel will bypass the Nechiphu Pass, where extreme foggy conditions prevail, causing hindrance to general traffic and military convoys.

"An architectural masterpiece, the strategically located tunnel will facilitate the swift movement of troops as well as citizens. Cutting a short distance by about 5 km, the tunnel will provide ease of travel and connectivity in the stretch that has dense fog," Khandu said in X, formerly Twitter. (PTI)

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BJP's Tafajjal Hossain, Bindu Debnath sworn in as MLAs

AGARTALA, Sept 12: BJP's Tafajjal Hossain and Bindu Debnath, who won the by-elections in Boxanagar and Dhanpur seats on September 8, were sworn in as the members of the Tripura assembly on Tuesday.

Speaker Biswabandu Sen administered the oath in the presence of Chief Minister Manik Saha and his cabinet colleagues.

Opposition MLAs stayed away from the oath-taking ceremony.

"We fought the by-elections in Boxanagar and Dhanpur with

full force and won both seats by a comprehensive margin. The people have voted for the BJP candidates massively in the by-elections. I believe that the new MLAs will meet the people's aspirations," the chief minister said.

Asked about cabinet expansion, Saha told reporters, "All of you will be informed whenever we take such a decision." At present, the Saha-led government has nine ministers, and it still has room for three more



ministers. (PTI)

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(NHMD/2023-24/1204)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Live as brave men; and if fortune is adverse, front its blows with brave hearts. - Marcus Tullius Cicero

Battle for India's future intensifies

In a political landscape marked by shifting tides and unexpected twists, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) finds itself in an intense preparation mode for the upcoming 2024 general elections. The Karnataka assembly election loss served as a wake-up call, prompting the BJP to re-evaluate its strategy. One notable development is the establishment of 300 call centres, a strategic initiative aimed at grassroots engagement, with Union home minister Amit Shah set to inaugurate them. These call centres are not mere phone banks but hubs for continuous voter contact, working tirelessly until Election Day. Skilled BJP volunteers armed with campaign materials will reach out to voters across the nation. The BJP is renowned for its organizational efficiency, and these call centres are meticulously planned, ensuring robust internet connectivity. The party firmly believes that these centres will play a pivotal role in securing victory in 2024. On the opposition front, a surprising alliance called INDIA, consisting of 26 opposition parties, has emerged as a formidable challenge to the BJP. This unity among various opposition stalwarts has caught the BJP off guard. While the call centres operate round the clock, dismantling INDIA's unity may not be an easy task for the BJP.

The BJP's voter base encompasses diverse groups, including Hindutva followers, Pasmanda Muslims, and independent undecided voters, each with its tailored strategy. Hindutva supporters are traditionally seen as the BJP's bedrock, but recent discontent among some segments due to perceived neglect has prompted the party to refocus on its Hindu roots. The Pasmanda Muslim community represents a crucial demographic, and the BJP, backed by the RSS, believes it can eventually win their support by showcasing its commitment to their development. One notable factor in the BJP's minority outreach strategy is the empowerment of Muslim women. Initiatives such as free rations, the triple talaq ban, Ayushman Bharat, and Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana have earned the trust and support of Muslim women. Despite facing challenges, the BJP remains resolute in its approach, unapologetically pursuing its version of minority appeasement. The party has emphasized its dedication to the Sanatana Hindu ethos, setting up a clear contrast with INDIA's narrative. The "Bharat" versus "INDIA" battle is central to the BJP's campaign, along with the proposed "one-nation, one-election" concept and discussions surrounding women's reservation.

In addition to call centres targeting specific voter groups like farmers, women, and youth, the BJP is leveraging an army of YouTube influencers and social media influencers for its 2024 election campaign. The BJP IT Cell plays a pivotal role, with "Masterstrokevadis" highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's achievements, from ending triple talaq to bringing "Bharat" into the forefront.

Undoubtedly, the BJP's success hinges on the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a one-man election-winning juggernaut who led the party to victory in 2014 and 2019. Consequently, the BJP's campaign for 2024 revolves around glorifying Modi as "Mahamanav" and "Vishwaguru," a leader who has uplifted entire communities. Recent events like the G20 Summit have further burnished Modi's image, potentially bolstering the BJP's chances in the upcoming elections. The BJP's meticulous seat allocation, focusing on "winnability," is a testament to its determination to secure a greater mandate in 2024.

India's G20 Summit was a big success for Modi's electoral prospects

In hindsight, the New Delhi summit of G20 countries under India's presidency, from September 8 to 10, could be seen as a one-size-fit-all type of clothing, which wrapped around deep differences of rival geopolitical blocs, primarily led by the United States on the one hand, and China-Russia on the other. India is increasingly situating itself as a bridge country that's a conciliatory link nation between choppy waters of international relations, and it has indeed managed to give the otherwise moribund G20 grouping a decent facelift under its presidency.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with his penchant for extravagant event management, the rotational G20 presidency had been turned into a vehicle for the ruling party's nonstop propaganda, an excuse to project him as the "Vishwaguru". The G20 logo carrying the lotus symbol, synonymous with his party, the BJP, as well as Narendra Modi's face on massive hoardings and billboards dotting every street in Delhi and other Indian cities - were already preparing the average Indian for a blitzkrieg of G20 advertising. Eventually, central Delhi was barricaded and forced into a quasi-lockdown, its homeless evicted, slums demolished, strays locked up and the poor forced behind absurd green screens, to sanitise the area for its global glory.

Nevertheless, the G20 summit became notable for both the presences as well as conspicuous absences. US president Joe Biden, clearly the most anticipated guest, flew in and rubbed shoulders with Modi and other world leaders in several choreographed and photographed events, such as the one at Rajghat paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi. Others like UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak waltzed around with his wife Akshata Murthy, taking in the adulation of being 'India's son-in-law'. Canadian PM Justin Trudeau, Italy's Georgia Meloni, France's Emmanuel Macron,



Australia's Anthony Albanese, European Union chief Ursula Van der Lyon, World Bank's Ajay Banga, IMF's Gita Gopinath, all made their presence felt in various degrees.

On the other hand, Brazil's Lula De Silva, South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa, Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman and others tried to make up for two crucial absences - that of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin - both of whom were represented by their deputies, premier Li Qiang and foreign minister Sergei Lavrov. Importantly, African Union became a permanent member of the G20 grouping, a significant development in sync with the current times of the middle continent asserting itself in global forums.

The Delhi Declaration, which was announced on September 9, turned out to be a laudable diplomatic coup, pleasing everyone in the room, including the presidents of Russia and China. By omitting any reference to Russia and using the phrase "war in Ukraine" instead of either Russia-Ukraine War, or war against Ukraine, the Delhi G20 document signified a key turn in geopolitics, in which the West is clearly winding down its nefari-

ous adventure of fighting Russia to the last Ukrainian, while the Global South stands firmly neutral and refuses to condemn Moscow for its stance. Expectedly, the Western media is confused between New Delhi helping out its old friend Moscow, while shaking hands with Washington very publicly.

Moreover, the Delhi Declaration ticked all the boxes of current international discourse, focussing on climate contingencies, peace, stability and security of all nations, strengthening of multilateral platforms by making them more representative, pandemic preparedness, reforming global financial institutions, health care, education, skill development and a balanced, sustainable growth, among several others. Many of the points read similar to those in the Johannesburg Declaration of the BRICS XV summit in South Africa, held last month, even though the tone was milder, with all criticism of the West turned into platitudes for more international cooperation and less competition.

The announcement of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, as its name suggests, is a significant achievement, evidently to counter China's Belt and Road Initiative and its growing hold on

West Asia and rest of the world. Backed by the United States, the IMEEC would be one more potential route for India to trade with the Gulf States as well as the West, along with the existing International North-South Transport Corridor between India, Iran and Russia, as well as the Middle Corridor between China-Central Asia-Turkiye (or Georgia/Black Sea)-Europe.

While the sight of Modi, Biden and Crown Prince Bin-Salman made for great photographs, it must be remembered that for this latest trade route to see the light of day, much new infrastructure would need to be built, including putting in freight corridors through the harsh Arabian deserts. Moreover, the route will pass through a number of ports operated by the Chinese in West Asia, with the exception of Haifa in Israel, for which billionaire Gautam Adani, very close to Modi, bought the rights of operation in January of this year for a hefty sum of over a billion US dollars. In addition, the convoluted logistics of the alternative route needs to be ironed out, especially when shorter route through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal already exists, and BRICS's new member, Egypt, mainly controls this indispensable shipping route valve.

Another significant development came on September 8, when the India-US joint statement came on the sidelines of G20. Para 18 of the joint statement has raised eyebrows amongst observers of external affairs as well as among the leaders of opposition, stating: "Both sides recommitted to advancing India's emergence as a hub for the maintenance and repair of forward-deployed U.S. Navy assets and other aircraft and vessels. The leaders also welcomed further commitments from U.S. industry to invest more in India's maintenance, repair, and overhaul capabilities and facilities for aircraft." Opposition MP Manish Tewari has asked if this could be construed as the beginnings of

having US military bases in India, a development that would put a massive question mark over New Delhi's legendary and time-tested neutrality, and certainly make BRICS partners, China and Russia, rather uncomfortable.

However, neither Moscow nor Beijing has yet made much of these details. In fact, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov commended India on a successful G20, saying that New Delhi prevented the West from making G20 about Ukraine, and instead made it about greater bargaining rights for the Global South. Biden, meanwhile, flew to Hanoi for US-Vietnam bilateral summit, where he rued that the Modi administration didn't allow for press conference, although he did mention human rights issues to the Indian Prime Minister. However, the Indian mainstream media would brush it aside, and hail the G20 as historic, which it was in a mellow way of averting major diplomatic confrontations, and politely asking for more representation for the Global South in multilateral forums and financial institutions.

At ₹ 4200 crore spent, the New Delhi meet was easily the most expensive G20 summits in years, and all the showbiz was about projecting Modi at the centre of the world stage. Away from the cameras, Manipur is still witnessing ethnic violence, despite the Delhi Declaration's paean to non-discrimination on religious and ethnic grounds, in its para 78.

However, none of that matters to Modi, who's now busy repainting India as 'Bharat', with the nameplates, souvenirs, venues saying 'Bharat' more prominently than 'India'. It's a subtle shift geared towards the next general elections, appropriating the language of decolonization to suit narrow the prime minister's Hindu nationalist ideological interests. For Modi, international politics is mostly a longer route for strengthening his home turf. (IPA Service)

Paryushan Parv: A spiritual path of peace and non-violence

By: Lalit Garg

Everyone wants to live a life which is full of peace and happiness, but they can't live this type of life. That is why in the Jain tradition, the spiritual festival Paryushan is celebrated, which will be held this year from September 12 to September 19, 2021. In these eight days of Paryushan Mahaparv, all Jain devotees will make efforts to make the body and mind spiritual. Paryushan Parva has a great importance in the lives of Jains. It's a period in which every Jain tries to purify and elevate his soul. For this purpose a shravak must perform the following five duties: Amari Pravartan (Total non-violence), Sadharmic Bhakti (helping people of same faith), Kshamapan (asking for forgiveness), Atham Tap (fasting for three days) and Chaitiya Pari Paati (Visiting local Jain temples). In eight days; a positive environment will be created, which will purify our life. From this point of view, this festival is a festival of spirituality as well as upliftment of life.

Paryushan Mahaparva is a medium to worship the inner soul - it is the festival of self-purification, self-enlightenment. In fact, the Paryushan Mahaparva is such a dawn which takes us from sleep to wakefulness. This festival leads us from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. While doing penance, chanting, and self-study, we can find our inner strength and will get to know that real happiness lies in forgiving.

The literal meaning of Paryushan Mahaparva is to be residing in the soul. One of the meanings of Paryushana is the destruction of karma. The bad Karmas will be destroyed and only then the soul will be purified in its natural form, hence Paryushan Mahaparva gives inspiration to the soul; to become selfless and pure. This Mahaparva mainly focuses on the connection between humans and humans and motivates them; it is the festival of opening the windows, skylights and doors of the mind.

Paryushan Mahaparva is not just a festival of Jains, it is a universal festival. It is a great and excellent festival for the whole world, because the soul is worshipped in it. This is the only festival in the whole world in which a person becomes self-realized by being self-absorbed and tries to attain salvation by ascending to the peak of supernatural, spiritual bliss. The Paryushan Mahaparva has its own unique and special spiritual significance in the renunciation-oriented culture of Jainism.

This is the only inspiring festival of self-purification. It is the most recognized festival of Jain people. Paryushan Mahaparva is an occasion for many types of rituals like chanting, austerity, sadhna, worship, meditation, food restraints etc.

Paryushan Mahaparva is a spiritual festival; the central element of it is the soul. Paryushan Mahaparva continues to play an important role in revealing the pure, luminous form of the soul. Adhyatma means closeness to the soul. Paryushan Mahaparva is the symbol of Jain unity. Jain people give utmost importance to it. The entire Jain society becomes awake and engaged in spiritual practice on the occasion of this festival. In the Digambara tradition, it is recognized as "Daslakshana Parva". Among them, its opening day is Bhadrav Shukla Panchami and the day of prosperity is Chaturdashi. On the other hand, in the Shwetambar Jain tradition, the day of Bhadrav Shukla Panchami is the day of Samadhi which is celebrated as Samvatsari with complete renunciation, fasting, self-study and abstinence. Even people who are unable to take time out during the year also wake up on this day. Even those who never fast are seen performing rituals on this day.

The theme of Paryushan Mahaparva is to destruct all the evil thoughts of mind and soul. The 10 gates of religion have been mentioned, in which the first door is forgiveness. Forgiveness means equality. Forgiveness is very important for life, unless there is no forgiveness in life, and then a person cannot progress on the path of spirituality. Lord Mahavir lived a life of forgiveness i.e. equality. No matter what the situation may have come, he remained equal in all circumstances. "Forgiveness is the jewel of the hero" - Only great people can take and give forgiveness. Paryushan Mahaparva is the celebration of the exchange of forgiveness.

On this day everyone unravels the entangled glands of their mind, opens the knots of anger and hatred within them, they hug each other. Eliminate the mistakes made in the past through forgiveness and make life pure. The end of Paryushan Mahaparva is celebrated as Forgiveness Day. In this way, Paryushan Mahaparva and Forgiveness Day - it is a festival to bring each other closer. It is a festival to consider each other as our own. It is also said in the Gita - "Atmoupamien sarvatra, same pashyati yorjuna" - "Shri Krishna said to Arjuna - O Arjuna! Treat the human as your equal. Lord Ma-

havira said- "Mitti mai Savva bhuvesu, veranmjihana kenai" I have friendship with all beings; I have no enmity with anyone.

Human unity, peaceful co-existence, friendship, socialism without exploitation, establishment of international moral values, non-violent life, support of the worship style of soul etc. are the main basis of Paryushan Mahaparva. From this point of view, efforts are expected to make this great festival a festival of the people. Whether a man is called religious or not, whether he believes in self-Parmatma or not, whether he believes in past birth and reincarnation, whether he should resort to non-violence as far as possible in solving any of his problems - this is the heart of the sadhna of Paryushan. Violence cannot be a permanent solution to any problem. Those seeking a solution through violence have only exacerbated the problem. Keeping this fact in front, not only the Jain society, but also the common people should become faithful in the power of non-violence and use it with deep faith. Paryushan is a festival of pleasure in the soul, a festival of self-purification and self-enhancement. This Mahaparva makes us become ego free. This Mahaparva is a celebration of worship of non-violence. Today the whole world needs the non-violence and friendship. Paryushan Parva is a festival of destruction of all negative aspects of the soul and by this one can find the real meaning of life. Each day of the Paryushan festival focuses on eliminating various impurities like anger, pride, deceit and greed and building good virtues.

Today, the main problems like violence, terror, mutual hatred, Naxalism, corruption, corona epidemic have become a big cause of concern not only for the country but for the world and everyone wants a solution to these problems. For those people, the festival of Paryushan is an inspiration, a path, guidance and a practice of non-violent lifestyle. Today, in the glare of materiality, it is more important to maintain the relevance of this festival in the blind race of running life. For this, Jain society should become sensitive, especially the younger generation should be aware of the value of Paryushan festival and they themselves should be benefited from these rare moments of awakening self-consciousness through sharing, silence, chanting, meditation, self-study, dietary restraint, sense control, life-day etc. and explore the pure essence of this auspicious festival in front of the people. (The author is a journalist & columnist)

Srimanta Sankaradeva: Reviving Vedic devotion through Vivartanavāda

By: Dipak Kurmi

Srimanta Sankaradeva, a towering figure in the history of religious philosophers, established a profound legacy through his philosophy, Eka Sharana Nāma Dharma. His teachings laid the foundation for a new religious philosophy that emphasized the elevation of the individual soul (Jīva) from a state of duality to a non-dual identity with Brahma, the supreme truth. This philosophy is characterized by several key principles that distinguish it from other philosophical paths.

