



- North Korea's Kim Jong Un inspects Russian bombers and a warship
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Amrit Brikshya Andolan- A people led afforestation programme



Himanta Biswa Sarma

In my childhood I always heard stories from my elders on how Assam's once rich tree cover has been rapidly declining over the decades. Later, I realised their anecdotal evidence of rapid deforestation contributed by a variety of factors. In the first two decades of this century, the tree cover in Assam declined by a stunning 11%.

When I entered public life and had the opportunity to visit other States, I was intrigued by the best practices of progressive farmers who diversified their income through commercial tree plantations. Planting a tree, I learnt, had similar attributes to investing in pension schemes. A sapling today, can become an asset many years later.

It was Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of Mission LiFE that inspired us to come up with an intervention to nudge citizens to undertake simple acts that can contribute to both a greener climate and greener economy. Keeping citizens at the heart of our every effort – a philosophy rooted at the Hon'ble Prime Minister's governance model – the Government of Assam has launched the Amrit Brikshya Andolan. This initiative is being executed with active involvement from the public, emphasizing Jan Bhagidari.

Amrit Brikshya is mass public movement that translate into planting 1.3 cr commercially viable saplings on a single day. To celebrate the untiring efforts of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to build a global network of Pro-Planet People, we have selected his birthday as the date to launch this monumental effort.

Amrit Brikshya intends to achieve two objectives. Firstly, to win back Assam's lost forest cover and make our state a net contributor of green action. The second objective is to lay the foundation of a viable tree economy in the state and give households an alternative source of income. Amrit Brikshya will boost the Agro Forestry and Wood Based Industry (WBI) leading to employment generation in downstream industries. At the same time it would create a huge carbon sink, which will contribute to the NDCs goal submitted by India to the UN framework convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Technology is a critical pillar for this movement. The Government has launched a Mobile Application (Amrit Brikshya Andolan App) and a website for registration of volunteers. As a token of appreciation, the government intends to encourage participants by providing Rs 100 each on the successful plantation and uploading of a geotagged and timestamped photo on the application. Rs 200 will be provided if the plant survives two years and evidence is provided on the application again in the form of a geotagged and timestamped photo.

The government has roped in grassroots-level community groups, such as Self-Help Groups, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, tea garden workers, and members of educational institutions, to expand the initiative's reach to the last mile. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Tuliram's silence on 'give & take policy' on border issue decried

Karbi bodies discuss allotment of land to APDCL, oppose delimitation of LS constituencies



HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 16: A total of 15 organizations including political parties, women and student's organizations in Karbi Anglong on Saturday held a meeting on the four vital issues of inter-state boundary in regard to the give and take policy being adopted by both Meghalaya and Assam governments, allotment of 18,000 bighas land by Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) to Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL) for setting up of mega solar power plant in Lahorjan, the delimitation of legislative assembly constituencies and increase of premium of

land value by the land and revenue department under KAAC.

The meeting was convened by the Joint Coordination committee for Protection of Autonomy (JCCPA) and held at the office of All Karbi Anglong Sarkari Gaon Bura Association here. The BJP and All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHL) did not attend the meeting.

Interacting with the media, Convenor, JCCPA, Khorsing Teron said, "15 organisations have come together to discuss the issues pertaining to Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong. Issue on Assam- Meghalaya inter-state border was discussed as

both the state governments have agreed to adopt the 'give and take' policy in solving the inter-state boundary affecting the bordering areas of West Karbi Anglong."

"We also discussed the allotment of 18,000 bighas of land by KAAC authority to APDCL for setting up of mega solar power plant and the delimitation of constituencies. Though political parties have demanded that no areas should be transferred to another constituency, the final publication of delimitation of constituencies saw some areas going to neighbouring districts," Teron said.

He also said there is an increase of premium percentage of land by the land and revenue department, which has become a problem for indigenous people to acquire land patta. Regarding these main four issues the fifteen organizations will work together in opposing the policy of the KAAC and the state government. Memorandums will be submitted to appropriate authorities and if needed, other forms of agitations will also be adopted, Teron informed. Vice president and spokesperson, Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (KADCC), Ratan Engti said, "If the KAAC authority (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

NIT-Silchar student commits suicide at, 40 injured during protest



GUWAHATI, Sept 16: A third-year student of NIT-Silchar allegedly committed suicide on the campus, following which his classmates launched a protest that eventually turned violent, prompting the police to lathi charge, injuring 40 people on Saturday.

The body of the student, a native of Arunachal Pradesh, was found hanging in his hostel room on Friday evening. Alleging that he was forced to die by suicide because of the actions of the college authority, his classmates stopped the police from taking down the body.

Two hours after the police managed to send the body for autopsy, the students began a demonstration in front of the dean of academics, BK Roy's official residence on the campus.

They alleged that Roy had in-

sulted the victim, who got six backlogs in his first semester examination, which was held online in 2021 because of the pandemic.

Due to the lockdown, he was at home and failed to attend the online classes due to lack of internet connectivity, resulting in the backlog, they claimed.

He had appealed to the authorities to conduct a special examination so that he could clear the backlogs, but Roy allegedly insulted him. Following this incident, he locked himself in his room and later his body was found hanging, they said. The protest over the death escalated, and the students allegedly vandalized Roy's residence, Cachar's superintendent of police Numal Mahatta said. "They attacked the police and other officials as well. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

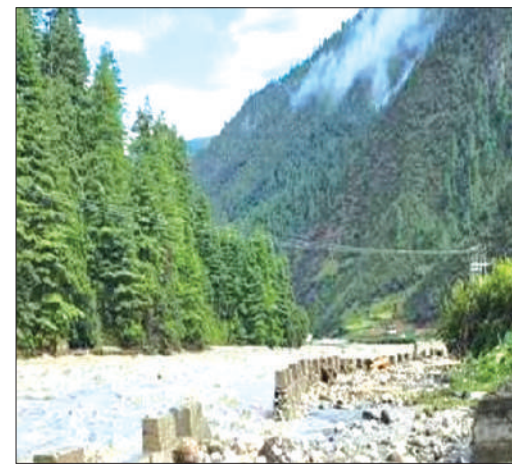
Cloudburst triggers floods, damages power stations in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, Sept 16: A cloudburst triggered devastating floods at a village in Arunachal Pradesh's Shi-Yomia district and caused extensive damage on Saturday, officials said.

The cloudburst in Lhalling village near Mechukha, the district headquarters, in the wee hours caused massive damage to two power stations and disrupted power supply to Mechukha township and its adjoining areas, an official report said. Floodwaters also ravaged agricultural fields, standing crops, houses, water supply and live-

stock. However, no loss to human life has been reported so far. Expressing serious concern on the situation, Arunachal Pradesh Assembly Speaker Passang Dorjee Sona, who represented Mechukha constituency, instructed the district administration to take immediate action and help the affected families.

Instructing the administration to assess the extent of the damage, Sona directed the power and public health engineering department (PHED) to initiate the restoration (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



Postal employee found dead in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Sep 16: A former employee of the postal department was found dead under mysterious circumstances in her own residence at Banshabari in Jorhat on Saturday, after a neighbour reported of a stench was emanating from the house.

Police said that the woman, identified as Minu Ghosh, who had retired from the Silchar post office, was found unclothed on her bed and the body was in a state of decomposition.

The woman is suspected to have died about four days ago.

A neighbour said that though the woman resided with her husband Narayan Ghosh in the same house, they lived separately. Minu Ghosh had also reportedly told her that she was suffering from anaemia, but had no one to take care of her.

2022-23 challenging year for BCPL

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Sept 16: The Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited (BCPL) chairman Sandeep Kumar Gupta said that the past financial year had been a challenging year for the company marked by spiraling feedstock price and relatively low polymer price.

He said this while addressing BCPL's 16th annual general meeting held at Guwahati on Friday.

The chairman presided over the meeting, which was attended by Pruthviraj Dash, director (Finance) and managing director (additional) (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Court cross-examines IO in Abhi-Neel lynching case



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 16: Nagaon district and session court carried out the cross-examination of the investigation officer in the sensational Abhijit Nath and Nilotpal Das mob lynching case on Friday and Saturday respectively.

The court on Saturday here again fixed the next date on Sep-

tember 29 and 30 for further cross examination of the investigation officer in connection with the heinous murder of the two youths sources said. The two Guwahati based young boys, who had gone for a nature trip to Kangthilangso, a picnic spot in the remote Dokmoka area in Karbi Anglong district, were suspected to be child

snatchers by locals. They were brutally lynched by a local mob on their way back on June 8 in 2018. The mob reportedly reacted to a rumour that the duo were child snatchers.

Taking into account the brutal manner in which the locals lynched the two youths, the state government had even set up a fast-track court to try the accused. However, it has been a long wait for their families as even after five years, they are yet to get justice.

Over 48 accused were identified and recorded in charge sheet in connection with the shocking incident among who, one accused was a juvenile, sources added.

Meanwhile, the families of the two victims had also expressed their dissatisfaction over the slow judicial process of the Nagaon court. The case was transferred to Nagaon so that no one can interfere in the judicial proceedings and tamper with evidence.

Naga peace talks: MLAs of all parties unite for early solution



KOHIMA, Sept 16: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Saturday asserted that the coming together of the legislators of all political parties in the Assembly was to press for an early solution to the Naga peace talks.

Addressing the first general body meeting of the ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) after winning the assembly elections in February, Rio said it is the topmost agenda of the party.

In 2021, all parties joined hands to form an opposi-

tion-less government in the northeastern state. It was done for the second time in March 2023 after the assembly elections.

"We came together not only because of the leadership, but also for the issue. We will continue to work towards finding an early solution," said Rio here.

He said the party-less government has maintained transparency and accountability at all levels.

"The NDPP as a party is just six years old, but we have won the state general elections two times in a row, with the support of alliance partners BJP. All other political parties came forward to have an opposition-less government," he said.

Nagaland has little resources of its own and the state government needs the support of the Centre, the Chief Minister said. Nonetheless, even if there is an alliance with the Centre, the focus of the state government is Nagas and that is why the people are supporting the NDPP, he said.

"Anything we achieve, it's with the dedication and commitment of the party leaders and workers," he said while thanking for the collective success.

A Framework Agreement signed between the Centre and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muiwah) to bring lasting peace in Nagaland was inked in 2015. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Winter coats in cheetahs responsible for infection and their death

India to import cheetahs from South Africa

NEW DELHI Sept 16: India plans to import cheetahs from South Africa that do not develop thicker winter coats -- a primary factor behind severe infections in some cheetahs and the death of three of them, according to the head of the reintroduction project.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 'Project Cheetah' in India last year by releasing a group of big cats brought from Namibia into an enclosure at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park on September 17. Project Cheetah marks its one-year anniversary on Sunday.

SP Yadav, additional director general of Forests at the Union environment ministry, emphasized that the project's focus in its second year would be on breeding these animals.

He asserted that the radio collars cheetahs were made to wear did not



cause any infections. However, authorities have decided to replace these collars with new ones from the same South African manufacturer. Yadav, also the chief of National Tiger Conservation Authority, said the next batch of cheetahs will be imported from

South Africa and introduced into Madhya Pradesh's Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary, which will be ready to welcome the spotted felines by the end of the year.

"It's mentioned in the Cheetah Action Plan that Kuno has a carrying capacity of about 20 cheetahs.

Right now, there are 15 cheetahs including a cub, and when we will bring the next batch of cheetahs in the country, it will be at some other place. We are preparing two such sites in Madhya Pradesh, one is the Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary, and the other is Nauradehi.

"The site preparation at the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary is going on in full swing. I'm expecting it to be completed by the end of November or December. Once we get the report of completion, we'll go to the site and evaluate it from all preparation points of view. And after December, we'll take a call on bringing the cheetahs," he said.

Some experts have also recommended transferring cheetahs to Mukundra Hills in Rajasthan, saying it's appropriate for the cats.

Yadav said: "Mukundra is a tiger reserve. You will be surprised to know that (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Assam theatre festival concludes, features renowned playwright's drama

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: It is after a hiatus of four years that theatre enthusiasts got the chance to enjoy the 14th edition of the Brajanath Sharma Memorial Inter-State Drama Festival in Guwahati.

The theatre festival, organized by amateur theatre group Samahar Natya Gosthee since 2007, was not held after 2019 due to the pandemic and returned to the annual circuit this year. Renowned playwright and theatre personality Sitanath Lahkar's latest play 'Drohi' was staged at the concluding day of the festival on Friday. It is organized in the memory of Brajanath Sharma, revered as the 'father of Assamese mobile theatre'.

Brajanath Sharma was a firebrand freedom fighter and pioneer of modern Assamese theatre, who had first brought women on stage to introduce co-acting in the state in 1933.

Meanwhile, based on Covid period, the play 'Drohi' exposes how a section of society tried to capitalize on the human catastrophe by means of superstitions.

"The pandemic had brought out the best and worst in people. We have tried to portray both sides, especially how the medical community put their lives at stake only to later face near-social ostracization," Lahkar, an actor of repute who also played the protagonist, said. He said the vulnerability of the masses to be swayed by popular sentiments in times of crisis as

well as the ability of the same people to side with reason when put forth convincingly has also been highlighted through the play.

"It has given us immense pleasure that the festival was well received and we had good turnout in all the five days," president of the drama festival committee Lalit Sarma said.

"We bring plays based on social themes, which touches the core of issues facing society," he added. The inaugural play on September 11 was 'Sagoror Bukut Ejaak Jonakor Mrityu', presented by Art from Nagaon, mainly talking about the perennial flood havoc and its impact on common people. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



Study to assess carbon footprint of India's tea industry

KOLKATA, Sept 16: The Tea Research Association (TRA) has initiated a collaborative study to assess the carbon footprint of the industry, an official said.

Speaking at the 59th Annual General Meeting of TRA, its chairperson Nayantra Palchoudhuri said a committee has been formed by the Tea Board of India to learn the outcomes of the study, and discuss and formulate policies on achieving net zero goals for the industry.

She also urged the FSSAI or the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India to devise a rating system for tea in the country.

"As the world is fast adapting to live with the reality of climate change, the issue of carbon offsetting has become important for all countries and industries. For a low-carbon industry like tea, there is much scope for earning carbon credits," she said. "However, there was no systematic study on the subject. TRA has taken up a collaborative study on life cycle assessment of tea plantations and the factories to scientifically find out the carbon footprint of the industry," she said at the programme on



Saturday night. Once the study is done by the end of next year, TRA can plan future strategies to tackle issues relating to carbon offsetting, she said.

"We proposed to the Tea Board of India to form a committee to discuss and formulate policies on achieving the net zero goal for the tea industry. Tea Board immediately accepted the proposal and formed the panel in July by drawing people from all segments of the industry," Palchoudhuri claimed.

The Tea Board could not be

reached immediately for comment.

Joydeep Phukan, the convenor of the net zero committee, told PTI, "It has been formed to review the carbon footprint of the industry and align it with India's goal by employing various climate-friendly initiatives."

TRA director A Babu said a new clone, which is climate resilient and good in quality, will be released in 2024.

He said a rapid test kit to detect harmful pesticides in green leaves would be released in November.

Palchoudhuri said compliance with pesticide norms has been a big challenge for certain segments of the Indian tea industry.

"I would like to urge the FSSAI to introduce a system by which tea can be rated according to its compliance standards. This will go a long way in lifting the quality standards of Indian tea," she said.

Asked about the proposal, FSSAI advisor (quality assurance) Satyen K Panda, said, "Such a mechanism can be put in place on a quality basis but it cannot be done on food safety parameters. At present, we are not able to consider such a proposal but we are getting representation from across the sector."

He also said FSSAI conducted a tea surveillance survey in 2022-23 to ascertain whether food safety norms were complied with.

In 2022-23, the country's tea production was 1,375 million kg as against 1,344 million kg in 2021-22, with an average price of Rs 201 per kg, Palchoudhuri said.

Exports were up at 231 million kg in 2022 calendar year, as compared to 200.79 million kg in 2021, she said. (PTI)

Being the fifth largest economy impressive, but per capita income must also rise, says Ex RBI Gov

HYDERABAD, Sept 16: While India becoming the fifth largest economy in the world is an 'impressive achievement,' there is a need to grow fast to increase the per capita income of the country from the present levels, former Reserve Bank of India Governor C Rangarajan said on Saturday.

In his address at the 13th Convocation of the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education, Rangarajan said post Covid-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war, there is a need to lay down a clear roadmap for India's future development and the first and foremost task is to raise the growth rate.

Noting that India was today the fifth largest economy, he said, "this is an impressive achievement." "However, in relation to per capita income, it is a different story. In 2020, India's rank with respect to per capita income was 142 out of 197 countries. This only shows the distance we have to travel... All the same, we have no choice but to grow fast, given the present level of per capita income," the former chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council said.

According to calculations, he said, if the country achieves a seven per cent rate of growth continuously over the next two decades and more, it will make a substantial change to the level of the economy and India may almost touch the status of a developed economy.

India needs to absorb the new technologies that have emerged and that will emerge and skilled manpower which is consistent with this development



though the new technologies may lower the employment elasticity with respect to output, he stressed.

"Employment must come out of increased growth. Employment enhancement without growth is not sustainable. That is why we must aim at least at a sustained growth of 7 per cent," Rangarajan pointed out.

The former RBI Governor underscored that the development strategy must be multidimensional and the country needs strong export as well as manufacturing sectors. Growth without equity is not sustainable, he opined. M Jagadeesh Kumar, Chairman of University Grants Commission was the chief guest of the convocation. (PTI)

Auditors should embrace technology: FM

CHENNAI, Sept 16: Observing that the next 25 years are 'critical' for India to achieve developed nation status, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday appealed to auditors to embrace technology and educate smaller companies to grow. The finance and corporate affairs minister remarked that the country has progressed at many levels in the last 20-25 years and even the World Bank report has said India has achieved in the last decade what it could not be achieved in 60 years. "I am talking to veterans of this profession. You are one of the oldest registered bodies. I would think my meeting with you all is not just only to celebrate the 90 years, but also to say celebrating at a time when this profession has to take newer responsibilities," she said at the 90th-anniversary celebrations of The Society of Auditors here. Sitharaman pointed out that the practices of chartered accountants were going through a lot of change, globally and said that even some of the audience gathered at the venue had already started to feel the change in their profession. Sitharaman said that in the next 25 years India is having a 'narrow window' to become a developed nation and every one of us has to play a very important role in not only focusing on your profession but looking at ways to better serve the nation. (PTI)

Domestic manufacturing of premium lighting products may double in 3 years: Official

KOLKATA, Sept 16: The Indian premium decorative lighting industry is focusing on domestic value addition to replace imports, and expects the localisation level to double from the current stage in the next three years as the demand is on the rise, a senior company official said.

Localisation refers to locally producing or manufacturing components. It is beneficial for a sector as it cuts down the cost of the component or the whole product.

The localisation and domestic manufacturing of premium lighting products is now around 20 per cent, which is expected to double in the next three years, said Usha International president and business head (lighting) Vikas Gandhi.

He explained that the volume did not support complete localisation, but the revival in the market with a boom in the housing and hospitality sectors has encouraged the company to promote local value addition.

Currently, most of the imports are from China, according to the executive, whose company sells its products under the Tisva brand since 2014.

"The government policies are also encouraging for greater local manufacturing. We are empowering and supporting local vendors for greater domestic manufacturing and value addition of premium products," Gandhi said.

Chandeliers, pendant lights, table lamps, floor lamps, ceiling lights, wall lights, and outdoor lights are some of the products in the premium decorative lighting category.

Meanwhile, the lighting vertical of Usha International expects a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 35-40 per cent, driven by the premium decorative and architectural lighting seg-

ment, Gandhi said on the sidelines of the company's foray into the eastern region market.

The company claimed that their average ticket size spending has grown by about seven times in the last six years, he said.

"We are very bullish about the premium segment of the lighting market, which comprises the decorative and architectural segment. This segment is growing strongly on the back of the booming housing sector and hospitality industry. It is growing at a CAGR of 20 per cent, but our growth will be much higher," Gandhi said.

The overall lighting market is worth ₹ 15,000 crore, of which decorative and architectural lighting is estimated to be at ₹ 3,000 crore. And of that, the estimated value of the decorative segment will be worth ₹ 800 crore but registering strong year-on-year growth.

"Our presence is now in 50 cities in different formats. In the next two to three years, the brand will be expanded to 100 cities," Gandhi said.

"With the launch of our first Kolkata exclusive store, Tisva Studio, we now have 15 such stores in 13 cities. Our presence in the rest of the cities is through dealerships or shop-in-shops," he added.

Speaking about the company's foray into the eastern region with an exclusive store, Gandhi said the company considers it an important growing market. He expects that the eastern region will be a focus region for the company and that it will gradually deepen its presence in this region along with national expansion.

In the future, the company aims to open new exclusive stores in cities like Lucknow, Surat, Jaipur, Chennai, and Kerala. (PTI)

Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations hosts 5th Auto Retail Conclave

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) recently hosted the fifth edition of the Auto Retail Conclave, held under the theme "Collaborate-Innovate-Accelerate." The event took place immediately following the 59th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and attracted key figures from the automobile industry, alongside over 500 dealer members representing regions across India.

The prestigious inauguration of the conclave was graced by Nitin Gadkari, Union minister of the Ministry of road transport & highways, government of India. Distinguished guests included Vinod Aggarwal, president SIAM, Shradha Suri Marwah, president ACMA, Manish Raj Singhania, president FADA, and CS Vigneshwar, vice president FADA.

Chief guest, Nitin Gadkari, addressed the audience, stating, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the automobile industry for India's rise to the third-largest automobile manufacturer globally. Our ambitions reach even higher as we aim to establish India as the

world's leading auto manufacturing hub, requiring a collaborative effort uniting India's strengths with global brands. The automobile sector contributes significantly, accounting for 40% of India's manufacturing GDP," Manish Raj Singhania, addressing the audience, said, "Today, as we gather for the 5th Auto Retail Conclave, it marks a moment for collective aspiration. Our esteemed minister, Nitin Gadkari ji, has transformed India's highways into world-class expressways, sparking a surge in vehicle sales. As stewards of road safety, we've launched our 'Buckle Up Campaign' to emphasise the importance of safety on the roads." The event highlighted the growth of the Indian Auto Retail sector, achieving a remarkable 21% growth rate in the last fiscal year, with 22.1 million vehicles leaving showrooms. While two-wheelers surged by 19%, three-wheelers saw an astounding 84% growth, passenger vehicles by 23%, and commercial vehicles by 33%. However, the 2-wheeler segment remains 20% below pre-Covid levels, despite a 7% growth in auto sales over the last five months.

