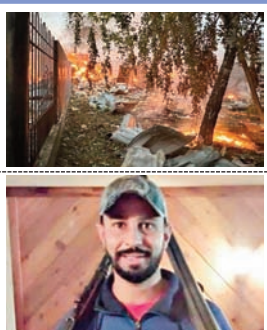


WORLD
NATION

- Russia strikes cities from east to west Ukraine, starting fires and killing at least 2
- Iran's Parl passes a stricter headscarf law days after protest anniversary
- Canada-based gangster Sukhdul Singh killed in Winnipeg
- Cutting across party lines, RS MPs support women's reservation bill

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Voice of the hills people

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Prevent incubation of mosquitoes inside and outside your home. Save yourself from Dengue

DENGUE SPREADS THROUGH AEDES MOSQUITOES

SYMPTOMS OF DENGUE

- High Fever
- Headache
- Pain Behind Eyes
- Muscular Pain
- Joint Pain
- Rash on Skin
- Redness of the Eyes
- Bleeding from Nose & Gums



If you feel any dengue-like symptoms, consult a doctor immediately. Laboratory facilities for testing Dengue is available free of cost in all District Hospitals and Medical Colleges.

(NHMD/2023-24/1254)

KCS units gets ₹10,000 to partake in ZKYF

HT Correspondent
KOILAMATI, Sept 21: Nilip member of autonomous council (MAC), Pobitra Rongpi announced that ₹10,000 will be given to 17 units of the Nilip Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) to participate in the forming coming 31st Zonal Karbi Youth Festival (ZKYF).

A reception committee has also been formed to organize the youth festival. A meeting was also held on Thursday, which was chaired by president, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Prisoner escapes from police custody

HT Correspondent
DALGAON, Sept 21: A prisoner has escaped from police custody while being taken to the Mangaldoi Civil Hospital for treatment in Mangaldoi in Assam's Darrang district. The prisoner has been identified as Ziarul Haque, a resident of Nagabahi village near Mangaldoi. He has been accused in a case registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

According to police sources, the prisoner told the police that he wanted to relieve himself and then escaped from police custody. The police have launched a search operation to trace him.

Former Manipur chief secretary appointed as RGU chancellor

ITANAGAR, Sept 21: President Droupadi Murmu has appointed former Manipur chief secretary J Suresh Babu as the chancellor of the Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU) in Itanagar, the lone central university in Arunachal Pradesh.

Babu has been appointed for a period of 5 years with immediate effect, a university release said. An MBBS from the Guntur Medical College and (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Delhi suspends visa issuance to Canadians

Killing of Khalistani separatist: India-Canada row escalates

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: India on Thursday announced temporarily suspending issuance of visas to Canadian citizens in view of "security threats" faced by its high commission and consulates in Canada, amid an escalating diplomatic row over Ottawa's allegations relating to the killing of a Khalistani separatist on Canadian soil.

Union external affairs ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the decision will include Canadian visa applicants in third countries even as he asserted Canada must act against the pro-Khalistani elements operating from its territory. India is temporarily unable to process visa applications from Canada because of the "security threats" faced by our high commission and consulates in Canada, Bagchi said at a media briefing.

"You are aware of the security threats being faced by our high commission and consulates in Canada. It has disrupted their normal functioning. Accordingly, our high commission and consulates are temporarily unable to process visa applications," he said. Bagchi said the situation will be reviewed regularly. He said all categories of visas have been suspended.

"The issue is not about travel to India. Those who have valid visas



and documents like OCI (Overseas Citizenship of India) cards are free to travel to India," Bagchi said.

"The issue is the incitement of violence, the inaction by the Canadian authorities, creation of an environment that disrupts the functioning of our high commission and consulates. That's making us temporarily stop the issuance of visas or providing visa services," he said. "We will be reviewing the situation on a regular basis," Bagchi said.

Earlier in the day, a private agency hired by India to carry out the initial scrutiny of visa applications of Canadians put out a note on its website on suspension of visa services due to "operational

reasons". However, the note was withdrawn within hours and then again it was put up online.

The agency, BLS International, also informed the stock exchanges that it had suspended India visa services in Canada with immediate effect. India and Canada are embroiled in a diplomatic row over the killing of Khalistani separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June. The row erupted following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing.

India on Tuesday rejected the allegations as "absurd" and "motivated" and expelled a senior Canadian (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Search operations continue, arms, ammunition seized in Manipur

IMPHAL, Sept 21: The Manipur police on Thursday said search operations have been conducted by security forces in various districts, and arms and ammunition, including mortar shells, have been recovered.

Altogether 127 checkpoints were installed in the valley and hill districts of the northeastern state,

and 873 people were detained on Wednesday for violation of rules.

"Search operations were conducted by security forces in the fringe and vulnerable areas of Imphal West, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Kangpokpi and Churachandpur districts in which one arm, two local pumpi guns, 50 ammunition and eight explosives were recovered from Imphal West and Kangpokpi districts," the police said on X, formerly Twitter.

A joint team of Assam Rifles and the state police personnel conducted a search operation at a village in Kangpokpi district, and seized four mortar bombs, which were kept hidden in the bushes, they said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

ered from Imphal West and Kangpokpi districts," the police said on X, formerly Twitter.

The body of the person with multiple bullet injuries was found on Monday near the forest areas of

Hukanjuri, close to the Arunachal Pradesh-Assam border, it said in the complaint.

A heavy exchange of fire took place between suspected timber smugglers and Assam forest personnel inside the Dehing-Patkai National Park, an official said on Thursday. One of the suspected smugglers was critically injured in the firefight, he said.

The Assam forest personnel received information that a group of timber smugglers from neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh had entered the national park to cut trees with

Security beefed up in Karbi Anglong border: Assembly informed Govt alert to formation of new Karbi rebel group: Conrad

HT Bureau
SHILLONG, Sept 21: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Thursday addressed concerns regarding the alleged formation of a new militant group called the United People's Front of Karbi Longri (UPFKL) in the ongoing state assembly and outlined measures taken by the government to address the situation.