Unity of Brahma and Ishwara:

One of the central tenets of Srimanta Sankaradeva's philosophy is the unity of Brahma (the supreme reality) and Ishwara (God). He boldly proclaimed that Brahma and Ishwara are not separate entities but are, in fact, the same. While Ishwara may be adorned with attributes, both entities are fundamentally unified. This stands in contrast to other branches of Sanātana Indian philosophy that had not previously taken this stance.

Harmony of Jñāna Mārga and Bhakti Mārga:

Srimanta Sankaradeva bridged the gap between the paths of knowledge (Jñāna Mārga) and devotion (Bhakti Mārga), which had remained distinct in Sanātana Hinduism. He emphasized the importance of both spiritual knowledge and devotion, highlighting their interdependence. His teachings underscored that true knowledge leads to devotion and that genuine devotion is rooted in understanding.

Interplay of creation and illusion:

Unlike Adi-Sankaracharya, who deemed the creation as illusory (Mithyā), Srimanta Sankaradeva regarded the universe as God's playground. He saw creation as an integral part of God's divine plan and not merely an illusion. His philosophy maintained that the creation, though temporary, is real, and its purpose is to facilitate the divine play of God.

Devotion and overcoming Māyā:

Srimanta Sankaradeva emphasized the role of devotion in overcoming Māyā (illusion). He advocated devotion to God

as a means to transcend the influences of Māyā. By holding Lord Hari's name in the heart and chanting it consistently, one could rise above the illusions of the material world.

Holistic approach to life:

Srimanta Sankaradeva's philosophy embraced an integral view of life, accommodating beliefs at various stages of spiritual evolution. He recognized the journey of the individual soul from gross to subtle, from duality to non-duality. His philosophy provided room for all levels of devotees to find resonance and progress.

Vedic influence on Srimanta Sankaradeva's philosophy:

Srimanta Sankaradeva's philosophy drew extensively from the Vedas. He glorified the Vedas and emphasized following their path. His philosophy resonated with the Purusha-sukta of Rigveda, which extols the omnipresence of the supreme Purusha (Brahma) in all entities. This echoes Srimanta Sankaradeva's view of the unity of Brahma and Ishwara.

Elevation of Lord Vishnu:

Srimanta Sankaradeva's teachings mirrored the Vedic emphasis on the worship of Lord Vishnu (Vāsudeva). He emphasized the significance of chanting the names of Lord Hari (Krishna), aligning with the Vedic tradition of devotion to Vishnu.

Preserving Vedic religion:

Srimanta Sankaradeva's Eka Sharana Nāma Dharma upheld the true essence of Vedic religion. He lamented the loss of Vedic devotion and revived the worship of Lord Hari. His philosophy was a beacon of Vedic ideals in a time when the dominance of Āgama-based practices overshadowed Vedic teachings.

Srimanta Sankaradeva's philosophy is a remarkable synthesis of various philosophical elements, bridging the gap between duality and non-duality, knowledge and devotion, and creation and illusion. It resonates with the spirit of the Vedas by emphasizing the unity of Brahma and Ishwara and promoting devotion to Lord Vishnu. His teachings serve as a testament to his visionary thinking, integral perspective, and commitment to reviving Vedic values in a transformative way. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewstive@gmail.com)

POST BAG

Amrit Brikshya Andolan

Sir/Ma'am

Assam Government is all set to plant over 1 crore saplings on September 17 under the initiative of Amrit Brikshya and is also eyeing to create and break some Guinness World Records on the same day. The saplings planted will be of commercial utility which will bring in an estimated revenue of over 5000 crore within 8-10 years, as reported. Assam is fast losing its green cover, it had over 30% of its area under forests in the early 2000s but in these two decades, it has lost more than half of its green cover which has also made the summers of Assam warmer. These 1 crore trees in the next 2-3 years will have a positive impact on the climate of Assam. The government must ensure that these saplings are well cared for as it is seen that such missions in the past have not been very fruitful due to the lackadaisical attitude of the administration. It is seen that very few saplings planted every year on World Environment Day survive to see the green foliage on them. So, let us not hope that these 1 crore saplings also have the same fate.

Noopur Baruah,
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The stories of women who migrate alongside their husbands to work as ‘helpers’

By: **Aanchal Pundir and Sujata Tanwar**

In southern Rajasthan, male migration has traditionally been a common phenomenon among the Adivasi community due to destruction of natural habitats and limited work opportunities. Environmental degradation coupled with financial constraints have pushed many men to look for work elsewhere. However, a new trend has emerged. Newly married women from Udaipur’s Gogunda Block migrate with their husbands to Gujarat and Maharashtra and work in the kitchens of hotels and hostels.

We previously had a limited understanding of women’s migration, focussing mainly on the trend of families from Banswara district moving to Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, primarily for construction work. Our prior knowledge of the working conditions for women and adolescent girls portrayed a grim picture, marked by physical exhaustion, persistent malnutrition (even during pregnancy), and the constant specter of sexual harassment.

However, our conversations with women from various villages in Gogunda revealed a complex nature of migration, shaped by intricate societal structures. Some of these women we spoke with were visiting to help families for the Kharif crop season, or have returned to their homes permanently, because they dared to speak up for themselves.

No entitlement, lack of options

These women shared their diverse experiences and varied impacts of migration on their lives and families. Tara, a mother of three young daughters, Ganga, Monika and Geeta, works in a hotel in Rajkot with her husband. For the last four years, she has been cooking in the hotel’s kitchen. She has left behind two of her daughters with her relatives in Gogunda.

“They only allow one child to stay with us and since Geeta is the youngest,

she travels with us. We have enrolled the other two in a school there [in Gogunda], but they are not consistent because nobody keeps an eye on them,” says Tara. Her expression showed how she has been left with an agonising choice – leaving behind her two children, and the wage she seeks to earn to take care of them.

However, Tara’s main concern lies with her husband’s drinking habits. When they are at the workplace, everything seems fine. Tara feels content and her husband remains sober, as alcohol is strictly prohibited within the campus. However, as soon as they return to their home in Gogunda, her husband starts drinking again. This leads to frequent arguments and even physical abuse, leaving Tara deeply troubled.

“I live like you there,” she pointed out to our attires. “I just apply sindoor and nothing else is compulsory. I can wear a suit, or even a saree,” she says, as if shedding the heavy burden of wearing a traditional lehenga choli offers her respite. Tara isn’t the only woman who doesn’t want to come back to her village after working in a big city like Rajkot or Ahmedabad. Women workers are torn between the worlds they inhabit; they stand between the societal expectations of leaving work for family and the different life cities offer.

The gap between these two worlds is quite evident. Sonu, 23, a mother of two, came back to her husband’s village Dadiya, during the COVID-19 pandemic and never went back.

She first went to Ahmedabad when she was 10 years old, with her uncle who worked at the airport. “It was not my first time living away from home. I went with my uncle and lived there for two years. I wanted to see the aeroplanes and thought I could study anytime but this is my only chance to go out and see them taking off,” her eyes sparkle as she recalls those days.

Even after getting married at the age of 12, she found the courage to speak up about her previous experiences. “I



am not afraid ma’am. During one of our jobs, my husband and I were made to stay along with other men because there were not a lot of women working in those spaces back then. I raised my concern and asked my husband, who is quite understanding, to get work somewhere else,” she says.

“We just had one task to do there – I used to clean the kitchen and in turn, I was getting good food and the privilege of working in a place with a functional fan,” she adds. Sonu came back to Rajasthan when her sons grew up and needed to enroll in school.

She came back to Rajasthan when her sons grew up and needed to enroll in school. Her migration, which once gave her an opportunity, now seems like a distant memory. There are Gujarati-medium schools mostly, and the Hindi-medium ones are expensive. Because of the inaccessible education system, she is compelled to stay behind. As private ownership grows and public education declines in the state, inequalities between disadvantaged and privileged groups have become more apparent. The lack of access due to language barriers keeps the cycle of marginalisation going.

An identity crisis

Another concern emerged during our conversations – that despite their vital contributions, women failed to recog-

nise themselves as workers.

Women working alongside their husbands raises intriguing questions about the evolving migration patterns. To truly understand this shift and the motivation behind women’s inclusion, it is imperative to delve into the complicated ways in which both men and women perceive women’s roles in this process. When asked about her decision to accompany her husband to Ahmedabad, Ganeshi Bai’s response was rooted in the belief that she was needed to assist him.

“Everyone said he is already working, and you will work in the kitchen only at home. So, why not help your husband with his work,” she says. Her response also shaped her perception of her role as a wife and a worker.

Many women find themselves cast into the role of a ‘helper’. However, this seemingly innocuous term conceals a significant imbalance. It also reveals a subtle yet significant form of labour exploitation since it diminishes the magnitude of their work, demoting them to a position devoid of the rights that a recognised worker would command. This linguistic choice effectively deprives these women of the entitlements that should rightfully accompany their labour.

In Obra, a quite remote village in the block, where opportunities are limited,

catering contracts have become increasingly popular, attracting numerous young couples who are hired by the subcontractors and contractors to cities like Rajkot and Ahmedabad.

Hansa, 22, a mother of one, confidently shares her story. She and her husband primarily earn from catering services, where they are paid Rs 500 per day. However, if they secure a monthly job at a hotel, they are paid Rs 15,000 combined.

“I said I also want to go with him because I heard other women from many villages go and help their husbands in the kitchen. I studied till 9th grade. I can keep an account of our salary,” she says. As we visited Hansa’s home in Obra, we were greeted by a modest kuccha house, barely spacious enough to accommodate her family of six adults along with a dozen farm animals. Such living conditions were common among families in the village.

“We came back to the village for my first delivery, which was seven months ago. My husband will go back [to the city] when he gets some work. Then I will also go after two to three months to work [in the city],” she adds.

Although the uncertain nature of these contracts may expose them to an unreliable employment environment, Hansa and other women from her village do not seem to care about the lack of stability because of the abundant opportunities this migration offers.

However, an awareness about the complexities surrounding labour migration, the need for a consistent income, and the importance of labour rights are crucial for Hansa and her peers as they aim for a more secure and empowered future. These stories, however, raise an important question. Why are women now being included in these migration ventures when historically they had been kept out? The answer to this question lies in the concept of enlisting women as ‘helpers’, which strategically eliminates the need to hire two separate individuals for kitchen-related tasks.

Contractors keenly seize upon this ploy: by encouraging male workers to bring their wives along, they can avoid the expense of hiring two men because then they can pay two individuals, a husband and a wife, a combined wage that is often lower than what two male workers would individually command.

The contractors’ cost-saving strategy, however, becomes unfavourable to women as it does not allow them to explore their identity as an independent worker. This approach also highlights how gender, migration, and economics intersect, showing the ongoing struggle for women to be treated fairly and paid equally.

Kailashi, 21, shared her experience as a migrant labourer. “I was not paid for the work, only my husband did, and at night, all the kitchen staff used to sleep together in the kitchen,” she says.

When she came back from Maharashtra due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kailashi found her in-laws’ home overcrowded, with six people crammed into a single room.

When she demanded her husband to provide her and their son a separate living space, he abandoned her and sent her back to her maternal home. In the process, her husband also took her son away, she says.

“I never wanted to get married, and now I don’t know what I will do with the rest of my life,” she says, while working on her father’s farm.

Kailashi’s story reveals how women are treated when they seek empowerment. It also highlights the dire need for a systemic change that upholds women’s rights, recognises their worth, and safeguards their aspirations within the broader theme of migration and society. Furthermore, these stories also call for the need for a more comprehensive approach to address the multifaceted issues women face, including access to education for children and the intricacies of marital dynamics in the context of migration. (Courtesy: *The Wire*)

Best skincare routine for dry skin

By: **Shahnaz Husain**

Dealing with dry, dehydrated skin? Don’t despair. There’s a skincare routine for that!

Dry skin can be uncomfortable and is usually marked by scaling, itching, cracking, and even bleeding. While dry skin commonly affects the hands, arms, and legs, it can affect any part of the body.

When the skin is dry, it develops tiny cracks in the outer layer, interfering with its ability to maintain hydration properly.

Dry skin, also called xerosis is caused by ageing, genetics, heredity factors, sun damages, environmental factors, lack of hydration and moisture etc. There are many other reasons also why skin becomes dry but if left untreated, dry skin can crack and become infected. Dry skins are vulnerable to early wrinkles with rough, reddish patches. Daily and appropriate care is essential.

The type of skincare products you use can also be a factor if they contain harsh chemicals or drying ingredients that disturb the skin’s surface.

The secret of a good skin lies in the right kind of care. In dry skins, the oil-producing glands are less active. Seasonal changes also influence the skin. The hot summer season causes moisture depletion. A dry skin lacks both oil and moisture.

Moisture is most important to dry skin. It helps to keep the skin soft, smooth and supple, all hallmark of younger skin. In fact, habitual lack of moisture can lead to visible ageing signs on the skin, like lines, wrinkles, loss of elasticity and firmness. When skin is properly moisturized, it is able to naturally exfoliate built-up dead skin which allows younger skin to reveal itself and help a well-formulated moisturizer absorb better.

Normal hydration also allows skin to preserve and sustain the natural substances it relies on to keep it healthy-looking and visibly protected from negative environmental influences. There are various natural ingredients which provide moisturising to skin.

Coconut oil contains saturated fatty acids that have emollient properties which significantly improve skin hydration and increase the number of lipids on the outer parts of the skin making it smooth and soft.

Oatmeal bath has immense qualities. Oatmeal extracts contain anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidant properties which can treat dry skin. It can be used by adding powdered oatmeal to a bath or using creams that contain oatmeal to hydrate dry skin.

Aloe vera has been part of traditional Indian healing system. Aloe vera gel provides relief from dry skin. A person with dry skin on their hands or feet can apply aloe vera gel and cover the affected area with a sock or glove preferably before going to bed and leave the gel on all night.

Honey has moisturizing, healing, anti-inflammatory properties which can be directly applied on skin to moisturise the skin and can also be used with other herbal products for achieving glowing and radiant skin.

Moisturizers are available in both liquid and cream forms. During the dry season,

for normal to dry skin, it is better to use a moisturising cream, applying it after cleansing and toning. It should also be applied under make-up. A liquid moisturizer can be used at night, after cleansing and nourishing the skin, if the skin is dry. Atmospheric conditions, exposure to the sun, air conditioning and heating, soaps and chlorinated water, make-up cosmetics and air pollution can all lead to moisture loss. This is more so during the hot dry season.

Therefore, the daily care routine should be adjusted according to the requirements of the skin. For dry skin avoid chemical laden harsh soaps, hot showers, drying cleansers, products with harsh or skin-aggravating ingredients, using extremely hot or cold water and abrasive scrubs, loofahs, or stiff-bristled cleansing brushes that cause micro-tears in skin’s surface. Always wear light cotton and khadi comfortable clothing that doesn’t feel scratchy on the skin.

Avoid spending too much time in the sun. Tanning and dryness can be a lethal combination. Make sure you regularly moisturize your palms and fingertips because they are constantly exposed to harsh products. Cleanse the face twice a day with a cleansing cream or gel, containing aloe vera, which helps to check moisture loss also rehydrates the skin.

Apply the cleanser, with a light massage and wipe it off with moist cotton wool. Tone the skin, with rose water or a rose-based skin tonic. You can make a homemade cleanser for dry skin - to a tablespoon of cold milk add 2 drops of any vegetable oil (olive, or til or sunflower oil). Dip cotton wool in it and wipe the skin. Make this for 2 or 3 days, but keep it in the refrigerator.

Protect the skin from moisture loss due to sun-exposure. Apply a sunscreen, before going out in the sun. Most sunscreens have built-in moisturizers. A liquid moisturizer should also be used under make-up. Keep the skin well moisturised.

Nourishment is imperative for dry skin, as it not only lubricates the skin, but helps it to hold moisture better. It also softens the skin. After cleansing at night, apply nourishing cream on face and massage it with upward and outward movements, for 3 to 4 minutes. Wipe off excess cream with moist cotton wool before bedtime.

The skin around the eyes is thin and delicate. It acquires lines and wrinkles easily. Apply an under-eye cream wipe it off after 15 minutes, with moist cotton wool. Or, daily apply pure almond oil sparingly and massage lightly, using only the ring finger, for one minute under each eye. Massage in one direction only.