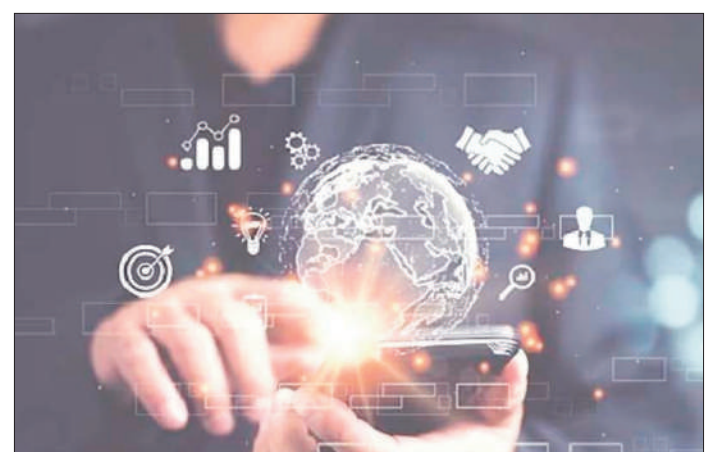
Gen X, Millennials curious to leverage AI at work: LinkedIn survey

MUMBAI, Sept 16: With companies adopting new technologies to enhance productivity, a majority of the Millennials and Gen X professionals are curious and eager to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) at work, according to a report.

Over 75 per cent of Millennials and 74 per cent of Gen X professionals surveyed feel that AI will take boring tasks off their plate giving them the time to focus on tasks that excite them, said a report by LinkedIn India.

Meanwhile, 70 per cent of Gen Z are also eager and curious to adapt to the world of AI, the report added. People born between 1965 and 1980 are referred as Gen X, while Millennials are those born between 1981 and 1996 and Gen Z includes those born between 1996 and 2010.

"While Gen Z and Millennials have always demonstrated greater tech fluency, it's refreshing to see Gen X professionals embrace AI with similar enthusiasm. Professionals from these three genera-



tions are tapping into AI's potential to enhance productivity, navigate work challenges, and achieve a meaningful work-life balance.

"Amid these progressive use cases, it's promising to note that professionals of all age groups value soft skills and technical skills equally as they prepare for the future of work," LinkedIn India Editorial Lead and Career Expert

UK firm secures lucrative order to supply Indian solar facility in Gujarat's Mundra

LONDON, Sept 16: A small cleantech firm in south-east England has secured a GBP 4 million order to supply its technology to a projected 2.0-gigawatt solar facility in Mundra, Gujarat, according to a top company official.

Gas Recovery and Recycle Limited (GR2L), an MSME (micro small and medium enterprise) business in Surrey, claims to have developed, patented and exported cutting-edge technology to reduce the energy consumption, carbon footprint and cost of manufacturing solar panels. It was backed by UK Export Finance (UKEF), the UK government's export credit agency, with a GBP 475,000 guarantee issued under its Bond Support Scheme that helped secure the Indian order. "Building on our existing export successes, support from Lloyds Banks and UKEF helped us to secure this latest growth opportunity and further develop our established international presence. I look forward to commissioning our machinery by the end of 2023," said Rob Grant, CEO and founder of GR2L.

"With production of brand-new argon creating up to a tonne of carbon dioxide for every tonne of argon, our cutting-edge gas recycling technology helps solar facilities reduce their scope 3 CO2 emissions and produce solar fuel cells more efficiently," he said.

Makers of solar panels use argon gas to purify silicon crystals, which are then used in solar cells. This process requires vast amounts of argon, with some producers needing to ship in multiple tankers of the gas each day. GR2L's ArgonO machinery claims to be a world first which allows solar cell production – as well as other advanced manufacturing activities like microelectronics production,



3D metals printing and aerospace heat treatments – instead to recycle up to 95 per cent of argon used.

GR2L had an opportunity to supply its argon recycling technology to Mundra Solar Technology Ltd. to support a solar facility being built in the town.

At the same time, the Surrey SME needed to obtain payments in advance of making any deliveries to Mundra. To secure these payments, it had to issue a guarantee to assure the buyer that it could deliver, which would have meant making a cash deposit through its bank, Lloyds Bank. This, however, would have restricted the funds that the company needed for delivering the very same orders it wanted to secure.

The guarantee issued under UKEF's Bond Support Scheme meant that GR2L could instead reclaim this portion of the cash deposit, allowing GR2L to access crucial funds needed to deliver the Mundra contract and secure this major exporting opportunity.

"It is good news that GR2L, a micro-business which has the edge in international markets thanks to the strength of its patented UK

technology, is now going even further with the backing of UK Export Finance," said Lisa Maddison-Brown, UKEF Export Finance Manager for Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex.

"This announcement shows the value which we, working alongside financial institutions like Lloyds Bank, can bring to innovative companies – including small businesses like GR2L – to grow their global presence," she said.

"Gas Recovery and Recycling Ltd is exactly the type of business we want to see thriving. As a bank, we are committed to helping Britain prosper, so it's fantastic to see the exporting ambitions of this firm grow with the support which we can offer alongside UKEF's through our Working Capital facility. Their contract with Mundra Solar Technology Ltd is a testament to that," added Colin Walls, Regional Director, Trade & Working Capital and Lloyds Bank.

The UK government said GR2L's export success story underscores the value of the UK-India trading relationship and its role in promoting innovation. (PTI)

Indian Bank unveils 'IB SAATHI' to enhance banking services

CHENNAI, Sept 16: Public sector Indian Bank on Saturday announced roll out of 'IB SAATHI' initiative aimed at providing an integrated ecosystem for all stakeholders in the financial sector through the business correspondent route.

The IB Sustainable Access and Aligning Technology for Holistic Inclusion (SAATHI) offers an enhanced user experience through the simplified delivery of services, encompassing both basic and value-added offerings to customers.

The bank's Managing Director and CEO S L Jain launched the initiative at their corporate office here, a press release said.

Indian Bank, with the launch of the scheme, seeks to provide basic banking services at all centres for a minimum of four hours per day at fixed branches while the Banking Correspondents would extend their services directly at the doorsteps of the customers.

By March 2024, Indian Bank has planned to deploy about 5,000 banking correspondents and this is expected to bolster the bank's reach and accessibility.

The city-based lender currently has 10,750 banking correspondents and 10 Corporate Business Correspondents which would grow to over 15,000 banking correspondents and 15 Corporate Business Correspondents. (PTI)



iDestiny unveils exclusive pre-booking offer for iPhone 15 series

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: iDestiny, the esteemed Apple Premium Partner in Guwahati, has sent shockwaves through the tech community with its exclusive pre-booking offer for the highly-anticipated iPhone 15 Series. The spectacle unfolded at Guwahati's City Center Mall, where a fervent crowd of Apple enthusiasts flocked to the ground-floor booth, eager to secure their iPhone 15 ahead of the official launch.

But the excitement doesn't end there! One fortunate customer who pre-books with iDestiny stands a chance to win an iPhone 15, adding an extra layer of thrill to this momentous event. The pre-booking window remains open until September 21, ensuring ample time for everyone to secure their iPhone 15 before it hits the market on September 22, 2023.

In an exciting revelation, iDestiny is also launching the Apple Watch Series 9 and Apple Watch Ultra 2, on the same day, September 22. This means customers can not only get their hands on the iPhone 15 but also the latest in wearable technology, all in one place, making iDestiny the go-to destination for tech enthusiasts on the thrilling launch weekend. "We, at iDestiny, take immense pride in being Guwahati's exclusive Apple Premium Partner. With two conveniently located stores at City Center Mall and Dispur, along with an Apple Authorized service center in Silpukhuri, our commitment is to elevate the overall customer experience."

Honda Cars India elevates customer experience

GUWAHATI, Sept 16: Honda Cars India Limited, a prominent player in the Indian premium car manufacturing sector, has unveiled a slew of innovative features aimed at elevating the overall ownership experience for its valued customers. These enhancements include a personalised dynamic dashboard with shortcut widgets, a digitalized pick-up & drop service, additional reward points for fuel purchases via the HPCL network, and the ability to buy and sell pre-owned cars.

REPLACEMENT OF CUT IN THROUGH JB/LOCATION BOX
E-Tender No. SNT-22-LMG-2023-24; Dated: 13-09-2023. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work. **Name of works & its location:** Replacement of Cut in through JB/Location Box by replacement of S&T cables from R/Room to L/Hut at Diphu, Daldali, Rangapahar & Bokajan station of Lumding Division. **Tender Value:** ₹82.45,436.52; **Bid Security:** ₹1,64,900.00; **E-tender will be Closed at 15:00 hrs. on 05-10-2023 and Opened at 15:30 hrs. on 05-10-2023.** For details visit: www.irps.gov.in
Sr. DSTE, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

Celebration marks the glorious journey of 'Basic Training Centre' in Kokrajhar with fanfare

Lone Bodo medium teacher training institute in Assam completes 75 years

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 16: The celebration of platinum jubilee of Kokrajhar Basic Training Centre has begun from Saturday at Basic Training Centre complex in Kokrajhar.

Notably, the Kokrajhar Basic Training Centre is regarded as a premier educational institution in Kokrajhar as well lower Assam districts which was established in 1948 which is the only Bodo medium teacher training institute in the entire state, and accordingly this year people celebrated the platinum jubilee to mark the glorious 75 years of journey in service of educational upliftment.

The closing ceremony of the platinum jubilee celebration would be held in December.

As part of the programme scheduled of inaugural ceremony of the platinum jubilee, MLA of Kokrajhar East LAC, Lawrence Isary laid the foundation stone to construct memorial tomb of the platinum jubilee celebration.

Earlier, principal of Kokrajhar Basic Training Centre, Swmdwn Brahma hoisted flag to mark the platinum jubilee celebration.

A sapling plantation drive was also carried out in connection to the observation of Amrit Brikya Andolan mission of the government.

An open discussion on the platinum jubilee celebration of Basic Training Centre was held with



Pratibha Brahma, chairperson of the reception committee of the platinum jubilee celebration in the chair.

Assam cabinet minister, Urkhao Gwra Brahma, MLA Lawrence Isary graced the occasion as guests.

Minister Brahma has extended his greetings to all the staff of the Basic Training Centre and reception committee members for organising the platinum jubilee celebration to recall glorious 75 years of journey in the field of educational training services amongst the teaching fraternities.

He said that the Kokrajhar Basic

Training Centre is currently the only Bodo medium teacher training institution in the entire state. He said that the Kokrajhar Basic Training Centre has paved the way in imparting training and knowledge amongst the teaching fraternities since its inception across the region.

"It is a delightful moment to attend the inaugural ceremony of platinum jubilee celebration of Kokrajhar Basic Training Centre in Kokrajhar, which was established in 1948, which is currently the only Bodo medium teacher training institute in the entire state. I do

express my gratitude for its continued success in the future", Brahma added.

MLA Lawrence Isary said that the platinum jubilee celebration began with a colourful programme that witnessed a deep discussion on social integration of the society.

Among others, retired principal of Basic Training Centre, Kokrajhar Ajay Kumar Brahma, retired teacher Kiran Sharma, Golokganj Basic Training Centre principal Charan Daimary, BEEO Kokrajhar Pradeep Kumar Goyary, Dotma BEEO, Swmdwn Narzary were prominent attendees in the event.



Potholes giving harrowing time to commuters on NH-37 in Demow at Dehajan as seen on Saturday. HT Correspondent

'Moi Dr Sukha Baruyai koisu' released at Moran

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Sept 16: 'Moi Dr Sukha Baruyai koisu', the autobiographical compilation of AIR interviews Dr Sukha Barua, the founder and principal of Moran Women's College and a literary pensioner, was released by Subarna Saikia, the president, Sadau Asom Lekhika Samaroh Samity at a function held on the day of her Adyashradha in her residence in Ushapur, Moran on Thursday.

The interviews were taken on different occasions by Dr Anil Kumar Saikia.

Subarna Saikia recalled her close association with Dr Barua who was a pillar of strength for the women writers' forum in the state. The commemorative volume of Dr Barua, 'Ratnagarbha Sukha Barua: byaktitwa, sristi aru xannidhya', was released by noted academician and professor

of Dibrugarh University Dr Karabi Deka Hazarika.

Dr Hazarika in her speech said that Dr Sukha Barua was a valiant fighter for women's rights and a prominent organiser besides being a writer of repute. The meeting was addressed among others by the former vice chancellor of Dibrugarh University Dr Kandarpa Kumar Deka, general secretary of Sadau Asom Lekhika Samaroh Manomoti Kurmi, working president of Sadau Asom Mahila Kobi Mancha Pushpa Gogoi, former principal of Moran College Dr Anil Saikia, principal Moran Women's College Jayashree Phukan, noted poet Prema Gogoi, and poet Snigdha Gogoi. The programme included garlanding Dr Sukha Barua's portrait, a prayer session, and lighting of earthen lamps.

Adhyasradha of UPPL leader Ranjit Kumar Daimary organised



KOKRAJHAR, Sept 16: The Adhyasradha of Ranjit Kumar Daimary, former general secretary of Sukhanjhora primary committee, UPPL was organised at his West Sukhanjhora residence on Saturday in Kokrajhar.

Notably, Ranjit Kumar Daimary expired on September 7 last due to heart stroke. He was an active party leader in the primary committee and associated with various social activities.

Assam cabinet minister, Urkhao Gwra Brahma, MLA of Kokrajhar East LAC, Lawrence Isary, UPPL media secretary Hantigiri Narzary, several senior party leaders attended the occasion and paid tributes to late Ranjit Kumar Daimary.

MLA Isary remembered the contributions and dedication of late Daimary, said that the party as well society in the area have loss an active party leader with expire of Daimary.

Minister Pijush Hazarika attends review meeting at Jamugurihat

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 16: State water resources, information & public relations and parliamentary affairs minister Pijush Hazarika on Saturday attended a review meeting for gram panchayat and town committee at Bapuji Bhawan, Jamugurihat.

During the review meeting minister Hazarika took stock of the ongoing developmental schemes in Sootea LAC from the officials concerned.

Minister Hazarika was accompanied by Sootea MLA Padma Hazarika. Addressing the huge gathering, minister Hazarika talked about the political propaganda that is going on against MLA Padma Hazarika.

He further added that the developmental schemes have been functioning smoothly under the



able leadership of MLA Padma Hazarika. People from outside of Sootea LAC have been trying to contest from Sootea (Naduar) LAC. And some people have been indulging in political conspiracy against MLA Hazarika in the name of chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and minister Pijush Hazarika.

The meeting was attended by Pallabita Sarma Mahanta, chairman of Jamuguri Town Committee, Dipshikha Handique, chairman of Sootea Town Committee, Jayanta Bora, president of Naduar Mandal BJP, social worker Trinayan Bora along with booth level party works and panchayat representatives.

Largest potted sapling mosaic map inaugurated at Ulup Pather in Margherita



HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Sept 16: The state government has launched a special programme titled 'Amrit Vriksha Andolan' to enrich the tree economy and increase green cover in the state.

Where under this 'Amrit Vriksha Andolan' 10 million commercially demanded trees will be planted across Assam on September 17.

The Guinness World Record for the Largest Mosaic Map was created under the 'Amrit Tree Movement' at Ulup Pather under Inthem Gaon Panchayat, Margherita, Tinsukia district on Saturday.

The environment and forest department has decorated a large mosaic map of Assam with about 6.32 lakh tree seedlings on an area of about 1 hectare.

The Guinness Book of World Records representatives will arrive at the Ulup field and award the title after completing the necessary inspections.

Addressing the public meeting

held at Ulup Pather in conjunction with the creation of the world record, Assam forest minister Chandramohan Patwory encouraged the people of the state to become economically self-reliant by planting tree seedlings of commercial demand where he also urged those who will plant trees under the Amrit Briksha Andolan programme to take proper care of the tree. The forest minister also urged the people to cooperate in the efforts to build an economically self-reliant green Assam.

Patwary was accompanied by Union minister of state for petroleum, Natural Gas, Labour and Employment, Government of India Rameshwar Teli among others. The event was also attended by senior officials of Tinsukia district administration and Margherita sub-division administration, other senior officials of environment and forest department, local people and artists of cultural groups participating in the programme.

LGBI Airport celebrated International Housekeepers and Environmental Services

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 16: LGBI Airport celebrated International Housekeepers and Environmental Services week from 10th September 10-16 to dedicate it to the frontline staff who often are left out without the praise they deserve and also for their recognizing their hard work. The programme started with a lighting of a lamp. The weeklong programme included carrom, chess, musical chairs, spoon race, needle & thread and blind fold competition of both male and female category where Ranju Thakuria, Ashok Das, Munni Basfore, Bhabesh Kalita, Jonali Das, Jhon Das, Namita Bhuyan and Mukut Ali were announced as the champion whereas Khanin K Nath, Suraj Shah, Sumitra Basfore, Namita Bhuyan, Laksi Boro, Tulashi Baishya, Kiran Basfore, Anju Das were 2nd winner respectively. CAO Utpal Baruah and more than 100 airport staff were present at the closing ceremony.

Uxoricide leads one to life imprisonment

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Sept 16: In a recent verdict, the district & session court Sivasagar awarded Krishna Bhuyan, aka Tulshi, was sentenced to life imprisonment for brutally murdering his wife, Bundi Murari.

The incident occurred on the night of February 26, 2022, at the residence of Jani Murari, the victim's sister in Murari Gaon under Demow PS. (Case no 36/22)

According to the report, Bundi Murari Bundi Murari and other members of her sister's family were asleep, the accused, Krishna Bhuyan, entered the premises and attacked his wife with a dao and killed her on the spot. After committing the crime, Krishna Bhuyan fled from the scene. However, Demow police later arrested the criminal and sent him for the trial.

In their ruling, the court of Justice Lohit KR Saikia stated that the accused, Krishna Bhuyan, does not pose a menace to orderly society. Therefore, they deemed it would be unjust to impose the death penalty to the accused. Instead, the accused was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for life under section 302 IPC and ordered to pay a fine of ₹ 10,000/- (ten thousand rupees). Failure to pay the fine will result in an additional three-month imprisonment term.

Amrit Tree Movement: Over 2.50 trees plantation aim to make Morigaon green

Commercially demanding trees will be planted in Morigaon today

HT Correspondent
JAGIROAD, Sept 16: The Morigaon district administration under the directives of the Assam Government will plant 2.71 lakh commercially demanding tree seedlings in Morigaon district on September 17 under the Amrit Tree Movement to boost the tree economy and increase green cover in the state.

Additional district commissioner Pranjal Kumar Baruah said 1.35 lakh people have registered under the Amrit Briksha Andolan programme in the district and the trees will be planted on Sunday.

Under this mission, 10 million trees with commercial demand will be planted across Assam. In the district of Morigaon, the saplings were distributed to 85 gaon panchayats, self-help group members, ASHA workers, anganwadi workers, educational institutions, police, tea plantations, government employees, people involved in religious institutions and others in the district from September 13 to 15 last.

The additional district commissioner



also said that as per the new directives of the government of Assam, the deadline for taking photographs of trees planted under the Amrit Briksha Andolan Scheme (with GPS location and

time) has been extended to 4 pm on September 17. The deadline for uploading these photos to the Amrit Briksha Andolan mobile app or portal has been extended to midnight on September 17.

Ayushman Bhavah campaign in KA from today

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Sept 16: The Ayushman Bhavah campaign will start from September 17 to October 2 informed the district commissioner, Madhumita Bhagawati, ACS, in a press meet held at DC conference hall here on Saturday.

Detailing about the campaign the DC said the Ministry of health & family welfare has planned to organise 'Ayushman Bhavah' campaign which is an umbrella initiative for enhanced awareness about various health care schemes and to saturate critical health care services in rural and urban areas. The major components are Ayushman Apke Swar 3.0, Ayushman mela, Ayushman sabha and Ayushman Gram/Ward.

The DC said the activities for Ayushman Apke Swar 3.0 is distribution of the Prime Minister Jay card and creation of new PM-Jay card and ABHA ID which will be door to door by FLW-ASHA/AWW/MPW/SW from September 17 onwards. The Ayushman mela will be conducted at al Sc-HWC and PHC-HWC, UPHC-HWC from September 17 on every Saturday on a weekly basis. 216 health mela will be organised in Karbi Anglong. The health melas will be held at Bokajan Community Health Centre (CHC) on September 23, at



Howraghat CHC on September 30, at Bakalia CHC on October 7 and at Dentaghat CHC on October 14.

Blood donation in all CHC levels will be organised. At Bokajan CHC will be on September 23, at Howraghat CHC will be on September 30, at Bakalia CHC on October 7 and at Dentaghat CHC will be on October 14. Organ donation camp will be organised on October 2, the DC informed.

Further the Ayushman sabha will be organised in all village and VDC levels

and in urban wards. Swachhata abhijan - cleanliness drive is going to be organised from September 17. The DC also informed that the Assam government has announced ABA plantation date and time schedule which will start on September 17 at morning 9 am to evening 4 pm and uploading of geo photo through mobile app or portal till September 20 up to 12 pm is midnight. The DC also informed that in ABA mobile application everybody can upload photo once it is accessed and by following the direction.

Shillong's tourism: Implications for Assam's identity and reputation

By: Dipak Kurmi

The cities of Gangtok and Shillong within the North-eastern region of India have become heavily reliant on the tourism industry. Gangtok, serving as the capital of Sikkim, emerges as a sought-after destination for both indigenous and global tourists. The urban landscape stands embellished with the majestic presence of mountains, verdant trees, blossoming flora, and traditional elements encompassing gastronomy, fruits, spices, and attire. A distinctive embellishment, generously funded by external sources, has transformed the central nucleus, Gandhi Marg, into a captivating enclave liberated from the clutches of commercial activities and vehicular congestion. Within this realm, visitors are privy to the exquisite experience of reclining on wooden benches during the evening, indulging in warm tea, and relishing musical melodies. The diligent local youth swiftly dispense pristine tea, while the prohibition of automobiles fosters an environment of pristine purity, evoking the sensation of wandering through an enchanting floral haven.

The divergence arises in Shillong, a mere bipartite-hour journey from Guwahati, as transformations unravel. Bhupen Hazarika's Lien Maca and Monalisa Lingo have relinquished their presence, leaving behind a landscape grappling with upheavals such as disorderly thoroughfares, unkempt marketplaces, and ceaseless gridlock. Cherrapunji, once an alluring magnet, now languishes amidst plastic detritus and an urban expanse of concrete. Roughly two decades earlier, wanderers were greeted by the redolence of pine trees and luxuriant foliage upon traversing Nangpo. The crimson soil was but a whis-

per, and apprehensions of landslides were meager.

Today, however, the ambience is tainted by roadworks, mining ventures, and relentless vehicular activity, resulting in precariously perched lofty edifices perilously jutting from mountain precipices. With a certain seasonality, landslides now materialize as an annual catastrophe. Shillong's epicentral domain primarily remains inhospitable for both vehicular transit and pedestrian passage, except for scant vestiges. Maladroit allocation of land, substandard traffic oversight, and superfluous market proliferation have collectively coalesced, rendering Shillong a less-than-ideal pause for travelers. Sanitary waste management endeavors remain conspicuously deficient. Nonetheless, Shailan Gabi steadfastly accommodates a continual influx of visitors, spanning the entire spectrum of seasons - be it summer, monsoon, winter, or spring - with a substantial proportion hailing from Assam, particularly Guwahati.

A short span prior, a widely recognized journalist hailing from Meghalaya vociferated concerns, ascribing the city's predicaments to Assam's tourists and their affinity for Maggi noodles. He contended that these quandaries have been aggravated by a ceaseless influx of visitors journeying from Assam to Meghalaya. In Guwahati, these sojourners proceed to concoct and relish Maggi by the thoroughfare, regrettably, without accruing benefits to the locals. The resultant escalation in vehicular movement further engenders vexations within the community. The journalist specifically imputed culpability onto the 'immigrant' populace originating from Assam.