The Chief Minister made these statements in response to a call for attention raised by UDP MLA Nujorki Sunghoh. While there have been reports of the UPFKL's formation, there have been no specific intelligence or complaints regarding extortion notes from the group. In



reply to a call attention moved by the UDP MLA, the Chief Minister on Thursday said the government has increased manpower along the inter-state border following this. Sunghoh pointed out that the in-

tenation of the new militant group was to create fear among the Khasi-Pnar people living in the disputed Block I on the border between West Jaintia Hills and West Karbi Anglong specifically in the Elaa Labang-Nongphylut-Pangam Raliang area.

The Chief Minister said though reports are coming in that there is no specific intel or specific complaints by any of the people that they have received extortion notes from UPFKL. "However, based on newspaper clippings on the formation of the new militant outfit, we have increased our manpower in the border areas," he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Hunger strike continues at NIT Silchar, 10 hospitalized

SILCHAR, Sept 21: The hunger strike by students of National Institute of Technology (NIT), Silchar to press for their various demands following the alleged suicide of a third-year electrical student entered the fifth day on Thursday, with 10 of them being admitted to a hospital after they fainted, an official said.

The condition of a student, identified as Harsh Kumar Singh, was stated to be serious.

The authorities have urged the students to call off their protest as their main demand of removing the Dean (academics) B K Roy has been met with. Roy has been removed temporarily and replaced by Lalit Kumar Saikia.

A student from Arunachal Pradesh, Kok Buker, was found hanging in his hostel room on September 15. The police had to break open the door to bring down the body as the other students had prevented the authorities from entering the room.

The protestors alleged that the

Dean (academics) had a record of harassing several students and was primarily responsible for the death of Buker. The students had started a protest on the night of September 15 and allegedly vandalized the residence of the Dean (academics), following which the police lathi-charged them, during which 40 students were injured.

NIT Silchar registrar, K L Baishnab said that the authorities are engaged in discussions with the students and counselling them about their studies and future.

Earlier, NIT Silchar's student fraternity had written to President Droupadi Murmu to immediately intervene as they claimed that the 'situation in our institution has escalated to an alarming level'.

The students had also demanded that the college administration lodge an FIR to ensure a proper investigation into the alleged suicide and the family of the deceased should be extended comprehensive support, including financial and legal. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

BJP Mahila Morcha grateful to PM for women's bill



HT Bureau
DIPHU, Sept 21: The East Karbi Anglong district branch of BJP Mahila Morcha on Thursday organized a 'Thanks Giving Programme' at the Diphu Club here to express their gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for passing the women's reservation bill by granting 33% seat reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies.

The Parliament on Wednesday passed the particular bill.

Speaking on the occasion, chief guest, Diphu MLA Bidyasingh Englang thanked Prime Minister Modi as it was under his leadership that the bill for women reservation was placed and unanimously passed in the Parliament.

MLA Englang said, "Our Prime Minister Modi really understands women empowerment and gives due recognition to it. With the passing of the bill, women will now get 33% reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies. The Congress government has not done this when they were in power, but the present BJP government has done it. We need to thank our Prime Minister for giving priority to women." Former Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) and ex-president Mahila Morcha, BJP-EKADC, Seema Ronghangpi said, "I want to thank Prime (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Tripura govt to launch ₹ 30 cr development mission NHRC approached regarding death of timber smuggler in Dibrugarh

AGARTALA, Sept 21: The Tripura government has decided to launch a mission with an estimated cost of ₹ 30 crore to uplift the socio-economic condition of tribal people in Tripura, state tourism minister Sushanta Chowdhury said. A proposal to roll out the Mukhyamantri Tribal Development Mission was approved by the state cabinet, he said.

"As part of the BJP's election manifesto and the budgetary announcement, the mission was approved by the cabinet on Wednesday for tribal development for the current fiscal year," Sushanta Chowdhury told reporters. The mission will be started with ₹ 30 crore, and the annual outlay will be increased in the years to come, he said.

According to the minister, the state tribal welfare department will soon commence a registration process for families to be included in the mission.

Claiming that the mission is "yet another bold step towards overall development of the indigenous people", Chowdhury said the fund will be utilized for building infrastructure such as roads, drinking water, and skill development to make the youth job-ready.

Earlier, the BJP-IPFT government had proposed to increase the seats of Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council from 30 to 50 to ensure representation of all the tribes, although the plan is still pending with the Centre. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



DIBRUGARH, Sept 21: The North East Human Rights Organization (NEHRO) of Arunachal Pradesh has filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), claiming that a person suspected to be a timber smuggler was shot dead by members of the Assam Forest Battalion in Assam's Dibrugarh district.

NEHRO also alleged misuse of power and unwarranted use of force by the battalion. The body of the person with multiple bullet injuries was found on Monday near the forest areas of

Hukanjuri, close to the Arunachal Pradesh-Assam border, it said in the complaint.

A heavy exchange of fire took place between suspected timber smugglers and Assam forest personnel inside the Dehing-Patkai National Park, an official said on Thursday. One of the suspected smugglers was critically injured in the firefight, he said.

The Assam forest personnel received information that a group of timber smugglers from neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh had entered the national park to cut trees with

machines on Monday, and upon hearing the sound of electric wood cutters, forest officials had launched a search operation. The miscreants allegedly opened fire on the forest personnel and a gunfight ensued, leading to the injury of the victim at Bashabnala, he said. "We have come to know that one timber smuggler was seriously injured during the firing. The incident occurred at Bashabnala, which is a few kilometers away from the Arunachal Pradesh border," Namrup divisional forest officer B V Sandeep told PTI. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

who died in the recent communal disturbance in Manipur, Boro talked about the importance of peace and stability in the Northeast for the growth of the nation. He said the spirit of peace and amity should emanate from individuals so that it can ensure societal harmony. The BTR chief stressed the importance of the introduction and inclusion of a curriculum related to peace studies to enable students to understand the importance of a peaceful society from their childhood. The BTR, an autonomous elected body for the Bodo tribal dominated areas in Assam, was created under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. (PTI)

High carbon emitting nations' reluctance is fatal to environment UN Climate Summit: Nations unwilling to act on fossil fuels

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: Calls to stop burning fossil fuels at the United Nations' Climate Ambition Summit were resounding and emphatic and the gathering laid bare the intent of nations unwilling to confront the central issue, climate policy experts said on Thursday.

They also said the major emitting nations' reluctance to act on climate crisis is disrespectful and fatal and must be called out.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres' Climate Ambition Summit on Wednesday highlighted two key aspects -- the conspicuous absence of leaders from major emitter nations and a unanimous call by attending leaders to phase out fossil fuels.