The skin on the lips is also thin and lacks oil producing glands. It becomes dry and chaps easily. After cleansing, apply almond oil or almond cream on the lips daily and leave it on all night. Sun-protective lip balms are also useful.

For skin on the body, arms and legs, apply warm sesame seed oil before bath, massaging it into the skin. Use a mild glycerine soap. Immediately after your bath, apply a body lotion while the skin is still damp. This helps to seal in moisture. (The author is international fame beauty expert and is called herbal queen of India)

G20: India’s women-led development focus is a good attack on the ‘wicked’ gender gap

By: **Sunaina Kumar**

When India listed “women-led development” as one of six main priorities of its G20 presidency, along with inclusive growth, progress on Sustainable Development Goals, green development, technological transformation and reforming multilateral institutions, it was considered a tacit acknowledgement of the fact that gender equality remains one of the most pressing policy challenges in India.

India’s gender gap – it was ranked 127 out of 146 countries in this year’s Global Gender Gap Report and faces the perennial issue of “missing women” from the workforce – is a wicked problem, a term that policymakers ascribe to problems that are impossible to solve in a way that is simple or final, like climate change which is a wicked problem. Under its presidency, India took an approach to mainstream gender into G20 discussions.

India has promoted women-led development as a distinct concept. Under women-led development, women are not just beneficiaries of development; instead, they set the agenda for development and are key to achieving the 2030 Goals, as leaders and equal participants. The concept, as such, taps into a long-established approach in development theory, which calls for the inclusion of women in development planning and decision-making.

Gender and G20

Gender, which was a neglected subject, has slowly gained traction in the G20. There is enough evidence to support that women are force multipliers – when women have access to resources, they invest in the education and health of families and communities, more than men. There is a multiplier effect on economies

too: India, for instance, can boost its GDP by 27 percent by raising women’s workforce participation. At the 2014 summit in Australia, G20 leaders made the “25x25” pledge to reduce the gender gap in labour market participation by 25 percent by 2025. In 2015 in Turkey, the W20 was launched as an official engagement group, a network designed to strengthen women’s economic empowerment in the G20 process.

G20 EMPOWER (Alliance for the Empowerment and Progression of Women’s Economic Representation) was launched in Japan in 2019, as an alliance between businesses and governments to promote women’s leadership and empowerment in the private sector. Gender commitments in the G20 have mainly emphasised increasing female labour force participation and improving workplace conditions and earnings for women. From 2015 onwards the forum has promoted women’s entrepreneurship, enhancing digital skills and education in STEM to increase female participation in these sectors.

More recently, the G20 has recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis have impacted women and girls disproportionately in every part of the world and committed to work on narrowing the resultant inequalities.

Indian vision of women-led development

The themes under India’s vision for women-led development are wide-ranging, but they can be summarised through the statement that came out of the G20 Ministerial Conference on Women Empowerment, which took place in August and encapsulates discussions that took place during this year.

These include increasing investment in and access to education and skilling, including in STEM for women; promoting women entrepreneurs and women-owned and led MSMEs; promoting leadership and decision-making roles

Surgery risks are disproportionately high for women in Africa: New study

By **Amy Paterson & Salome Maswime**

Improving surgical care for women in low- and middle-income countries is a global health priority. It’s also critical for sustainable development because of the critical role women play in macro-economic growth, community well-being, and as part of the healthcare workforce.

When the inequities and disparities in obstetric outcomes between world regions came to the attention of governments and multinational organisations, maternal health initiatives were started in regions with the highest maternal mortality rates, including sub-Saharan Africa. This has contributed to an almost 40 per cent reduction in maternal deaths in sub-Saharan Africa in the last two decades.

But the outcomes of other kinds of surgery for women in Africa have remained under-examined. Women need equitable surgical care throughout their lives – not just during childbirth.

In our recent study we compared the outcomes of non-obstetric surgery for women in African countries with the outcomes for women in countries outside Africa.

We wanted to bring attention to the outcomes and establish whether there

was a large disparity between the groups. At the surface the outcomes seemed similar: 2.9 per cent of the African patients and 2.3 per cent of the international group experienced severe complications after surgery. But when we adjusted for risk profile, African women were twice as likely to experience severe complications (including death) after surgery compared with the international incidence.

Our study reveals an important and addressable health equity issue and makes a case for expanding funding and resources for women’s health and global surgery. The findings point to the urgent need to improve healthcare and surgical care for women in Africa.

Comparing surgery outcomes

The study was an analysis of data from two large, similar studies: The African Surgical Outcomes Study (ASOS) and the International Surgical Outcomes Study (ISOS). There were 1,671 women in the African cohort and 18,449 in the international cohort (from low-, middle- and high-income countries elsewhere in the world).

We focused on the outcomes of operations such as orthopaedic and bowel surgery. We excluded obstetric and gynaecological surgeries such as caesarean sections and hysterectomies.

At first glance, the rates of severe com-

plications appeared to be similar: 2.9 per cent of women in the African cohort developed a severe complication and 2.3 per cent of women in the international cohort did.

But the African cohort was almost a decade younger. The African women also had significantly fewer comorbidities such as diabetes and hypertension. And they typically underwent more minor and fewer major surgeries. One would therefore expect their outcomes to be significantly better. This means the African outcomes were disproportionately worse.

Our analysis then adjusted for these differences in health status and type of surgical procedure.

The analysis confirmed that, if the risk profiles were equal, women in the African cohort would have twice the odds of dying or having a severe complication after surgery.

This indicates that health system factors, such as staffing and infrastructure, are severely affecting women’s surgical care and health in Africa. This not only affects the patients, but has ripple effects for their families, communities and the macroeconomic development of their countries.

Almost half – 48 per cent – of the women who developed severe complications in the African cohort died while in

hospital (versus 18 per cent in the international cohort). This is a particular cause for concern.

The percentage of severe complications that result in death is known as the “failure-to-rescue” rate. It’s largely determined and prevented by the early detection of potentially serious postoperative complications in hospital – and fast and effective clinical action in response.

Where there are staff shortages, high patient loads and limited funding, doctors and nurses are stretched. Many hospitals in these settings don’t have the resources and warning systems to pick up these complications and act early enough. This is currently a major issue in African health systems.

Future steps

Women at all life stages and from all backgrounds deserve access to safe and comprehensive surgical care. Our study highlights the need for further research and investment into women’s surgical care in African countries.

Africa is not a monolith. There are vast differences between and within African countries’ health systems. Therefore there’s a need for country-specific and condition-specific research into women’s surgical care and ways to improve these outcomes on the African continent. (Courtesy: *Down To Earth*)

Israeli Supreme Court hears first challenge to Netanyahu's contentious judicial overhaul



JERUSALEM, Sept 12: Israel's Supreme Court on Tuesday opened the first case to look at the legality of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's contentious judicial overhaul — deepening a showdown with the far-right government that has bitterly divided the nation and put the country on the brink of a constitutional crisis.

In a sign of the case's significance, all 15 of Israel's Supreme Court justices are hearing appeals to the law together for the first time in Israel's history. A regular panel is made up of three justices, though they sometimes sit on expanded panels. The proceedings were also being live-streamed.

The law, which the Israeli parliament passed in July, cancels the court's ability to strike down government decisions it deems to be "unreasonable." It is the first piece of the wider plan by Netanyahu's government to weaken the Supreme Court and give more power to the governing coalition.

The protesters have come largely from the country's secular middle class. Leading high-tech business figures have threatened to relocate. Perhaps most dramatic, thousands of military reservists have broken with the government and declared their refusal to report for duty over the plan.

Netanyahu's supporters tend to be poorer, more religious and live in West Bank settlements or outlying rural areas. Many of his supporters are working-class Mizrahi Jews, with roots in Middle Eastern countries, and have expressed hostility toward what they say is an elitist class of Ashkenazi, or European Jews.

Earlier, late on Monday, tens of

thousands of Israeli protesters crowded around the Supreme Court, waving national flags and chanting against the government.

The law passed as an amendment to what in Israel is known as a "Basic Law," a special piece of legislation that serves as a sort of constitution, which Israel does not have. The court has never struck down a "Basic Law" before but says it has the right to do so. The government says it does not.

In a statement ahead of Tuesday's hearing, Israeli Justice Minister Yariv Levin said the court "lacks all authority" to review the law.

"It is a fatal blow to democracy and the status of the Knesset," he said, insisting that lawmakers elected by the public should have the final say over the legislation.

The petitioners asking the court to strike down the law include a handful of civil society groups advocating for human rights and good governance. A ruling is not expected on Tuesday, but the hearing could hint at the court's direction.

The case is at the heart of a wider contest in Israel between fundamentally different interpretations of democracy. Netanyahu and his coalition say that as elected representatives, they have a democratic mandate to govern without being hobbled by the court, which they portray as a bastion of secular, left-leaning elite.

Opponents say that the court is the only check on majority rule in a country with such a weak system of checks and balances — just one house of parliament, a figurehead president and no firm, written constitution. (AP)

Afghanistan headed to a civil war with Taliban splitting into various factions: Former Afghan commander

WASHINGTON, Sept 12: Two years after the US forces abruptly left Kabul, Afghanistan is headed towards a civil war, the Taliban is now riddled with factionalism, and the country is fast becoming a safe haven for foreign terrorists, a former Afghan commander has said.

"I believe that the situation in Afghanistan is very critical and dangerous and it's going in a dangerous direction, which could be a civil war again, or which could be a split to Afghanistan because you see that in last two years Afghanistan has been controlled by the terrorists and it has fallen into terrorist hands," Lt. Gen. Haibatullah Alizai, who was chief of staff for the army at the time the capital city of Kabul fell to Taliban in August 2021, told PTI in an interview.

Alizai currently lives in the US and has recently launched an initiative to unite Afghans outside the country. Expressing his deep dissatisfaction over the current situation in Afghanistan, the former Afghan commander blames the Biden administration for abruptly leaving Afghanistan and its people at the mercy of the Taliban.

The number of terrorist organisations in Afghanistan has expanded during the Taliban regime, he said. Even the Afghan terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab have established a foothold in Afghanistan and they have started training its militants, he alleged. "And everything is happening under the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan," he said.

"This is the situation. Al-Qaeda is active. Daish is getting more and more active and a lot of resistance groups are being announced and established against the Taliban regime in different parts, which will of course lead Afghanistan to another serious civil war or possible split (of Afghanistan)," Alizai said. Responding to a question, Alizai said that Afghanistan under the Taliban is headed to become a safe haven for terrorists.

"I think the Biden administration made a big mistake at that time, or especially Biden himself. He had the opportunity to collect more information about Afghanistan and a little bit more deep dive into the situation in Afghanistan. But the decision was so prompt, so quickly and even without thinking deeply about the current situation that's going on in Afghanistan," he said.

"However, we as Afghans and his administration, some organisations like Intel organisations and military even they told him that this is going to be a chaos... because we were on the ground and we were watching everything from a closed lens. Unfortunately, he never listened to anybody, the administration didn't listen to anybody and the situation, now you see where is it?" he said. (PTI)

Prominent journalist who founded the Rappler news outlet is facing multiple charges brought during Rodrigo Duterte's presidential term

Nobel winner Maria Ressa acquitted of tax evasion though she faces 2 more legal cases

MANILA, Sept 12: Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa was acquitted of a final tax evasion charge on Tuesday though she still faces two remaining legal cases she believes the former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte used to muzzle her critical reporting.

Ressa and her online news organisation Rappler had faced five tax evasion charges but a court acquitted her of four of the charges in January. A different court heard the fifth charge and acquitted her Tuesday.

"Facts wins, truth wins, justice wins," she told reporters outside the courthouse.

Ressa and Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov were awarded the 2021 Nobel for their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression by fighting for the survival of their news organisations and defying government efforts to shut them.

She had said the charges against her were politically motivated as Rappler was critical



of Duterte's brutal crackdown on illegal drugs that left thousands of mostly petty drug suspects dead. The International Criminal Court is investigating the crackdown as a possible crime against humanity.

Rappler also criticised Duterte's handling of the coronavirus pandemic including prolonged lockdowns that deepened poverty,

Kim is expected to seek Russian economic aid & military technology in exchange for munitions to be used in Russia's war in Ukraine

North Korea's Kim is in Russia ahead of a meeting with Putin as their nations draw closer

SEOUL, Sept 12: North Korea's Kim Jong Un arrived in Russia on Tuesday for a meeting with President Vladimir Putin where they are expected to offer each other increased support in their escalating standoffs with the West.

Kim is expected to seek Russian economic aid and military technology in exchange for munitions to be used in Russia's war in Ukraine.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim boarded his personal train bound for Russia on Sunday afternoon, accompanied by members of the ruling party, government and military.

After decades of complicated, hot-and-cold relations, Russia and North Korea have drawn closer since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The bond has been driven by Putin's need for war supplies and Kim's efforts to boost his partnerships with traditional allies Moscow and Beijing as he tries to break out of diplomatic isolation.

South Korea's military assessed the train crossed into Russia early Tuesday, Jeon Ha Gyu, spokesperson of South Korea's Defence Ministry, said without elaborating on how the military obtained the information.

Later Tuesday, Russian news

agencies quoted Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov as confirming Kim had entered Russia, and reported that his train had crossed the Razdolnaya River, north of Vladivostok.

Officials identified in North Korean state media photos may hint at what Kim might seek from Putin and what he would be willing to give.

Kim is apparently accompanied by Jo Chun Ryong, a ruling party official in charge of munitions policies who joined the leader on recent tours of factories producing artillery shells and missiles, said South Korea's Unification Ministry. North Korea may have tens of millions of artillery shells and rockets based on Soviet designs that could give a huge boost to the Russian army in Ukraine, analysts say.

Also identified in photos were Pak Thae Song, chairman of North Korea's space science and technology committee, and Navy Adm. Kim Myong Sik, who are linked with North Korean efforts to acquire spy satellites and nuclear-capable ballistic missile submarines.

Experts say North Korea would struggle to acquire such capabilities without external help, although it's not clear if Russia would share such sensitive technologies.



Kim Jong Un may also seek badly needed energy and food supplies, analysts say. Deputy foreign minister Andrei Rudenko said Russia may discuss humanitarian aid with the North Korean delegation, according to Russian news agencies.

Kim's delegation also likely includes his foreign minister, Choe Sun Hui, and his top two military officials, Korean People's Army Marshals Ri Pyong Chol and Pak Jong Chon.

Putin arrived in the eastern city of Vladivostok on Monday to attend an international forum that runs through Wednesday. Putin's first meeting with Kim was held in 2019 in the city, which is about 425 miles (680 kilometres) north of Pyongyang. Peskov said Putin and Kim will meet after the Vladivostok forum, but the reports didn't specify when or where. He added

that the meeting would include a lunch in Kim's honour.

At the forum on Tuesday, Putin spoke about economic development in Russia's Far East, and did not mention Kim in his first hour at the forum's plenary session. Earlier, he told forum moderators that Russia was developing weapons based on "new physical principles" but did not give details.

Data from FlightRadar24.com, which tracks flights worldwide, showed an Air Koryo Antonov An-148 took off from Pyongyang on Tuesday and flew for about an hour to reach Vladivostok. North Korea's national airline has only just resumed flying internationally after being grounded during the COVID-19 pandemic. There had been speculation that North Korea could use a plane to fly in support staff.

Kim is making his first foreign

trip since the pandemic, during which North Korea imposed tight border controls for more than three years.

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

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

US officials released intelligence last week that North Korea and Russia were arranging a meeting between their leaders.

According to US officials, Putin could focus on securing more supplies of North Korean artillery and other ammunition to refill declining reserves as he seeks to rebuff a Ukrainian counteroffensive and show that he's capable of grinding out a long war of attrition. That could potentially put more pressure on the US and its partners to pursue negotiations as concerns over a protracted conflict grow despite their huge shipments of advanced weaponry to Ukraine in the past 17 months. (AP)

US praises India for G20 summit, hails 'India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor'

WASHINGTON, Sept 12: The US lauded India for hosting the G20 summit, calling it a big "success" and hailing the landmark 'India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor' which will usher in a new era of connectivity from Europe to Asia and will stimulate economic growth across the two continents.

The G20 Leaders' two-day summit, held under India's presidency, wrapped up on Sunday. On Saturday, the ambitious India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) was jointly announced by the leaders of the US, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, Italy and the European Union on the sidelines of the summit in New Delhi.

The new economic corridor is seen as an alternative to China's controversial Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

During a regular press briefing on Monday, the US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters, "It was a landmark India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) that we believe will usher in a new era of connectivity from Europe to Asia that will stimulate economic growth, economic development across the two continents, as well as cooperation on energy and digital connectivity."