However, it seems to elude the journalist that the proprietors of Shillong's lodgings would likely



spearhead protests against any potential restrictions on tourists from Assam. Their commercial enterprises pivot on merchandise, textiles, footwear, and snug attire, hinging heavily on these visitors. Tourists themselves also encounter impediments arising from confined roadways, unclean pedestrian walkways, and petite, unhygienic food kiosks dotting the entirety of the state, with the exception of the Ward's Lake locale. A recent sojourn to Gulmarg in Kashmir unveiled a starkly contrasting panorama: an environment untainted by plastic, untouched by pollution, and devoid of bustling markets, allowing solely tourist and military vehicles passage. The nearby denizens from neighboring hamlets conveniently traverse on foot, fulfilling their roles as vendors. At present, Shillong finds itself grappling with an inflow of concrete constructs, reminiscent of the topographical settings prevailing in the northern regions of India. This coincides with a proliferation of shops, intensifying the quandary of vehicular congestion. Unless

this matter is addressed with alacrity, Shillong's allure, akin to the hill towns nestled in the Himalayas up north, could languish perilously.

The exigent adoption of judicious tourism policies, informed by the managerial paradigms of prominent national metropolises such as Darjeeling and Gangtok, stands as a pivotal imperative. The urgency for resolute action is paramount. In the contemporary milieu, to circumvent vehicular gridlocks, we consciously elect to ensconce ourselves within a lakeside resort enveloped by pine trees in Barapani, refraining from venturing into Shillong's urban localities during our visits to Meghalaya.

Prominent scribe Patricia Mukhim may remain oblivious to the tribulations endured by the marginalized denizens of Meghalaya, who find themselves tethered to tourists for sustenance. Khasi women, proprietors of petite establishments lining the Guwahati-Shillong route, ingeniously eke out livelihoods by vending bamboo crafts and succulent pineap-

ples to our populace. The mantle of responsibility falls squarely on the administration's shoulders to furnish secure havens, facilitating the indulgence of Meghalaya's local populace in weekend respites and leisure interludes. If warranted, a strategic maneuver might involve the designation of Sundays as a sanctuary from tourists' footfalls across Meghalaya's precincts, an initiative likely to garner widespread approval. Nonetheless, such an initiative could court backlash from a substantial majority of Shillong's commercial operators, barring a select affluent clique. The journalist, in due course, voiced reservations pertaining to the erratic conduct exhibited by drivers from Assam. Nonetheless, visitors too shoulder accountability in this domain.

Remedial actions to bridle such behavioral laxities stand as an indispensable requisite. The practice of preparing Maggi over gas burners at roadside enclaves is undeniably intolerable, albeit the notion of responding with violence, an impetuous suggestion, cannot be

sanctioned.

Tourism emerges as a domain interwoven with nature's ethos, offering a wellspring of local fiscal augmentation through meticulously orchestrated stratagems. This trajectory, however, must sidestep ecologically deleterious pursuits, such as the arbitrary cleaving of mountains to facilitate road expanses or the issuance of novel edifice permits, particularly within Shillong's confines. The imperatives of highway safety dictate the purging of precarious trees adorning pathways, erecting a bulwark against potential hazards for travelers. The reverberations of mountain truncation on slide phenomena spotlight the exigency for judiciousness. It's worth highlighting Vietnam's feat in constructing last year the world's lengthiest bridge hinged to a mountainside, emblematic of a seamless accord between nature and technology, eschewing the need for invasive excavations or timber extractions, a striking display of boundless potentialities.

Meghalaya's burgeoning tourism sector confronts an array of formidable impediments. The terrain brims with an opulent allure catering to the proclivities of nature aficionados, thrill-seekers, and trekking enthusiasts alike. It stands as an idyllic haven, beckoning not only to lens wielders but also to the quills of writers, the verses of poets, and the canvases of artists. To buttress the indigenous populace, the imperative lies in fostering avenues that facilitate the trade in postcards, mementos, pine arboreal specimens, and nascent orchid life within lodgings, eateries, and preeminent emporia. The resonance for customary Khasi garb, ornamental finery, bamboo artistry, and rattan wares resonates robustly. The province's tourism apparatus could strategically embrace methodologies con-

ducive to enticing footfall from varied corners of the nation, with particular emphasis on the panorama of West Bengal.

The quandary for Meghalaya's tourism department stems from a paucity of erudite guides, a predicament that culminated in our befuddlement and tribulations. In proximity, merely a kilometer distant from Shillong's epicenter, sprawls Laitlum Park, where a sinuous river meanders through serrated mountain ranges, forging a serpentine chasm betwixt verdant expanses, proffering vistas that seize the breath.

Despite our initial intrigue kindled by an extensive video exposure, our fascination waned precipitously, dissipated within a scant half-hour of setting foot there. The labyrinthine labyrinth of mobile map's directives, tethered to vertiginous inclines, labyrinthine bends, and precipitous gradients, added a layer of intricacy. Relying on the local populace for guidance along our trajectory proved a capricious endeavor. In stark contradistinction to foreign locales where brochures and maps shepherd voyagers, Shillong's precincts languish bereft of such navigational aids, and the traffic constabulary seem bereft of vested engagement.

Contrariwise, Thimphu, the metropolis of Bhutan, ushered us with streets pulsating in vibrancy, boutiques bedecked in resplendence, and viewpoints that beckoned with entrancing allure, while Shillong's denizens settled for hawking expedient packs of instant noodles and crisps. Nurturing the province's burgeoning tourism sector mandates rigorous attention, and my sanguine aspiration remains tethered to influential chroniclers casting illumination upon this perspective. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

Baghbeta: A wildlife festival of Jamugurihat



By: Arup Saikia

Every place possesses its own unique history and traditions that have been preserved through time. These historical events or social traditions often hold great significance for the local population. In the town of Jamugurihat, one such memorable and thrilling festival was known as "Baghbeta," which involved the capture of tigers. Even today, the local people fondly reminisce about this event, which existed from approximately the 1940s to the 1960s.

Background:

During this period, the Jamugurihat area was sparsely populated, with each village surrounded by thick bamboo and wood forests. Tigers, seeking easy prey, occasionally ventured out of the forests and settled temporarily in these village areas. They would sometimes attack domestic cows in barns or herds. In response, the villagers from neighbouring areas would come together to plan the capture of the tiger, as it was not considered wrong to kill wild animals in those days.

Baghbeta:

When a tiger entered a human settlement to prey on livestock, people from various villages would unite to capture it using a unique method. They used cotton rope nets to trap the tiger, keeping it on display to the public for several days. This practice was known as "Baghbeta" or enclosing a tiger. Typically, only the most aggressive tigers, specifically the royal Bengal tiger (panthera tigris), were captured in this manner. Other tigers were caught and killed by strategically digging pits for them. This tiger-capturing tradi-

tion became a celebrated festival in the region, and it is still vividly remembered by the local people today.

Procedure:

To capture a tiger, the villagers would look for signs of a tiger's presence, such as the killing of cows or buffalo, or by observing the behaviour of other animals that indicated the presence of a tiger. They primarily used jute nets for this purpose, ensuring that the net holes were of a specific size to prevent the tiger from inserting its mouth.

In those days, each village had its own tiger trap, and these nets were stored in the Namghars (Assamese prayer houses). When two or four cows were killed, and the tiger began attacking, preparations were made to capture it. A designated tiger tracker, known as the "tiger chungi," would locate the tiger's position in the forest.

Skilled, courageous, and wise individuals would then set out to find the tiger, a process known as "Tigerchanda," and define the boundaries of the area, called "Chandi chong," where the tiger was located. News of the tiger's discovery would spread quickly by word of mouth from one village to another. Upon receiving this news, people from each village would bring nets to encircle the forest. Each group of villagers participating in the tiger hunt was called a 'baha.' A shed would be constructed for each 'baha,' with a fire lit nearby. Eating food within the tiger chong was strictly prohibited. The group with the most participants earned the honour of being the 'first baha,' and a village headman would be elected to keep everyone informed about the hunt's progress.

Tiger Chungi:

Tracking a tiger was a highly skilled and critical endeavour. The tiger's location was determined based on various factors, such as its footprints and signs of prey. The path commonly used by tigers in the tiger chong was known as 'Go (cow) Khoj.' Tigers typically followed the same route to and from the tiger chong, so the 'first baha' was placed along this path.

Setting Up the Tiger Net:

One village elder would lead the way, chanting sacred hymns, with others following him to clear the forest and set up the nets. Clearing the forest was referred to as 'cheuni cutting.' The tiger net was set up with the help of sturdy bamboo poles known as "tongi" and "kukur."

The kukur poles were approximately two feet long, sharpened at one end, and buried in the ground, leaving only a few inches exposed to secure the net with bamboo hooks. These kukur poles were placed about two feet apart to prevent the tiger from slipping underneath. The tongi poles were seven to eight feet long and were used to raise the net, which was typically ten feet high, by twisting it around the poles from both the outside and inside. The poles were arranged at a slanting angle, and two strong ropes, known as "Don," were used to control the tension of the net.

Entertainment:

To agitate or provoke the tiger physically, a large bamboo known as "Ra-bamboo" was inserted from outside into the innermost areas of the net. This bamboo served as a revolving see-saw or manual thrashing machine. It not only irritated the tiger but also flattened the surrounding jungle as it moved about. This provoked the tiger

further, and after several days, the trapped tiger would eventually be killed.

Scientific Skill:

Despite the lack of formal education, the people of Jamugurihat demonstrated remarkable unity, harmony, and scientific knowledge during the Baghbeta festival. They had a deep understanding of the process. Even though a tiger could jump up to twelve feet high, they could capture it using a six-foot-high net.

Each hole in the net was equipped with a "Makori ghila," a reddish chocolate-coloured edible fruit commonly found in the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh. One villager explained that this fruit would obstruct the tiger's vision, causing it to forget to jump. There was a strict rule that if a tiger managed to break through a particular village's net, that village would be held responsible and face punishment from the Jamuguri regional committee (Baresohoria sabha).

Foreign Exposure:

In 1955, a United States-based film company, O.D.C. Film Production produced a film titled "The Man Eater," which depicted the man-eating tiger and featured the tiger-capturing technique of Jamugurihat. The film crew reached the region through Calcutta, and the entire shooting took place in Routa, Darrang district.

Under an agreement with the film production company, people from 25 villages in Jamugurihat brought 25 nets to Routa to capture the tiger for the film. Once the scene was filmed, the tiger was killed. Subsequently, wildlife protection laws were enacted, leading to the decline and eventual disappearance of the thrilling Baghbeta festival in Jamugurihat.

Conclusion:

This unique festival of Baghbeta was born out of the necessity for the socio-economic and life security of the agrarian people of Jamugurihat. Although the festival has disappeared due to changing laws and conservation efforts, the thrilling experiences and memories of Baghbeta continue to live on in the hearts and minds of the people of Jamugurihat. It stands as a testament to the courage, unity, and solidarity of the community during a bygone era. (The writer is a noted cultural activist, actor, scriptwriter and poet)

Importance of educating school-age children about sustainable development

By: Muzamil Arif

The concept of sustainable development has gained increasing importance in today's society, as it centers on addressing present demands without compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs. Teaching school-age children about sustainable development is crucial, especially in the face of serious global issues such as climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation. By equipping them with information and fostering attitudes focused on sustainability, we enable students to become responsible global citizens capable of building a better and more sustainable future.

Realizing the Interconnectedness of the World

Children who attend school benefit significantly from learning about sustainable development because it helps them understand the intricate web of relationships within the global ecosystem. They discover the close interdependence of environmental, social, and economic elements, as well as the potential impact of our current behaviors. By recognizing these links, children can develop a holistic viewpoint and make thoughtful decisions to minimize adverse effects on the environment.

Strengthening Analytical and Problem-Solving Abilities

Sustainable development education encourages children to think critically and analyze complex situations from various angles. They gain the ability to weigh the environmental, societal, and economic impacts of their decisions. Children working on sustainable development-related problems develop the creativity, adaptability, and resilience necessary to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Fostering Global Citizenship and Social Responsibility

Sustainable development encompasses social fairness and economic well-being in addition to environmental preservation. Through education in social responsibility, empathy, and inclusivity, children learn the value of fairness and justice in creating sustainable societies. They recognize that sustainable development is an international endeavor, emphasizing cooperation, respect,



and an awareness of diverse cultures and viewpoints.

Preparing for Future Careers

As the world moves towards a more sustainable future, there is a growing demand for experts in sustainable development. By exposing youngsters to sustainability principles at a young age, we provide them with the knowledge and skills required for the emerging green economy. This prepares them for careers in industries such as sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, environmental management, and urban planning, allowing them to contribute to a better world while securing their own future employment.

Encouraging Sustainable Lifestyles

Educating school-going youngsters about sustainable development also involves promoting sustainable lifestyles. By teaching kids about the ecological footprint and the consequences of individual choices, children become aware of their consumption patterns and the resources required to support them. They learn about options such as sustainable transportation, organic food, and responsible waste management. Encouraging sustainable habits from an early age lays the foundation for a generation that prioritizes conscious and sustainable choices, resulting in reduced environmental degradation and improved overall well-being.

Promoting Adaptability and Resilience

Children who receive education on sustainable development are better prepared to cope with the rapid changes in the world. They gain knowledge of the effects of environmental problems such as natural disasters and climate change. Children who are aware of these risks can become resilient and adaptable, devising creative

ways to manage and overcome such challenges. Their ability to handle future difficulties contributes to the creation of more resilient communities.

Connecting Classroom Education with Practical Problems

Sustainable development education extends beyond textbooks and classrooms. It emphasizes experiential learning and interaction with real-world situations. Field visits, outdoor activities, and community initiatives enable youngsters to observe and comprehend the tangible implications of sustainable development concepts. By linking academic knowledge to concrete experiences, children develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world and a stronger understanding of the importance of sustainable practices.

Securing a Sustainable Future

Ultimately, educating school-age children about sustainable development is an investment in ensuring a sustainable future for subsequent generations. By equipping children with information, beliefs, and skills aligned with sustainability, we empower a generation capable of addressing the complex challenges of our time. These young individuals will go on to become scientists, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and community leaders, contributing to the creation of a world where social, economic, and environmental well-being coexist.

In order for children to participate in a future that is environmentally friendly, socially just, and economically productive, it is our duty as educators, parents, and society at large to ensure they receive a comprehensive education that incorporates sustainable development principles. (The author is a graduate student who can be reached at muzamilarif-batt@gmail.com)

Russian literary ladles in the Hindi film kitchen: A soulful soup of cinematic delights

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar

My journey into the realms of literature and cinema began during my formative years. I was irresistibly drawn to the profound literary creations of Swami Vivekananda, Sant Kabir, and Jiddu Krishnamurti. Their words ignited within me a fervent passion for deep introspection, the pursuit of truth, and the realms of philosophy. Additionally, the literary treasures penned by eminent figures like Jawaharlal Nehru, M.K. Gandhi, and the illustrious Dr. B.R. Ambedkar served as a compass, guiding me toward a more profound comprehension of societal dynamics and political intricacies.

Furthermore, my intellectual odyssey led me to the captivating literary works of Russian luminaries such as Maxim Gorky, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy. Their profound explorations of the human psyche resonated with me on a deep level, leaving an indelible mark on my literary sensibilities.

As I immersed myself in the world of literature, I found it impossible to resist the magnetic pull of British literary giants like Daniel Defoe and H.G. Wells. Their narratives had the enchanting ability to transport me to entirely different dimensions. And then, there was Jules Verne, the captivating French wordsmith, who assumed the cherished role of my bedtime storyteller, setting my imagination ablaze with tales

brimming with adventure and uncharted exploration.

My passion for literature seamlessly intertwined with my fascination for cinema and music. While I never aspired to be a film critic, the cinematic brilliance of directors like Raj Kapoor, Satyajit Ray, Akira Kurosawa, Andrei Tarkovsky, Guru Dutt, Girish Karnad, Shyam Benegal, and Majid Majidi drew me into the world of cinema. These visionary filmmakers, each with their unique storytelling prowess, fuelled my appreciation for the art of visual storytelling.

It was during one such evening, in the heart of Dimapur, surrounded by friends who shared my ardor for art, that the influence of Russian literature on Hindi films emerged as a captivating topic of discussion. Our conversation unveiled the hidden threads connecting the literary giants of Russia to the vibrant narratives of Hindi cinema, reminding us once again of the enduring power of storytelling across cultures and generations.

On a leisurely evening in one of the cozy restaurants nestled in the heart of Dimapur, where time seemed to saunter at its own unhurried pace, a conversation about films began to meander through the gentle swirls of steam rising from our hot bowls of soup. It was an evening like many others, spent with friends who shared an insatiable appetite for art and culture. Our musings wandered through the tapestry of



world cinema, and like a forgotten fragrance carried on a passing breeze, the subject of Russian literature in Hindi films wafted into our collective consciousness.

Russian literature, a vast and intricate realm, has left an indelible mark on the world of storytelling. Its profound narratives, rich characters, and explorations of the human condition have transcended geographical boundaries. Yet, what intrigued me that evening was not just the impact of Russian literature on literature itself, but its subtle, almost spectral presence in the world of Hindi cinema.

In the hushed corners of the Hindi Film Industry's cinematic tapestry, echoes of Russian literary giants like Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy reverberate in unexpected ways. The influence was not always overt, but it weaves an intricate subplot, often unnoticed, into the narratives of Hindi films. It is as if the spirit of Russian literature has clandestinely infiltrated the

scripts, adding layers of complexity to the storytelling.

Consider the themes of existentialism that permeate Russian literature, particularly in the works of Dostoevsky. His exploration of the human psyche, the battle between good and evil, and the moral dilemmas faced by his characters find curious parallels in Hindi cinema. Films like "Deewar" and "Sholay" delve into the moral ambiguity of their protagonists, grappling with questions of right and wrong. The internal conflicts mirror the torment of Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov in "Crime and Punishment."

Tolstoy's epic "War and Peace" may seem light years away from the vibrant and often melodramatic world of Hindi films. Still, the core theme of human endurance amidst tumultuous times resonates deeply with narratives like "Mera Naam Joker" and "Mother India." These films, while rooted in Indian soil, draw upon the univer-

sal human experiences depicted by Tolstoy.

Moreover, Russian literature's preoccupation with societal critique, class struggles, and the human condition's vicissitudes finds an echo in Hindi cinema's more socially conscious offerings. Movies like "Do Bigha Zamin" and "Garm Hava" grapple with issues of poverty, displacement, and societal inequities, akin to the social critiques prevalent in Russian literature.

The emotional depth and intricacy of Russian literature's characters have also left their fingerprints on Hindi films. The brooding heroes and enigmatic heroines, often portrayed with layers of complexity and moral ambiguity, owe a debt to the intricate character studies of Russian literature. The character of Devdas, immortalized in multiple Hindi adaptations, bears the unmistakable imprint of Russian literary heroes.

But perhaps, beyond the thematic and character parallels, it is the emotional resonance that Russian literature imparts to Hindi cinema that is most intriguing. The deep wells of emotion, the unrelenting examination of the human soul, and the triumph of the human spirit against all odds - all of these are themes that find a warm embrace in the hearts of Hindi film audiences.

In those fleeting moments of revelation during our restaurant conversation, it became apparent that the influence of Russian lit-

erature on Hindi films was not just a matter of borrowed plots or overt adaptations. It was an infusion of the spirit of Russian storytelling, a subtle exchange of literary souls that transcended the boundaries of language and culture.

As we sipped the last remnants of our soup and the evening sunlight bathed our table in a golden hue, I couldn't help but marvel at the beauty of this cross-cultural conversation between two distinct literary worlds. It was a reminder that art, in all its forms, possesses the remarkable power to bridge chasms, to create connections where none seemed possible. Russian literature had journeyed far from its homeland, finding a new home in the hearts of Hindi film enthusiasts, leaving an indelible mark on the soul of Indian cinema. And in that quiet restaurant in Dimapur, we celebrated this unspoken yet profound connection - a testament to the enduring power of storytelling.

Life is unpredictable, and I find myself least bothered about what tomorrow might bring. In the vast landscape of possibilities, who's to say that one day I won't be the one making a film that resonates with audiences far and wide? It's a whimsical thought, perhaps, but as my dear friend Colonel Joy Chowdhury (Retd) is fond of saying, "It's time for the rolling stone to gather some moss - be all that you can possibly be."

In the course of meandering

conversation that lazy evening in Dimapur, the idea of creating art, much like the fusion of Russian literature and Hindi films, became a tantalizing notion. The unpredictability of life, with all its twists and turns, can lead us to uncharted territories and ultra-adventures, even those as diverse as filmmaking.

Just as Russian literature found a subtle, unexpected resonance in the world of Hindi cinema, who's to say where our own creative journeys might lead? The beauty of art lies in its boundless possibilities, in the quiet intersections where two worlds meet and share their stories. And, as Colonel Joy's wise words remind us, it's never too late to gather some moss, to embrace the full spectrum of our potential.

In the realm of storytelling, whether through literature, cinema, or the simple act of sharing experiences over bowls of soup, we find the threads that connect us all. It's these threads that make life's unpredictability a tapestry of rich experiences and surprising connections - a tapestry where the influence of Russian literature on Hindi films becomes not just a curiosity but a testament to the enduring power of artistic expression. So, who knows what tomorrow might bring? A film, a story, or a super-epic adventure yet to be written - it's all part of the unfolding narrative of our lives. (The author is an academician in the Dept. of Political Science, Tetso College, Nagaland)

BOOK REVIEW

Metaphors in Poetry: Allama Iqbal's Majestic 'Shaheen'

By: Aubaid Ahmad Akhoun

In the rich tapestry of poetic expression, metaphors stand as beacons of creativity and insight, illuminating the depths of human thought and emotion. A metaphor is a literary device that transcends the boundaries of the ordinary by drawing striking comparisons between seemingly unrelated entities. Within the realm of Urdu and Persian poetry, the metaphorical brilliance of Allama Iqbal, often hailed as Mufakkir-e-Pakistan (The Thinker of Pakistan), shines resplendently. Among his many metaphorical creations, none is as powerful and enduring as the "Shaheen" or falcon.

The Essence of Metaphor in Poetry

Metaphors are the artistic brushstrokes that transform the canvas of words into a vivid tapestry of imagery and meaning. They allow poets to convey complex ideas, emotions, and concepts by likening them to more familiar or tangible objects. In poetry, metaphors evoke powerful sensations, stimulate the imagination, and invite readers to explore deeper layers of understanding.

Dr. Yusuf Khan writes, "Iqbal's conscience and emotions are stirred most profoundly by poetry. It's the manifestation of 'power' that drives him, which is why he prefers eagles and falcons over nightingales and moons as metaphors."

Allama Iqbal's preference for the symbol of the falcon (Shaheen) is explained in a letter attributed to Zafar Ahmed Siddiqi, where he writes, "The analogy of the falcon is not just a poetic comparison; in this bird, one finds all the qualities of Islamic asceticism. It is self-reliant and fiercely protective; falcon never feeds on prey that has been hunted by someone else's hands. It is indifferent to building a nest, aiming for great heights, and it is solitary and sharp-sighted."