Notable omissions included leaders from the



US, the UK, China, Japan and France. Among the top carbon emitters, only the European Union received an invitation. The leaders who

participated in the summit exhibited an almost unanimous resolve to put an end to the era of fossil fuels.

Harjeet Singh, the head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network International, said, "At the Climate Ambition Summit, the world heard an unequivocal message -- we are in the midst of a climate emergency and fossil fuels are its chief culprit. Yet, the urgent actions required remain elusive."

Mohamed Adow, the director of Kenya-based independent think-tank Powershift Africa, noted a departure from typical political agendas at such summits -- the leaders with poor climate records, including the US and the UK, found themselves sidelined. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

School of peace and happiness to be established in BTR

BONGAIGAON, Sept 21: A school of peace and happiness will be established in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) in Assam with an objective to promote community happiness, BTR chief Pramod Boro said on Thursday.

Addressing an event on the occasion of the International Day of Peace, Boro also said that the young generation must embrace humanity to make peace a reality.

Pramod Boro said, "The civilizational values of a syncretic culture are not in accordance with the spirit of conflict and hence, there is a need for peaceful existence of all communities in the region, state, and nation for overall

progress, prosperity and happiness."

Boro said a school of peace and happiness will be established in BTR as part of the Bodoland Knowledge Declaration 2023, which was adopted in the first Bodoland International Knowledge Festival held in Kokrajhar in March this year.

The event was held as part of the Bodoland Happiness Mission, which was launched five months ago. Boro mentioned that the signing of the historic BTR peace accord in 2020 has paved the way for permanent peace in the region after a prolonged period of strife and unrest. While remembering the people

who died in the recent communal disturbance in Manipur, Boro talked about the importance of peace and stability in the Northeast for the growth of the nation.

He said the spirit of peace and amity should emanate from individuals so that it can ensure societal harmony.

The BTR chief stressed the importance of the introduction and inclusion of a curriculum related to peace studies to enable students to understand the importance of a peaceful society from their childhood. The BTR, an autonomous elected body for the Bodo tribal dominated areas in Assam, was created under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. (PTI)

India to clock GDP growth of 6.5 pc in FY24 despite high crude oil prices: NITI Aayog member Arvind Virmani

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: The Indian economy will grow at around 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal, notwithstanding high crude oil prices and increased uncertainty due to climate changes, NITI Aayog member Arvind Virmani said on Thursday. Virmani also asserted that the gross household savings ratio in India has consistently gone up. In an interview with PTI, he said: "My growth projection (of India's GDP growth) is 6.5 per cent plus minus 0.5 per cent... because my experience is that the fluctuations in global GDP more or less has balanced out for us, assuming normal changes." On some US-based economists' claim that India is overstating economic growth, Virmani said he has noticed that certain former officials don't have any idea how GDP is constructed as they have come from academic background.

Last week, the Finance Ministry also dismissed the criticism of inflated GDP, saying it has followed the consistent practice of using the income side estimates to compute economic growth, and stressed many international agencies have revised upwards their forecast after seeing the first quarter data.

The critics, the ministry had said, should have looked at other

data like purchasing managers' indices, bank credit growth, increase in capital expenditure and consumption patterns to assess the growth.

India's GDP growth in 2022-23 was 7.2 per cent, lower than 9.1 per cent in 2021-22. According to Reserve Bank of India's projections, India's GDP is likely to grow at 6.5 per cent in the current fiscal year.

The eminent economist noted that the risk for India is "crude oil prices". "... if we look back 10 years ago... Saudi Arabia and the USA were more or less on the same geopolitical platform, and they used to coordinate things... but that has changed in the last five years," Virmani said.

International crude oil prices have breached the USD 90 per barrel mark for the first time in 10 months and are currently hovering around USD 92 per barrel. "Recently, we have seen that it (Saudi Arabia) cut down on oil production when oil prices started going to reasonable levels, and so did Russia."

According to Virmani, the issue of El Nino conditions has come up again and the uncertainty has increased because of climate change.

Responding to a question on



falling household savings to five-decade low, Virmani said the net household saving is falling down, not the gross household savings.

"The gross household savings ratio has consistently gone up. The net household savings ratio is going down because consumer debt is increasing faster," he said.

Asked whether the fall of net household savings is a matter of concern, Virmani noted that every economist who writes on macroeconomics said that the debt-to-GDP ratio in India is way too low.

"They have compared India with every country in the world, and they keep telling you that

there's a huge scope for increasing debt-to-GDP ratio in India," he observed. He noted that "the debt-to-GDP ratio for households in the country is not too high or unsustainable." Responding to a question on high inflation, the eminent economist said the rise in crude oil prices will have some inflationary impact. "Because inherently the income of the people goes down. So again, (regarding rise in) oil prices, we cannot do anything in the short-term, except manage it," he opined.

Virmani emphasised that as far as food inflation is concerned, the government has managed it rea-

sonably well.

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

Meanwhile, India's real GDP growth was 7.8 per cent on a year-on-year basis in Q1 FY24, as per the Income or Production Approach. Recently, former Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian, in an article, argued that India's GDP is not measured from the expenditure side rather than the productivity side.

Earlier this month, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran rejected criticism of "statistical discrepancy" in the first quarter GDP data, saying when the same statistical authority reported the severest contraction in the first quarter of 2020, the naysayers had called it credible as it suited their narrative.

The article was written in light of debates over India's economic performance and economist Ashoka Mody, a Princeton University professor, raising concerns regarding the country's GDP growth rate for the first quarter of the financial year 2023-24. (PTI)

Markets decline for 3rd day on weak global cues; ICICI bank slumps 2.81 pc



MUMBAI, Sept 21: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure for the third straight session to settle nearly 1 per cent lower on Thursday as investors pared exposure to auto, banking and financial shares amid a sluggish trend in global markets. Global equities fell after the US Federal Reserve signalled that they expect to raise rates once more this year to fight inflation.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 570.60 points or 0.85 per cent to settle at 66,230.24. During the day, it plunged 672.13 points or 1 per cent to 66,128.71.