"The memorandum of understanding is among the United States, India, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, EU, and other G20 partners to explore a shipping and rail

transportation corridor that will enable the flow of commerce, energy, and data from India, the Middle East, and Europe," he said in response to a question.

Miller said that the recently concluded G20 Summit in New Delhi was a big success. "We absolutely believe that it was a success," he said.

"First, with respect to the statement, the G20 is a big organisation. Russia is a member of the G20; China is a member of the G20. There are members that have a diverse range of views. We believe the fact that the organisation was able to issue a statement that calls for respecting territorial integrity and sovereignty and saying that those principles should not be violated is an extremely important statement because that is exactly what is at the heart of Russia's invasion of Ukraine," he said.

"It is those very questions. So we thought that was an incredibly important statement for them to make. You also saw important announcements made at the G20 about new economic arrangements between Saudi Arabia and India that the United States was a part of," Miller said.

"With respect to (Chinese) President Xi Jinping not attending — I'm not going to speak to whether President Xi should have attended or should not have attended. I will say we found it incredibly productive for President Biden and Secretary Blinken to be there, engaging di-

rectly with their counterparts," he said.

"There is no substitute for that, and we found it incredibly productive for the interests of the United States to be able to have those conversations and advance them. As the White House made public over the weekend, in addition to the sessions, the President had a number of pull-asides with leaders of other countries where we were actively advancing the foreign policy priorities of the United States, including engaging on the war in Ukraine," Miller said.

India managed to hammer out an unexpected consensus among the G20 countries on the contentious Ukraine conflict through a series of hectic negotiations with emerging economies such as Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia playing a leading role in reaching the agreement on the declaration on the first day of the summit.

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

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

Taiwan: 22 Chinese warplanes and 20 warships spotted near the island

TAIPEI, Sept 12: Taiwan said on Tuesday it spotted 22 Chinese military aircraft and 20 vessels near the island over the previous 24 hours, as Beijing steps up its military activities in the area.

Over the weekend, the United States and Canada sailed warships through the Taiwan Strait in a challenge to China's sweeping territorial claims.

On Monday, China sailed a naval formation led by its aircraft carrier Shandong, about 70 miles (110 kilometres) to Taiwan's southeast. The vessel was expected to conduct drills simulating air-

craft, submarine, warship and land attacks, according to Chinese state media.

Thirteen of the Chinese military aircraft reported on Tuesday had crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial demarcation zone between China and Taiwan, according to Taiwan's defense ministry.

China claims Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy, as part of its territory to be reunited by force if necessary.

Over the past year, Beijing has stepped up military activities around the island, including by sending warships and warplanes on a near-

daily basis.

"The period from July to September this year was the peak period for the Chinese Communist Party's exercises," Maj. Gen. Huang Wen-Chi, the assistant deputy chief with the General Staff for Intelligence of Taiwan's Defense Ministry, said during a press conference.

"There are a lot of warship activities in the waters surrounding the Taiwan Strait. There was also a large number of warships operating in different areas in the South China Sea and East China Sea," he said.

Huang said the Taiwanese military would continue the monitor the movements of Chinese warplanes and warships.

On Saturday, the USS Ralph Johnson and the Royal Canadian Navy's Halifax-class frigate HMCS Ottawa sailed through the Taiwan Strait.

The timing coincided with a Group of 20 leaders' summit in New Delhi.

The U.S. routinely sails through the strait in what it calls "freedom of navigation" operations, which China sees as provocative actions. (AP)

Malaysia's Appeals Court upholds Najib's acquittal in one of his 1MDB trial

PUTRAJAYA, Sept 12: Malaysia's Court of Appeal on Tuesday upheld the acquittal of former Prime Minister Najib Razak of audit tampering in relation to the multibillion dollar looting of the 1Malaysia Development Berhad state fund, though he remains in prison for other graft charges.

The court struck out the appeal after prosecutors failed to meet deadlines in filing documents to support their bid. Najib's lawyer Mohamed Shafee Abdullah told a news conference. Najib, 70, was acquitted in March after the High Court ruled prosecutors failed to show that he abused his position to order amendments to a 1MDB audit report in 2016 to cover up wrongdoings before it was presented in Parliament.

"The acquittal is upheld without any further process," Shafee said, adding that prosecutors are unlikely to appeal to the top court.

The audit tampering is one of Najib's several corruption trials. He is

currently serving a 12-year jail term after losing his final appeal last year in his first of several corruption trials linked to the 1MDB scandal.

The 1MDB fund was set up months after Najib became prime minister in 2009. Investigators allege more than \$4.5 billion was stolen from the fund and laundered by Najib's associates through lawyers of bank accounts in the United States and other countries to finance Hollywood films and extravagant purchases that included hotels, a luxury yacht, art and jewelry.

More than \$700 million landed in Najib's bank accounts. Najib and his wife, Rosmah Mansor, were hit with multiple graft charges after the saga led to his ruling coalition's shocking defeat in 2018 general elections. Rosmah was sentenced in 2022 to 10 years in prison and a record fine of 970 million ringgit (\$217 million) for corruption over a solar energy project and is out on bail pending an appeal. (AP)

7 died in storms in southern China

BEIJING, Sept 12: Rainstorms battering southern China have killed at least seven people and allowed dozens of crocodiles to escape from a farm. Nearby residents were advised to stay at home after more than 70 crocodiles escaped in Maoming, a city near the coast in western Guangdong province, according to Chinese media reports.

An emergency official was quoted as saying that 69 adult crocodiles and six juveniles had escaped. Some have been captured, but the operation was difficult because of the depth of a lake they are in, the media reports said.

No injuries have been reported. Further west, seven people died and three are missing after multiple landslides in the city of Yulin in the Guangxi region, the official Xinhua News Agency reported late Monday. Heavy rain on Sunday and Monday triggered the landslides. (AP)

QCI and state govt collaborate for quality revolution at Assam Gunvatta Sankalp

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 12: The Quality Council of India (QCI), with the backing of the state government, proudly hosted the Assam Gunvatta Sankalp event on Tuesday, in Guwahati. The objective of this event was to usher in a quality revolution for the citizens of Assam. The event began with an inaugural session that included the ceremonial lighting of the lamp and the launch of the Assam Gunvatta Sankalp video by Dr Lakshmanan S, secretary, Industries, Commerce & PE department, Assam, in the presence of distinguished dignitaries such as Jaxay Shah, chairperson, QCI; Dr RP Singh, secretary-general, QCI; PR Mehta, chairperson, NABET; and Rajesh Maheshwari, CEO, NABCB, among others.

During the event, an MoU was signed between the Quality Council of India (QCI) and the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Assam, department of Health and Family Welfare, government of Assam. The MoU aims to enhance the food safety ecosystem in Assam through the establishment of a quality infrastructure mechanism, including conformity assessment frameworks, infrastructure development, and training and capacity building of stakeholders.

The Assam Gunvatta Sankalp featured four informative sessions, each addressing critical aspects of Assam's development in various sectors, including Education and Skill, Industry and MSME, Sustainable Agriculture, ONDC, Tourism, Culture, and Infrastructure. Eminent speakers from diverse domains shared valuable insights and recommendations.

Paban Kumar Borthakur, IAS, chief secretary, government of Assam, highlighted the connection between 'Quantity and Quality', emphasising that high-quality products and services can enhance a country's economic growth. He acknowledged QCI's efforts in areas such as quality certification,



accreditation, and training, which can improve the quality of products, services, and infrastructure in Assam, contributing to the state's development.

Dr JB Ekka, IAS, principal secretary, Panchayat & Rural Development department, discussed the government's focus on improving the quality of life for the people of Assam through various initiatives in healthcare, education, infrastructure development, job creation, environmental conservation, and social programs.

Dr Lakshmanan S, secretary, Industries, Commerce & PE department, Assam, inaugurating Assam Gunvatta Sankalp, emphasised the uniqueness of Assam's cultural heritage and its vast potential. He expressed a commitment to ignite a quality revolution as a strong pillar for Assam's growth.

Jaxay Shah, chairperson, QCI, expressed enthusiasm for collaborating with Awesome

Assam to drive the Quality Mission in the state. He stated that the Gunvatta Sankalp initiative aims to empower Assam with quality-driven progress and reaffirms the state's commitment to excellence in quality development at the grassroots level.

Dr RP Singh, secretary-general, QCI, commended Assam's dedication to quality-driven progress, particularly highlighting the Bonee Scheme and its role in fostering excellence in rural sectors. He stressed the strategic importance of Assam in ensuring quality development not only within the state but also in neighbouring regions.

Abhijit Baruah, IAS, commissioner of Food Safety, Assam, noted that the MoU between QCI and the Commissionerate of Food Safety, Assam, represents a significant milestone in their journey toward quality excellence, especially in upholding the quality and safety of food products

in the state.

Dr B Kalyan Chakravarty, principal secretary, Skill, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Assam, emphasised the importance of skills as a bridge to prosperity and economic growth, highlighting the state's efforts to empower its workforce with necessary skills.

Manavendra Pratap Singh, managing director, Assam Industrial Development Corporation, spoke about the paradigm shift in Assam's industrial landscape and how it's positioning Assam as a quality manufacturing hub through best practices and product quality enhancement.

Syedain Abbasi, additional chief secretary, Guwahati Smart City Limited, stressed the importance of preserving culture and the environment while developing cities, emphasising that quality management practices can harmoniously blend modern infrastructure with cultural and natural assets.

Dr Sonali Ghosh, IFS, CEO, Assam Agroforestry Development Board, highlighted the collective commitment to excellence and innovation in agriculture and forestry, critical sectors with a profound impact on the environment and economy.

Dr Om Prakash, mission director, Samagra Shiksha Assam, discussed the goal of providing quality education to every child in Assam, ensuring education reaches even the farthest corners of the state.

Amrit Deorah, vice-president, Federation of Industry and Commerce of North Eastern Region (FINER), talked about working with Assam to catalyse industry excellence, promote innovation clusters, and facilitate knowledge exchange among businesses.

Triyanga Bharatiya Borah, director of Horticulture & FP Assam, highlighted Assam's potential to lead India's agricultural transformation and its efforts to elevate quality standards in agriculture at the grassroots level.

Heroin worth ₹ 18 crore seized in joint STF and police operation



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 12: In response to a tip-off, law enforcement authorities launched a significant operation targeting a narcotics trafficking operation involving a Thar vehicle with the registration number AS 01 FM 7800. The vehicle was suspected of transporting illegal drugs from Churachandpur in Manipur to various Lower Assam districts. The operation took place at Saraighat on the Kamrup side, where the vehicle was intercepted. During this operation, three individuals from Manipur, who were believed to be involved in drug peddling, were apprehended.

Subsequently, in a coordinated effort, three individuals from Assam, who were suspected to be the recipients of the narcotics consignment, were also apprehended at Sachika Hotel in Amingaon. The investigation led to the discovery of hidden compartments built into the Thar vehicle, where law enforcement authorities found a total of 170 packets or soap cases containing heroin. The seized heroin weighed approximately 2 kilo-

grams and 200 grams and was found without any covering.

The estimated market value of the seized drugs is approximately ₹ 18 crore. This operation was carried out as a joint effort between the Special Task Force (STF) and Kamrup Police, with supervision provided by Parthasarathi Mahanta, DIG STF. Legal action is set to be initiated at Amingaon Police Station.

The individuals involved in this narcotics trafficking operation include Khalilur Rahman, son of MD Fajir Rahman, from Muktapur (Loch), Baihata Chariali, Kamrup; Inamul Ali (32 years), son of Amzad Ali, from Kalitapara, Sipajhar, Darrang; Abdul Ali, son of Mainuddin Ali, from Muktapur (Loch), Baihata Chariali, Kamrup; Haapu Singon (43 years), son of Late Thanga Singon, from Leijangkhopi, Tuibong, Churachandpur, Manipur; Gogou Haokip (37 years), son of Jamlal Haokip, from Gangjang, Churachandpur, Manipur; and Samingon Doungel (29 years), son of Khuphkol Doungel, from Zionveng, Tuibong, Churachandpur, Manipur.

Self-financed input dealer training program concludes at KVK, Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 12: The fifteen-day self-financed input dealer training program, organised jointly by Assam Agriculture University, Jorhat, and the state agriculture department at Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Nagaon, reached its conclusion on Tuesday.

Over 25 input dealers from Hojai district actively participated in this comprehensive training program. The event featured a roster of experts, including professionals from Assam Agriculture University, Jorhat, including former director Dr Hamendra Bhat-tacharya, as well as experts from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Nagaon, Morigaon, and various other line departments who served as trainers



throughout the program.

To mark the successful conclusion of the training program, a valedictory session was held at the auditorium of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Nagaon. Dr Niranjana Deka, head of KVK, Nagaon, presided over the session. Also present were district agriculture officers from Nagaon and Hojai, Satish Talukdar and Ranjit Mishra Bhagawati, respectively. Assistant director Ranjan Prasad Deka and

other scientists from Agriculture Research Station, Shillongani, as well as experts from KVK, Nagaon, were also in attendance.

During the event, Dr Niranjana Deka emphasised the importance of input dealers maintaining adequate stocks of fertilisers and integrated agricultural machinery. This readiness, he explained, enables input dealers to provide essential resources to the farming community when needed.

KABC's seminar concludes with unity and faith in Bokajan

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Sept 12: The Women's Seminar organised by the Karbi Anglong Baptist Association (KABC), Women's department, came to a close at the Bokajan Kordoikuri Matri Baptist Church on September 10. The seminar revolved around the theme inspired by Acts of the Apostles 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The KABC encompasses members from various Baptist associations, representing a diverse range of communities and tribes, including Karbi, Boro, Adivasi, Garo, Shyam,

Assamese, Dimas, Nepali, Rengma, Kuki, Manipuri, Hmar, Lalung, and Amri Kari.

Over the course of the three-day event, attendees were enlightened by speakers Arenla Y Longkumar and Rev Kamson Rongphar, the general secretary of KABC. Youth members from the DVBA Youth department led the praise and worship sessions. In addition to engaging with various topics and participating in worship services, a choir competition added to the festivities. The women of Amri Karbi Baptist Kachekruk Asong claimed the first prize, PKBA women secured the second prize, and NKBA women received the third prize, respectively.

NFR shows steady progress in freight loading

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 12: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) continues its upward trajectory in freight loading, achieving a noteworthy milestone by loading 0.824 million tonnes (MT) in August 2023. This accomplishment brings the total freight loading for the current financial year 2023-24 to 4.144 million tonnes (MT) as of August.

From April to August 2023, NFR has demonstrated significant progress in the loading of food grains and containers, surpassing the previous year's figures. During this period, food grain loading surged by an impressive 34.2%, while container loading witnessed a substantial increase of 9.1%. Additionally, miscellaneous commodities such as ballast also saw a remarkable uptick, with a 41% increase compared to the corresponding period in the previous financial year.

Notably, all the divisions under NFR's jurisdiction have contributed to this outstanding performance in freight loading, resulting in a substantial boost in freight loading revenues. This increase in freight loading not only reflects the railway's efficiency but also signifies the region's growing economic activities.

Nowgong Girls' College celebrates 62nd foundation day

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 12: Nowgong Girls' College marked its 62nd foundation day with great fervour and enthusiasm at the college premises. The day's celebrations commenced with Dr Tosheswar Nath, president of the College Governing Body, hoisting the college flag in the morning. Following the flag hoisting, students and alumni of the college performed the college anthem, creating a sense of unity and pride.

Dr Kulen Chandra Das, the college principal, paid floral tributes to the bust of the founder principal, Mahesh Chandra Dev Goswami. He also inaugurated the newly constructed second floor of the PDP Girls' Hostel, a project funded by the college.

The open session of the celebration began with a harmonious chorus titled 'Aji Bondo Ki Chondre' performed by the college teachers. Principal Dr Kulen Chandra Das reflected on the college's illustrious history and highlighted the new initiatives aimed at the comprehensive development of the students.

The highlight of the event was the 'Mahesh Dev Goswami Memorial Lecture', delivered by Dharanidhar Boro, a

renowned wildlife conservationist and recipient of the prestigious 'Asom Gaurav Bora' award. Arun Vignesh CS, IFS, divisional forest officer of Eastern Assam Wildlife Division, Kaziranga, graced the occasion as the guest of honour.

During the program, more than 14 meritorious students received recognition for their exceptional academic achievements. The college also felicitated students who participated in the Guinness World Record-holding performance of Bihu and five NCC cadets for their national accomplishments.

Additionally, a book titled 'Environment, Livelihoods, and Self-Reliance', edited by Dr Nazneen Akhtar and Manashjyoti Bhuyan, was unveiled. The day's festivities reached a pinnacle with a captivating local adaptation of Shakespeare's Hamlet, directed by Dhananjay Boro and organised by 'The Bohemian Souls', an art and drama society under the department of English.