According to Iqbal, the above mentioned same qualities are found in a faithful man. He desires to see these same qualities in the youth as well. Apart from the falcon, no other bird can serve as a role model for the youth in this way. In Urdu poetry, no poet has portrayed the falcon from this perspective.

One of the most iconic couplets that encapsulate the essence of the Shaheen reads: "Tu Shaheen Hai, Parwaz Hai Kaam Tera, Tere Aage Asmaan Aur Bhi Hain" (You are a falcon; flight is your vocation: You have other skies stretching out before you). These lines are a testament to Iqbal's ability to distill profound wisdom into succinct verses. The metaphor of the falcon embodies the idea that every individual possesses the potential to rise above mediocrity and achieve greatness. Iqbal's poetry beautifully contrasts the falcon's unbounded ambition with the limitations of other birds. He writes, "Parwaz Hai Dono Ki Issi Aik Fiza Mein, Kargas Ka Jahan Aur Hai, Shaheen Ka Jahan Aur" (The vulture and the falcon soar in the same air, but in worlds apart). Through this analogy, Iqbal underscores that while some may settle for a mundane existence, the Shaheen aspires for grandeur.

Furthermore, Iqbal's verses depict the arduous path to greatness. He pens, "Qana'at Na Kar Alam-e-Rang-o-Bu Par Chaman Aur Bhi, Ashiyani Aur Bhi Hain" (Do not be content with the world of color and smell; other gardens there are, other nests too). Iqbal urges individuals to surpass the ordinary and venture into uncharted territories, reminding us that there is always more to explore, learn, and achieve. Iqbal is emphasizing the idea that there is more to the world than what meets the eye. He suggests that beyond the ordinary world with its colors and fragrances, there exist additional realms of existence, both metaphorically and perhaps even spiritually.

Iqbal's portrayal of the Shaheen resonates with

his broader philosophy of self-realization. He encourages individuals to rise above their circumstances, embrace their inherent potential, and strive for excellence. The Shaheen, in Iqbal's poetry, becomes a symbol of unbounded aspiration, the pursuit of knowledge, and the quest for spiritual enlightenment. Just as the falcon defies its limitations to soar to greater heights, Iqbal invites us to overcome obstacles and realize our fullest potential.

In the poem "Shaheen" bal-e-Jibril," Allama Iqbal presents the (Shaheen) falcon in the following way:

Khayabanon Se Hai Parhaiz Lazim, Aadaen hain In Ki Bohat Dilbarana
Hawa-e-Bayaan Se Hoti Hain Kari, Jawaan
Mard Ki Zarbat-e-Ghaziya
Hamaam o kabotar ka bhoka nahi main, Ke Hai Zindagi Baaz ki Zaahidana
Jhaptna, Paltna, Palt Kar Jhaptna, Lahoo
Garam Rakhne Ka Hai Ek Bahana
Ye Poorab, Ye Pacham, Chakoron Ki Dunia
Mera Neelgun Aasmaan Baikarana
Parindon Ki Dunya Ka Darvesh Hoon Main,
Ke Shaheen Banata nahi aashiyana

Translation
One must shun the garden dwellers
They have such seductive charms!
The wind of the desert is what gives
The stroke of the brave youth fighting in battle its effect

I am not hungry for pigeon or dove
For renunciation is the mark of an eagle's life
To swoop, withdraw and swoop again
Is only a pretext to keep up the heat of the blood
East and West these belongs to the world of the pheasant.

The blue sky... vast, boundlessis mine
Alama Iqbal presents the concept of the "Shaheen" (falcon) as a symbol of strength, independence, and spiritual elevation. The central thesis of this poem revolves around the idea that the Shaheen represents a lofty and free-spirited individual who is detached from the ordinary desires of life and is instead focused on a higher purpose, which is often associated with spiritual and intellectual pursuits. Falcon's ability to swoop, turn, and swoop again symbolizes its unwavering determination. It keeps the blood warm with the passion for adventure. Iqbal contrasts the Shaheen with "garden dwellers" and "pigeon or dove," symbolizing those who are content with a mundane and comfortable existence. The Shaheen, on the other hand, is depicted as someone who seeks challenges, is unbound by geographical or worldly limitations ("East and West"), and embraces the vastness of the universe as their own.

The poem encourages readers to aspire to the qualities of the Shaheen, emphasizing the importance of courage, perseverance, and the pursuit of higher ideals. It serves as a call to break free from the constraints of a conventional life and soar to greater intellectual and spiritual heights. Ultimately, Iqbal's "Shaheen" symbolizes a spiritual and intellectual awakening and a yearning for a purposeful and transcendent life.

In conclusion, the Shaheen in Allama Iqbal's poetry is more than a mere bird; it is a representation of the human spirit's ceaseless journey towards self-discovery and growth. Through these verses, Iqbal inspires us to break free from the constraints that hold us back, encouraging us to emulate the Shaheen's audacity in our pursuit of excellence. As we read these lines, let us remember that, like the falcon, our potential knows no bounds, and our dreams can propel us to the highest realms of achievement. (The author is a renowned Columnist & Motivational Speaker and an Associate Editor of the Weekly Publication 'Education Quill'.)

Bengali novelist Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay still remains a pan India icon

By Tirthankar Mitra

Long after Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's literary works sprang into fame, his reputation as a literary icon stands undimmed to this day. As his 147th birth anniversary is being celebrated on September 15, the contention few authors could rival his mastery of the condition of villages and plight of woman of his time in Bengal, remains unchallenged.

Being universally human and not quintessentially Bengali, the appeal of Chattopadhyay's works is timeless. They continue to live in print and celluloid. He was a pioneer in style and content in his times may in any other Indian language. Without shouting in support of women's emancipation from the rooftops, Chattopadhyay championed it. Soudamini, the central character of Swami who stands up to her mother-in-law is one such woman. And of course, there are four feisty women characters in Charitraheen.

His pen breathed life into the characters of Rajlaksmi aka Pyaribai, Rama, Parbati and Chandramukhi to name a few and made them such sought after characters that their shades were discernible even in female characters of modern day works. Parbati remains the typical Indian girl next door who bows to her parental choice and weds their chosen groom and yet retains a soft corner for her first love. Chandramukhi, on the other hand, the courtesan whom Parbati's onetime beloved Devdas loves to hate and yet cannot forsake, represents a world which society cannot do without and yet shuns. Chattopadhyay had first hand experience of the seamy side of life. "How can he write about things

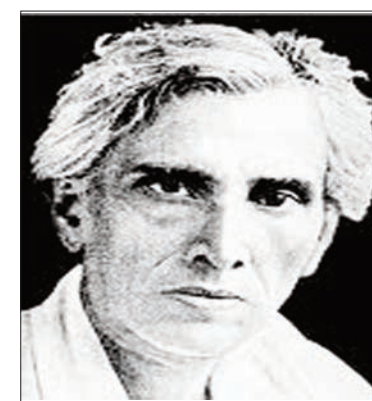
he has no knowledge about, as to know about them one either has to be a moneyed man or have wealthy friends," Chattopadhyay said about an author who had penned a work about the societal underbelly. He was absolutely within his rights as he knew what he was speaking of.

There were male characters too and the first name that comes to mind is Devdas. Separated from his beloved, he hits the bottle to forget his Parbati and yet journey's to her marital home to catch a glimpse of her before he drew his last breath.

And there was Ramesh the central character of Pallisamaj who stood up to social evils and in the end earns infamy and ridicule. What about Rashbehari, the smirking villain of Datta who has designs on the heroine's vast estate and tries to make her tie the knot with his son. These characters have become part and parcel of Bengali life. Yet the characters in Chattopadhyay's works continue to appeal far away from the state and are yet to be dated. For the obstacles they faced remain till this day though in camouflage. Small wonder, the struggle to remove them continues especially on the silver screen when Parineeta and Devdas are running to packed houses having been remade again and again for successive generations.

Ahead of his times, Chattopadhyay's works are pointers to his great courage and energy to portray men, women and children wars and all. A champion of secularism and woman emancipation cameos of Muslim characters stand out as gems in Mahesh and Pallisamaj.

The Pallisamaj character, a musclemoon on a zamindar's payroll flatly refuses to press a false charge after being



beaten in a fair fight. How can I be the complainant after having always been an accused, he says and reiterates his uprightness.

Readers eyes moisten in the short story Mahesh when Gafuroo who has to depart from his beloved cow Mahesh, makes a final appeal to his maker not to forgive those who have deprived his pet of God's gift of grass and water. Does one discern the seeds of divisiveness leading to the dismemberment of Bengal?

Chattopadhyay never made any secret of his sympathy for the underprivileged and economically weaker sections of the society. His popularity had catapulted him in the upper strata of society but he remained a rebel with a cause in the way he has penned Abhagir Swarga.

A change of scene was in the air when Rabindranath Tagore had felt during his tour to Russia. Perhaps, though a Congress leader and riding the success of the popularity of his books, Chattopadhyay too had felt it and manifested it in his works.

Not born with a silver spoon, Chat-

topadhyay had known struggle in the early part of his life and relished it. He depicted strong characters apparently simple but often with subtle shades which may escape a casual reader. In the process, he left clear indications of the circumstances he had emerged from and the society he wanted to live in.

Born in Bhagalpur, Bihar the earliest stories Chattopadhyay penned were Korel and Kashinath. He went to Burma and married Shanti Devi and had a son though both passed away in plague; he later married Mokshada Devi, a young widow. The man who joined Indian National Congress after coming in touch with "Deshbandhu" Chittaranjan Das was not enamoured of non-violent struggle for independence. His novel Pather Dabi espouses armed struggle and consequent run-ins with men in uniform who were in pay of an alien power.

It was once proscribed and brought out by Asutosh Mukherjee's son, Uma Prasad who picked up the courage to publish it. Based in Burma, it's central character Sabyasachi, presumably modelled after the great revolutionary Rashbehari Bose, sketches out a grand scheme to throw off foreign shackles and though his efforts end in failure, he refuses to give up.

Arguably, his works being translated in most Indian languages is an yardstick of the appeal cutting across the language barrier. At a function of naming a park after him, the then chief minister, Jyoti Basu recalled coming across Chattopadhyay who often visited Narendra Deb and Radharani Devi, a literary couple at Hindustan Park, near Basu's ancestral home. They never talked in person, that was a regret the veteran leader carried. (IPA Service)

Voice Of An Earth Citizen

By Bipul Ch Kalita

Kiss and enjoy the fragrance of the soil
Earth's love grows all of us equally
And
Equally in the disciplined ways
Of generosity and impartiality;
She is always social
She is always apolitical
That maintains all policies with no doubt.

I'm neither a king nor any king's man
But a citizen of the earth
An inhabitant of a beautiful land
Being a part of its culture and civilization;
Body lives
In a geographical boundary
Mind moves
Round the globe day in and out
To connect
Minds with minds and hearts with hearts,
Love to take part in humanity's peaceful tears.

Listen to the voice of an earth citizen:
Things are going wrong
Wrong air
Wrong ideals
Power has become a fire
That has burnt hearts' well-designed greenery;
Protect your soft petals of the heart
Protect your hardest determinations of the mind
Save the earth, her inhabitants, and her identity.

Let fatherly and motherly hands bless
Brotherly and sisterly heads
Of the global village
To grow
To sow
Seeds of oneness
That will bloom like bunches of vivid
flowers;
Earth will smile
I know
Earth will be sure to smile if
Love, humanity, and peace prevail upon
dragons.



World Of Greenery

By Khemu Parashar

As soon as you see greenery, your mind gets drawn towards it
Only humans are not happy with this
Animals and birds also enjoy it
cuckoo sings a sweet song
cow smiles looking at the greenery
the bull starts running
farmers reach the fields

Dripping rain drops add beauty to the greenery
The smell of soil makes the mind happy
environment becomes attractive with greenery

Nature's scenery shines
win a person's heart
water flows from springs
the river gallops
weather becomes absolutely pleasant
sky becomes clear
Peacock looks beautiful dancing
children become engrossed in their games

All the Russian warplanes shown were among the types that have seen active use in the war in Ukraine

North Korea's Kim Jong Un inspects Russian bombers and a warship on a visit to Russia's Far East

SEOUL, Sept 16: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected Russia's nuclear-capable bombers, hypersonic missiles and an advanced warship from its Pacific fleet on Saturday as he continued a trip in Russia's Far East that has sparked Western concerns about an arms alliance that could fuel Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine.

After arriving in the city of Artyom by train, Kim travelled to an airport just outside the port city of Vladivostok where Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and other senior military officials gave him an up-close look at Russia's strategic bombers and other warplanes. All the Russian warplanes shown to Kim on Saturday were among the types that have seen active use in the war in Ukraine, including the Tu-160, Tu-95 and Tu-22 bombers that have regularly launched cruise missiles. Shoigu, who had met Kim during a rare visit to North Korea in July, also showed Kim one of Russia's latest missiles, the hypersonic Kinzhal, carried by the MiG-31 fighter jet, that saw its first combat during the war in Ukraine, according to Russia's Defence Ministry.

Kim and Shoigu later travelled to Vladivostok, where they inspected the Admiral Shaposhnikov frigate of Russia's Pacific fleet. Russia's navy commander, Admiral Nikolai Yevmenov, briefed Kim on the ship's capabilities and weapons, which include long-range Kalibr cruise missiles that Russian warships have regularly fired at targets in Ukraine. Kim's visits to military and technology sites this week possibly hint at what he wants from Russia, perhaps in exchange for supplying munitions to refill Putin's declining reserves as his invasion of Ukraine becomes a drawn-out war of attrition.

Kim's trip to Russia, which included more than four hours of talks with Putin on Wednesday, comes amid momentum in military cooperation between the countries in which North Korea could potentially seek



Russian technologies to advance Kim's nuclear, missile and other military programmes in exchange for providing Russia with badly needed munitions.

Videos released by Russia's Defence Ministry showed Shoigu greeting Kim at the airport along with honour guards lined up near a red carpet. Kim was seen peering at the Kinzhal missile and gesturing and asking questions about the warplanes' capabilities as he discussed technical details with Shoigu and other military officials through translators. Kim was also seen talking to Shoigu and Yevmenov about a purported nuclear attack submarine the North unveiled last week as they stepped out of the Shaposhnikov frigate.

The visit follows Kim's tour on Friday of a factory producing advanced Russian warplanes. Kim in recent months has emphasised the need to strengthen his navy to counter the advanced naval assets of the United States, which has been expanding its combined military exercises with South Korea to counter the North's growing threat.

Analysts say Kim's focus on naval strength could be driven by ambitions to obtain sophisticated technologies for ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-propelled submarines as well as to initiate joint naval exercises between Russia and North Korea.

Oleg Kozhemyako, the governor of Russia's Primorsky region, earlier announced Kim's arrival in the city of Artyom, about 40 kilometres northeast of Vladivostok. Kozhemyako released a video showing Kim smiling as he got off his green-and-yellow train and was greeted by children presenting flowers. After meeting Putin at Russia's main spaceport, a location that pointed to Kim's desire for Russian assistance in his efforts to acquire space-based reconnaissance assets and missile technologies, North Korea's leader reappeared Friday in the far eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur for a visit to a plant producing Russia's Su-57 fighter jets. Experts have said potential military cooperation between the countries could include efforts to modernize North Korea's outdated air force, which relies on warplanes sent from the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

Pyeongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said Saturday that during his visit to the aircraft plant in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, Kim expressed "sincere regard" for what he described as Russia's rapidly advancing aviation technologies, which he said were "outpacing the outside potential threats."

North Korean state media have been reporting on Kim's activities in Russia a day late while crafting the details to meet govern-

ment propaganda purposes. Russia's Cabinet on Friday released a video showing Kim on an elevated platform looking at the cockpit of an Su-57 while listening to its pilot. Kim also beamed and clapped his hands when an Su-35 fighter jet landed after a demonstration flight.

During a luncheon hosted by Russian officials, Kim's top military officer, army Marshal Ri Pyong Chol, said his leader's visit to the facility "added another glorious page" to the countries' relations, KCNA said. Kim's delegation also includes the top commanders of North Korea's air force and navy.

Kim's trip to Russia, his first since April 2019 when he met Putin in Vladivostok, came days after he attended a ceremony at a North Korean military shipyard where the country unveiled the alleged nuclear attack submarine. State media claimed it is capable of launching tactical nuclear weapons from underwater. But South Korea's military expressed doubt about the operational capabilities of the sub, which was the result of reshaping an existing submarine to install missile launch tubes.

Kim has also announced goals to acquire nuclear-propelled submarines, which can quietly travel long distances and approach enemy shores to deliver strikes, a key asset in his efforts to build a viable nuclear arsenal that could threaten the United States. Analysts say such capacities would be unfeasible for the North without external assistance.

Putin on Friday reiterated that Russia would abide by UN sanctions, some of which ban North Korea from exporting or importing any weapons.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov separately said that no agreements on bilateral military cooperation were signed after the Putin-Kim meeting Wednesday. Experts say North Korea and Russia aren't likely to publicise any deals on weapons to avoid stronger international criticism. (AP)

Libya probes the collapse of 2 dams after flood devastated an eastern city, killing over 11,000

DERNA (LIBYA), Sept 16: Libyan authorities have opened an investigation into the collapse of two dams that caused a devastating flood in a coastal city as rescue teams searched for bodies on Saturday, nearly a week after the deluge killed more than 11,000 people. Heavy rains caused by Mediterranean storm Daniel caused deadly flooding across eastern Libya last weekend.

The floods overwhelmed two dams, sending a wall of water several metres (yards) high through the centre of Derna, destroying entire neighbourhoods and sweeping people out to sea.

More than 10,000 are missing, according to the Libyan Red Crescent. Six days on, searchers are still digging through mud and hollowed-out buildings, looking for bodies and possible survivors. The Red Crescent has confirmed 11,300 deaths so far.

Claire Nicolet, who heads the emergencies department of the Doctors Without Borders aid group, said rescuers found "a lot of bodies" on Friday and were still searching.

"It was a big number ... the sea is still ejecting lots of dead bodies unfortunately," she told The Associated Press. She said massive aid efforts were still needed, including urgent psychological support for those who lost their families. She said the burial of bodies is still a significant challenge, despite some progress in coordinating search and rescue efforts and the distribution of aid.

Authorities and aid groups have voiced concern about the spread of waterborne diseases and shifting of explosive ordnance from Libya's recent conflicts. Haider al-Saeih, head of Libya's centre for combating diseases, said in televised comments Saturday that at least 150 people had suffered from diarrhoea after drinking contaminated water in Derna.

He urged residents to only drink bottled water, which is being shipped in as part of relief efforts. Libya's

General Prosecutor, al-Sediq al-Sour, said prosecutors would investigate the collapse of the two dams, which were built in the 1970s, as well as the allocation of maintenance funds. He said prosecutors would investigate local authorities in the city, as well as previous governments.

"I reassure citizens that whoever made mistakes or negligence, prosecutors will certainly take firm measures, file a criminal case against him and send him to trial," he told a news conference in Derna late Friday.

It's unclear how such an investigation can be carried out in the North African country, which plunged into chaos after a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

For most of the past decade, Libya has been split between rival administrations — one in the east, the other in the west — each backed by powerful militias and international patrons. (AP)



Erdogan says Turkiye may part ways with the EU

ISTANBUL, Sept 16: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Saturday that Turkiye may part ways with the European Union, implying that the country is thinking about ending its bid to join the 27-nation bloc.

"The EU is making efforts to sever ties with Turkiye," he told reporters before departing for the 78th UN General Assembly in New York.

"We will evaluate the situation, and if needed we will part ways with the EU." He was responding to a question about a recent report adopted by the European Parliament, which stated "the accession process cannot re-

sume under the current circumstances, and calls on EU to explore a parallel and realistic framework' for EU-Turkiye relations."

Turkiye applied to join the European Union in 1999, and accession talks began in 2005. Accession negotiations were frozen in 2018 because of "democratic backsliding," according to the European Parliament.

Erdogan's statement on Saturday came more than a week after Turkiye's foreign minister affirmed his country's resolve to join the EU and urged the bloc to take courageous steps to advance its bid. (AP)

Man arrested for climbing over wall near Buckingham Palace stables

LONDON, Sept 16: A 25-year-old man was arrested near the stables of Buckingham Palace in London after he climbed the wall to enter the Royal Mews in the early hours of Saturday, Scotland Yard said.

The man remains in custody at a London police station after he was arrested under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act for trespassing on a protected site.

The Metropolitan Police said that the man did not gain access to the palace grounds at any point.

"A man has been arrested in the Royal Mews area adjacent to Buckingham Palace," the Met Police said in a statement. "At 01:25 hrs (local time) on Saturday, 16 September, officers at Buckingham Palace responded to a person climbing the wall and entering the Royal Mews."

Following a search, a 25-year-old man was detained by officers outside the stables in the Royal Mews," the statement said.

"At no point did the man enter Buckingham Palace or the Palace Gardens. The man has been arrested under the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act for trespassing on a protected site."

He has been taken into custody at a London police station where he remains," it added.

No members of the royal family are believed to have been in residence at Buckingham Palace at the time of the nearby intrusion. (PTI)

Yet another hike smashes fuel prices record in Pak

ISLAMABAD, Sept 16: Amid double-digit inflation, Pakistan's caretaker government has effected yet another hike in the prices of petrol and diesel taking them to a historic high — over ₹ 330 per litre — prompting immediate protests and a legal challenge too.

As on Saturday, USD 1 was equivalent to 296.41 Pakistani Rupee. The Ministry of Finance on Friday night announced the price hike of petrol by ₹ 26.02 and diesel by ₹ 17.34 per litre.

After the hike, petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD) are costing over ₹ 330 at the filling stations, "a psychological barrier that has been crossed for the first time in the country's history," the Dawn newspaper wrote.

The fuel price hike comes on the heels of over 27.4 per cent increase in the rate of inflation in August, putting an unbearable burden on the masses, as petrol and HSD are used by all private and public service vehicles. The caretaker government on September 1 jacking up the petrol and diesel prices by over ₹ 14.

The rise is on top of ₹ 32.41 and ₹ 38.49 per litre increase in petrol and HSD prices since August 15.

Petrol and diesel have become costlier by 20 per cent since the caretaker government took over in August. Meanwhile, the hike in the petrol and diesel prices has prompted Pakistan's opposition parties to vociferously criticize it even as a judicial activist challenged it in the Lahore High Court.

Rejecting the massive increase in petroleum prices, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) announced sit-ins outside the governors' houses in all four provinces of Pakistan.

Ji chief Sirajul Haq said the government has made the life of a common man miserable by increasing the petroleum prices on the directions of the IMF. Dunya News channel's website reported on Saturday.

Sardar Abdul Rahim of the Grand Democratic Alliance too rejected the increase as he said that the PDM, i.e. the consortium Pakistan Democratic Movement's agreement with IMF has "proved to be fatal for Pakistan's economy."

In Lahore, advocate Azhar Siddique, the head of the Judicial Activism Panel, has filed an application in the Lahore High Court, in which the caretaker federal government has been made a party. Dunya News said in another report. The petitioner pointed out how there was no mechanism to determine the prices of the products and that the increase in prices of petroleum products would lead to a new wave of inflation.