The Nifty declined 159.05 points or 0.80 per cent to end at 19,742.35. "Domestic market declined following a hawkish stance by the Fed chair and prolonged high-interest rate trajectory, which is not positive for a slowing global economy. "PSU Banks and Mid and small-caps were the worst hit due to stretched valuations and concern over moderation in yields. Rising oil prices and erratic rainfall further led investors to stay cautious in the market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

ICICI Bank was the biggest loser in the Sensex pack, slipping 2.81 per cent, followed by Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Motors, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank and Power Grid. Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Infosys, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, Larsen & Toubro and Titan were the gainers. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge fell 0.99 per cent and smallcap index declined 0.98 per cent.

Among the indices, bankex fell by 1.75 per cent, auto declined by 1.58 per cent, financial services (1.35 per cent), realty (1.16 per cent), consumer discretionary (1 per cent), utilities (0.97 per cent), power (0.90 per cent) and commodities (0.75 per cent). Teck

emerged as the only gainer.

"Bearish sentiment across the global equities led to selling in the domestic market for the third straight session as investors fretted over the US Fed statement indicating one more rate hike later this year."

"Other negative catalysts like lingering overseas fund outflows, rising US Dollar index and treasury yields, and higher crude oil prices are making investors jittery," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the negative territory. European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended in the red on Wednesday.

The US Federal Reserve left its key interest rate unchanged on Wednesday for the second time in its past three meetings, a sign that it's moderating its fight against inflation as price pressures have eased. But, Fed officials also signalled that they expect to raise rates once more this year.

"Market fell by 2.2 per cent in the last three days amid profit booking at higher levels. Uncertain global cues and persistent selling by FIIs are likely to keep markets under pressure in the near term. It would be better to prefer defensive sectors for some time until the market stabilises," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.81 per cent to USD 92.77 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,110.69 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark had tumbled 796 points or 1.18 per cent to settle at 66,800.84 on Wednesday. The NSE Nifty declined 231.90 points or 1.15 per cent to end below the 20,000 mark at 19,901.40. (PTI)

Axis Bank launches 'NEO for Business' for MSMEs

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 21: Axis Bank has introduced 'NEO for Business,' a Transaction Banking platform designed specifically for India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This digital proposition caters to the transaction banking needs of MSMEs, offering features such as digital onboarding, bulk payments, GST-compliant invoicing, payment gateway integration, transaction tracking, auto reconciliation, recurring collections, and cash flow reports. This platform allows MSMEs to conduct their banking transactions on-the-go without visiting a bank branch. Existing Axis Bank Current Account customers can access NEO for Business via a mobile app or web-based registration. Axis Bank aims to support the growing digital adoption among MSMEs, which make up a significant portion of India's economy and are increasingly favoring digital payments over cash. Neeraj Gambhir, Group Executive & Head of Treasury, Markets, and Wholesale Banking Products at Axis Bank, emphasized the bank's investment in cutting-edge technologies to deliver digital solutions for customers and its 'ready to integrate' approach to offering 'Beyond Banking' solutions through partnerships and ecosystems. This move is part of Axis Bank's efforts to serve its focused MSME segment, which remains a key growth driver for the bank.

New generation Tata NEXON launched in Guwahati



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 21: Tata Motors, India's leading automotive manufacturer, has launched the new generation NEXON at Bimal Cars in Basistha, Guwahati. The launch event featured prominent figures from Tata Motors and Bimal Cars.

The new NEXON represents a significant upgrade across all aspects of the compact SUV, offering versatility, innovation, and aspiration to customers. It caters to individuals who seek to stay ahead of the curve and are willing to go the extra mile. The new NEXON features a digital-inspired design, leading safety features, contemporary technology, and best-in-class performance.

Key highlights of the new NEXON:

Digital-Inspired Design: The new NEXON showcases a re-designed front with Bi-LED Headlamps and Sequential LED DRLs, ensuring it stands out during the day and night. Features like Daytime Lit, X Factor, and Taillamp with Welcome & Goodbye add a sense of class and modernity. The

interior boasts a 3-Tone Dashboard with a rich Leatherette Mid Pad, a Leather Wrapped Physical Steering Wheel with an illuminated logo, and a comfortable Leatherette Armrest.

Advanced Safety: The NEXON meets stringent safety protocols, including GNCAP 2022 standards, making it highly secure. Standard features include 6 airbags, Electronic Stability Control, 3-point rear seatbelts with occupant detection, passenger airbag deactivation switch, and ISOFIX Child seats. It also offers a high-definition 360-degree surround-view system, front parking sensors, blind-view monitor, E-call for emergency assistance, and B-call assistance for car breakdowns.

The new NEXON is available in four distinct personas - Fearless, Creative, Pure, and Smart, and is offered with both petrol and diesel powertrains. Sales have begun with an introductory price of ₹ 809,990 Lakhs. This launch marks a significant upgrade in the compact SUV market, catering to customers seeking a modern and safe vehicle with advanced features.

MG Motor India exploring options for a second plant in country

KOLKATA, Sept 21: Chinese car maker MG Motor India is exploring the possibility of setting up a second plant in the country, a company official said. Currently, the company has a manufacturing plant at Halol in Gujarat where the production capacity is 1.2 lakh units per annum.

"We are exploring the option of putting up a second plant in India. It generally takes two to three years for a new plant to come into stream," Gaurav Gupta, deputy managing director of MG Motor India said on Wednesday evening. The company has not identified so far the location of the possible second plant.

Starting operations in India four years back in 2019, the company is presently having five models and selling around 5,000 units per month. Out of the five models, two are electric vehicles (EV), he said.

Gupta said the company plans to introduce a new model every year in India, either on the EV or ICE (internal combustion engine) platforms. He said at present, 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the company's sales are coming from the EVs. "Our target is to increase this percentage to 35 per cent by 2025", Gupta added. He also said the company is also evaluating the option of a setting up a battery assembly plant near the existing facility in Gujarat. Gupta said the passenger car industry is growing at a pace of nine to ten per cent per year. "During January to August in 2023, the company's sales grew at more than 20 per cent. We hope to maintain this pace during the current calendar year", he said.

Presently, MG Motor India is sourcing batteries for its EVs from China. For improving the EV ecosystem, the company has partnered with JioBP to set up charging stations in the country.