To add to the grandeur of the occasion, over 8000 earthen lamps were lit in the evening, illuminating the college campus and creating a mesmerising ambience.

Boy rescued in Sootea; swift action taken by locals & authorities

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 12: In a heartwarming act of compassion, an employee of the Naduar Education Block discovered a nearly 14-year-old deaf and dumb boy in a semi-naked condition at Nagaya Barua Chuk, Sootea. Without hesitation, the rescuer arranged for clothing for the boy and promptly informed the local media team in Sootea and the Sootea Police. They, in turn, alerted the Child Protection Team. Moti Kumar Newar, chairman of the Child Welfare

Committee in Biswanath, along with his team, swiftly arrived at the scene and successfully rescued the boy. He was subsequently taken to the Child Care Institute, a shelter home for children in Biswanath. Upon further investigation, it was revealed that the rescued child hailed from Udaypur, Kusumtola, and his parents were identified as Bijoy Gogoi and Jyoti Nayak. The collaborative efforts of concerned citizens and authorities ensured the safety and well-being of the young boy.

Nature enthusiasts explore 'Nature's Wonderland' at Assam State Zoo

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 12: Nature enthusiasts from ten different states across India gathered at Assam State Zoo for the enlightening event titled 'Nature's Wonderland - A Journey of Curiosity'. Dr Purnima Devi Barman, a UN Champion of Earth Awardee from Aaranyak, shared inspirational words about selfless service and the connection between peace and dreams. Organised by Aaranyak, a premier biodiversity conservation organisation in the region, the event emphasised the importance of urban biodiversity within the Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden.

Jayanta Kumar Pathak, senior manager at Aaranyak, explained the event's purpose and highlighted the need for initiatives that deepen our understanding of urban biodiversity. Wildlife biologist Dr Jayaditya Purkayastha discussed the role of zoological parks in ex-situ conservation, emphasising their significance in wildlife research, population revival of endangered species through captive breeding, and species conservation.

Environmentalists Tanvi Hussain of Aaranyak introduced the concept of 'One Health and Human Well-being', and participants enjoyed an eco-therapy session



comprising yoga asanas and a connection with nature to relax and rejuvenate.

Rajani Kanta Deka, chief animal keeper of Assam State Zoo, shared insights on animal rescue, rehabilitation, captive breeding, and animal behaviour. He emphasised the impact of anthropogenic activities, such as honking horns and bursting firecrackers, on animals' stress levels and behaviour.

Dipak Bhattacharjee of Aaranyak and Pranab Bori of Assam State Zoo discussed the enthusiasm for nature conservation and the importance of finding joy and happiness in life's ups and downs.

The event included a nature walk and

talk led by Aaranyak's team and Wonderland mentors. Thirty nature enthusiasts from ten different Indian states actively participated in the Nature's Wonderland event, supported by the Wipro Foundation and LASA (Lea Associates South Asia Private Limited). The event, held on September 3, was coordinated by Pranab Goswami and Wasima Begum of Aaranyak, with active participation from Pralika Saikia, Bishakha Saikia, Hiramoni Rabha, Birsong Phangcho of the department of Eco-Restoration, Dimoria College, and Akash Kakati, Nayan Sarma, and Anil Kumar Das of Aaranyak who volunteered their support.

Tezpur University and Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari celebrate Universal Brotherhood Day

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Sept 12: Tezpur University, in collaboration with Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari Tezpur branch and the National Service Scheme (NSS), celebrated Universal Brotherhood Day on Monday. This momentous event, aimed at promoting values of unity, compassion, and fraternity among all individuals, brought together numerous students and dignitaries in the council hall at Tezpur University.

Distinguished guests included Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, vice-chancellor of Tezpur University, Alka Gauri Joshi, Assam Prant Sangathak, and Prof PP Sahu, dean of the School of Engineering at Tezpur University.

The event commenced with the rendition of 'Viswa dharma ki jai ho'. Dr Sanjay Deka, a professor from the Botany department at Darrang College, introduced Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari and elaborated on its motto, which emphasises individual development for nation-building. A member of Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari recited Swami Vivekananda's historic speech from Chicago. Dr Amiyao Das read a prepared speech sent by Nibedita Raghunath Vire, vice president of Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari, emphasising the enduring message of



Sanatan Dharma to the world and India's mission of celebrating universal brotherhood. Alka Gauri Joshi, Assam Prant Sangathak of Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari, stressed the importance of youth possessing unwavering determination and highlighted that in India, a person's character defines their personality more than their attire.

Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, vice-chancellor of Tezpur University, remarked that Sanatan Dharma is not just a religion but a way of life in India. He mentioned India's commitment to the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, signifying the world as one large family, and referred to India's G20 motto, advocating for 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

Universal Brotherhood Day stands as a beacon of hope and harmony, emphasising the need to foster a global community that transcends borders, beliefs, and backgrounds. Inspired by Swami Vivekananda's teachings, it celebrates the oneness of humanity. Swami Vivekananda's vision of unity transcends borders and reminds us to embrace diversity and promote understanding. On this day in 1893, Swami Vivekananda delivered his historic speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Vivekananda Kendra Kanyakumari Tezpur branch and NSS Tezpur University invited individuals from all walks of life to come together in the spirit of unity and mutual respect.

Rise above 'party politics', declare Himachal calamity a 'national disaster': Priyanka to Centre

SHIMLA, Sept 12: Urging the Centre to rise above "party politics", Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra Tuesday demanded that the recent calamity in Himachal Pradesh due to heavy monsoon rains be declared a 'national disaster'.

Gandhi, who visited rain-affected areas of Kullu district and reviewed relief and restoration works, urged the Centre to rise above "party politics" without taking into consideration whether there is a Congress or BJP government in the state, a statement issued here said.

Flash floods and landslides triggered by heavy rains had wreaked havoc in Kullu and Mandi districts on July 14 and 15.

During her Kullu visit, Gandhi lauded the spirit with which the people and state government are facing the situation.

"The people of Himachal have set an example for the nation by uniting and coming to the forefront to help the affected families. People in the state have come forward

to donate for those hit by natural calamities and even did 'shram dan' (physical labour) to open roads washed out by rains or blocked by landslides," the statement quoted Gandhi as saying.

Even as the state government is doing far beyond its capacity by using its limited resources to provide succour to the affected families, however, without the assistance of the Union government, it is difficult to restore normalcy and complete renovation works besides providing aid to the people, the leader added.

The Congress leader visited affected areas on her way to Manali from Kullu, including the Sangam Bridge at Bhuntar which was damaged by the overflowing Beas river following heavy rains in July, and interacted with the flood victims at the Aloo ground in Manali.

The farmers and horticulturists of the state have also suffered enormous losses and the Centre should pay heed towards their plight as well. Some big industrial houses, dealing in fruit marketing, have re-



duced the price of the apple crop thereby causing losses to the horticulturists, Gandhi said.

Gandhi, who arrived at the Bhuntar airport in Kullu this morning, earlier spoke with Congress workers and local growers about apple production, transportation and rates of apple boxes offered by the Adani group.

The centre has also reduced the

import duty on the Washington apple, which will also directly affect the horticulturists of the State, thereby causing losses to them. The Central leadership should also think about the benefits of the farmers and horticulturists of the State, the statement said.

Gandhi was accompanied by chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, State Congress chief, who

is also the sitting Congress MP from Mandi Parliament constituency, and Public Works Department Minister Vikramaditya Singh.

The Congress leader will also visit Mandi, Shimla and Solan districts.

Himachal Pradesh has suffered losses of ₹ 8,679 crore since the onset of monsoon on June 24 till September 11.

Over 260 people have died in rain-related incidents, according to the state emergency operation centre.

As many as 165 landslides and 72 flash floods were reported during the monsoon season. Out of the 111 deaths in landslides, 94 were reported in Kullu, Mandi, Shimla and Solan districts, while 18 out of 19 deaths due to flash floods were also witnessed in these districts.

Chief minister Sukhu has pegged the losses at ₹ 12,000 crore and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to declare the calamity in Himachal Pradesh as a national disaster. (PTI)

SC refers pleas challenging validity of sedition law to bench of at least five judges

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: The Supreme Court on Tuesday referred to a Constitution bench of at least five judges a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the IPC provision on sedition, a month after the Centre introduced in Parliament bills to replace the colonial-era penal statutes IPC, CrP and the Evidence Act, proposing among other things the repeal of the sedition law.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud declined the Centre's request to defer the issue of reference to a larger bench as Parliament is in the process of re-enacting the provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Bill has now been placed before a standing committee.

"We are not inclined to accept the request for deferring the consideration of the constitutional challenge in these batch of matters for more than one reason," said the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra. The bench observed that section 124A (sedition) of the IPC continues to remain on the statute book, and even if the new Bill becomes a law, there is a presumption that any new law in the penal statute will have prospective and not retrospective effect.

"Consequently, the validity of the prosecution which would be launched so long as section 124A continues to remain in the statute, will have to be assessed on that basis," it said.

The court noted the constitutional validity of section 124A of the IPC was tested by the apex court on the basis of a challenge that it was ultra vires Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution in the 1962 judgement of Kedar Nath Singh versus State of Bihar.

Article 19(1)(a) relates to the right to freedom of speech and expression. The 1962 judgement had upheld the constitutionality of Section 124A and held it was in harmony with Article 19(1)(a).

The bench observed it needs to be noted that when the five-judge constitution bench had ruled on the validity of Section 124A in 1962, the challenge to it on the ground that it violated Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution was tested only with respect to that Article.

It said at that time there was no challenge on the ground that section 124A of the IPC violated Article 14 (equality before law) of the Constitution.

The bench noted the submission of the counsel representing the petitioners that it would be necessary to re-evaluate the validity of Section 124A of the IPC as the provision has only been tested with respect to Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.

The top court said the appropriate course of action for a three-judge bench would be to direct that the papers be placed before the CJI so the pleas could be heard by a bench of at least five judges since the 1962 decision was by a constitution bench.

"We accordingly direct the registry to place the papers before the CJI so that appropriate decision can be taken on the administrative side for the constitution of a bench of strength of at least five judges," the court said.

The apex court had on May 1 deferred the hearing on these pleas after the Centre said it was at an advanced stage of consultation on re-examining the penal provision.

On August 11, in a landmark move to overhaul colonial-era criminal laws, the Centre had introduced in the Lok Sabha three bills to replace the IPC, CrP and the Indian Evidence Act, proposing among other things the repeal of sedition law and introducing a new provision with a wider definition of the offence.

The top court had on May 11 last year put on hold the penal law on sedition till an "appropriate" government forum re-examined it and directed the Centre and states to not register any fresh FIR invoking the provision. Besides the lodging of FIRs, ongoing probes, pending trials and all proceedings under the sedition law across the country will also be in abeyance, the top court had said. The law on sedition, which provides for a maximum jail term of life under section 124A of the IPC for creating "disaffection towards the government", was brought into the penal code in 1890, a full 57 years before Independence and almost 30 years after the IPC came into being. (PTI)



Mamata leaves for 12-day tour of Spain, Dubai

KOLKATA, Sept 12: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday left for a 12-day tour of Spain and United Arab Emirates to seek investments for the state. Banerjee's flight to Dubai, which was scheduled around 8.30 am, was delayed by at least three hours due to some technical glitches.

She and her team finally flew from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport after a delay of around three hours. An airport official said that the flight, by which Banerjee and her team left for Dubai, had arrived late at Kolkata from the West Asian city.

Banerjee is scheduled to spend the night in Dubai due to the unavailability of connecting flights, before flying to Spain's capital Madrid the next day. Due to the delay, the CM visited some outlets at the airport, including the state government's Biswa Bangla store.

Speaking to reporters at the airport, Banerjee said, "It's been five years since we went abroad. Spain was the theme country of this year's International Kolkata Book Fair.

They are good in manufacturing and other industries. We will be participating in business conferences there."

"They (foreign delegates) come here again and again. But we don't go. That's why we are going now. A business conference is also scheduled in Dubai. I will keep you people informed from time to time," she said.

The CM was accompanied by chief secretary H K Dwivedi, other senior officials and one representative each from the football clubs of Mohun Bagan and East Bengal.

Former Indian cricket team captain Sourav Ganguly, who is currently in London, will join her team in Madrid.

"We will stay in Madrid for three days, during which we will attend a business summit and meet non-resident Bengalis. From there, we will take a train to Barcelona, where we will participate in a two-day meeting for the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS)," she had told reporters at state secretariat Nabanna on Tuesday. (PTI)

Parivartan Yatra commences in poll-bound Chhattisgarh

DANTEWADA, Sept 12: The BJP on Tuesday rolled out 'Parivartan Yatra' from tribal-dominated Dantewada in Chhattisgarh eyeing a comeback in the upcoming assembly polls, due later this year. The Yatra was scheduled to be launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah but his visit was cancelled at the last moment due to some urgent reason, a party leader said.

In the absence of Shah, BJP's Chhattisgarh incharge Om Mathur flagged off the yatra after performing rituals at the famous Maa Danteshwari temple in Dantewada town. The Bharatiya Janata Party has planned two Parivartan yatras in poll-bound Chhattisgarh. BJP chief JP Nadda will launch the second Yatra from Jashpur on September 15.

The two yatras, which will see 84 public meetings, 85 "swagat sabhas" (welcome gatherings) and seven road shows, will culminate in Bilaspur on the same day after covering a distance of 2,989 km across 87 out of the total 90 assembly constituencies. After offering rituals at Danteshwari temple, Mathur, Chhattisgarh BJP

chief Arun Sao, and other senior leaders addressed a public rally at the High School ground here before flagging off the Yatra.

Speaking at the rally, former chief minister Raman Singh hit out at the Congress government in Chhattisgarh and claimed it has indulged in corruption and looting people for the last five years.

"The Bhupesh Baghel government has done nothing except corruption in the last five years. We are not saying this but the Enforcement Directorate's investigation has revealed this. This government has committed scams in rice, coal, liquor, DMF, Gauthan etc.," Singh alleged. He said the Parivartan Yatra is aimed at uprooting the "corrupt and incompetent" Congress government and asserted that BJP would emerge victorious once again in the upcoming assembly polls. Sao, Raman Singh and opposition leader Narayan Chandel boarded the Parivartan Yatra bus which was flagged off at the function. They waved hands at the crowd from the hydraulic lift of the bus as it hit the Dantewada streets.

BJP targets Congress over its leaders' 'silence' amid repeated 'insult' to Sanatan

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: The BJP on Tuesday accused the INDIA bloc of having a hidden agenda to target Sanatan Dharma for its vote bank politics as party president J P Nadda led a fresh charge and claimed that attacking the ancient faith is part of a well thought-out strategy of the Congress and its leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

The BJP seized on DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Minister K Ponmudiy's remarks that the INDIA bloc was forged as an "opposition to Sanatan ideology" to hit out at the opposition.

"The Congress and the INDI Alliance should make their view clear and tell if the Constitution gives the right to make objectionable comments against any religion? Do INDI Alliance members not know the constitutional provisions," Nadda said on X. The alliance, the Congress and Sonia and Rahul Gandhi should answer as to why "hate against Sanatan Dharma is being sold in the name of mohabbat ki dukan," he said. This mega mall of hate is only for power; divide and rule, he al-

leged. Addressing a press conference, BJP leader and former Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the country's culture and heritage are being daily insulted while senior leaders like Sonia Gandhi are silent.

Noting that Bihar minister and RJD leader Chandra Shekhar and Samajwadi Party's Swami Prasad Maura have repeatedly criticised Hindu holy books like Ramcharitmanas, Prasad said the leadership of these parties have maintained silence.

"Such silence is an indication of approval, he said, making it clear that the BJP will go to people on the issue after the agenda has been set by the opposition. "We will talk of vikas (development) as well as virasat," he said. India will not tolerate this insult to Sanatan, he said. The more Sonia Gandhi maintains silence over the matter the more it will be clear that opposing Sanatan Dharma is part of the INDIA bloc's common minimum programme, he alleged.

"The BJP will urge this alliance to come out with a categorical resolution that we completely disassociate ourselves (from DMK's criticism) and this is not our agenda," he said.

With the DMK linking Sanatan Dharma with the practice of caste discrimination among Hindus to justify its criticism, the BJP leader noted that temples dedicated to revered people from backward castes like Shabir, Kewat and saint Ravidas have been built. The Sanatan Dharma believes that one irrespective of his caste and community background can attain God with their devotion, he claimed.