Earlier, the Finance Ministry blamed "the increasing trend of petroleum prices in the international market" for revising the existing consumer prices of petroleum products. The government is charging Rs 60 per litre petroleum development levy (PDL) on petrol and Rs 50 each on HSD under the commitment with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In July, the IMF transferred USD 1.2 billion to cash-strapped Pakistan, part of the USD 3 billion bailout programme for nine months to support the government's efforts to stabilise the country's ailing economy. (PTI)

WASHINGTON, Sept 16: The Seattle Police Officers' Guild has defended the callous remarks of its official, who was found making insensitive comments after the horrific death of Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula, saying some viral videos of police actions shared by media were taken out of context.

Kandula, 23, was struck by a police vehicle driven by Officer Kevin Dave when she was crossing a street in Seattle on January 23. He was driving 74 mph (more than 119 kmh) on the way to a report of a drug overdose call. Kandula was thrown 100 feet when she was struck by the speeding police patrol vehicle.

In bodycam footage released on Monday by the Seattle Police Department, Officer Daniel Auderer laughed about the deadly crash and dismissed any implication Dave might be at fault or that a criminal investigation was necessary. In the video, Auderer can be heard saying, "Yeah, just write a cheque. USD 11,000. She was 26 anyway, she had limited value."

"The video captures only one side of the conversation. There is much more detail and nuance that has not been made public yet..." the Seattle Police Officers Guild said in a statement on Friday as it also released a letter written by its officer Auderer in which the latter said that he intended the comment as a mockery of lawyers. Officer Auderer claimed his joke that the city should "just write a cheque" was taken out of context during a private call he didn't know was being recorded by his department-issued body camera.

In the letter dated August 3 to the Office of Police Accountability, Au-



derer said he laughed at the ridiculousness of how these incidents are litigated and the ridiculousness of how he has watched these incidents play out as two parties bargain over a tragedy.

"At the time I believed the conversation was private and not being recorded. The conversation was also not within the course of my duties," he wrote in his letter to Gino Betts, director Office of Police Accountability.

"On January 23, 2023, I was dispatched from home to assist with a fatality collision involving a city vehicle," he said.

"While en route home I called Mike Solan to give him an update regarding what had occurred. The phone call was inadvertently recorded on my BWV which had turned on. The conversation took place in my patrol car. I was the only occupant. During that phone call Mike Solan stated something to the effect that it was unfortunate that this would turn into lawyers arguing 'The value of human life'," he wrote.

"Mike Solan asked me as he was lamenting the loss of life something similar to: 'What crazy argument can a lawyer make in something like this? What crazy thing can they

come up with.' I responded with something like: 'She's 26 years old, what value is there, who cares.' I intended the comment as a mockery of lawyers — I was imitating what a lawyer tasked with negotiating the case would be saying and being sarcastic to express that they shouldn't be coming up with crazy arguments to minimise the payment," Auderer wrote.

"I laughed at the ridiculousness of how these incidents are litigated and the ridiculousness of how I have watched these incidents play out as two parties bargain over a tragedy. At the time I believed the conversation was private and not being recorded. The conversation was also not within the course of my duties," he said. "I understand that without context, the comment could be interpreted as horrifying and crude. Without context, the comment is insensitive to the family of the victim when in reality I was involved in a conversation regarding the callousness of the legal system. At the time I had no idea who the victim was," he wrote.

Auderer said he does understand that if a citizen were to hear it they would rightfully believe he was being insensitive to the loss of a

human life. "I also understand that if heard it could diminish the trust in the Seattle Police Department and make all of our jobs more difficult. With all of that being said the comment was not made with malice or a hard heart, quite the opposite."

"My intent in requesting rapid adjudication is to be as transparent as possible. I am willing to accept any reasonable discipline our accountability partners and the Chief of Police wish to hand down," he said.

The Seattle Police Officers' Guild in its statement said some viral videos of police actions shared by the media fail to explain the full story/context.

"This Seattle Police video is an example of that reality. The video captures only one side of the conversation. There is much more detail and nuance that has not been made public yet... SPOG has full confidence that the civilian-led police accountability system known as the Office of Police Accountability / OPA will conduct a thorough and fair investigation," the guild wrote. Upon being made aware of the existence of this video, Auderer immediately took ownership of his actions and authored a statement requesting that the Director of OPA (Gino Betts) consider the course of "Rapid Adjudication", the statement read.

"Rapid Adjudication is a disciplinary process that was agreed to by the City of Seattle and the SPOG to expedite police employee misconduct investigations so accountability can be swiftly addressed, and reasonable discipline imposed. This was done by Dan more than 4 weeks before the release of the video," the guild said. (PTI)

Millions under storm watches as Lee is downgraded but bears down on New England and Canada

PORTLAND, Sept 16: The National Hurricane Centre downgraded Hurricane Lee to a post-tropical cyclone but millions of people remained under storm watches and warnings early on Saturday as the storm still could produce hurricane-force winds, torrential rain and coastal flooding.

Severe conditions were predicted as a possibility across portions of Massachusetts and Maine and hurricane conditions could hit the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, where the storm had been predicted to make landfall later Saturday.

The storm was located about 230 miles (365 kilometres) southwest of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and about 220 miles (355 kilometres) southeast of Eastport, Maine on Saturday morning. There were more than 11,000 power outages from Massachusetts to Maine early Saturday. The wind had picked up and rain moved into eastern Massachusetts.

The hurricane centre predicted hurricane-force winds extending more than 100 miles (161 kilometres) from Lee's centre with lesser but still dangerous tropical storm-force gusts up to 345 miles (555 kilometres) miles outward.

States of emergency were declared for Mas-



sachusetts and Maine, the nation's most heavily forested state, where the ground was saturated and trees were weakened by heavy summer rains. Cruise ships found refuge at berths in Portland, while lobstermen in Bar Harbour, Maine, and elsewhere pulled their costly traps from the water and hauled their boats inland, leaving some harbours looking like ghost towns on Friday.

Lee already lashed the US Virgin Islands, the Bahamas and Bermuda before turning northward and heavy swells were likely to cause "life-threatening surf and rip current conditions" in the US and Canada, according to the hurricane centre.

Parts of coastal Maine could see waves up to 15 feet (4.5 metres) high crashing down, causing erosion and damage, and the strong gusts will cause power outages, said Louise Fode, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Maine.

As much as 5 inches (12 centimetres) of rain was forecast for eastern Maine, where a flash flood watch was in effect. But even as they hunkered down and prepared, New Englanders seemed unconcerned by the possibility of violent weather.

In Maine, where people are accustomed to damaging winter nor'easters, some brushed aside the coming Lee as something akin to those storms only without the snow.

"There's going to be huge white rollers coming in on top of 50- to 60-mph winds. It'll be quite entertaining," Bar Harbour lobsterman Bruce Young said Friday. Still, he had his boat moved to the local airport, saying it's better to be safe than sorry.

On Long Island, commercial lobsterman Steve Train finished hauling 200 traps out of the water on Friday. Train, who is also a firefighter, was going to wait out the storm on the island in Casco Bay. (AP)

HANM to write to M'laya MPs over India's name change issue

SHILLONG, Sept 16: The Hynniewtrep National Achik Movement (HANM) recently informed that it will write to all three Member of Parliament (MP) of Meghalaya to oppose the move of the central government under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to change the name of India to Bharat.

Speaking to media persons, HANM president Lamphrang Kharbani alleged that the motive of the central government to change the name of India to Bharat is to impose one religion in the country which is against the constitution of the country.

Kharbani said that such an idea to change the name to Bharat also indicates that the BJP-led government disregards the people who are not familiar with the party ideologies like language, religion, practice and customs.

He added that the intention of the BJP government to rename India to Bharat is unacceptable and the HANM and the people of Meghalaya strongly oppose this since India is a diverse nation formed by nearly 500 kingdoms including the Khasi states.

"The HANM strongly opposed the renaming of India to Bharat and we also urged our MPs to oppose this in the parliament," said Kharbani.

Kharbani said that if the BJP-led government decides to go ahead with renaming India to Bharat, then it will clearly show that the party does not respect the kingdom that was formed to make India and this might lead to mass protests all over the country including in Meghalaya. (NNN)



'Chintan Shivir' commences in Meghalaya under NITI Aayog's Aspirational Block Programme

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 16: In a significant milestone for Meghalaya's progress and development, the state's 'Chintan Shivir' under the NITI Aayog's Aspirational Block Programme was convened by the community & rural development department for the three aspirational blocks of the state recently.

This pivotal event aimed to chart a comprehensive development strategy for the aspirational blocks of Umiling of Ri Bhoi District, Amlarem of West Jaintia Hills district and Resubelpara of North Garo Hills.

Chaired by Raja Brahma, MCS, the additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of Ri Bhoi District, the 'Chintan Shivir' garnered participation from the district and block officials of different line departments including health, social welfare, agriculture, veterinary & animal husbandry, PHE and the C&RD department.

Notable attendees included officials from NITI Aayog; Dr Priscilla C Ngaihte, the regional officer for Northeastern States, Bhaskar Kashyap, assistant director and state nodal officer for the ABP; Himani Sachdeva, consultant specialist; Dr Shelly Dabiya and T Prachi Sharma, young professionals along with Eric Kevin Dkharthe BDO of Umiling C&RD Block, Gameliel L C Mylliem BDO of Amlarem C&RD Block and Verdi Sangma BDO of Resubelpara C&RD Block.

During this intensive 'Chintan Shivir,' attendees were presented with comprehensive data on Umiling, Amlarem and Resubelpara. Moreover, detailed insights into ongoing initiatives across various gov-



ernment departments, spanning healthcare, education, infrastructure, and more, were shared. The core focus remained on enhancing key development indicators while fostering active engagement and participation from local communities.

The event commenced with a welcome speech from Raja Brahma, additional deputy commissioner, shared his experience gained from working in diverse districts. He expressed his commitment to advancing development across multiple districts and extended a warm welcome to

the NITI Aayog team. Drawing from his experiences in the aspirational district of Ri Bhoi, Brahma provided valuable insights.

Dr Priscilla C Ngaihte, the regional officer for Northeastern states, took the stage to address the gathering. She introduced the NITI Aayog team and encouraged active participation by inviting everyone to introduce themselves. Dr Ngaihte emphasised the purpose of the visit, which was to assess the progress of the 'Chintan Shivir' in the block. She mentioned the forthcoming presentation of baseline assessments of Key

Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the documentation thereof.

Furthermore, the block development officer of Umiling C&RD Block, presented their approach and strategy, focusing on the PDIA (Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation) methodology. The BDO of Amlarem and Resubelpara also highlighted the need for ANMs to visit households more frequently, particularly with the establishment of Village Health Councils (VHCs). The VHCs will play a vital role in identifying Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) cases. While discussing the challenges faced by the block, the BDO of Amlarem Block stated, "We have a clear intention to prioritize various sectors, with a strong emphasis on education. We recognize the pressing need for improvement, and our plan is to adopt a community-driven approach to enhance the quality of education."

The blocks demonstrated a commitment to addressing pressing issues and driving progress. Their dedication reflects the vision of the Aspirational Block Programme in transforming underdeveloped regions. Likewise, two dedicated individuals from each aspirational block stepped forward to provide a glimpse into their invaluable work on the ground. They passionately articulated their roles and shared their experiences, illustrating the programme's tangible impact on local communities. These individuals, the unsung heroes of development, showcased how they are instrumental in shaping positive change from the grassroots.

Nagaland DGP's stern warning to state cops

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Sept 16: Nagaland DGP Rupin Sharma has issued final a warning to the state cops who are indulged in alcohol and substance use and keeping unauthorised arms and ammunition.

In a video message on Friday, Sharma said stern disciplinary action, including dismissal from service, will be initiated against those who are involved in these activities. He said this be taken as the final warning.

He said he had been warning the cops against alcohol and substance use for the last seven months.

Sharma asked them to reform themselves or face serious consequences if caught. He also asked their families to understand this.

Stating that the state police have prepared a list of suspects in the first phase, he said the unit commanders have been asked to issue notice to them to go to rehab centres within one week at their own expense.

"If they go for treatment, they will be considered sick, and if they do not do so they will be considered criminals," he said.

Sharma asked them to avail this last chance taking into account their own and their family's welfare.

The state police chief asked the policemen who are still keeping any unauthorised ammunition



with them to hand them over to their unit commanders by September 20.

He assured them that they would be forgiven one last time even if this was a crime or an offence, or else no mercy would be shown if anyone is arrested with unauthorised ammunition or weapon.

Referring to the three cases of ammunition loss of the police department in the last three months, Sharma cautioned that if ammunition or weapons are found to be lost or stolen during annual classification firing, anyone involved in

this act will not be spared and there will be no mercy.

He added not only the people involved in the classification firing but also the supervisors be they ABSIs, ABIs or deputy commanders, commanders or unit commanders will bear responsibility for this.

The DGP specifically asked the unit commanders to ensure physical stocktaking of arms and ammunition when they take charge of their units for their own safety. It will be the incumbent's responsibility if any wrongdoing is detected, he added.

Security forces recover arms & ammunition

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 16: A joint team of Army, Assam Rifles, CAPF and Manipur Police launched an operation in general area of Village Khodang, in district Churachandpur, on a specific intelligence and successfully recovered a huge cache of weapons, ammunition and war like stores. A total of 15 weapons including 14 Improvised Mortars, 1 Single Barrel weapon and other war like stores were recovered. In a similar operation in Thoubal, a joint team of Assam Rifles and Thoubal police launched a search operation in general area Kwarok Maring on Sept 15. During the extensive search of the suspected location, the teams recovered one 9mm Carbine and other war like stores. The recovered items have been handed over to Police.

AASU Demow College unit formed

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, Sept 16: The Demow College unit of AASU formally came to being on Saturday. A meeting was organised in this regard at Lahoti auditorium of Demow College. Rontu Chetia presided over the meeting and Ankur Gogoi, general secretary of AASU Demow College Unit spoke at length about the aims of the meeting.



Minister of defense signs MoA with state referral hospital/ Zoram Medical College, Aizawl for multi-speciality and super-speciality treatment to Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) beneficiaries of Mizoram on Saturday. UB Photos

Minister Atul Bora and APCC executive prez Rana Goswami visit Romuda's residence

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Sept 16: To pay homage to the departed public leader and prominent Assamese leader Pranabjit Chaliha aka 'Romuda', agriculture minister Atul Bora and APCC executive president Rana Goswami on Saturday visited Chaliha's Phukan Nagar residence and conveyed their condolence to the bereaved family members.



Atul Bora recalled his association with Romuda and said that he was an outstanding personality in public life and also in the playing arena. His smashing in volleyball court was hard to resist and so were his dialogues in support of Assamese nationalism. Rana Goswami also met Romuda's wife Raka Chaliha and son Sringkhal and conveyed his feelings.

C-in C of banned ULFA, through a release to the media yesterday, condoled the death of the prominent social leader Pranabjit Chaliha and said his contribution to Assamese society is immeasurable.

Bhojpuri Samaj Sivasagar, Rangpur Sahitya Sabha, Brihattar Sivasagar Press Club, also condoled the death of Romuda like a host of other organisations here.

Cattle loaded vehicles seized at Dholaibil and Besseria in Sonitpur



HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Sept 16: In two separate incidents two cattle-loaded vehicles were seized on Friday night at Dholaibil under Jamugurihat Police Station and on

Thursday evening at Besseria under Bebejia Police Outpost.

As per sources, a cattle-loaded vehicle was seized on Friday at 2 No Borpathar near Dholaibil under Jamugurihat Police Station by the people of the locality.

People on the spot informed that the high speed vehicle bearing Registration no AS28AC0450 loaded with approximately 18 cattle was coming from Gohpur Biswanath Chariail side and entered into the village.

After searching the vehicle, people present on the spot found that the persons in the vehicle along with the driver had already fled away from the spot. Police rushed to the spot and investigation is on to find the details.

Meanwhile, in the other incident, a cattle loaded truck was also seized by police of the Bebejia police outpost under Tezpur Sadar Police Station at Besseria on NH 15 on Thursday night near here with 40 cattle.

As per sources a high speeding truck moving towards Guwahati from Tinsukia hit a car at Balipukhuri on NH 15 and tried to flee away. The persons in the car along with people of the locality followed the fled truck and was able to intercept it at Besseria.

However, after getting the information the police of Bebejia outpost rushed to the spot and seized the cattle loaded truck which was moving from Tinsukia without any legal documents regarding carrying of the cattle. Investigation is being carried out by the police to find out the details.

Manipur govt deploys CAPF at sensitive areas in Manipur



IMPHAL, Sept 16: Manipur government has deployed Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) at two highly sensitive areas in the fringes of valley districts where frequent armed confrontation between the rival groups took place since the violence erupted in strife-torn Manipur.

An official source said that a column of Border Security Force (BSF) has been deployed at High Canal area of Phubala under Moirang police station of Bishnupur district bordering Chingphie hill range of Churachandpur district.

Frequent gunfights have occurred in this area since the outbreak of the violence and in the latest gunfight occurred on September 13, a sub-inspector of Manipur police was killed.

The cross firing between the two rival groups in this area was reported till last night.

A platoon of CRPF has also

been deployed at Bethel village, a village in Kangpokpi district bordering the Koutruk area of Imphal West district, the source said.

There has been frequent gunfight at the Koutruk area from the bunkers erected at Bethel and its adjoining villages.

In the latest cross firing, to note here, at least three armed miscreants were killed on September 12 and a minor girl of 12 staying in her house at Koutruk village was injured after armed miscreants fired several rounds of guns on the previous day.

The CAPFs were deployed in the area as a part of confidence measures being taken up by the state police to restore peace and normalcy in the state.

Security forces have been conducting operations in the fringe and vulnerable areas of the state to disarm miscreants besides dismantling of illegal bunkers erected by the armed miscreants. (NNN)

USTM signs pact with AIC Selco Foundation

Boosting Technology Entrepreneurship among Students

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 16: The USTM and AIC Selco Foundation under Atal Innovation Mission have signed an MoU to collaborate towards creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem with the prime focus of boosting technology Entrepreneurship among students.

The MoU further emphasises on sharing of resources especially mentoring faculties and support systems as per the area of competencies available with both. The MoU signing ceremony was done by Dr S Kalita CEO, AIC Selco



Foundation, and Anju Hazarika, registrar, USTM.

After the MoU signing ceremony, a workshop was conducted

by a team of mentors from AIC Selco Foundation and CIE (Centre for Innovation, Incubation, and Entrepreneurship) USTM. Technical sessions concluded with an idea-pitching session where six groups of students from USTM presented their innovative ideas.

The MoU aims to establish a close linkage and functional coordination between USTM and AIC Selco Foundation for furthering the cause of entrepreneurship and support for vernacular entrepreneurs/innovators in the clean energy sector.

According to the agreement, both institutions will jointly partake and organise, seminars, workshops/events, etc for expert resources and create a strong support model for integration into the AIC-Selco Foundation Incubation Programme. USTM will act as a knowledge partner for the AIC-Selco Foundation by providing resource persons for capacity building, mentoring, or consultation purposes. The MoU further states that the institutions will jointly design the Summer Internship Programme (SIP) for the students of USTM.

Reconstituted CWC holds first meeting; deliberates on road map for assembly, LS polls

HYDERABAD, Sept 16: Top Congress leaders held deliberations on Saturday at the first meeting of the new CWC focusing on preparing a comprehensive road map for ensuring the party's victory in the upcoming assembly polls in five states and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

By holding the crucial Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting in the Telangana capital, the party is also looking to send out a message that it will go all-out to dislodge the BRS government in the poll-bound state.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot, Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel, Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah and general secretaries K C Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh, among others, were present at the meeting. The CWC meeting began around 3 pm, soon after the unfurling of the party flag at the Taj Krishna hotel venue here.

Before the start of the CWC meeting, the first in many years held outside Delhi, Congress chief



Kharge said his party has fought for and ushered in democracy, social justice, progress and equality in the country and will continue to fight to preserve national integrity and unity in diversity.

"In consonance with our long cherished philosophy, the Congress Working Committee will craft a comprehensive road map to lead the party towards victory and strengthen the future of our nation and her people," he said in his message. In his post on X, Kharge also shared former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi's message.

"We had made a promise to the people of Telangana. We have fulfilled that promise," Sonia Gandhi said, referring to the creation of the state of Telangana following the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. She said the Congress has always stood by the aspirations of the people of Telangana.

"Now, it's time to lead the state into a new era of progress and prosperity. The Congress Working Committee stands ready to write a new chapter of development with dignity for all people of Telangana and our nation," she said.

This will be the first CWC meeting after he took over as the party president in October last year.

"The Congress is dedicated to raising the concerns of the common people, and striving to provide them with a government that upholds their rights and aspirations," Rahul Gandhi said in a Facebook post before the meeting.

During the CWC meeting and the deliberations at the extended working committee session on Sunday discussions about party organisation will take place. The leaders will hold discussions regarding the upcoming elections in five states, Kharge said.

The focus of the meetings, he said, will be on strengthening the organisation and discussions on alliances will take place in the meeting of the INDIA bloc.

The brainstorming of the Congress top brass during the meeting would prove to be a "game changer" and a "transformative moment" for Telangana politics as well as the party, according to party leaders.

The party said "free and open" discussions would take place during the CWC, asserting that its internal democracy is what makes it different from other parties.

"Everybody is free to voice his or her opinion, suggestion, or criticism. That is the way our party

functions," Congress media and publicity department head Pawan Khara earlier said. On Sunday, there will be a meeting of the extended CWC to which all state party chiefs and CLP leaders, besides Parliamentary Party office-bearers, Central Election Committee members have been invited to strategize for the upcoming elections.

While the MPs of the party would return to Delhi for the special session of Parliament after the rally, other leaders, CWC members, PCC presidents and CLP leaders will branch out to the various assembly constituencies on September 18.

"The charge sheet against the KCR government will come out, our workers will be there in all assembly constituencies. Along with the leaders, they will participate in this programme," Venugopal earlier said. Kharge had on August 20 reconstituted the CWC, retaining the old guard and giving space to the young in the 84-member body.

The CWC has 39 regular members, 32 permanent invitees and 13 special invitees. These include 15 women and several new faces such as Shashi Tharoor, Sachin Pilot and Gaurav Gogoi who are among the regular members. (PTI)

3 terrorists killed as infiltration bid foiled in J-K

Pak Army gave cover fire to infiltrators: Officials

SRINAGAR, Sept 16: The Pakistan Army gave cover fire to infiltrating terrorists and targeted quadcopters of the Indian Army during a bid to cross the Line of Control in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday that was foiled with the killing of three militants, officials said.

Addressing a press conference in north Kashmir's Uri, Brigadier P M S Dhillon said the operation at Hathlanga in the Uri sector along the LoC was launched early Saturday following specific inputs about infiltration attempts by Pakistan-based outfits.

"We had been receiving intelligence inputs that Pakistani outfits were trying to infiltrate into Uri to destabilise peace in Jammu and Kashmir. So, we strengthened our counter-infiltration and surveillance grid," he said.