The company has invested ₹ 4,000 crore so far in India. MG Motor India is also exporting cars to Nepal and other SAARC countries, he said, adding the company is evaluating other export destinations as well. (PTI)

BLS International and PSB Alliance partner for doorstep banking services

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 21: BLS International, a global tech-enabled services partner, has entered into a strategic partnership with PSB Alliance, a consortium formed by Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in India, to offer Doorstep Banking Services (DSB) across the nation. The initial rollout will cover 58 cities, with plans for expansion to all regions.

Under the 3-year contract, BLS International will provide basic banking services through a network of 100 centers. This initiative is expected to serve an estimated 11.7 million customer transactions, spanning

rural, semi-urban, metro, and urban areas in the North, West, East, and Northeast regions.

The partnership aims to transform the banking experience, enhance customer convenience, and promote financial inclusion by offering personalized banking solutions at customers' doorsteps. It aligns with the government's vision of expanding access to financial services.

Shikhar Aggarwal, Joint Managing Director of BLS International, expressed their commitment to driving positive change in the industry and contributing to the nation's progress through this partnership.

Rupee rises 5 paise to close at 83.06 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Sept 21: The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and settled 5 paise higher at 83.06 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday as crude oil price receded from its elevated level. The rupee was also weighed down by a rising dollar index, following hawkish comments from US Federal Reserve officials, forex traders said.

Moreover, investors remained cautious ahead of the Bank of England and Bank of Japan policy decisions, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 83.16 against the US dollar and settled at 83.06 (provisional), registering a rise of 5 paise from its previous close. During the session, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 83.02 and a low of 83.17.

In the previous session, the rupee staged a sharp rebound from its lifetime low levels and surged by 21 paise to close at 83.11 against the US dollar.

"Indian rupee headed south after a flat opening amid a hawkish signal from FOMC, which dragged the global risk-assets lower," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

However, the rupee managed to end the session with minor losses supported by the retracement in the crude oil prices and probable central bank interventions, Parmar added.

Market participants are in a



wait-and-watch mode ahead of the Bank of England and Bank of Japan policy decision, he said.

"The dollar is expected to bode well amid policy divergence and a better US macro environment compared to other developing nations," Parmar said.

The trend for USD/INR remains bullish, following broad-based strength in the greenback. The pair has resistance at 83.30 and support at 82.90, he added.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.18 per cent to 105.51.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 1.05 per cent to USD 92.55 per barrel.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex was trading 570.60 points or 0.85 per cent lower at 66,230.24. The broader NSE Nifty declined 159.05 points or 0.8 per cent to 19,742.35. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 3,110.69 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

Indri Diwali Collector's Edition wins top honors at Whiskies of the World Awards '23

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 21: Indri Diwali Collector's Edition 2023, a single malt whisky from Piccadilly Distilleries in India, has achieved global recognition by winning the 'Best in Show' Double Gold award at the prestigious Whiskies of the World Awards. This accolade positions Indian single malts on the world stage.

The Whiskies of the World Awards is a renowned whisky tasting competition that judges over 100 varieties of whiskies worldwide each year through rigorous blind tastings.

Indri Diwali Collector's Edition 2023 was selected as the Best in Show, outshining numerous Scotch whiskies, Bourbons, Canadian whiskies, Australian and British single malts.

Siddhartha Sharma, Founder of Piccadilly Distilleries, expressed the significance of this win in changing the global perception of Indian spirits and showcasing India's excellence. He emphasized the growth of Indian whisky, driven by factors like premiumization and a demand for authenticity. Indri Diwali Collector's Edition 2023 is a peated Indian single malt matured

in PX Sherry Casks, offering a unique flavor profile with notes of smoke, candied dried fruits, toasted nuts, spices, and more.

Piccadilly Distilleries introduced Indri to promote homegrown quality liquids on the world stage, and since its launch in 2021, the brand has received over 14 global awards. Indri-Trim, India's first triple cask single malt, is available in 19 Indian states and 17 countries, while the Diwali Collector's Edition 2023 will be available in the US, India, and select European countries starting in November.

Investors' wealth erode by ₹ 5.50 lakh cr in three days as markets fall on weak global trends

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: With equity benchmark indices falling for the third day running on Thursday, investors' wealth eroded by ₹ 5.50 lakh crore during this time amid a weak trend in global markets and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 570.60 points or 0.85 per cent to settle at 66,230.24 on Thursday. During the day, it dropped 672.13 points or 1 per cent to 66,128.71.

In three days, the benchmark has fallen by 1,608.39 points or 2.37 per cent. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by ₹ 5,50,376.85 crore to ₹ 3,17,90,603.86 crore in three days.

"Bearish sentiment across global equities led to selling in the domestic market for the third straight session as investors fretted



over the US Fed statement indicating one more rate hike later this year. Other negative catalysts like lingering overseas fund outflows, rising US Dollar index and treasury yields, and higher crude oil

prices are making investors jittery," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended

in the negative territory.

European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended in the red on Wednesday.

The US Federal Reserve left its key interest rate unchanged on Wednesday for the second time in its past three meetings, a sign that it's moderating its fight against inflation as price pressures have eased. But, Fed officials also signalled that they expect to raise rates once more this year.

"Domestic market declined following a hawkish stance by the Fed chair and prolonged high interest rate trajectory which is not positive for a slowing global economy," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Mahindra & Mahindra, ICICI

Bank, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Motors, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank and Power Grid were the major laggards among the Sensex firms.

Tech Mahindra, Asian Paints, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and Larsen & Toubro were the gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge fell 0.99 per cent and smallcap index declined 0.98 per cent.