The Congress has maintained that it believes in respecting every faith. Hitting back, Prasad said while opposition leaders from those in the DMK to some in parties like the Rashtriya Janata Dal and Samajwadi Party have been vocal in criticising Sanatan Dharma and holy books associated with Hinduism, can they summon courage to criticise other faiths and their holy figures. (PTI)

Bajrang Dal leader Monu Manesar arrested over Nuh violence

GURUGRAM, Sept 12: Cow vigilante Monu Manesar was arrested Tuesday in connection with the violence in Haryana's Nuh district in July, a police official said.

The official said Manesar was sent to 14 days in judicial custody by a Nuh court.

The Bajrang Dal leader was arrested in Gurugram's Manesar. A video clip that surfaced online showed plainclothesmen taking Manesar, whose original name is Mohit Yadav, into custody.

The exact charges against Manesar were not immediately known.

A video clip that surfaced online before the July 31 violence had Manesar (30) saying he would participate in the Brij Mandal Jalab-

hishek procession and asking people to join the yatra.

Mobs attacked the VHP-led yatra in Nuh. Six people were killed in Nuh and Gurugram in the violence. For days, Nuh and adjoining districts were on edge as authorities clamped prohibitory orders and imposed restrictions on mobile internet.

Asked about the video later, Haryana home minister Anil Vij had said, "I have seen that video, nowhere is he instigating people to riot... he is asking people to join the yatra."

But the state police said Manesar's role in the violence will be probed. Nuh Police have booked several other people for making inflammatory remarks on social

media.

Manesar is also named in an FIR registered in February by Rajasthan Police after two men, Nasir (25) and Junaid (35), were found dead in a burnt car in Loharu in Haryana's Bhiwani district. The men from Rajasthan's Bharatpur district were allegedly abducted by cow vigilantes who then crossed the state border into Haryana.

Rajasthan Police said last month that Manesar's role in hatching a conspiracy and abetting the crime was "under active investigation".

Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar had also told reporters earlier that his government would provide any assistance Rajasthan Police required to nab Manesar. (PTI)

President Murmu to virtually inaugurate the 'Ayushman Bhav' campaign today

HT Desk

DELHI, Sept 12: In a momentous event set to redefine healthcare accessibility and inclusivity across the country, President, Droupadi Murmu, will inaugurate the visionary 'Ayushman Bhav' campaign on September 13.

This historic launch will take place through a virtual event, marking a significant leap towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and ensuring healthcare for all.

The inauguration event will be attended by Mansukh Mandaviya, Union minister for health and family welfare, Bharati Pravin Pawar, and SP Singh Baghel, union ministers of state for health and Family Welfare, VK Paul, member (Health), NITI Aayog, several members of Parliament, and senior officials from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Governors, chief ministers, state ministers, and their officers from different sectors have been invited to participate virtually from all States and Union Territories.

A large number of public representatives, beneficiaries and participants will also attend from District headquarters, Block headquarters and health and wellness centres in their villages.

The 'Ayushman Bhav' campaign, initiated by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, is a comprehensive nationwide healthcare initiative that aims to provide saturation coverage of healthcare services, reaching every village and town in the country.

This groundbreaking initiative builds upon



the success of the Ayushman Bharat program and signifies a paradigm shift in healthcare services.

The campaign, which will be implemented during the 'Seva Pakhwada' from September 17 to October 2, embodies a whole-of-nation and whole-of-society approach.

It unites government sectors, civil society organizations and communities under a common mission to ensure that every individual receives essential health services without any disparity or exclusion.

The Ayushman Bhav campaign is a collaborative effort spearheaded by Gram Panchay-

ats in coordination with the Department of Health, other government departments, and local elected bodies in the rural and urban areas.

Its core objective is to extend comprehensive healthcare coverage to every village and town, transcending geographical barriers and ensuring that no one is left behind.

This synergistic approach aims to saturate coverage of health services through its three components Ayushman - Apke Dwar 3.0, Ayushman Melas at Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs) and Ayushman Sabhas in every village and panchayat.

Ayushman Apke Dwar 3.0: This initiative aims to provide Ayushman cards to remaining eligible beneficiaries enrolled under the PM-JAY scheme, ensuring that more individuals have access to essential health services.

Ayushman Melas at HWCs and CHCs: These Melas at Ayushman Bharat- HWCs and CHCs will facilitate the creation of ABHA IDs (Health IDs) and issuance of Ayushman Bharat Cards.

They will also offer early diagnosis, comprehensive primary health care services, teleconsultation with specialists, and appropriate referrals.

Ayushman Sabhas: These gatherings in every village and Panchayat will play a pivotal role in distributing Ayushman cards, generating ABHA IDs, and raising awareness about vital health schemes and disease conditions, such as non-communicable diseases, tuberculosis (Nikshay Mitra), sickle cell disease, as

well as blood donation and organ donation drives.

The Ayushman Bhav campaign is aligned with the vision of creating 'Healthy Villages' and 'Healthy Gram Panchayats', laying the foundation for achieving Universal Health Coverage in the country.

Panchayats that successfully saturate the health schemes will earn the prestigious title of 'Ayushman Gram Panchayat' or 'Ayushman Urban Ward,' symbolizing their dedication to equitable healthcare provision.

Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya held a virtual interaction with health ministers and senior officers of States and UTs today to take stock of the preparations underway for the launch of Ayushman Bhav.

Mandaviya highlighted the importance of the Ayushman Bhav initiative for all states and UTs. He stressed upon the states/UTs to organize Health Melas in the Health and Wellness Centres every year and urged every medical college to hold a Health Camp at the block level.

He emphasized that this would ensure that patients getting screened at the Health Melas can access timely treatment at the Health Melas.

Underlining the complementarity of cleanliness and good health, he exhorted the states to ensure that all villages hold Swachhta Drive on October 2.

He also underscored the importance of organ-donation and blood-donation which have recently been added as the sixth and seventh pillars of the Ayushman Bharat Initiative.

MAHARASHTRA CASTE RESERVATION

Ready to end fast, but won't leave protest site till govt issues Kunbi caste certificates to Marathas: Jarange

MUMBAI, Sept 12: Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange on Tuesday said he was ready to end his indefinite hunger strike, but would not leave the protest site in Jalna district until the state government started issuing Kunbi caste certificates to the Maratha community from the Marathwada region. He also said that he was giving one month's time to the Maharashtra government so that a state-appointed committee could prepare its report on the Maratha reservation.

"If I am to discontinue my fast, the state government should first start issuing (Kunbi) caste certificates to the Maratha community. All the police cases (against Maratha quota protesters) should be withdrawn, the police officials who ordered the lathicharge should be suspended, and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, both deputy Chief Ministers, Chhatrapati Udayanraje Bhosale and Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati should be present at the time of the withdrawal of the fast. All these assurances should be given in writing," he told the gathering at the protest site. Chhatrapati Udayanraje Bhosale and Sambhajiraje Chhatrapati are descendants of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Jarange, aged around 40, has been on an indefinite hunger strike since August 29 at Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district of central



Maharashtra, more than 400 kms from here, demanding reservation in jobs and education under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category for the Maratha community.

The state government has set up a five-member panel headed by Judge Sandeep Shinde (retired) to determine the Standard Operating Procedures, including legal and administrative framework, for giving caste certificates to Maratha community members who have been described as 'Kunbis' in the Nizam-era documents. This will allow Marathas from the Marathwada region -- which was part of the Nizam's Hyderabad state till 1948 -- to avail of quota benefits as Kunbis are now categorized as

OBCs. Marathwada region comprises eight districts - Aurangabad, Beed, Hingoli, Jalna, Latur, Nanded, Osmanabad and Parbhani.

Addressing the gathering at the protest site on Tuesday afternoon, Jarange said, "I am ready to give the state government one month's time so that the committee prepares a report. I have made it clear to the state government that whether its report is positive or negative, it will have to start issuing Kunbi caste certificates to the Maratha community."

"I am walking two steps backwards so that the defamation of my community stops. I am ready to withdraw my fast, but I will not vacate this place," he said.

Chief minister Shinde on Monday chaired an all-party meeting in Mumbai to discuss the Maratha quota issue. He later said that all the parties attending the meeting passed a resolution requesting Jarange to withdraw his fast.

The CM also announced the withdrawal of police cases filed against pro-Maratha reservation protesters in Jalna district, the epicentre of the latest round of stir on the issue. He also announced the suspension of three police officials involved in lathi-charge on quota agitators in Jalna earlier this month.

On Tuesday, state minister Sandipani Bhumre and Shiv Sena leader from Jalna Arjun Khotkar met Jarange and apprised him of the resolutions passed at the all-party meeting. Hindutva leader Sambhaji Bhide also met him and requested him to withdraw the fast.

But Jarange maintained that he would continue his protest as there had been no concrete decision on his demand of quota for the Maratha community. Later in the afternoon, he also said that he was planning to hold a rally of the Maratha community at the protest site on October 12.

"It will be attended by all the Marathas. It will show our plight and disappointment...I will continue my protest here and will not even see the faces of my children till then," he said. (PTI)

Cong slams BJP over reports about 'Lotus' being printed on parl staff new uniform

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: The Congress Tuesday accused the BJP of making the "Parliament a one-sided partisan thing" amid reports that the ruling party's poll symbol 'Lotus' is being printed on the new uniform for Parliament staff.

Congress whip in Lok Sabha Manickam Tagore questioned why the 'Lotus' was being added and not a tiger or a peacock, the national animal and the national bird respectively.

"Why lotus only? Why can't a peacock or why can't a tiger? Oh, they're not BJP party election symbol. Why this fall sir Om Birla," Tagore said on X, using the hashtag "#NewDressforParliamentStaff".

A media suggested the Parliament staff will have a new dress code with the Lotus printed on it.

"Why is the government not ready to put Tiger in the Parliament staff's dress, because Tiger is the national animal. Why are they not ready to put the Peacock, which is the national bird, in the dress? But they chose to put the Lotus in the dress code of the Parliamentary staff, because the BJP's symbol is the Lotus," Tagore said in a statement.

"How cheap they are. They did it in G20 also. Now also they are doing it and saying it is the national flower."

"This kind of pettiness is not right. Hope the BJP grows up and not make the Parliament a one-sided partisan thing," he alleged. (PTI)

Watching porn in private time without showing it to others not an offence: Kerala HC

KOCHI, Sept 12: Watching pornographic photographs or videos in one's private time without showing it to others is not an offence under the law as it is a matter of personal choice, the Kerala High Court has held.

The high court said that declaring such an act as an offence would amount to intrusion of a person's privacy and interference with his personal choice.

The ruling by Justice P V Kunhikrishnan came while quashing a case of obscenity under Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code against a 33-year-old man who was back in 2016 caught by police while watching porn videos on his mobile phone on the roadside near the Aluva palace here.

The order and ruling came on the accused person's plea to quash the FIR and the court proceedings against him in connection with that.

The court said pornography was in practice for centuries and the new digital age has made it more accessible, even to children.

"The question to be decided in this case is whether a person watching a porn video in his private time without exhibiting it to others amounts to an offence? A court of law cannot declare that the same amounts to an offence for the simple reason that it is his private choice and interference with the same amounts to an intrusion of his privacy," it said.

The court also noted that there was no allegation that the petitioner (accused) publicly exhibited the video.

"I am of the considered opinion that watching an obscene photo by



a person in his privacy by itself is not an offence under Section 292 (obscenity) of IPC. Similarly, watching an obscene video by a person from a mobile phone in his privacy is also not an offence under Section 292 IPC.

"If the accused is trying to circulate or distribute or publicly exhibit any obscene video or photos, then the offence under Section 292 IPC is attracted," Justice Kunhikrishnan said.

Therefore, no offence under Section 292 of the IPC is made out against the accused, the court said and quashed all the proceedings in the magisterial court in connection with the case.

At the same time, Justice Kunhikrishnan also cautioned parents against giving mobile phones with internet access to children to make them happy.

"The parents should be aware of the danger behind it. Let the children watch informative news and videos from the mobile phones of their parents in their presence."

"Parents should never hand over

mobile phones to minor children to make them happy and thereafter complete their daily routine works in their house allowing unsupervised use of mobile phones by children," the judge said.

Justice Kunhikrishnan said that if minor children end up watching porn videos, which are now accessible in all mobile phones, "there will be far reaching consequences".

"Let the children play cricket or football or other games they like during their leisure time. That is necessary for a healthy young generation who are to become the beacons of hope of our nation in the future."

"Instead of purchasing food from restaurants through 'swiggy' and 'zomato', let the children taste the delicious food made by their mother and let the children play at playgrounds and come back home to the mesmerising smell of their mother's food. I leave it there to the wisdom of the parents of minor children of this society," the judge said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

No recruitment scam during

allegations of financial dealings. "If anyone is indulging in corruption in the name of giving government jobs, the dispensation should accept it, and assure that such scams don't happen in the future," he said. Meanwhile, Congress' Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha cited the recent arrest of some BJP leaders in an alleged cash-for-jobs scam in Assam. (With inputs from PTI)

Russia to participate in Eastern

workshop where we can meet, interact and discuss for smooth and swift operationalisation of EMC," he said. The Russian government also expressed their desire to visit the Chennai port with a large business delegation to explore opportunities and possibilities through bilateral discussion with their Indian business delegation.

The session was moderated by Denis Ilatovsky, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Association of Commercial Seaports. Speaking about India's maritime programme and its flagship programme Sagarmala, Sarbananda Sonowal said, "Our transformative Flagship Initiative of Sagarmala was launched with the objective to boost India's logistics sector performance, by unlocking the full potential of India's coastline and waterways. The vision of Sagarmala is to reduce logistics cost for both domestic and EXIM cargo with optimized infrastructure investment through port-led development. Currently, there are 802 projects worth investment of more than 65 Billion US Dollars for implementation under the Sagarmala Programme by 2035. Of this, 228 projects worth 14.6 Billion US Dollars have been completed and 260 projects worth 27 Billion US Dollars are under implementation."

Further, 314 projects worth 24 Billion US Dollars are under various stages of development. Under holistic development of coastal districts, a total of 567 projects with an estimated cost of around 7 Billion US Dollars have been identified.

Valery Prokopchuk, Deputy Chairman of the Government of Primorye Region; Pavel Kalmychek, Department for Bipartite Cooperation Development, Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation; Sergey Berezkin, CEO of Ruscon LLC also spoke at the session. Pavan Kapoor, India's Ambassador to Russia; S. K. Mehta, Chairman, Deendayal Port Authority; Vladimir Panov, Rosatom Special Representative for the Arctic Development; Dmitry Prokhorenko, Director for Foreign Network Development, Russian Export Center JSC also attended the session. Both the parties also discussed about modern infrastructure in ports and ways and means to ensure cargo volume for the shipping industry.

The Deputy Chairman of Chennai Port Authority, S Viswanathan delivered a presentation on the "Capabilities of Indian ports and prospects for operationalisation of Chennai-Vladivostok corridor." Elena Kazarina, Commercial Director of the Port, Vladivostok Commercial Sea Port also delivered a presentation on "Development of FESCO's Deep Sea routes and further directions of transport and logistics relations between Russia and India." A Memorandum of Intent on Development of Maritime Communications between the two ports of Vladivostok and Chennai was exchanged in the presence of Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin during Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September 2019. Subsequently, an independent study found that coking coal as the most suitable commodity for trade between the two countries using EMC.

In due course, more commodities like oil, LNG, fertilizers will be added to the list of commodities transported via EMC. The Eastern Maritime Corridor is estimated to reduce the time required to transport cargo between Indian and Russian ports of Far-East Region by up to 16 days, i.e., 24 days in comparison to over 40 days currently taken to transport goods from India to Far East Russia via Europe.

Present trade route between Mumbai in India and St Petersburg in Russia covers a distance of 8,675 nautical miles which takes approximately 35 to 40 days. The Chennai-Vladivostok sea route (EMC) will be covering a distance of about 5,600 nautical miles. A large container ship which travels at the normal cruising speed of 20-25 knots (37-46 km/hour), will be able to cover this distance in approximately 10 to 12 days. This corridor holds immense potential to unlock new opportunities for trade and cooperation.

Contaminated drinking water

is pumped through a borewell and the water is filtered without properly filtering it. This makes the public who consume it, prone to various water borne diseases," said a local resident of Bokajan.

"Those running the water plants also do not have the necessary permission or other valid documents from the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) authority that are required for installing these plants," he further said. The locals of the surrounding villages have urged MAC of Bokajan, Madhurija Dhekiyal Phukon and executive member (EM), of KAAC Surjya Rongphar and deputy speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly and MLA Bokajan, Numol Momin to intervene into the matter and initiate necessary action against these plants.

The locals also urged the public health engineering department to carry out inspection of these plants.