"At 6.40 am this morning, despite bad weather, an ambush noticed three to four terrorists trying to cross the LoC in the Hathlanga area. Immediately contact was established and the firefight continued for two hours," he added.

The officer said the army used under-barrel grenade launchers (UBGL), multi-grenade launchers (MGL), and rocket launchers to neutralise the terrorists.

"One terrorist was neutralised. The ambush party then realised

that two injured terrorists had changed their movement. The ambush party then got into a second firefight with them at around 9.15 am which continued for about half an hour and resulted in the neutralisation of the second terrorist," he said. Brigadier Dhillon said the third injured terrorist "exfiltrated" with the help of firing from a nearby Pakistani post.

"The Pakistani Army post gave fire support for his exfiltration and fired towards us. They fired on our quadcopters as well. According to our estimate, the injured terrorist succumbed about 300 metres from the Pakistani post, in the general area. The weather is very bad, but the search continues in the area," he said. The officer said three terrorists from Pakistan have been neutralised in the operation and the bodies of the two have been retrieved.

"This shows how the Pakistan Army backs terrorists and lends them full support to infiltrate. It also establishes how Pakistan Army is involved in destabilising peace in Kashmir," he said.

The security forces also recovered an AK-47 and AK-74 rifle, seven magazines, a five-kg IED, some ammunition, a Chinese pistol and some grenades along with Indian and Pakistani currency from the terrorists. (PTI)

ED arrests Anil Kumar Meena, RPSC member Babulal Katara in paper leak case

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: The Enforcement Directorate has arrested Babulal Katara, Member of Rajasthan Public Service Commission (RPSC), and Anil Kumar Meena in connection with the Paper Leak case in Rajasthan, officials said Saturday.

Katara and Meena were arrested under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act and sent to the custody of ED for three days by a special court, they said.

The directorate had taken over the case filed by Rajasthan Police in connection with the leak of the General Knowledge paper conducted by RPSC for the recruitment of Senior Teacher Grade II between December 21 and 24, 2022. It is alleged that Katara leaked the paper and sold it to Meena who through his syndicate supplied it to candidates for Rs 8-10 lakh, they said.

"Earlier, ED conducted a search at 15 premises of accused persons on 05.06.2023, resulting in recovery of incriminating documents/digital records. Further, ED has also provisionally attached movable & immovable properties worth ₹ 3.11 crore (approx) of Babulal Katara, Anil Meena AKA Sher Singh Meena and others vide Provisional Attachment Order dated 18.08.2023," the agency said in a statement. (PTI)

Vote Modi back to power to avoid infiltration: Shah at rally in Bihar

JHANSHPUR (BIHAR), Sept 16: Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday warned that Bihar's areas close to the borders (seamant) will become "infested with infiltrators" if Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not voted back to power.

Shah, widely regarded as the BJP's "principal strategist", made the remark at a rally in Jhanshpur parliamentary constituency, situated close to Nepal and Bangladesh.

The home minister, who spoke for close to 30 minutes, charged Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar and Rashtriya Janata Dal president Lalu Prasad of pursuing "appeasement politics" through measures like cuts in holidays of government schools.

"I would like to congratulate the people of Bihar for putting up a resistance that forced the state government to withdraw its order whereby holidays on Rakshabandhan, the festival of brothers and sisters, and Jannamashtami, devoted to Lord Krishna, were done away with," said Shah.

The allusion was to the recent protests by teachers across the state which led the education department to withdraw the new calendar which was brought in with the aim of ensuring that classes were held for the requisite number of days in a year.

Continuing with the tirade against "tushitkaran" (appeasement), the home minister slammed the Congress, a partner in the state's ruling alliance, for dragging its feet on Ram temple at Ayodhya and Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

Showering praises on PM Modi for abrogation of Article 370 and making possible the construction of the temple "by January next year", the home minister, however, struck an

alarming note.

"If the Lalu-Nitish duo (jodi) returns to power in Bihar and Narendra Modi does not come back as Prime Minister, the entire region will become infested with infiltrators (saara seamant kshetra ghushpaitiyan se bhar jaaega)," said Shah.

"In such a situation, many types of issues will arise in Bihar (anek prakara ke sawaal khade honge). Do you want the area to be teeming with infiltrators," the home minister asked.

He, however, exuded confidence that the BJP-led NDA, which performed well in Bihar in the last couple of Lok Sabha polls, will win "all 40 seats" of the state in 2024.

Shah also slammed the INDIA coalition for the alleged denigration of "Sanatana Dharma" and claimed that the Congress-led coalition did away with the previous name "UPA" because it had been associated with "scams involving ₹ 12 lakh crore".

"Some of the scams involved Lalu Prasad, who was then the railway minister, to which Nitish Kumar is now turning a blind eye for the sake of his prime ministerial ambitions", alleged Shah.

"But Nitish should know there is no vacancy for the post of the prime minister. His alliance with Lalu is like trying to mix oil with water. The oil does not get dissolved, but water gets contaminated", Shah remarked. Shah also alleged while the chief minister was thinking of becoming the prime minister, his ally was busy making plans to help son (Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav) occupy the highest seat of power in the state.

The former BJP president began his speech with evocative salutations to goddess Sita, who

is believed to have been discovered by King Janaka not very far from the venue of the rally.

The home minister, who slammed the INDIA bloc for alleged denigration of Bihar, underscored the benefits that were likely to accrue to Bihar under the Centre's Ramayana Circuit tourism scheme, which covers many districts of the state. He also claimed that at the G20 presidency, the showcasing of Nalanda and Madhubani paintings were proof of the high esteem in which PM Modi held Bihar's heritage.

"It was at the instance of PM Modi that African Union was included in the G20. I have been travelling across the country since then. Young people feel proud of India's growing influence", claimed the Union home minister.

Charging the Nitish Kumar government with being in deep slumber (Kumbhakaran ki neend) as Bihar, particularly the Mithila region, were reeling under floods and lawlessness (jungle raj), Shah claimed the Modi government has so far given ₹ 5.92 lakh-crore for various projects in Bihar, as against the UPA that spent less than half the amount.

Shah, who reached the venue by a chopper he took at Darbhanga, credited the Modi government for the airport at the north Bihar town and said an allocation of ₹ 1,200 crore has been made to upgrade the one at Patna.

He also blamed the state government for the stalling of construction of AIIMS at Darbhanga "which would have made Bihar a state with more than one such hospital (after Patna)".

"The Nitish Kumar government had allotted a tract of land that was unsuitable for the project. Moreover, they have now taken the entire 81 acres back", alleged Shah. (PTI)

Congress to launch 'Jan Aakrosh' Yatra against 'failures' of MP govt from Sept 19

BHOPAL, Sept 16: The Congress will launch the "Jan Aakrosh" Yatra on September 19 from seven places covering all 230 assembly segments in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh, senior leaders said on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference, MP Congress chief Kamal Nath and AICC in-charge for the state, Ran-deep Singh Surjewala, alleged "rampant corruption" under the BJP government, which they said had "failed" to tackle unemployment and crime against women and Dalits.

"As many as 250 scams have taken place during 225 months of the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh. The dissatisfaction among people against the 18-year rule of Shivraj Singh Chouhan has turned into 'Jan akrosh' (public anger)," Surjewala said. He alleged Madhya Pradesh is witnessing "severe anarchy, crime, fear, atrocities and looting".

"All sections, including tribals, farmers, Dalits, daughters, sons, backward classes and youths, want to remove this government to save the state," Surjewala said and alleged 58,000 women and girls were raped and about 67,000 others were abducted in Madhya Pradesh in the last 18 years. To highlight all these issues, the Congress will take out "Jan Akrosh Yatra" from seven places beginning September 19, he said.

The marches will collectively cover 11,400 kilometres across all 230 seats in Madhya Pradesh in 15 days. Congress leaders, including leader of opposition Govind Singh, former state Congress chief Arun Yadav, ex-ministers Kamleshwar Patel, Jitu Patwari, and Ajay Singh and former Union ministers Suresh Panchoori and Kantilal Bhuria, will lead the Yatra from various locations. During the presser, Surjewala targeted the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government alleging "rampant corruption".

"This government didn't even spare the construction of 'Mahakal Lok' (a corridor at Lord Mahakal temple campus in Ujjain), nutritious meals for children and health schemes from corruption," he alleged. Surjewala referred to the Sidhi urination incident to allege that "atrocities" were being committed against Dalits, women and tribals in the state. The formal schedule for the assembly elections, due in November this year, is yet to be announced. With polls approaching, both the ruling BJP and opposition Congress are trying to reach out to the masses and they have either taken out or planned Yatras.

The BJP has already rolled out "Jan Ashirwad Yatra" to "seek the blessings of the people". The Yatras, being taken out from various places, will culminate in Bhopal on September 25. (PTI)

Explore possibilities of extending benefits of Covid-19 schemes to all orphan children: SC to Centre

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: An orphan is an orphan, irrespective of how the death of his or her parents happened, the Supreme Court has said, asking the Centre if there are ways the benefits of schemes, including PM Cares fund, which were meant for children orphaned during the Covid-19 pandemic, can be extended to all orphans. A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra on Friday asked additional solicitor general Vikramjeet Banerjee, appearing for Centre, to seek instructions in the matter.

"You have rightly brought out a policy for orphans, whose parents died due to the Covid pandemic. An orphan is an orphan, irrespective of whether the parents died in an accident or illness. By bringing these schemes, you are attending to the condition and not the parentage."

"You seek an instruction on whether benefits of schemes including PM Cares fund meant for children orphaned during the Covid-19 pandemic can be extended to other orphaned children," the bench told Banerjee. The ASG said he was recently given a brief to appear in the matter and would respond to the court's query in four weeks' time.

Petitioner Poulomi Pavini Shukla, who appeared in person, said that children orphaned during the pandemic were provided benefits under the Right to Education Act and similar benefits can be given to other orphan children on the court's

direction.

"Two states Delhi and Gujarat have been providing benefits of the Right to Education Act by issuing a simple government order under section 2(d) of the Right to Education Act and this can be done in other states also," Shukla told the bench.

Section 2(d) of the Right to Education Act, 2009, deals with a child belonging to a disadvantaged group -- which means a child belonging to a Scheduled Caste, a Scheduled Tribe, a socially and educationally backward class, or such other group that has a disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economical, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factor, as may be specified by the appropriate government, by notification. (PTI)

The vice president added that it is important to help such artists in a "structured manner" through several schemes launched by the government.

"There are very few countries in the

world whose culture is not more than 500-700 years old. But India's culture is 5,000 years old. Hence, it is important that we appreciate these artists, take care of them, protect them, nurture them, and help them in a structured manner. I am aware that there are several innovative government schemes under which artists are receiving help," Dhankhar said.

A total of 84 artistes, including 70 men and 14 women, received the award at the ceremony.

The list of awardees include Krishen Langoo (theatre and music) from Jammu and Kashmir, John Claro Fernandes (playwriting) from Goa, Mahabir Nayak (folk music and dance) from Jharkhand and Tsering Stanzin (folk music) from Ladakh.

Three artistes from Andhra Pradesh, two from Arunachal Pradesh and six from Maharashtra also received the prestigious award. Three from Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat

and two each from Punjab and Delhi were also selected.

Four award recipients each are from Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal, Manipur, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka while five each from Assam and Rajasthan also received the prize.

The awardees received ₹ 1 lakh, besides a 'Tamrapatra' and 'Angavastram'.

Sandhya Purecha, chairman of Sangeet Natak Akademi, said that the Akademi is awarding those artists who have given a lifetime to preserve and protect Indian arts and culture.

"All of you represent the diverse cultural fields and arts of India. All of you are experts in your respective fields and have maintained the continuity of the Indian culture through your practices. You have made an important contribution to keeping the Indian heritage alive. This is a reward for that contribution," Purecha said. (PTI)

Kerala govt working to identify area, source of first Nipah case

KOZHIKODE (KERALA), Sept 16: After identifying the man who was the patient zero or index case of the Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, the state government on Saturday began looking for the source and place from where he got infected by seeking details of his mobile tower locations. Kerala Health Minister Veena George said while the state government was trying to determine where and how the man got infected, the central team was collecting bat samples to ascertain the viral load.

She also claimed that the state's efforts to combat the virus outbreak were appreciated by the central team.

The government was also focusing on completing contact tracing in respect of the sixth person who was confirmed, on Friday, to have been infected by the virus, the minister told reporters here.

She also said that there were no new positive cases and in a relief for the state, 94 samples -- of persons from the high-risk contact list -- have come back negative for the virus.

Meanwhile, 21 people at the Kozhikode medical college and two kids at the Institute of Maternal and Child Health (IMCH) were in isolation, George said.

Everyone, including a nine-year-old boy on a ventilator, who is under treatment for the virus or is in isolation is stable, she added.

The minister said that all those infected are part of the first wave of the infection which has manifested in two clusters --



one being the two family members of the man who was the index case and the second being the persons who came into contact with him at the hospital he went for treatment.

The man who has been identified as the index case died on August 30 and it was only much later it was found that he was infected with Nipah.

His nine-year-old son and brother-in-law are still undergoing treatment along with two others, one of them a health worker,

with whom he came into contact at a hospital.

The second fatality due to Nipah occurred on September 11 and the victim had come into contact with the man who was the index case at the same hospital as the others, George said.

Regarding the monoclonal antibody, the only viable therapeutic against the virus, the minister said that according to the Centre it was 50-60 per cent stable and it has asked the state government to explore the possibility of getting a new version of the antibody.

"Presently, according to the doctors, the patients under treatment do not require it," she said.

However, the state requested the Centre's support for expediting the process required for importing the monoclonal antibody and the same was assured.

She also said that a meeting of the core committee was held earlier in the day to chalk out the further course of action.

State Tourism Minister P A Mohamed Riyas, who was present with George at the press briefing, said the control room, call centres and volunteers were doing an excellent job of instilling confidence in the public and creating awareness among them about the virus.

Kozhikode city mayor Beena Philip, meanwhile, said all the wards where the man, who was the index case, went have been declared as containment zones.

"He has moved around a lot. Therefore, the contact list is expected to get bigger," she said.

Kozhikode District Collector A Geetha said that arrangements have been made for online classes in educational institutions for the coming week and instructed students not to engage in holiday-related celebrations.

The Collector also said that Beyerport harbour will remain closed till further orders as it falls in one of the containment zones and provided two alternative locations for landing fishing vessels and sale of the catch.

The Centre on Friday decided to procure from Australia 20 more doses of monoclonal antibody through the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for treatment of those infected by Nipah.

The Kerala Health department had on Friday said it has identified a total of 1,080 people in the contact list of the positive patients and has started collecting samples.

It had earlier announced that everyone who is on the high-risk contact list of the infected persons will be tested.

The ICMR's National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune had sent its mobile BSL-3 (Biosafety Level-3) laboratory to Kozhikode to test the samples for the virus in the district.

This is the fourth time the viral infection has been confirmed in the state. It was detected in Kozhikode in 2018 and 2021 and in Ernakulam in 2019.

The World Health Organisation and ICMR studies have found that the entire state, not just Kozhikode, is prone to such infections. (PTI)

All-party meet on Parliament's Session eve today

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: Ahead of the Parliament session, the government will hold a meeting with leaders of all parties on Sunday to brief them and hear their views, amid an intense buzz on whether it will have some surprise item up its sleeve during the five-day sitting.

The unusual timing of the session, which begins on Monday, has left everyone wondering, even though the main stand-out feature on the listed agenda is a special discussion on Parliament's journey of 75 years starting from the "Samvidhan Sabha" (Constituent Assembly).

The government has also listed the bill on the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other election commissioners to be taken up for consideration and passage during the session. The bill was introduced in Rajya Sabha during the last Monsoon session.

The government enjoys the prerogative of tabling in Parliament some new legislation or other items that might not have been part of the listed agenda. Though there is no official word on any probable new legislation, there has been some talk about a bill to ensure quota for women in elected legislatures like Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

What has added to the anticipation around the session is the strong likelihood of Parliament



being shifted to the new building which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 28. Various departments of parliamentary staff are all set to don new uniforms in a signal from the government that the shift to the new building is likely to be marked with a fresh start in more ways than one.

The successful G20 summit in the national capital under India's presidency has added to Modi's appeal and is set to be a major talking point of the treasury benches during the session.

The new dress code with floral motif for a section of staff has already kicked up a political row, with the Congress dubbing it as a "cheap" tactic to promote the ruling party's poll symbol - the lotus flower.

While announcing the session, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi had described it as "special session". But the government had later made it clear that it was a regular session, 13th session of the present Lok Sabha and 261st session of Rajya Sabha.

Usually, Budget, Monsoon and Winter sessions of Parliament are held every year. The Monsoon session was held in July-August while the Winter session is due in November-December.

The Budget session has a fixed time of commencement from January end of every year.

The gap between the two sessions cannot be more than six months.

As of now, the government has listed a special discussion on Parliament's journey of 75 years

starting from the Samvidhan Sabha on the first day of the session.

Besides the discussion on "Parliamentary Journey of 75 years starting from Samvidhan Sabha - Achievements, Experiences, Memories and Learnings" scheduled for September 18, the other listed business for Lok Sabha includes 'The Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023' and 'The Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023', already passed by Rajya Sabha on 3 August 2023.

Besides, 'The Post Office Bill, 2023' has also been listed in the Lok Sabha business, according to an official bulletin. The bill was earlier introduced in Rajya Sabha on 10 August 2023. The list of business is tentative and more items can be added.

On August 31, Joshi, while announcing the "special session" of Parliament for five days from September 18, did not spell out any specific agenda for it. "Amid Amrit Kaal, looking forward to having fruitful discussions and debate in Parliament," Joshi had posted on X.

Sharing the agenda for the special Parliament session on X, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh had said it "is much ado about nothing" and all this could have waited till the Winter session in November, but added that the government could be having "legislative grenades" up its sleeve. (PTI)

BJP, BRS to celebrate merger of erstwhile Hyd princely state today

HYDERABAD, Sept 16: Poll-bound Telangana will witness hectic activity here on Sunday, especially over the commemoration of the merger of this erstwhile princely state with the Indian union 75 years ago, with the BJP, ruling BRS and AIMIM having lined up events to mark the day.

The Congress, fancying its chances of another electoral win in the south, is likely to sound the poll bugle with its announcement of 'guarantees', in a bid to repeat a winning strategy in neighbouring Karnataka earlier this year. Meanwhile, the Congress is holding its Working Committee (CWC) meeting today and an extended session on Sunday in the city.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah would attend 'Hyderabad Liberation Day' event, organised by the Central government to mark the merger of this erstwhile princely state on September 17, 1948. The event is scheduled to be held at the Parade Grounds in the city.

Shah had attended the celebrations last year as well which was organised officially by the Centre for the first time. Separately, ruling BRS founder and Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao will be participating in the "National Integration Day," organised by the state government to mark the merger.

The Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM would organise a 'Tiranga bike rally' followed by a public meeting on Sunday to commemorate "National Integration Day".

September 17 is interpreted differently by different parties in Telangana. The BJP celebrates the day as "Telangana Liberation Day", to commemorate the region's freedom from the then Nizam rule. The saffron party has been fighting for its official celebration by the governments for over two decades now. It has been critical of the incumbent BRS government for not organising an official function despite being in favour of it during the Telangana statehood agitation. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Amrit Brikshya Andolan- A people led

What sets this Andolan apart is its pioneering women-led approach to tree planting, making it an innovative effort that advances economic and social empowerment for women. By actively engaging women in all facets of the initiative, it offers frontline workers, particularly women, a platform to showcase their leadership capabilities and contribute significantly to environmental preservation.

To give Amrit Brikshya a sound legal framework, our government has made significant change in regulations relating to the forestry sector. Aimed to enhance the Ease of Doing Business, the government has recently enacted the Assam Wood Based Industry (Promotional and Development) Rules 2022 and Tree Outside Forest (Sustainable Management) Rules 2022. These regulations will exempt farmers/growers from obtaining permission for felling trees outside forest areas. The objective is to incentivize them to cultivate commercially valuable tree species. This approach seeks to raise their earnings, enhance the state's forested areas, and entice investments in industries related to timber and wood products.

Assam is expecting to achieve a significant number of world records through this Jan Bhagidari Andolan. Such as largest sapling distribution, most trees planted by a team of 100 in one hour, largest tree Mosaic among many others. People of the state have already shown their enthusiasm. Over 47 lakh people have already joined this movement through our app. Amrit Brikshya is considered to be an ongoing and continuous endeavor and not merely an event. We intend to plant 3 crore saplings in 2024 and another 5 cr sapling in 2025. In short, in the next 2 years we shall have planted 9 cr trees in the state through this campaign. This movement exemplifies our resolve to launch an andolan that secures our present and improves our future.

Tuliram's silence on 'give

is against the 'give and take' policy then why is it silent when such incidents have been taking place. The chief executive member (CEM) of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang has not uttered a single sentence before the media to express his disagreement on the 'give and take' policy."

Engti made it clear that the demarcation of the inter-state boundary should be as per 1951 official notified boundaries. He said not an inch of land of West Karbi Anglong can be transferred to the neighbouring state.

On the allotment of 18,000 bighas of land to APDCL the KADCC vice president said if there is waste land then they have no objection, but the solar power plant cannot be set-up on cultivable land.

"Out of 18,000 bighas 12,000 bighas land belong to the indigenous tribes. By setting up Assam police command training camp, solar power plant and allowing the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited to construct bypass roads along the inter-state boundary, losing huge land is not the only options for protecting the boundary. The villagers only know that they will get compensation for their land, but will not understand the future consequences," Engti said. On the delimitation of constituencies, Engti said that he even spoke in the meeting convened by Election Commission of India in Guwahati that no areas should be shifted or transferred to another district or constituencies.

However, in the final publication of LA constituencies several areas in both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong are shifted to other districts and constituencies. "We are not satisfied and corrections should be made," Engti demanded. He also said due to the sudden increase of the percentage of premium of land value by the land and revenue department the indigenous people are unable to acquire land pattas. In Sixth Schedule districts such increase of land revenue is a problem for the indigenous people.

Former CEM, KAAC and general secretary, ASDC, Jotson Bey said the pressure put by a single organization or party is not effective and the fifteen organizations will work collectively to pressurize the government.

The 15 organisations are JCCPA, Tribal People Confederation, Assam (TPCA), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), CPI(ML), Anti-Corruption Foundation of India (ACFI), Karbi Students Union, Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), KSA of Jemson Timung and Samson Teron factions, Karbi Unemployed Youth Association (KUYA), Karbi Nimso Chingthur Asong (KNCA), Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (KADCC), Karbi Rong Asar Amei (KRAA), Karbi Farmers Association (KFA) of Tingku Engti faction, and Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA).

NIT-Silchar student

At one point, we had to lathi charge to control the situation. We are now investigating the matter," he said. In the lathi charge, 40 students were injured and they were sent to the Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH) for treatment. The conditions of some of the students are stated to be critical, officials said.