Among the indices, bankex fell by 1.75 per cent, auto declined 1.58 per cent, financial services (1.35 per cent), realty (1.16 per cent), consumer discretionary (1 per cent), utilities (0.97 per cent), power (0.90 per cent) and commodities (0.75 per cent). Teck emerged as the only gainer. (PTI)



সত্যমেব জয়তে
অসম চৰকাৰ

সাংস্কৃতিক পৰিক্ৰমা বিভাগৰ উদ্যোগত



অসম সাংস্কৃতিক মহাসংগ্ৰাম ২০২৩-২৪



২৫ অক্টোবৰ ২০২৩ - ৰপৰা ৭ ফেব্ৰুৱাৰী ২০২৪ - লৈ

এই কাৰ্যসূচীৰ অধীনত অসমৰ প্ৰতিখন গাঁও পঞ্চায়ত / ৱাৰ্ড / ভি চি ডি চি / এম এ চি পৰ্যায়ত
অনুষ্ঠিত হ'বলগীয়া প্ৰতিযোগিতাসমূহ :

জ্যোতি অংগীত

ৰবীন্দ্ৰ অংগীত

বিশ্ব ৰাজ্য অংগীত

বিশ্বনৃত্য

ভূপেন্দ্ৰ অংগীত

অসমৰ লোকনৃত্য
(দলীয়)

ক শাখা :

১২-ৰ পৰা ১৮ বছৰ

খ শাখা :

১৯-ৰ পৰা ২৪ বছৰ

গ শাখা :

২৫-ৰ পৰা ৩৫ বছৰ

ইচ্ছুক প্ৰতিযোগীসকলে অফলাইন আবেদন পত্ৰ <https://directorculture.assam.gov.in>
ৰ পৰা ডাউনলোড কৰি ১০ অক্টোবৰ ২০২৩ তাৰিখৰ ভিতৰত গাঁও পঞ্চায়তৰ কাৰ্যালয় অথবা পৌৰসভাৰ
কাৰ্যালয় অথবা খণ্ড উন্নয়ন বিষয়াৰ কাৰ্যালয়ত জমা দিব লাগিব। গাঁও পঞ্চায়ত / ৱাৰ্ড/ ভি চি ডি চি/ এম এ চি
পৰ্যায়ত অনুষ্ঠিত প্ৰতিযোগিতাৰ প্ৰতিটো শাখাৰ তিনিগৰাকী বিজয়ীয়ে বিধান সভা পৰ্যায়, বিধান সভা পৰ্যায়ৰ
প্ৰতিটো শাখাৰ তিনিগৰাকী বিজয়ীয়ে জিলা পৰ্যায় আৰু জিলা পৰ্যায়ৰ প্ৰতিটো শাখাৰ তিনিগৰাকী বিজয়ীয়ে
ৰাজ্যিক পৰ্যায়ৰ প্ৰতিযোগিতাত অংশগ্ৰহণৰ সুযোগ লাভ কৰিব।

বিতং তথ্যৰ বাবে : ৮৮২২৬৩৮০১১, ৮৮২২৬১১৬৩৪ আৰু
৯৪০১১৮৩৯৯৬ এই তিনিটা মোবাইল নম্বৰত যোগাযোগ কৰিব

সঞ্চালক
সাংস্কৃতিক পৰিক্ৰমা, অসম

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Women hold up half the sky
- Mao Zedong

Women's Reservation Bill

The much-anticipated passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, after an agonizing 27-year wait, hasn't sparked the jubilation it rightly deserves. Over these years, successive governments have made concerted efforts to bury it in obscurity. It is only the Left parties and segments of the women's movement, notably AIDWA, that have tenaciously fought to keep its flame alive. The disheartening truth is that while the bill has finally been passed, its implementation is being needlessly postponed until after the next general election, citing dubious grounds. The draft bill stipulates that the reservation of parliamentary and state assembly seats for women will occur only after the next census, which is set to begin in 2026, along with the delimitation of seats. Neither the census operation nor the delimitation exercise is a prerequisite for implementing women's reservation. This reservation could be executed immediately after the bill's passage, with seat adjustments made later if necessary. Yet, specious arguments are being wielded to deny women their right to elected representation for more years. The BJP has consistently included the bill's passage in its election manifestos and promised to enact it before both the 2014 and 2019 general elections. They have held a majority in the Lok Sabha after both elections and pushed through controversial legislation. However, they failed to fulfill this electoral pledge during their nine years in power. Now, towards the end of their second consecutive term, they introduce the bill, seemingly hoping to secure women's votes without challenging the patriarchal status quo.

This strategy is unlikely to succeed. Women across the nation feel deceived rather than elated. The bitter realization is that several elections will pass without a substantial increase in women's representation in parliament and state assemblies. It's shameful that in 75 years of our independence, in a nation the BJP heralds as 'the cradle of democracy,' the proportion of seats held by women in the Lok Sabha has only risen from 5% to 15%. Most countries surpass us in this regard, even though Indian women vote in large numbers, and their participation grows with each election. The government's recent message is that this will not change soon, even though it could have by the 2024 general election. Adding insult to injury, the government appends a patronizing section titled 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' to the bill. In it, they claim to have empowered women through various initiatives, citing financial independence, access to education, and health services. They assert that true empowerment requires greater participation in decision-making. This section ends by stating that the bill aims to achieve these objectives.

However, this section is objectionable on several fronts. Initiatives like the Ujjawala Yojana have proven to be cruel jokes on millions of impoverished women who can't access free cylinders due to technicalities and can't afford the now-expensive ones. Similarly, claims of widespread toilet construction belie the grim reality of poor women's enduring unsanitary conditions. Mentioning these deeply disappointing schemes serves as a fitting conclusion for a bill promising women's reservation in positions of power, which will remain frustratingly out of reach for a considerable time. This delay undermines women's political representation, perpetuating a long-standing disparity. The government must act swiftly to fulfill its promise and empower women in decision-making roles. Urgent action is imperative. Closing this representation gap is essential for true democracy and gender equality in India.

Challenges in Indo-Canada relations: Examining Khalistan extremism and Trudeau's legacy

The 1985 bombing of an Indian airline by pro-Khalistan separatist terrorists remains a haunting and unresolved chapter in Canadian security history. Despite the passage of many decades, it is disheartening that crucial lessons have not been fully learned from this dreadful attack. Shockingly, only one individual was eventually charged with manslaughter in connection to this horrendous event, and it took nearly two decades for the investigation and prosecution to conclude, as reported by the Canadian national broadcaster, CBC, in July 2022. The prolonged nature of the investigation and the slow progress within the Canadian judicial system have undoubtedly left the Indian government and its citizens, particularly those deeply affected by this act of terrorism, with feelings of dissatisfaction and mistrust. This protracted legal process and the eventual verdict have, for some, served as an ominous precursor to further troubling developments.