Heroin, Sampex Plus capsules

Nagaon district. A case has been filed against the accused under various sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

Fresh violence claims 3

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)

Accused ASP remanded to judicial

The Assam police had launched a man-hunt to track Dutta, who had been absconding. A case had been registered against her for brutally torturing her domestic help, Anima Praja. She finally surrendered before the Sivasagar police on September 10. The Sivasagar police has registered a case against her under sections 228/342/307/326/506 of the Indian Penal Code. However, during interrogation, she did not co-operate much, said senior police officers.

AIUDF with opposition bloc INDIA

Biswa Sarma administration has said it is going to enact a law banning polygamy in the state and issued a notice on August 21 seeking public opinion on the proposed Act on the controversial subject.

"We want our girls to be educated, go to schools and acquire higher education but the Centre has stopped the scholarships that were given to girl students of minority communities," he said.

The Dhubri MP said that his foundation was imparting education to female students so that they can pursue higher education and make their choices in life but the government's decision is making this difficult. (PTI)

Assam Assembly rejects mob

lynching being such an issue that no civilized person can accept. He maintained that the government has been acting strongly against any person involved with any instance of mob lynching under relevant laws.

"We already have different sections of Indian Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 to deal with mob lynching. Hence, we feel there is no need for a separate bill to deal with it," Hazarika added.

Deputy speaker Numol Momin, who was in the chair, put the proposal to vote and it was rejected in a voice vote. (PTI)

M'laya Cabinet seals termination of 2

Minister told reporters. He said that the projects in the current form were not viable in terms of the rate, but the new technologies that have come in like pump storage and other facilities can be used and combination of water being released from one project to the downstream for another like in the case of Upper Khri Stage I and II, the projects need to be change and hence the department will immediately work in that aspect and hope that very soon it will be able to have expression of interest to be with these projects in its new form. Sangma said that these projects were unviable in its current form and if implemented the government will have to buy power at ₹. 8 or ₹. 9 from these two plants which is not acceptable

"Hence we would want better technologies to be implemented and therefore we are going for another expression of interest for the same projects and maybe the same parties will apply again and as soon as possible we will go ahead," the Chief Minister said. According to him, a lot of time has been wasted (on the projects), and the companies have not been able to implement them and technology is outdated and rates are too high.

Asked why the government had signed these power projects in the first place when it had to terminate the contract with the companies, Sangma said that he does not want to blame anyone even as he added that the then government might have done the feasibility study and maybe had intention to move forward with them.

"I think things did not go as planned but now at the current point when we look back at these projects we are not finding the feasibility at this point," Sangma pointed out. He said that the government is ready to even work with Meghalaya Energy Corporation Limited, North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO), or any other private parties to implement these two projects.

Protestors forcibly shut down

Meira Paibi (women torch bearers) group said that they joined the stir of closing down the Central institutions in support of the demand for withdrawal of Assam Rifles from the state. She said that unable to tolerate the atrocities carried out by the paramilitary force on the civilians, the people raised the voice against the Assam Rifles. The stir will continue until the paramilitary force is withdrawn from the state, she said, expressing hope that other organizations will also extend their support to the stir. (NNN)

World can emulate India's law

plant varieties. She also conferred plant genetic savior awards to six farmer communities and 20 individual farmers. Speaking about the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, the President said it is one of the most important international agreements among member countries to conserve, use, and manage plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. For the first time, the Treaty talked about guaranteeing food security through conservation, exchange, and sustainable use of the world's plant genetic resources for food and resources, she said. Highlighting India's rich biodiversity, Murmu said this has been a treasure trove for the global community at large as the country with only 2.4 per cent of the world's land area accounts for 7-8 per cent of recorded species of plants and animals. "Our farmers have toiled and enterprisingly conserved local varieties of plants, domesticated wild plants, and nurtured traditional varieties that have provided the building blocks for different breeding programmes. This has ensured food and nutritional security for human beings and animals," she said. Efforts of biodiversity conservers and industrious farmers, scientists and policymakers coupled with government support have played a key role in giving fillip to multiple agricultural revolutions in the country, she said. "...in the raging debate of food sovereignty versus food security, I firmly believe that technology and science can serve as an effective protector and enhancer of heritage knowledge," she noted. The President also mentioned that the first-ever symposium will provide a golden opportunity for the world to realign its priorities and programmes according to the needs of humanity and to make common commitments. (PTI)

Invest more in R&D for India to keep pace with evolving world: Rajnath to domestic defence firms

JAMMU, Sept 12: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday called upon domestic defence companies to invest more in research and development for India to keep pace with the evolving world. Addressing the North-Tech Symposium, jointly organised by the army's Northern Command, the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and IIT-Jammu, Singh described the country's defence manufacturing sector as "imaginative, innovative, dynamic and progressive".

"Though research and development (R&D) is a risky venture as it requires out-of-the-box thinking and sometimes does not give desired results, it still remains one of the basic elements for the development of any country," he said. Hence, capital investment in R&D becomes a necessity, the minister added.

The defence minister said India is passing through a transitional phase. "There is nothing wrong in acquiring a technology through imitation or transfer, but we cannot become a developed nation on these grounds alone. We need to file our own patents, for which a lot of investment in R&D is needed," he said.

He said capital investment in R&D may reduce today's profits, but it will prove to be beneficial to the industry and the country in the long term.

Highlighting the steps taken by Narendra Modi government to support the domestic industry, he said the synergy between the government and domestic companies has resulted in record defence production of ₹ 1 lakh crore and

exports of ₹ 16,000 crore in the financial year 2023-24.

Singh expressed confidence that defence exports will soon touch the ₹ 20,000-crore mark.

He extended the Ministry of Defence's continued support to the industry for holistic development of the nation, in line with the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.

The defence minister urged industry partners to focus on creating a culture that encourages R&D, based on skilled human resources, and suggested linking the work of institutions such as IITs, IIMs and IISc with the defence sector to create an R&D ecosystem.

"Efforts should be made to connect with the Indian R&D sector, engineers and scientists who work in top universities, companies, space agencies and scientific research organisations abroad and wish to be a part of India's growth story," he said.

The defence minister also recommended hiring of managers, legal experts and financial experts from within the country and abroad to create a culture conducive for R&D.

"We cannot run our workforce in the 21st century on the basis of HR policies of the 19th century. Today, the quality of work is more important than the number of hours worked. Focus should be on intellect and innovation," he said.

The defence minister said that "a work culture needs to be developed where there is a concept of senior and junior, not superior and inferior". He also noted that there is a need to involve women in R&D with "more effective-

ness".

He also exhorted the SIDM to create an independent body, comprising scientists and experts from the industry, which will work with transparency and evaluate the products made by companies.

"The buyer or the government will definitely try to check the quality of the products from their end, but there is a need to develop a system for internal evaluation as well. This quality check system will increase your credibility globally with time," he said.

He also suggested that the SIDM should create an internal vigilance mechanism to counter the potential cases of corruption and favouritism. "If any company affiliated with you is indulging in any wrongdoing or passing wrong information, then you should bring it before the government. Such actions will further increase people's trust in the institutions," Singh said. The North Tech symposium is an event conducted annually and this year, it was organised at IIT-Jammu.

The event witnessed an participation of around 200 industry partners and provided an opportunity for knowledge diffusion among various stakeholders to create awareness of contemporary technologies and hardware solutions available with manufacturers under 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

Singh witnessed a plethora of indigenous weapons and equipment. He lauded the efforts of all stakeholders in their joint efforts to push the domestic defence industry. (PTI)

DILJIT DOSANJH REUNITES WITH SONAM BAJWA AND SHEHNAAZ GILL FOR 'RANNA CH DHANNA'

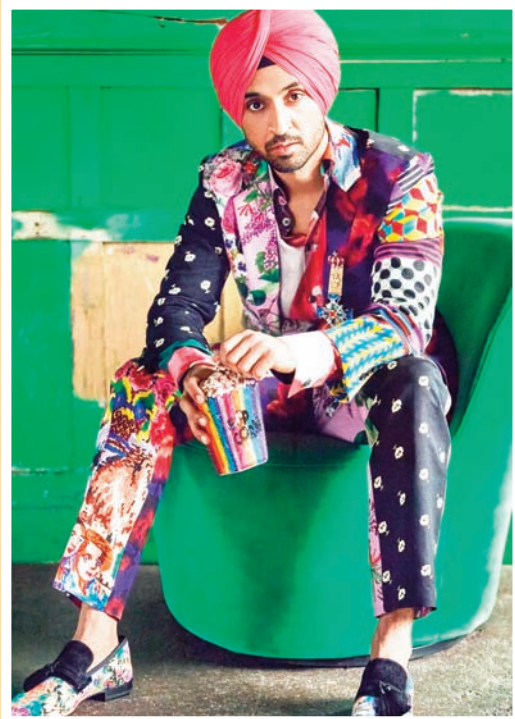
MUMBAI, Sept 12:

Actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh is set to collaborate with his "Honsla Rakh" co-stars Sonam Bajwa and Shehnaaz Gill in the upcoming Punjabi film "Ranna Ch Dhanna", the makers announced Tuesday.

The movie will be directed by Amarjit Singh Saron, who also helmed the 2021 romantic-comedy "Honsla Rakh".

Dosanjh said he is thrilled to reteam with Bajwa and Gill on "Ranna Ch Dhanna", which he said is more entertaining than their last outing.

"Audiences immensely enjoyed my pairing with Sonam Bajwa and Shehnaaz Gill in 'Honsla Rakh' and now we are back with even more fun,



comedy, romance and entertainment with "Ranna Ch Dhanna", the actor-producer said in a statement.

The film, produced by Thind Motion Pictures and Storytime Productions, is scheduled to be released worldwide on October 2, 2024. (PTI)

Anil Kapoor to attend 'Thank You For Coming' world premiere at TIFF



MUMBAI, Sept 12: Bollywood actor-producer Anil Kapoor on Monday said he will be attending the world premiere of his upcoming production "Thank You For Coming" at the 46th Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF).

Billed as a coming-of-age comedy, the film follows the story of Kanika Kapoor, played by Bhumi Pednekar, a single girl in her 30s, and her quest for true love and pleasure. The film is directed by Karan Boolani from a script penned by Radhika Anand and Prashasti Singh.

The gala premier of the movie is scheduled to take place on September 15 at Roy Thompson Hall.

"I've been wanting to attend TIFF ever since 'Slumdog Millionaire'! That year, I travelled to all the festivals from BFI at London to Cannes and everything in between. The only festival I couldn't attend then was TIFF and that was because my visa didn't arrive in time for me to be there. So, TIFF has been on my bucket list ever since! "I may not have been able to attend the festival then as part of the movie, but this year I get to be there in the capacity of a producer. 'Thank You For Coming' has so much heart, soul and sass, and I'm grateful to be a part of its showcase on such a hallowed platform," Kapoor said in a statement.

The cast of the movie including actors Bhumi Pednekar, Shehnaaz Gill, Dolly Singh, Kusha Kapila and Shibani Bedi will attend the festival, along with producers Ekta R Kapoor and director Karan Boolani. Produced by Balaji Telefilms Limited and Anil Kapoor Film Communication Network Pvt. Ltd, "Thank You For Coming" will release theatrically worldwide on October 6. (PTI)

Marilyn Monroe's LA home saved from demolition after outcry from neighbourhood residents

LOS ANGELES, Sept 12: Hollywood icon Marilyn Monroe's LA residence, the only property she owned in her life, has been saved from demolition after a backlash from residents in the neighbourhood.

Marilyn bought the palatial pad in the city's Brentwood area in 1962 after her divorce from Arthur Miller but was found dead in the property just months later, following an apparent drug overdose at the age of 36.

The property was to be demolished by its current owner, who bought the 2,900-square-foot hacienda for USD 8.35 million. The residents of the neighbourhood became aware of the planned demolition after the owner filed for permits, according to CNN.

After a backlash from the residents, the Los Angeles officials intervened to block the demolition.

"Unfortunately, the Department of Building and Safety issued a demolition permit before my team and I could fully intervene and get this issue resolved," LA city councilwoman Traci Park said in a



news conference last week.

Park said she received hundreds of calls urging her to save the Spanish colonial-style house.

On Friday, the city council unanimously approved Park's emergency motion to begin the process to designate the house a historic building.

Demolition is on hold until the city's Office of Historic Resources conducts a study and analysis of the home, according to Park.

The 2,624-square-foot home sits on an estate which boasts a swimming pool and citrus grove. It has four bedrooms and three bathrooms. (PTI)

Nicolas Cage-starrer 'Sympathy for the Devil' to stream in India on Lionsgate Play



MUMBAI, Sept 12: "Sympathy for the Devil", starring Hollywood actor Nicolas Cage, will be available for streaming in India on Lionsgate Play from September 29.

Directed by Yuval Adler, the film follows a taxi driver on his way to the hospital, as he is interrupted by an unwelcome passenger and held at gunpoint.

"Forced against his will, this dangerous car ride uncovers hidden secrets that leave both 'The Driver', played by the celebrated Joel Kinnaman, and 'The Passenger' in shock," read the synopsis of the movie according to a press release. Cage, who plays The Passenger in "Sympathy for the Devil", described his character as someone who is "enigmatic".

"He's trying to get The Driver to get back to the dark dog, the bad dog, the evil dog that he knows is in him. Joel's character - The Driver is on the other side because they have both been at the epicentre of this particular tragedy.

"The other idea was working with Joel and having a two-hander where it's largely just these two people talking. That brought me into it - I thought that would be a new challenge and something that I had not done before. This is going to be a high-wire character in the so-called reportorial, I think it's going to be amazing," the Academy Award winner said in a statement.

"Sympathy for the Devil" is written by Luke Paradise and is produced by Allan Ungar, Alex Lebovici, Stuart Manashil, and Cage. (PTI)

Seven films other than 'Jawan' where Shah Rukh Khan starred in dual roles

MUMBAI, Sept 12: "Jawan", a pan-India film that is on a roll with its record-breaking box office collections, treated viewers to not just one but two Shah Rukh Khans on screen.

Directed by Tamil filmmaker Atlee, the movie features the superstar in the role of Vikram Rathore and his son Azaad. Critics and audiences are praising the film for being an impressive blend of high-octane stunts and a politically charged narrative with a strong emotional core.

Here are seven more films that feature Shah Rukh in dual roles:

1. "Karan Arjun" (1995) - The story revolves around the titular brothers, who are reincarnated years later to avenge their father's murder at the hands of their property-hungry uncle. Also starring Salman Khan in a dual avatar, "Karan Arjun" was directed by Rakesh Roshan.

2. "Duplicate" (1998) - In this movie, directed by Mahesh Bhatt, Shah Rukh stars as an aspiring chef Bablu, and Manu, a notorious gangster. The film did not do well at the box office.

3. "Paheli" (2005) - Shah Rukh plays Kishanlal and Prem in the film directed by Amol Palekar. A ghost called Prem takes Kishanlal's place at the latter's house and romances his wife Lachchi (Rani Mukerji) when Kishanlal goes away on a business trip.

4. "Don: The Chase Begins Again" (2006) - An updated version of 1978's "Don", originally

starring Amitabh Bachchan, this action film saw Shah Rukh play Vijay, a common man aspiring to make it big in Mumbai. Vijay is sent on a secret mission to impersonate Don after government authorities discover he is a look-alike of the most-wanted international criminal. The actor reprised the titular character in its 2011 sequel "Don 2".

5. "Om Shanti Om" (2007) - Another reincarnation drama, but with an ode to the Hindi cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. Shah Rukh played Om Prakash Makhija, a junior film artist in the '70s era who dreams to become a superstar one day. Om is reincarnated as superstar Om Kapoor, who sets out to avenge the murder of the love of his life, actor Shantipriya.

The Farah Khan directorial also marked the Bollywood debut of Deepika Padukone, who also starred in the dual roles of Shantipriya and Sandy.

6. "Ra.One" (2011) - It may have been dubbed as a failure at the box office, but this Anubhav Sinha-directed movie has gained cult status over the years. It starred Shah Rukh as Shekhar Subramaniam, a game designer who designs G.One, the game's protagonist, to look like him.

7. "Fan" (2016) - In this experimental Maneesh Sharma film, Shah Rukh stars in the dual role of film star Aryan Khanna and his lookalike obsessive fan Gaurav Chaudhary. (PTI)

'Scoop', Karishma Tanna nominated for top honours at Asia Contents Awards & Global OTT Awards

NEW DELHI, Sept 12: Netflix show "Scoop" and its lead star Karishma Tanna are nominated for the Asia Contents Awards & Global OTT Awards 2023, the organisers announced on Tuesday.

According to its official website, Asia Contents Awards & Global OTT Awards is an annual event to celebrate the achievements of excellent content made for TV, OTT, and online across Asia. It is organised by Busan International Film Festival and Korea Radio Promotion Association.