NIT-Silchar director, Dilip Kumar Baidya said he has sympathy for the student who died, but he had a bad academic record. "Some students fail, and they come with illegitimate demands," he said, commenting on the incident. Cachar's district commissioner Rohan Kumar Jha visited the campus and formed a committee that will investigate the incident. The students, however, said that they would continue their protest in a democratic manner. "Our classmate died because of the wrong decisions of the authorities, we'll continue our protest till justice is served," said one of the protesters. A large police contingent was deployed at the campus, along with one company of the central reserve police force, the SP said. (PTI)

Cloudburst triggers floods

process as soon as possible. Sona also communicated the urgency of the situation to Chief Minister Pema Khandu and his deputy Chowna Mein, seeking their assistance to address this crisis. The hydro power stations located in Lhallung village serve as the lifeline of electricity supply for Mechukha township and its adjoining areas. (PTI)

Naga peace talks: MLAs

The pact came after over 80 rounds of negotiations spanning 18 years, with the first breakthrough in 1997 when the ceasefire agreement was sealed after decades of insurgency in Nagaland, which started soon after Independence in 1947. However, the final solution is yet to see the light of the day mainly because of the unwillingness of the government to accept the NSCN(IM)'s persistent demand for a separate flag and constitution. (PTI)

2022-23 challenging year

charge) and other members of the board and shareholders of the company. In his address, Chairman BCPCL expressed gratitude to the valued stakeholders for their continued support and confidence. "2022-23 had been a challenging year for the company due to spiraling feedstock price and relatively low polymer price. Following a maintenance shutdown during the first quarter of the financial year and despite odds, the company was able to demonstrate healthy financial management with the external rating maintained at AA+ by CRISIL and Acuite Ratings," said Sandeep Kumar Gupta.

India to import cheetahs

even tiger introduction in that area has not succeeded. Two adult tigers and cubs have already died (there) because of heavy parasitic load and heavy tick infection in that area. There are a number of issues in Mukundra. I don't think right now Mukundra is prepared to receive or to successfully harbour cheetahs."

He acknowledged that one of the biggest challenges faced in the first year of managing cheetahs in India was the unexpected development of winter coats by some cheetahs during the Indian summer and monsoon, in anticipation of the African winter (June to September). Even African experts did not expect it, the senior forest official said.

Yadav explained that the winter coat, combined with high humidity and temperatures, caused itching, prompting the animals to scratch their necks on tree trunks or the ground. This led to bruises and exposed skin, where flies laid their eggs, resulting in maggot infestations and, ultimately, bacterial infections and septicemia, leading to death.

"Some cheetahs did not develop winter coats and remained infection-free. They are better suited to Indian conditions. Therefore, in our next cheetah import, we will be very careful in animal selection. We will prefer animals that either do not develop winter coats or develop thinner ones," the head of Project Cheetah said.

Yadav said one of the most significant achievements of the first year of the project is the successful natural hunting behaviour observed among the cheetahs in the wild. "They have demonstrated great skill in hunting, protecting their kills, and adapting to the environment. These indications are extremely encouraging, and I believe we have accomplished numerous milestones within just one year of completing Project Cheetah," he said.

Since March, six of these adult cheetahs have died due to various reasons. In May, three of the four cubs born to a female Namibian cheetah succumbed to extreme heat. The remaining cub is being raised under human care for future wilding. (PTI)

Assam theatre festival

Jagiroad Natyagosthi's 'Ekalabya' was performed on the second night, which revolves around a rape victim and showcases her struggle to get justice against the accused, who is linked to a powerful politician of the area. 'Jiban Zindabad' by Jorhat Theatre was staged on the third night. It is a family drama that narrates how a family deals with problems when the father gets paralyzed.

The fourth night featured Agartala-based Somankur's 'Bodhoday' based on a tale of a teenage Muslim girl, who takes a room on rent in a house of a Hindu family. The story revolves around the clash between the two sides, especially the tenant and the wife of the house owner. (PTI)

NIA raids 31 locations to foil ISIS-inspired recruitment drive

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: The National Investigation Agency on Saturday raided 31 locations in Tamil Nadu and Telangana to thwart a radicalisation and recruitment campaign by proscribed global terror group ISIS, an official said.

Several digital devices, documents and incriminating books in vernacular and Arabic languages, and Rs 60 lakh as well as USD 18,200 in cash were seized during the searches, a spokesperson of the federal anti-terror agency said.

The official said the agency is in the process of examining the data in the seized mobile phones, laptops and hard discs.

NIA teams raided 22 locations in Coimbatore, three in Chennai and one in Kadayannallur of Tenkasi district in Tamil Nadu, and another five locations in Telangana's Hyderabad, the spokesperson said.

The searches were conducted in connection with a case, registered by NIA Chennai under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, that pertains to clandestine operations by a group of individuals to radicalize gullible youth, the official said. (PTI)

K'taka minister Rajanna pitches for three more deputy chief ministers

TUMAKURU (K'TAKA), Sept 16: Cooperation minister K N Rajanna on Saturday floated the idea of having three more deputy chief ministers in Karnataka, and said he will discuss it with the Congress high command, keeping in mind the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

He pitched for deputy chief minister posts to be given to leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities.

Currently, D K Shivakumar from the Vokkaliga community is the Deputy Chief Minister in the Siddaramaiah-led cabinet. He is also the state Congress President.

"Lok Sabha elections are at our doorstep, we are seeing that all the parties are making preparations for the polls. It is our intention that the Congress should win the maximum number of seats in Karnataka, we are also confident that we will win," Rajanna told reporters here.

"One post (DCM) should be given to a leader from the SC/ST community, second for a minority community leader and third for a Veerashaiva community leader as there is a feeling the community has gone away from the Congress and it has been proved from this Assembly poll results that the Veerashaiva community votes has

mostly come back to the party," he added.

Rajanna, pitching for three DCMs is notwithstanding the Congress' decision that Shivakumar will be "the only" Deputy CM amid stiff competition between him and Siddaramaiah for the chief minister's post after the Assembly election results in May this year.

It was said that him (Shivakumar) being the only DCM was one among the commitments which the Congress leadership made to Shivakumar, while convincing him to give up his claim for the CM post and to take up the role of deputy chief minister.

Noting that it is his personal opinion (appointing three more Deputy CMs) to get more support from SC/STs, minorities and the Veerashaiva community, the minister said he felt it would be right to share it with the party high command.

"I have decided to write a letter to Congress high command in this regard and will do so in a couple of days. As the Congress Working Committee meeting is on in Hyderabad, they will all be busy, and I too will be busy with general body meetings of Cooperatives in September, so I will be meeting all our high command leaders in the

first week of next month and will try to convince them on this," he added. Asked who should be given the deputy CM posts, Rajanna, from the ST community, said according to him, it was for the high command to decide.

"I don't want (DCM post), but the high command should give it to leaders from these communities. The high command decision is our decision," he said.

Noting that several people in the party shared a similar opinion (about having more DCMs), Rajanna said they have told him personally his proposal was good for the party's interests.

Asked whether Shivakumar and his brother- D K Suresh, an MP, were upset with him for pitching for more DCMs, he said, "why will they be upset, I haven't spoken against them. Shivakumar is a DCM and party state unit President. He is ably organising the party as he is a good organisation man. I don't think there is a need for him to get upset."

Shivakumar had chosen not to respond to Rajanna's statement to a news channel on Friday calling for three deputy CMs, while Suresh told reporters, "You should ask Rajanna about it...he is the one running the government." (PTI)

Last diesel-run double-decker bus of Mumbai drives into history



MUMBAI, Sept 16: As Mumbaikars bid adieu to the last diesel-run double-decker bus of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking, commuters and staffers reminisced about their journey in the iconic red vehicle that became a symbol of the city itself.

"Hello, Mumbai Police? I'd like to report the theft of one of my most important childhood memories," wrote industrialist Anand Mahindra on 'X', echoing the loss felt by many Mumbaikars. The bus started its final trip on route 415 from the Andheri railway station to SEEPZ village in the western suburbs around 11.05 pm on Friday. After reaching the destination, it headed for Marol depot of BEST.

"I had a memorable journey with the double-decker bus for 15 years. It was 'Mumbai ki shaan' (Mumbai's pride) and we are not going to see it again. We distributed old tickets to commuters during the final trip as a special ticket," said Gopal Sutake, the conductor of the 415 route bus. The era of red diesel-run double-deckers, introduced on the city streets 86 years ago, thus came to an end. New, shiny red-and-black battery-operated (EV) double-deckers have already begun to ply since February this year.

However, three open-deck diesel-run double-deckers used for sightseeing tours in South Mumbai are still in operation. These buses will go off the road on October 5, BEST officials said. Decorated with garlands of flowers and balloons, the last diesel-run double-decker rolled out of BEST's Marol depot on Friday morning and caught the eyeballs throughout the day. People were seen clicking photos and selfies inside and outside the bus.

"Bye bye #doubledecker buses. a lovely way to travel parts of the city. Nothing compares on the road not even my #Audi #Mumbai," wrote Anand Sivashankar on 'X'. Members of the commuter group 'Aapali BEST Aaplyasathi' and a few bus lovers were present at Andheri East to bid farewell to the double-decker on its last journey. Rupesh Shelatkar, president of 'Aapali BEST Aaplyasathi', told PTI that apart from common citizens, celebrities like Junior Mehmood, a famous Bollywood actor, were also present there. A cake was cut at the hands of BEST drivers and conductors. The passengers and assembled bus lovers clapped their hands and expressed gratitude for the bus.

Shelatkar said that the bus was running full throughout the day as many people wanted to

ride on it for one last time. Some wanted to experience the nostalgia of sitting in the front seat on the upper deck and enjoying the cool breeze.

"Since the iconic double-decker buses served Mumbai for the last 86 years, we wanted to give it a grand farewell as gratitude and we were really overwhelmed. But we urge the BEST administration to preserve at least a couple of these old double-decker buses in its museum, considering the love of Mumbaikars for this model," he said. The bus was to make its last trip from Andheri East at 9.19 pm, but due to public demand, BEST ran some extra services, he said. It was an emotional day for Yash Vinay Surve, one of the commuters who took the final ride.

"I have spent my childhood enjoying rides in double-decker buses. We have requested the BEST administration to keep at least one bus of each model at its museum in Anik depot," he said. The first double-decker bus was introduced on Mumbai roads in 1937, a decade after BEST launched its bus service in the growing city. Till the mid-1990s, BEST had around 900 double-decker buses in its fleet. The number began to decrease and around 125 buses were left in 2010. By 2019, it had dwindled to 50.

"A total of 900 air-conditioned double-decker bus services will be provided to the people of Mumbai by the end of July 2024," the BEST said in its release.

"Since the newly-introduced buses are air-conditioned and electric, the future generations will miss out on the joy of racing up the stairs to get a seat on the top deck and enjoying the view with the breeze hitting faces," Varun Dikshit, a commuter said. Another commuter Dikshoshi Mishra created a special memory with her daughter by taking the last ride on the bus from SEEPZ.

"I have so many memories of travelling in the double-decker bus as a child with my father. I can't get those days back. But I created a special memory with my daughter as we took a ride on the bus from SEEPZ. She played my favourite song 'Ae dil hain mushkil jeena yaha, Jara hatke jara bachke ye hain Bombay meri jaan' on her flute during our last ride on the bus," she said. (PTI)



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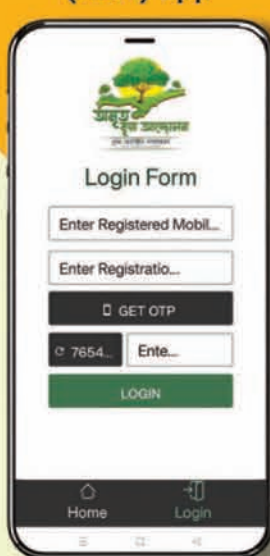
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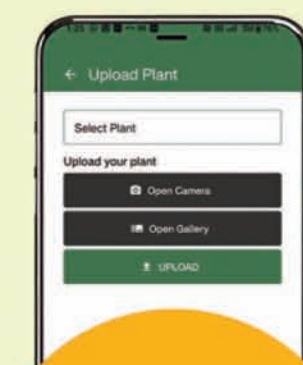
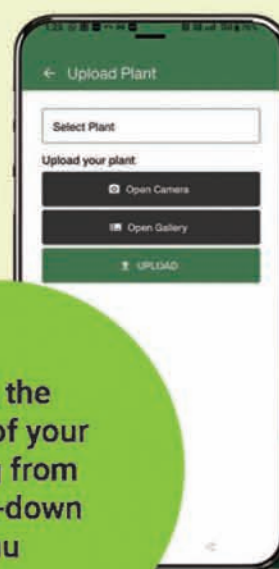
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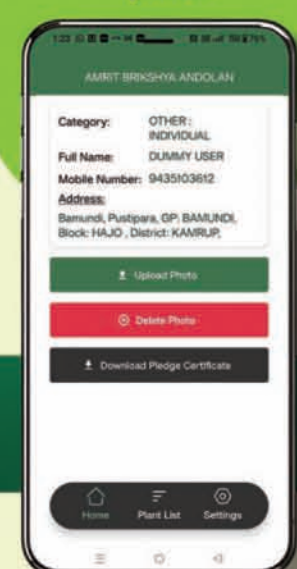


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Women's World Cup winners maintain boycott of Spain's national team

BARCELONA, Sept 16: The new coach of Spain's women's team had to delay the announcement of her first squad Friday after nearly all of the country's World Cup-winning players maintained their boycott of the national team as part of their fight against sexism in soccer. Spain coach Montse Tomé was set to announce her squad on Friday. But 20 minutes before she was supposed to hold a news conference, the federation said it was postponed to a time to be determined.

The federation said the players had rejected their attempts to convince them to return to the team early on Friday.

That leaves Tomé with the difficult decision of whether to still call up the players revolting, or select a completely different team for upcoming Nations League games against Sweden and Switzerland on Sept. 22 and 26. According to Spanish sports law, athletes are required to answer the call of its national teams unless there are circumstances that impede them from playing, such as an injury.

Spain's women have had little chance to celebrate their greatest soccer achievement because Luis Rubiales, the now former president of the federation, caused an uproar when he kissed player Jenni Hermoso on the lips at the awards ceremony in Sydney on Aug. 20.

The team members, along with dozens

of other players, responded to his subsequent refusal to step down in the days after the kiss by announcing that they would not play for their nation again until the federation underwent deep reforms and had new leadership.

The federation has been in upheaval since. Rubiales was first suspended by soccer governing body FIFA, then his interim replacement fired women's national team coach Jorge Vilda, who was unpopular with players. Rubiales himself eventually resigned under immense pressure.

Many expected that the firing of Vilda and the exit of Rubiales would clear the path for the return of the players, but the players want more changes and, it appears, more officials and employees to be removed from the federation.

The players, through the FUTPRO players' union, issued a statement Friday signed by 21 of its 23 World Cup winners, and 18 other players, explaining that "the changes that have been made are not sufficient."

In the statement, the players said they want interim president Pedro Rocha, who was picked to succeed him by Rubiales, to also step down; the women's team staff to be overhauled; and for personnel changes to also be made to the cabinet of the federation's presidency and secretary general, the press relations and marketing department, and its integrity department charged with fighting discrimination.



tegrity department charged with fighting discrimination.

"The charges we specified to the federation are based on showing zero tolerance toward people, who from their position in the federation, have practiced, incited, covered up or applauded attitudes that discriminate against women," the players' statement read.

They concluded their statement by saying "what most fills us with pride is wearing the shirt of the national team."

Athena del Castillo and Claudia Zornoza, both Real Madrid players, were the only two women from the World Cup team not to sign the statement.

Zornoza said on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, that she was retiring from international soccer at the age of 32.

"The moment has arrived for me to say goodbye and focus on my objectives with Real Madrid," the midfielder said. "I desire with all my strength that for once and for all the areas of the national team change so they can be at the same level as our achievements."

Last year, 15 players similarly rebelled, asking for more "professional" coaching from Vilda. The federation — led by Rubiales — firmly backed Vilda, and only three of those players relented

and were eventually included in the World Cup squad.

Quietly, however, the player revolt did appear to lead to some changes. The staff was increased to more than 60 members to accompany the team to Australia and New Zealand, the team flew on chartered flights, and players were given money to help bring their families along. Players with children were also given time to spend with them.

With Rubiales — Vilda's biggest supporter — out of the way, the federation has sided more fully with the players during this second rebellion. In Vilda's place, the federation hired Tomé, his former assistant, as the first female coach of Spain's women's team.

Spain midfielder Alexia Putellas, a two-time Ballon d'Or winner, said Wednesday that the players want sweeping reform.

"We are asking for changes so no woman, inside or outside of soccer, should ever have to experience again situations of disparagement, disrespect, or abuse," Alexia said. "We need consensus, courage and leadership from the institutions, please. This is why we will not stop here."

The federation followed that with a statement saying that Rocha would lead "a process of transition" until the federation can hold elections.

But it also asked for time, in an appar-

ent appeal to the players.

"A call has also been made in favor of dialogue and cooperation given the especially atypical scenario that the Spanish national team is going through," the federation said. "The federation wants to reinforce its commitment with the world champions, whom the federation is enormously proud of."

Rocha added in his own words: "It is fundamental to guarantee the future of Spanish soccer that we carry out transformations in a progressive manner and recover the dignity and credibility lost after the incidents at the World Cup."

"It is fundamental that our players, the media and society at large understand this and help us carry it out. A lot is at stake and we must be aware of that."

Spain is part of a joint bid along with Portugal and Morocco — and possibly Ukraine — to host the 2030 men's World Cup. The Spanish government has warned the federation that the Rubiales controversy could hurt the bid's prospects.

The latest chaotic day for the federation coincided with Rubiales denying any wrongdoing to a judge investigating accusations by state prosecutors that the ex-official committed sexual assault and coercion against Hermoso. The judge placed a restraining order on Rubiales, prohibiting him from being within 200 meters (yards) of Hermoso. (AP)

Winning Asia Cup is important for momentum ahead of World Cup: Gill

COLOMBO, Sept 16: Opener Shubman Gill said a victory in the Asia Cup final against Sri Lanka on Sunday is important because it will give the team a lot of momentum ahead of the World Cup beginning next month. The 24-year-old said a victory here will instill in the team a winning habit, and fill them with confidence.

"Winning the (Asia Cup) final is very important for us because we need to create a winning habit. Peaking at the right time and gaining momentum at the right time is important," he said during the post-match press conference on Friday night.

"It is also important to maintain that momentum because losing in one or two matches can add pressure. Winning here will give us a lot of momentum and confidence going into the World Cup."

India had lost their Super Four match against Bangladesh by six runs on Friday night, but Gill said they have not lost any momentum ahead of the summit clash.



"I don't think we have lost any momentum. I think we gave away extra 10-15 runs to their (Bangladesh) lower-order batters, but that apart we played some good cricket."

"But these things happen on such kinds of wickets. Hopefully, we can execute these lessons in the final (of Asia Cup) and in the World Cup."

Gill said Sri Lanka have been playing good cricket, and India needed to be at their best to beat them in the final.

"I think they (SL) have great momentum with them. The way they won the last match (against Pakistan) was great to see."

"We will have to pull up our socks, and we have to be at our 100 percent to beat them," he said. Gill said playing on slow-turning pitches in the Asia Cup will stand India in good stead during the approaching World Cup.

"It is a great practice for batsmen and bowlers because these are the kind of pitches that we generally play in India."

"Playing on these wickets against good teams against good oppositions under pressure will definitely help us in the World Cup," he said. (PTI)

U-16 national football skipper Mate yet to meet parents in Manipur

IMPHAL, Sept 16: Ngamgouhou Mate, who led the Under-16 Indian football team to victory at the South Asian Football Federation championship in Bhutan's capital Thimpu recently, said he was yet to meet his parents since returning to his home state Manipur four days ago.

The teenager told PTI. "I reached Kangpokpi on September 12 and have been living in a relief camp there. Though it has been four days since I reached the state, I am yet to meet my father and mother. This is a heartfelt sadness which I have."

India's U-16 team won the SAFF U-16 Championship by beating Bangladesh 2-0 in the title clash in Thimpu on Sunday.

Manipur's Bharat Lairenjam (8th minute) found the net in the first half, while Levis Zangminlun (74th), also from the same state, sealed the victory with a second-half goal at the Changlimithang Stadium. The 23-member squad of the U-16 Indian national team had at least thirteen players from Manipur. "I started playing football from a very young age and later joined Classic Football Academy in Imphal for training back in 2021," the team's captain, Mate, said.

"I wish to become a professional football player of international repute," Mate, who plays midfield for the country, said, adding one of his favourite international players is Spain's Rodrigo.

Sharing his Bhutan experience, Mate said, "In the first match against Bangladesh, we faced breathing



issues in the first half due to high altitude, but gradually adjusted to the conditions in the second half."

Mate, lovingly called Albert by his father Kapa Lal, said he desperately prays for the return of peace in the state. Hailing from Zion village near Pallei in Tengnoupal district, Mate's father Kapa Lal told PTI. "To facilitate his football training and education of his elder sister, we rented a house at my elder brother's place in Khongsai Veng in Imphal."

"I had also bought a two-wheeler for my son to enable him to go for his training, but unfortunately that was vandalised in the violence," Kapa Lal said.

"When violence broke out in May, it was a heartbreaking moment as I was not with my children in Imphal and my daughter had to stay on the premises of the 2nd Manipur Rifles for at least four days before she was evacuated." (PTI)

Rayo Vallecano beats Alaves 2-0 after back-to-back losses in Spanish league

MADRID, Sept 16: Rayo Vallecano recovered from back-to-back losses in the Spanish league to beat Alaves 2-0 at home on Friday. Isi Palazon converted a penalty two minutes before halftime, and summer signing Jorge de Frutos sealed the win with a goal off a counterattack in the 82nd. Alvaro Garcia played a key role in both goals. The winger was fouled in the area to set up Isi's spot kick, and he provided the assist for De Frutos in the second goal. Rayo is coached by Francisco Rodriguez after Andoni Iraola left to take over Bournemouth in the off-season. Rayo started the season with two wins before it was routed 7-0 at home by Atletico Madrid and then lost 1-0 at Real Betis before Friday's victory. (AP)

Ten Hag unsure if Jadon Sancho will play for Man United again

MANCHESTER, Sept 16: After Jadon Sancho was forced to train away from Manchester United's first team because of a "discipline issue," manager Erik ten Hag said Friday that he doesn't know if the winger will play for the club again and that his squad must abide by his strict rules.

Sancho claimed on social media that he had been made a "scapegoat" after being cut from United's squad for its 3-1 loss to Arsenal this month. He is now on a "personal training program" until the matter is resolved, United said.

Ahead of Saturday's Premier League home game against Brighton, Ten Hag was

asked directly whether Sancho would put on the United jersey again. He answered: "I don't know. I am sitting here. Tomorrow we have a big game, we are going into a new block of games, many games in a condensed program. I focus on that."

Ten Hag added: "He is not available, so in this moment, he is not important, because he can't contribute."

Ten Hag, who has previously taken a hardline stance after transgressions by Cristiano Ronaldo and Marcus Rashford, declined to go into detail about Sancho. But he made it clear he intended to stamp his authority on the club.

"Strict lines is what the club asked me because there was no good culture before I entered last season," the Dutch coach said. "So to set good standards, that is what I did and it is my job to control the standards."