Indeed, recent times have witnessed a resurgence of violent and menacing activities perpetrated by elements within the Khalistan separatist movement, taking root in Canada, the neighbor of the United States. Headlines have been replete with evidence of the gravity of this resurgent issue, as exemplified by a report from Wion news titled "How Canada has become headquarters for Khalistani terrorists." Given Canada's historical track record in handling such matters, it is not unreasonable for New Delhi to harbor concerns that Ottawa may lack the necessary commitment or capability to effectively address individuals and groups posing a threat to India's territorial integrity. Especially concerning are those who espouse violence as a means to achieve their destructive objectives, prompting apprehensions about the robustness of Canada's response to this emerging challenge.

From this perspective, it comes as no surprise that pro-Khalistan separatists in Canada have felt emboldened to engage in reprehensible actions, such as creating disturbing images glorifying the assassination of a former Indian Prime Minister. Shockingly, they even went so far as to publicly display a grotesque depiction of the brutal assassination of Indira Gandhi, who also served as the head of the Congress Party, an opposition party to the current government led by Narendra Modi's BJP. These recent incidents, among others, have rightfully elicited strong protests from the Indian government and Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, a member of the BJP party. In a broader sense, these attacks and threats against India and its citizens on Canadian soil can be viewed as an assault not only on all Indians but also on ethnic Indians worldwide, highlighting the global ramifications of such actions.

Moreover, India has conveyed to Ottawa the imperative of comprehending the necessity for safeguarding its diplomats stationed in Canada, who have been subjected to a range of threats from various Khalistani activists. Adding to the diplomatic concerns, Voice of America reported that India vehemently refuted Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of Indian government involvement in the assassination of a Canadian Sikh leader. India dismissed these allegations as "absurd and politically motivated" and, in the midst of escalating tensions between the two nations, took the measure of expelling a Canadian diplomat.

However, one cannot escape the conclusion that years of inaction and ineffectiveness by Ottawa in dealing with the unchecked activities of Khalistan extremists have injected a toxic element into Indo-Canada relations on all too many occasions.



While the overall relationship between these two significant Commonwealth nations has generally been positive, it has been

marred by unnecessary flare-ups caused by a fringe group effectively holding the betterment of relations hostage. It is imperative that this long-standing friendship between these two major countries is not allowed to fray any further, and a decisive resolution is urgently needed. The primary responsibility for resolving this issue lies with the Canadian authorities, who must take stronger measures to address this problem and prevent it from further straining the bilateral ties between the nations.

The persistent problem of Ottawa's perceived ineffectiveness or lack of interest in addressing the alarming violence and hatred emanating from the pro-Khalistan separatist movement can be attributed, in part, to an overzealous interpretation of Canadian multiculturalism. It seems that the government, entangled in the complexities of minority politics, may be reluctant to confront groups advocating violence. This hesitance may stem from a fear of being labeled as excessively politically correct, a concern exacerbated by the extreme woke politics espoused by certain leftist factions, which may hold

undue influence both within and outside the government of Justin Trudeau. A more diplomatic explanation of this leniency towards such groups can be found in the statement made by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, as reported by the Indian Express: "Canada's response to the Khalistani issue appears to be constrained by its 'vote bank compulsion.' India will have to respond if these activities threaten its national security and integrity."

To be more explicit, Justin Trudeau's minority government, which relies on a delicate balance of support, may harbor concerns about alienating a significant and politically active segment of the Canadian community. This segment represents a voting bloc that Trudeau's party has been actively competing for, primarily against the socialist NDP opposition party led by Jagmeet Singh. It's worth noting that Singh had previously attended pro-Khalistan separatist rallies and refrained from condemning the terrorist separatists responsible for the planted bomb that downed the Canadian plane in 2018, as reported by CBC. However, it should be mentioned that Singh has more recently expressed remorse for his past defense of the pro-Khalistani separatist movement leader who was charged in connection with the airline bombing.

The Canadian government,

under Justin Trudeau's leadership, would benefit from reframing its perspective. Rather than predominantly positioning itself as a guardian and advocate for various segments of minority groups engaged in overseas conflicts tied to their ancestral roots, a more prudent approach would be to prioritize enlightened self-interest. This approach doesn't entail indifference to the plight of those suffering and facing abuse abroad but emphasizes a balanced stance that serves the best interests of Canadians while remaining responsive to genuine cases of suffering and oppression elsewhere.

I have no personal animosity towards Trudeau, who hails from a family with a commendable track record regarding the Canadian Charter of Rights, particularly his late father's government. However, it's noteworthy that when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau confronted Quebec separatists in the 1970s, especially those who openly supported or engaged in acts of violence, he displayed unwavering resolve. As a Canadian who witnessed the devastating effects of such terrorism, I can attest that Trudeau exhibited a resolute approach in dealing with these perilous elements. His actions garnered widespread appreciation from the majority of Canadians.

Nevertheless, despite the occasional tensions, New Delhi appears to aspire to enhance its relations with Ottawa, even when these relations have hit rock bottom at times, particularly in the context of the Khalistan issue. Fundamentally, it seems that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau holds a genuine affinity for India and its culture. He seems to be committed to avoiding a legacy marked by opposition to the legitimate concerns of the broader Indian community regarding violence, whether or not voter considerations come into play. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

Significance of Putin-Kim summit for rest of the world and global power balance

By: MA Hossain

On September 13, North Korean leader Chairman Kim Jong-un embarked on his first foreign visit, following the global public health crisis. His arrival was marked by disembarkation from his bullet-proof train at the Vostochny Cosmodrome spaceport, located in the Amur Oblast in the Russian Far East. Kim met Russian leader Vladimir Putin at the launch vehicle assembly building and toured the spaceport facilities before engaging in an hours-long meeting in Kim's Limousine, transported from Pyongyang.

Putin spoke of the Soviet Union's wartime support for North Korea and also covered economic cooperation, humanitarian concerns, and regional dynamics. Kim, reciprocally, pledged "full and unconditional support" for Moscow, making an apparent reference to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Kim's itinerary across Russia included visits to aviation factories in Komsomolsk-on-Amur, a marine biology laboratory in Vladivostok, and the Russian Pacific Fleet. No doubt, the summit is seen as a sign of the "strategic importance" of bilateral relationships that have an anti-US, anti-Western alignment, thereby strengthening their alliances.