While "Scoop" has secured a nomination in the Best Asian TV Series, Tanna is vying for the Best Lead Actress trophy at the awards.

"Scoop" follows Jagruti Pathak (Tanna), a star crime reporter at a Mumbai newspaper, who makes headlines after she is accused of her rival Jaideb Sen's murder.

The critically-acclaimed Hindi lan-



guage series, created by Hansal Mehta and Mrunmayee Lagoo Waikul, premiered on Netflix in June.

Mehta, also director of the series, congratulated the team for this "great honour". Backed by Indian production banner Matchbox Shots, the show is inspired by Jigna Vora's biographical book "Behind the Bars In Byculla: My Days in Prison".

"#Scoop on @NetflixIndia nominated for ACA and Global OTT Awards. - Best Asian Series - Best Actress @KARISHMAK. TANNA... A great honour for the entire team. This is all because of them. Congratulations partner in crime @mrunmayeelagoo @MatchboxShots," Mehta said in a post on X.

In the Best Asian TV Series category, "Scoop" will compete with "The Black Yard" (Kazakhstan),

"Not Others" (South Korea), "Delete" (Thailand), and "Taiwan Crime Stories" (Taiwan).

Besides Tanna, other Best Lead Actress nominees are South Korean star Song Hye-kyo ("The Glory"), Hollywood star Zoe Saldana ("Special Ops: Lioness"), Singaporean star Rebecca Lim ("Third Rail"), and Malaysian actor Emily Chan ("The Patient").

The Asia Contents Awards & Global OTT Awards 2023 will be held on October 8 at the BIFF Theater, Busan Cinema Center, during the course of the Busan International Film Festival, which runs through October 4 and October 13.

Indian films also will have a strong presence at the 28th edition of the upcoming film gala, which will see premieres of several titles such as "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani", "Joram", "Agra", and "Against The Tide". (PTI)

Fernando Santos' future as Poland coach is uncertain after poor start to Euro 2024 qualifying

WARSAW, Sept 12: Fernando Santos' position as Poland coach remained uncertain Tuesday after he met with the president of the country's soccer federation following the team's poor start to European Championship qualifying.

The 68-year-old Santos, who has only been in the job since January after spending eight years as coach of his native Portugal, will hold further talks with Cezary Kulesza this week and no final decision has been taken on his future, federation spokesman and team manager Jakub Kwiatkowski said.

Poland, with star striker Robert

Lewandowski, is fourth in its five-team European Championship qualifying group — behind Albania, the Czech Republic and Moldova — after losing three of its five games so far.

The results and performances have prompted criticism from fans and national media.

Santos parted ways with Portugal after last year's World Cup in Qatar.

He is Poland's third foreign-born coach, after Leo Beenhakker and Paulo Sousa.

He was tasked with improving Poland's underwhelming record at

recent major tournaments, with the team having only advanced from the group stage at one World Cup (2022) and one European Championship (2016) since 1986, but it might not even get to Euro 2024.

With three matches remaining in qualifying, Poland is four points behind first-place Albania and two points off the Czechs in second place.

The top two qualify automatically.

Santos was asked after the 2-0 loss to Albania on Sunday if he would resign, and he said he wouldn't because "not everything

is lost yet" for Poland in qualifying.

Poland's next game is against last-place Faeroe Islands on Oct. 12.

Polish sports media have speculated that Santos could be replaced by a Pole, with Marek Papszun and Michal Probiez potential options.

Raków Częstochowa became Polish league champions for the first time last season under Papszun and also won the Polish Cup twice under him, in 2021 and '22.

Probiez coaches Poland's under-21 team. (AP)



ROHIT SHARMA SIXTH INDIAN TO AMASS 10,000 ODI RUNS

Wellalage, Asalanka run through star-studded India on turning track

COLOMBO, Sept 12: Sri Lankan duo of Dunieth Wellalage and part-timer Charith Asalanka spun a web around the Indian batters on a turning track, restricting them to a sub-par 213 in their Asia Cup Super 4 match here on Tuesday.

Left-arm spinner Wellalage (5/40), all of 20, and offie Asalanka (4/18) knifed through the star-studded line-up after India opted to bat.

But before spinners exploited the generous turn and grip on the Premadasa pitch, India started their innings in a blazing fashion.

Rohit Sharma, who made 53 off 48 balls, added 80 runs for the opening wicket with Shubman Gill (19), and that remained the brightest phase of Indian innings.

Watching Rohit and Gill adding those runs in just 12 overs rekindled the memories of India's blitz against Pakistan on Monday, when they posted a massive 356 for two.

During his innings, the Indian captain also went past a significant personal milestone, becoming the sixth Indian batsman to score 10,000 runs in ODIs.

The landmark came in a befitting fashion too, as Rohit lifted pacer Kasun Rajitha over his head for a majestic six.

Other Indian batsmen to reach the mark are: Sachin Ten-



dulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Rahul Dravid, Virat Kohli and MS Dhoni. Indeed, a magnificent company to be in!

However, the introduction of Wellalage changed the whole complexion of the game as the spinner halted Indian batsmen's charge.

Gill was the first to go. The opener played a forward defence without entirely covering the line and once the ball beat his bat, Gill's fate was sealed.

Wellalage, a former under-19 captain of his country, then went on to show why he has been spoken so highly in

Lankan cricketing circles.

He bowled a straight, quick delivery and Rohit could not bring his bat down on time, as the ball rearranged his timber.

But Wellalage wasn't finished yet. He added the wickets of Virat Kohli (3), KL Rahul (39), who added 63 runs with Ishan

Kishan (33) for the fourth wicket, and Hardik Pandya (5) to his kitty for his maiden five-wicket haul in ODI cricket.

None of the following batsmen also could effectively negate the uneven bounce and turn on the pitch, as Asalanka wreaked havoc.

His delivery to dismiss Ravindra Jadeja would carry a lot of repeat value.

The ball reared from the length, turned and bounced viciously to take an edge of Jadeja's bat before nestling in stumper Kusal Mendis' gloves.

Now, the Indian spin trio of Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel and Jadeja will have to replicate the performance of their Lankan counterparts.

For India, a win against Lanka will assure them a place in the final with four points.

A defeat will not harm India, but they will need a victory against Bangladesh on Friday.

Their current NRR of +4.56, which will dip a bit if they lose this match, too might come handy in the event of an equation tussle with Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

If India will have to split points on Tuesday after a washout, then they will enter the final with three points, awaiting either Lanka or Pakistan in the summit clash. (PTI)

Straighter run-up, aggressive rhythm key to my ODI success: Kuldeep Yadav



COLOMBO, Sept 12: Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav believes tweaks in his technique, including a straighter run-up and an aggressive rhythm, has helped him to improve his bowling and achieve success in ODI cricket.

The 28-year-old has taken 27 wickets from 14 matches this year, the highest by an Indian bowler in ODIs.

"After the (knee) surgery (last year), my run-up has become much straighter, and rhythm has become aggressive. My hand used to fall over but that has been controlled and now it (hand) is facing the batsman," said Kuldeep in the post-match press conference.

Kuldeep said he had worked on spin and drift post his surgery to improve his efficiency.

"I exerted care not to lose my spin and drift without losing my pace. If a leg-spinner lands the ball on a good length, he can pick up wickets more regularly and loose balls can be reduced. You can be consistent," he added.

Kuldeep said he worked with NCA physio Ashish Koushik post his surgery to reduce the burden on his knee while landing in the crease.

"I did not want to lose my zip,

nip or drift. After surgery I went for a three-month recuperation at NCA and physio Ashish Koushik said I had to reduce the load on my knee. So, I worked to make my rhythm faster," he said.

However, Kuldeep said it took him some time to make the remodelled action work at the top level cricket.

"I tried the new action in a practice game in Kanpur. The batsmen were struggling to face me. But even in the IPL and during the tour of the West Indies I was struggling with it (action)."

"It took some 6-7 matches for me to make work at this level," said Kuldeep.

"Performing against a top opposition like Pakistan motivates me."

His (5/25) five-wicket haul helped India outclass Pakistan by a massive 228-run margin and Kuldeep said he will always remember this effort as it came against a top opposition.

"I will always remember that I picked up five wickets against Pakistan when I retire. It is a big thing for me because Pakistan players can play spin well. If you perform against a side that plays spin well in the subcontinent, it motivates you," said he. (PTI)

Chahal shines on County C'ship debut for Kent

KENT (ENGLAND), Sept 12: India leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal has made an impressive start to his County Championship stint with Kent, claiming three wickets against Nottinghamshire in a Division One fixture.

The 33-year-old returned 20-6-52-3 on Day Two of the four-day contest, here on Monday.

Chahal dismissed Nottinghamshire batters Matthew Montgomery, Lyndon James

and Calvin Harrison to help his side reduce its opponents to 219 for eight in reply to Kent's total of 446.

For his first wicket, Chahal cleaned up James with a superb leg break delivery which knocked down the batter's off-stump.

The leg-spinner signed up with Kent for three County matches, at home against Nottinghamshire and Lancashire and for an away fixture against Somerset.

Earlier this season, Kent had signed up India pacer Arshdeep Singh who played five matches and took 13 wickets.

Chahal has been a regular member of the Indian T20 side but has not played ODI cricket since January this year.

His last assignment with the Indian team was in the five-match T20I series against the West Indies.

He was recently left out of both Asia Cup 2023 and World Cup squads. (PTI)



Newly-crowned Indonesia Masters champion Kiran George fails to enter main draw of Hong Kong Open

KOWLOON (HONG KONG), Sept 12: India's Kiran George, who won the Indonesia Masters title last weekend, failed to keep the momentum going as he could not make the main draw, bowing out in the men's singles qualification round of the Hong Kong Open here on Tuesday.

George was shown the door by Malaysia's Jun Hao Leong 20-22, 21-14, 14-21 in the second round of qualification.

The Indian had earlier defeated Chinese Taipei's Yu Jen Chi 21-15, 21-17 in the opening round of the qualifiers.

Mithun Manjunath and Ravi also bowed out in the qualifiers of the men's singles. Both the players lost to Hong Kong's Jason Gunawan.

While Manjunath lost 20-22, 15-21 to Gunawan in the opening round, Ravi was shown the

door 15-21, 14-21 in the second round by the local shuttler.

In women's singles, Malvika Bansod progressed to the main draw after her Thai opponent Pitchamon Opatniputh retired midway due to an injury while leading 14-21, 10-11.

The Indian women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Pullula Gayatri Gopichand entered the second round of the main draw after beating Dutch combination of Debora Jille and Cheryl Seinen 21-15, 16-21, 21-16 in the opening round.

The other Indian women's doubles duo of Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa will take on Chinese Taipei's Chia Hsin Lee and Chun Hsun Teng in the opening round after qualifying for the main draw following a 21-16, 21-14 win over compatriots N Sikki Reddy and Arathi Sara Sunil. (PTI)

This innings was classic example of playing second fiddle to KL: Kohli after 47th ODI ton



COLOMBO, Sept 12: Virat Kohli said that his 47th ODI hundred was a classic example of playing second fiddle after not getting off to a good start in India's record 228-run win against Pakistan in an Asia Cup Super Four game here on Monday.

Kohli's lightning quick running between the wickets was mainly down to this exemplary fitness but he called those singles and doubles "easy runs" after racking up an unbeaten 122 off just 94 balls.

It was a typical Kohli hundred in which he accumulated the runs via 38 singles and 15 twos before changing gears towards the end of the innings.

"I always prepared my game in a way I can help the team. Today was a classic example of you don't get off to a good start... KL started better, I was trying to bring

him on strike and playing second fiddle," said Kohli when asked about his innings.

"And yes, then after that I stepped up where I could. I take a lot of pride in fitness. Pushing for doubles are easy runs, compared to a big shot. It has paid off before, hope to continue in the same way," he added.

Talking about the partnership with Rahul, Kohli said: "Both KL and myself are both conventional players. And when you have him batting the way he was and me playing, its tough to break these partnerships because we don't play fancy shots."

"We didn't think about the partnership too much, the idea was to 'keep batting.' It is one of the memorable partnerships we've had and for Indian cricket as well. He hit form for us straightaway, good for us (going into the

World Cup)."

Due to rain, India will end up playing three days in a row as they take on Sri Lanka here on Tuesday. They romped to a 228-run win over Pakistan on the reserve day after only 24.1 overs were possible on Sunday.

Kohli was understandably tired after an epic knock but come Tuesday, he will be ready.

"It's the first time I have done anything (play back-to-back ODIs) like this in 15 years of cricket. Luckily, we are Test players, so we know how to come back the next day and play. Recovery is crucial. It was humid out there today. I will be 35 in November, so I need to take care of my recovery."

"A big shout-out to the groundstaff from my side," he added when asked about taking the field in less than 24 hours. (PTI)



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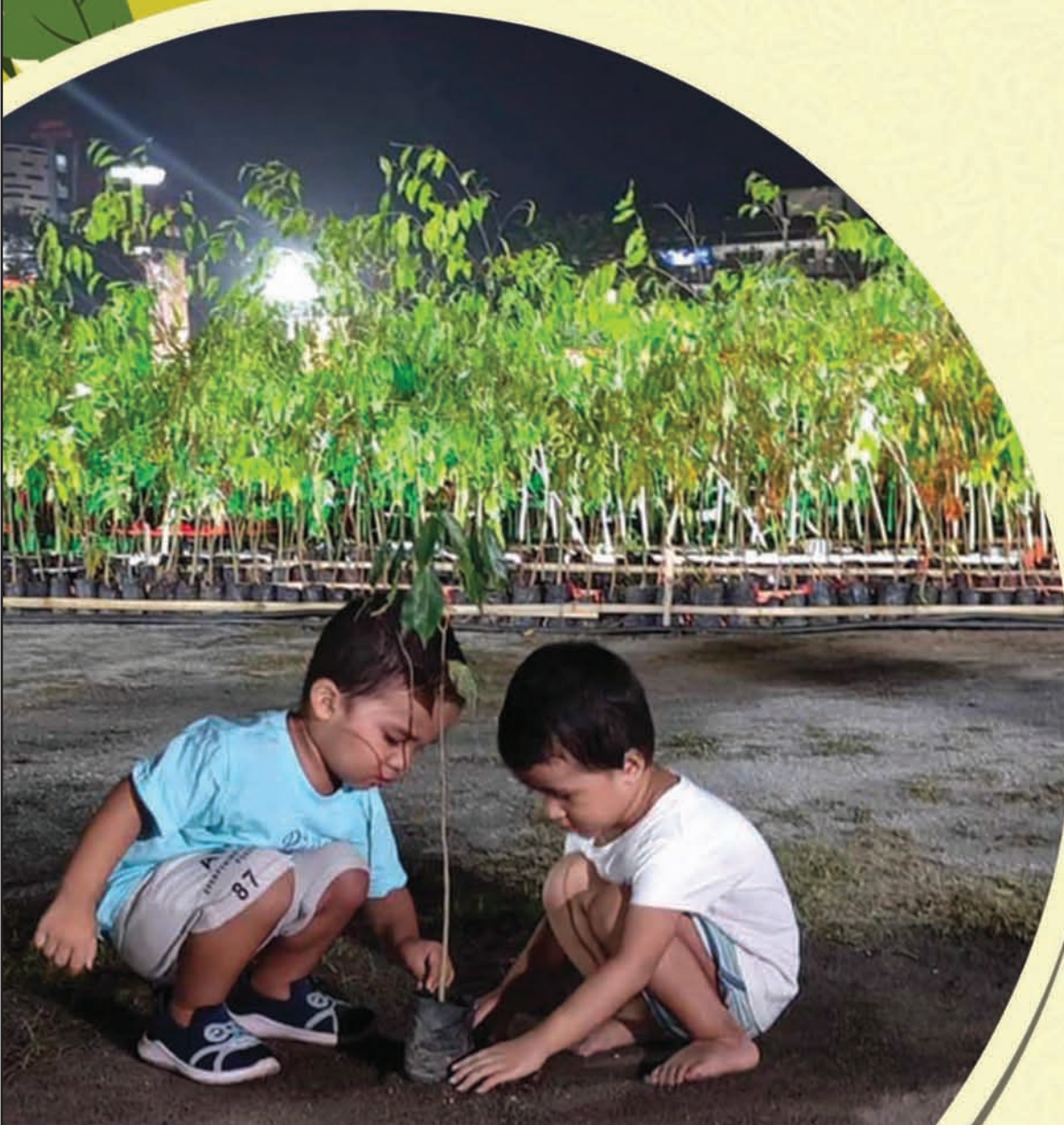
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