"Of course, it is never (the case that) someone only makes one mistake, it is a whole process before you come to a certain outcome about strict lines. If (it is) staff or players or whoever, there is a structure to cross lines so you have to be strong."

Ten Hag had said Sancho was dropped from the Arsenal game because of his performances in training. (AP)

Travis Head's WC participation in doubt after fracturing left hand



CENTURION, Sept 16: Travis Head's participation at next month's World Cup has been thrown into uncertainty after the Australian opener fractured his left hand during the fourth ODI against South Africa.

Head was struck on the left glove by a short delivery from Proteas seamer Gerald Coetzee in the seventh over in the fourth ODI here on Friday.

The 29-year-old faced three more deliveries but looked in discomfort and was forced to retire hurt in Australia's massive 164-run loss.

"It's a confirmed fracture," Australia head coach Andrew McDonald said at the post match conference.

"As to the nature of what sort of time frame that lends itself to, that will be assessed tomorrow," he added.

More scans on Saturday will reveal the extent of the injury.

"He's going to go in for more scans tomorrow to get a detail of

that, then we'll work out the management of it from there.

"I'm not a medical person but I think it's a bit higher up than the finger itself ... it's in a joint (in the hand) somewhere. Fingers crossed with the World Cup fast approaching," McDonald added.

The injury throws Australia's plans into disarray with only weeks to go for the World Cup in India, starting on October 5.

If Head misses the start of the World Cup, Mitchell Marsh could be elevated to the opening position given his good run at the top in the series against India earlier this year.

However, should Head be ruled out of the tournament, Australian selectors might be tempted to add the in-form Marnus Labuschagne in the squad. Australia take on India in Chennai on October 8 in their tournament opener.

The last date to make changes to the squad is September 28, post which any changes would need approval from the ICC. (PTI)

Moffi upstages Mbappé with 2 goals and an assist as Nice wins 3-2 at PSG

PARIS, Sept 16: Terem Moffi upstaged Kylian Mbappé with two goals and an assist to help Nice win 3-2 at Paris Saint-Germain in the French league on Friday, handing the defending champion its first defeat under new coach Luis Enrique.

A worrying one, too, for home fans despite Mbatpe also scoring twice, with PSG's opening game of the Champions League on Tuesday against Borussia Dortmund.

PSG's lingering defensive frailties were again exposed, this time by the clinical finishing of the Nigeria striker. Moffi's pace and wide runs off the ball were ideally suited to the excellent counterattacking of unbeaten Nice. This was a costly defeat for PSG, which is one point behind second-place Nice and two behind leader Monaco, which plays at Lorient on Sunday. (AP)

India's golden generation of squash ready for one last dance at Asian Games

NEW DELHI, Sept 16: Saurav Ghosal, Joshna Chinappa and Dipika Pallikal, synonymous with Indian squash over the past two decades, have unfinished business going into what could be their last appearance at the Asian Games. Ghosal and Joshna, who both turned 37 recently, will be featuring in their sixth Asian Games, a testament to their remarkable longevity in a physically demanding sport like squash.

A week away from celebrating her 32nd birthday, Dipika will be entering her fourth and in all probability last Asian Games. The mother of two, who doesn't play singles anymore, will be eyeing a mixed doubles gold alongside Harinder Pal Sandhu in Hangzhou.

Ghosal and Joshna too are in the twilight of their careers and Hangzhou could be their one final chance to add a singles gold to the rich medal count at the continental event, having won seven and four medals respectively since their maiden outing in 2002.

Though the level at Asian Games is not as high as the Commonwealth Games, the job for Ghosal and Joshna will be far from easy.

Ghosal targets elusive singles Gold

The psychological wounds of a heart-breaking loss in the men's singles final at the 2014 Incheon edition remain fresh in Ghosal's mind as the veteran athlete goes into the Games once again as the favourite for the gold medal.

Leading 2-0 and a match ball in the third game, he had the gold very much in sight until Abdullah Al Muzayen from Kuwait bounced back from nowhere to stage a winning comeback.

Ghosal is not bitter about that loss but re-



mains determined to win the gold.

"When I started back then, never thought I would go on to play in six Asian Games. Representing India has been the biggest honour. "In terms of highs and lows, the biggest high was 2014 when we won the team gold for the first time and biggest low was also the 2014 silver."

"Winning the first bronze in 2006 will always be special. The gold is obviously the target this time as I have not done it yet," said Ghosal, who won a historic bronze in the Commonwealth Games last year.

The Indian is seeded second in the singles behind Malaysia's Eain Yow Ng, an oppo-

nent 12 years younger to him. Ghosal, who is currently the highest-ranked player in Asia at 17, will also need to be wary of his rivals from Pakistan, Kuwait and Hong Kong. Abdullah, the 2014 gold medalist, is also part of the draw.

Ghosal is drawn to meet world number 19 Yow in the final and if that does happen, he will go into the contest high on confidence having beaten the much younger Malaysian in five games in Paris last month.

Can Joshna go all the way too?

While Ghosal has had a steady run ahead of the Games, Joshna goes into the competition following an injury-marred year that

saw the former world number 10 drop to as low as 71 in the PSA rankings. In fact, Tanvi Khanna is now the highest ranked Indian woman at 70.

Having regained full fitness ahead of the mega event, Joshna will have a point to prove and change the colour of the singles medal she secured in Jakarta five years ago. The bronze in the 2018 edition was her first in singles event, following her three medals in team events.

Her main rivals in the competition include top seed Satomi Watanabe of Japan and Ho Tze Lok of Hong Kong.

Joshna may not have had the best of year leading up to the Games but trust her to bring her A game to the fore, like she had done in the 2018 edition when she stunned eight-time world champion Nicol David in the team events to script a silver for India.

Dipika favourite for mixed doubles Gold

Dipika and her mixed doubles partner Sandhu had the opportunity to take part in the Asian Games test event in Hangzhou three months ago and they made the most of it by winning the gold.

Training at the Indian Squash Academy in Chennai under the eyes of former world champions Gregory Gaultier and James Willstrop, the Indian duo is giving finishing touches to its preparation.

The Games are expected to be Dipika's swansong and she is giving her all on the training front to make it a memorable affair.

India ended with five medals in Jakarta (four bronze and one silver) and they are looking to better that performance in China. (PTI)

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India look to snap five-year trophy-less streak against Theekshana-less Lanka

COLOMBO, Sept 16: Rohit Sharma's Indian team will be firm favourites to end its five-year trophy drought in multi-nation events, when it squares off against a depleted Sri Lanka in the final of the Asia Cup here on Sunday despite a few niggling questions still remaining unanswered.

While Axar Patel is an important component in the Indian set-up and his multiple injuries remains a concern, Sri Lanka will in fact miss their premier spinner Maheesh Theekshana way more due to his right hamstring injury.

A glance at India's trophy cabinet will reveal the uncomfortable truth of them not winning any titles in the last five years, and Sunday will be a good opportunity for them to snap that unhappy streak.

Not to forget a win before getting into the World Cup mode will be the ideal boost for a side which hasn't yet fully ticked all boxes but is showing more solidity than one would have thought a few months back.

India's last title, across the three formats, came in 2018 when the Rohit's side beat Bangladesh in the Asia Cup by three wickets in Dubai.

Since that victory, India's inability to master crunch matches and occasions has been startling.

India reached semifinals of the 50-over World Cup in 2019 and the T20 World Cup in 2022, besides losing against New Zealand and Australia in the WTC finals in 2019 and 2023 respectively.



The Men in Blue also failed to make their presence felt in last year's Asia Cup, which was won by Sri Lanka. That event was played in T20 format. Any whichever one looks at it, this is a seriously underwhelming record for a team that prides in its cricketing tradition and wants to set some new trends under head coach Rahul Dravid and skipper Rohit.

However, India will believe that they have a brilliant chance to add a trophy to their glittering collection come Sunday.

India are certain to recall the five players who were rested for the Super Four match against Bangladesh on Friday, which they eventually lost by six runs.

The return of Virat Kohli and Hardik Pandya for the summit clash will certainly add meat to their batting unit, which struggled against the array of Bangladesh spinners.

Opener Shubman Gill made a top class hundred, but the rest of the batsmen could not rotate the strike effectively in the middle overs, leaving the late order with a tall task.

The match also revealed another area India needed to address – the lack of consistency in bundling out a side after making early inroads.

India had reduced Bangladesh to 59 for 4, but the bowlers gave away too many runs in the death overs, allowing their neighbours to post a healthy 265. But India will

hope that the issue will be solved once pacers Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav make their comeback for tomorrow's game.

India will keep a watch on Axar's right hand which received multiple beatings in the match against Bangladesh, suffering niggles on his little finger and forearm along with hamstring injury.

Even though the team management informed that they are still monitoring the progress of the left-arm spinner, they have roped in off-spinner Washington Sundar as cover for him for the final.

Washington was training in Bengaluru with India's Asian Games-bound squad, and is expected to link with the team in Colombo this evening.

But these are India's immediate concerns pertaining to the Asia Cup final. But they cannot be unmindful of the larger picture as well.

Apart from the practice games, India have four more ODIs – Asia Cup final and three matches against Australia – prior to the World Cup to tick the desired boxes.

A victory here in the Asia Cup will boost their confidence ahead of the quadrennial big bash next month, as they also seek to end a 10-year-long ICC trophy drought.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka will feel quietly confident of their chances against India, as the home side is also on a 15-match winning streak in ODIs.

Teams (India): Rohit Sharma (captain), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya (vice-captain), Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Kuldeep Yadav, Prasad Krishna, Washington Sundar (cover for injured Axar Patel).

Sri Lanka: Dasun Shanaka (captain), Pathum Nissanaka, Dimuth Karunaratne, Kusal Janith Perera, Kusal Mendis (vc), Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Maheesh Theekshana, Dhanu Weirasinghe, Matheesha Pathirana, Kasun Rajitha, Dushan Hemantha, Binura Fernando, Pramod Madushan. Match starts at 3 PM IST. (PTI)

Mission Hangzhou: A look at India's biggest medal prospects



BADMINTON Men's Singles: HS Prannoy

During the 2018 World Championships, Prannoy was diagnosed with Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) and was infected with COVID-19 in November 2020.

The man from Thiruvananthapuram, however, turned his career around at the back end of 2021, returning to the top 10 in December last year. He has been the most consistent Indian singles player in the last 12 months.

He has won the Malaysia Masters in May and finished runner-up at Australian Open before claiming a World Championships bronze medal at Copenhagen, Denmark last month and achieved a career-best world number six ranking.

Men's Doubles: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty

Satwik and Chirag emerged as the brightest stars of Indian badminton with their stellar performance this year. The 23-year-old Satwik from Amalapuram and the 26-year-old Chirag from Mumbai became the first pair to win the Asian Championships gold.

After the coronavirus-induced break, the Indian duo came back strongly in 2022 with title triumphs at the Indian Open Super 500 and the Commonwealth Games before claiming a maiden bronze at the World Championships in Tokyo.

Men's Team Championships:

India have won three bronze medals in men's team event but the country will be heading into the upcoming showpiece on the back of its first-ever Thomas Cup win. The core of that team remains the same as it was Prannoy, Kidambi Srikanth, Lakshya Sen and Satwik-Chirag who had fashioned India's epic win.

Given the form of the members, India will start favourites for the team gold.

CRICKET Men:

The team led by Rituraj Gaikwad is way ahead of the rest of the pack with all proven IPL performers in its roster, but in the shortest format, a side is just one upset away. Anything less than the gold medal would be considered an underwhelming result.

Women:

The Indian women's team should have been the runaway favourites in the format but the recent poor show against Bangladesh, and the unavailability of skipper Harmanpreet Kaur for the first two games, could upset its plans. But even then, they are favourites to win the gold.

HOCKEY Men:

The Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist Indian men's hockey team is firm favourites to win gold at the Hangzhou Asian Games. Going by world rankings (3rd), current form and fitness, it would be a big disappointment if the Harmanpreet Singh-led side achieves anything less than the top spot on the podium.

India doesn't boast of a very good record in the Asian Games, having won the title just three times as against Pakistan's eight crowns and South Korea's four. In the last Games, India secured a bronze, but since then, they have made rapid progress.

Women:

Just like their male counterparts, the Savita Punia-led Indian women's team is also a serious contender for a podium finish. Placed seventh in the world, India are currently the highest ranked team in Asia and they wouldn't like to settle for anything less than gold in Hangzhou. The Indian women won the Asian gold only once, way back in 1982.

SHOOTING Men:

Rudranksh Patil (10m air rifle)

The 19-year-old 10m air rifle shooter will be gunning for nothing less than a gold medal following his stellar success in 2022 when he became the world champion at Cairo and sealed a Paris Olympic quota place for the country.

Women:

Manu Bhaker (25m sports pistol)

The junior world champion had a forgetful Tokyo Olympic Games with her pistol malfunctioning in one of the two events she competed in. However, she would like to forget that, as well as the disappointment of the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games, and aim for the gold medal in Hangzhou given her pedigree and calibre.

SQUASH Men:

Saurav Ghosal

The psychological wounds of a heart-breaking loss in the men's singles final at the 2014 Incheon edition remain fresh in Ghosal's mind as the veteran athlete goes

into the Games once again as the favourite for the gold medal.

The Indian is seeded second in the singles behind Malaysia's Eain Yow Ng, an opponent 12 years younger to him. Ghosal, who is currently the highest-ranked player in Asia at 17, will also need to be wary of his rivals from Pakistan, Kuwait and Hong Kong.

WOMEN:

Joshna Chinappa

A record 19-time national champion, Joshna goes into the competition following an injury-ridden year that saw the former world number 10 drop to as low as 71 in the PSA rankings.

However, she remains India's best for a medal in the women's singles. Her main rivals in the competition include top seed Satomi Watanabe of Japan and Ho Tze Lok of Hong Kong.

MIXED DOUBLES:

Dipika Pallikal and Harinderpal Sandhu

Dipika and her mixed doubles partner Harinderpal had the opportunity to take part in the Asian Games test event in Hangzhou three months ago and they made the most of it by winning the gold. The Games are expected to be Dipika's swansong and she is giving her all on the training front to make it a memorable affair.

TABLE TENNIS Men's Team:

The team comprising Sharath Kamal, in his fifth and last Asian Games, G Sathiyan and Harmeet Desai did the unthinkable in Jakarta as it beat the mighty Japan in the quarterfinals to secure a historic bronze in Asian Games, ending a 60-year wait for India's first table tennis medal in the continental event.

The men's team event remains India's best bet for a medal in Hangzhou. The trio recently ended with a bronze in the Asian Championships in South Korea but repeating that feat at the Games will be a much tougher task.

Mixed Doubles:

Following a memorable performance in the men's team event in Jakarta, India ended up with a surprise bronze medal there via Sharath and Manika Batra.

India's star female player will be pairing up this time with Sathiyan, and both will be looking to make a mark with one eye on the Paris Olympics next year.

TENNIS Men's Doubles:

Rohan Bopanna and Yuki Bhambri

At 43, Bopanna is still playing some solid tennis and is expected to defend his men's doubles title at the Games. In the last edition, he had won the gold with Divij Sharan, and in Hangzhou, he is expected to pair with Bhambri.

Bopanna is still playing superb tennis which was evident at the US Open where he played the final alongside Mathew Ebden.

Having a player like Bhambri to share the court increases his chances even more. Bhambri was playing singles till early this year and has an all-round game with solid ground strokes.

WRESTLING Men:

Aman Sehrawat (men's 57kg)

Aman has made steady progress in the last two years. The hard-working trainee at the Chhatrasal stadium has underlined his growth by winning the U23 World and Asian Championships last year, and now he is making his presence felt on the senior circuit as well.

He won the Asian Championship this year. Competing in Olympic medallist Ravi Dahiya's category, Aman has emerged as a serious contender to challenge his superior and fancied opponent, Dahiya.

Women:

Antim Panghal (women's 57kg)

If not gold, Antim Panghal will be in contention for at least a podium finish in her category. The wrestler from Hissar effortlessly won the recent trials for the Games and the Worlds. She recently became the country's first woman wrestler to win back-to-back junior world titles. She is sound both technically and mentally.

WEIGHTLIFTING Women:

Mirabai Chanu

As is the case with almost every tournament she competes in, the ever-smiling Mirabai Chanu will start as a strong medal favourite. With only an Asian Games medal missing from her trophy cabinet, Mirabai has prioritised the continental championships this year. The Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist has been working hard to get the coveted 90kg snatch lift. While it will be difficult to get the gold with Chinese lifters Hou Zhihui and Jiang Huihua in the field, a podium finish is highly likely for the Manipuri. (PTI)

Asia Cup final

Washington called up as cover for injured Axar Patel

COLOMBO, Sept 16: Washington Sundar has been called up as a cover for the injured Axar Patel for the Asia Cup final against Sri Lanka on Sunday.

Axar sustained several injuries during India's six-run loss to Bangladesh in their last Super Four match on Friday.

The extent of Axar's injuries is currently unknown and hence bowling all-rounder Washington, who was part of India's Asian Games squad, has been called up as a precautionary measure.

"Axar is currently suffering from multiple injuries. He has hurt his little finger, got hit on forearm by a throw from deep and most importantly has developed a hamstring niggle. So Washington has been called," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

More than the swelling on his forearm, it is Axar's hamstring issue which will keep the Indian team management worried with just three weeks to go for the World Cup.

Washington, who bowls off-spin, last played an ODI at home against New Zealand in January this year. (PTI)

Injured shoulder likely to force Naseem Shah out of ICC Cricket WC

DUBAI, Sept 16: Pakistan pacer Naseem Shah's recent shoulder injury has cast doubts over his participation in the forthcoming World Cup, set to be held in India next month.

The 20-year-old pacer suffered the injury during Pakistan's Super-4 clash against arch-rival India in an Asia Cup match in Sri Lanka.

Shah walked off during the 46th over Indian innings after injuring the right shoulder muscle.

According to ESPNcricinfo, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has analysed the scans he underwent in Dubai, which indicate that he could be ruled out for the year-remainder, effectively ruling him out of the World Cup.

Also, with Pakistan set to play three Tests in Australia in December, Shah's participation in the same appears dicey for now. The PCB is still awaiting the results of a secondary scan, which is due to arrive in the coming days. Although Shah was replaced by Zaman Khan in the Asia Cup, Pakistan failed to make it to the final. (PTI)

Australia start favourites in World Cup dress rehearsal series vs India: Suresh Raina

MUMBAI, Sept 16: Former India all-rounder Suresh Raina has said that the mighty Aussies will start off as favourites when they take on India in a three-match ODI series that will serve as a dress rehearsal ahead of the World Cup. The two teams will also begin their World Cup campaign against each other on October 8. Raina believes that Australia's batting flexibility and their familiarity with the Indian conditions provide them with an 'upper hand'.

The first match of the series is on September 22 in Mohali, five days after the Asia Cup final. Australia are currently

playing South Africa in an ODI series.

"They (Australia) have a lot of left-right combinations in the batting order. The Indore ground is very small, and Rajkot has a flat track. Also, the Australian side has played a lot in Mohali and hence I believe they will have an upper hand," Raina told JioCinema.

Indore and Rajkot will host the second and third games respectively.

Raina, who was a part of the victorious 2011 ODI World Cup side, said that a 3-0 victory or a 0-3 defeat will not matter a lot but the series will provide a perfect chance to the teams to get their combina-

tions sorted and find their key players ahead of the World Cup.

The former allrounder also named his key players for the India vs Australia series. He said that Indian skipper Rohit Sharma will score the most runs during the series. Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood will be the best Australian bowler. For India, it will be either pacer Mohammed Shami or spinner Kuldeep Yadav, Raina said.

Allrounder Shardul Thakur will be the 'X-factor', Raina said, hoping that he will be able to bowl the knuckle ball like Zaheer Khan that proved crucial in India's 2011 World Cup win. (PTI)

World Wrestling Championship: Abhimanyu enters quarterfinals

BELGRADE, Sept 16: Three Indian free-style wrestlers fell by the way-side, losing their second-round bouts on the day one of the UWW World Championships, with only the 70kg grappler Abhimanyu entering the quarterfinal here on Saturday.

Abhimanyu, the bronze-medal winner at the U23 World Championships in June and ranked 26th in the world, first upset Ukrainian world No.7 Thor Nykyforuk 19-9 by effecting a victory by fall (VFA) before defeating Moldova's Nicolai Grahmev 13-2 (technical superiority) to secure a place in the quarters. He will, however, run into world No.2 from the United States, 28-year-old Zain Allen Retherford, runner-up at the 2022 World Championships in Belgrade last year.

The World Championships here is a 2024 Paris Olympic qualification tournament. India is competing in the global event under the United World Wrestling (UWW) flag after the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) was suspended for failing to hold elections in the time-frame given by the world body. Abhimanyu was in great form in the first round against the higher ranked Nykyforuk, finishing the contest in 5 minutes, 41 seconds.

The referee stopped the contest 2.41 minutes into the second three-minute session, after Abhimanyu had also dominated the first three-minute session, taking a 5-0 lead. Akash Dahiya (61kg) despite beginning on winning note, defeating his Moldovan opponent Leonid Colesnic, with the referees giving an overwhelming 10-5 verdict in the Indian's favour, lost his pre-quarterfinal contest to Uzbekistan's world No.6 Jahongirmirza Turobov. (PTI)

We're trying to improve our batting on slow pitches: Shubman Gill

COLOMBO, Sept 16: Indian batters, barring centurion Shubman Gill, struggled against Bangladesh spinners on a pitch that offered turn and grip during their six-run defeat in the Asia Cup Super Four match, and the opener said they are working on their skills to master such tracks.

Gill said it was important to give attention to the area in view of the approaching World Cup, and the Asia Cup final on Sunday against Sri Lanka. "It is definitely an area that we are trying to improve on. We had camp in Bangalore before coming here, and we were practicing on similar wickets," said Gill during the post-match press conference after India failed to chase down 265. "World Cup is such a long tournament as we go deeper into the tournament, the wicket tends to get



slower." Gill said the Indian batting unit is trying to minimise the dot balls by increasing the strike rotation. "It is not easy for batsmen who are coming in to rotate the strike and minimise those dot balls. As a batting unit, we are looking to work on it," he said.

On their approach against Bangladesh spinners at Premadasa stadium, Gill said the batters were trying to play

late. "Taking singles was not easy on this wicket. So, we were trying to let the ball come to the bat because we get more runs square of the wicket on slow wickets. So, we were trying to play the ball late," he added.

Gill said he should have stayed back and carried India past the finishing line against Bangladesh, but termed the chase as a good learning experience.

"Sometimes, there is so much adrenaline when you are batting, you miscalculate. It was a miscalculation on my part. "But when I got out and there was a lot of time left, and if I would have batted not that aggressive then we should have gotten over the line. But these are learnings, and fortunately this game wasn't the final." Axar Patel had coped a bit of beating on his right hand during the match against Bangladesh but Gill allayed any concerns.

"I don't think there is anything wrong with Axar. I think that was temporary and nothing to worry about," he said.

Gill also defended India's decision to rest five frontline players in Virat Kohli, Hardik Pandya, Jasprit Bumrah, Kuldeep Yadav and Mohammed Siraj for the Bangladesh match. (PTI)