The visit came at a time when the backdrop of a diplomatic standoff in North Korea's relations with the US and South Korea, followed an unsuccessful summit between Chairman Kim and President Donald Trump in Hanoi, Vietnam, in February 2019. Consequently, Kim's meeting with Putin was a strategic manoeuvre to reemerge North Korea on the world stage through successful diplomacy. Moscow and Pyongyang have historical relations, when Stalin supported Kim's grandfather at the start of the Korean War in 1950. North Korea was one of the five countries that opposed the UN resolution in early March 2022, condemning the Russian invasion, and was also one of the first three countries to recognize the independence of the two Russian-occupied states - Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic in Eastern Ukraine.

North Korea possibly has tens of millions of artillery shells and rockets based on Soviet designs that could potentially give a considerable boost to the Russian army. In exchange, Kim seeks badly needed energy, food, and advanced weapon technology, including those related to intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, and a military reconnaissance satellite. This exchange can complicate President Biden's security consideration within the European and Asian theatre.

During Kim's visit, he praised "comrade Putin" and depicted Russia's actions in Ukraine as a "sacred fight to protect its sovereignty and security". He also added that the two countries would always be together in the fight against imperialism. The meeting at the Cosmodrome is symbolic, especially as Pyongyang failed twice recently in its bid to put a military spy satellite into orbit. The weaponry of Soviet vintage, akin to those used in the Ukraine conflict, emerged as the most salient items North Korea can provide to Moscow.

According to a senior research fellow from the Royal United Services Institute in Britain, Russia has exhausted up to 11 million shells in Ukraine last year and is set to fire 7 million more this year. Russia's defence industries have been ramping up shell production this year, but it has not been able to keep up with demand stemming from the war. North Korea is believed to possess a substantial reserve of Soviet-designed artillery shells and rockets, which are used against Ukraine. Kim was also accompanied by Jo Chun Ryong, a ruling party official overseeing munition policies.



The most appealing ammunition to Russia is the BM-21 Grad, a 122 mm multiple rocket launcher system that is similar to the ones it uses. Russia is also interested in the Soviet-made 152 mm M-1955 (D-20) towed gun-howitzers and 122 mm (D-30) howitzers used by North Korea. North Korea is also one of the few countries with ample stocks of Soviet-era tanks similar to those deployed by Russia in Ukraine, such as the T-54 and T-62, and it could supply spare parts. Former US National Security Advisor, John Bolton told CNN "From North Korea's point of view, this gets them back into really significant contact with Russia for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union".

The economic relations between North Korea and Russia have soared to new heights. Pyongyang will consider a Russian proposal to build a gas pipeline and power line running from North Korea to South Korea. Russia has already started a pilot project using North Korean cargo terminal to ship Russian coal to South Korea. Moscow has an ambition to connect its Trans-Siberian railway to the Trans-Korean railway linking Russia and the Korean Peninsula. North Korea has also hinted at an interest in reconstructing construction workers to assist in the reconstruction of Russian-occupied areas. Russia also has an economic interest in North Korea, especially in the fields of energy, transportation, and trade. Moscow hopes to expand its trade with North Korea, which has been severely restricted by the United Nations Security Council sanctions.

The significance of Kim's visit to Russia lies in its symbolic and strategic value rather than its substantive results. The summit exemplified Kim's diplomatic prowess amidst international pressure and isolation. For Putin, it reinforces his role and influence in regional and global affairs, especially within the context of escalating tensions with the US and its allies over issues, such as Ukraine, Syria, Venezuela, and West Africa. China would be more cautious regarding the development of these alliances. Kim's visit offers China some respite to support Putin and diverts attention from the US's intensified focus on Taiwan. The cooperation between these parties would complicate the threat assessments for Mr. Biden, spanning homeland, Europe, and Asia.

Kim Jong-un's visit to Russia was a significant event that reflected the intricate and dynamic landscape on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. The summit highlights the potential and limitations of bilateral relations between North Korea and Russia, as well as their implications for regional and global security. The visit conveys a clear message to NATO and the US as efforts to boost the visibility of his partnership with traditional allies by breaking out of isolation and part of a united front against Washington. (IPA Service)

Attack on Hinduism- Who gains from this intolerance?

By: M.R.Lalu

Absolutely, ever since Masha Amini's custodial death, the Islamic Republic of Iran has intensified its mandatory hijab law, according to which, women in the country face up to 10 years of prison if they fail to follow the stricter dress code. Amini was detained for her incorrect wearing of the headscarf and the young woman was allegedly beaten to death by the country's morality police. As per the Hijab and chastity bill, those who defy the religious decree of the state would receive 60 lashes as punishment and a prison term almost up to 10 years with heavy fines. The public outrage for the last few months have almost been brought to control, but the government, fearful of serious acrimony in the streets on the anniversary of Masha's death, has increased its vigilance with more forces barricading the streets and public places. The government has extended its radicalized gender segregation in hospitals, universities, workplaces, parks and other places where people gather. In Afghanistan the situation is worse as women in the country have totally been banned from places of public access and their education has been limited to the primary level and their dress code is of course a mandatory requirement under the Taliban.

Unsurprisingly, the world is watching these exercises of ruthlessness and discrimination without an impulse of compassion and an understanding is evidently effervescent in accepting the unquestionable power and reach of the religion and its acrimony is being frequently justified as a religious moral code of conduct with divine approval. Semitic religions, for that matter, have gained immunity for stretching their religious suppression or radicalized behavior to any extent with the world turning a mute spectator. When targeted assassinations and unprincipled outrage and savagery turn streets into hotbeds of mob violence, medieval religious laws receive acceptance and approval from the secular world as well. Year 2015 witnessed a terrible attack on Charlie Hebdo, the French satirical magazine, killing almost 12 of its editors. The world seems to have diluted its call for freedom of speech, trimming its periphery shorter in order to protect the interests of organized religions. If terrorism should be separated from religion then what about the religious principles that propagate and accentuate radicalism and promote enmity and terror? Here, again you will find a deliberate game played out with a systematic preface. That terror can never be associated with any religion, for all

the religions are aiming for something higher which is spiritual and they disapprove of terror in any fashion and form.

This has been an intelligent narrative that found place in our social discourse and we began to emulate this artificial global framework of glorifying religions irrespective of the quantum of blood they shed for their expansion and survival. If this has been the status and essential force of Islam irrespective of the complexity and fear it could cause among people from across the globe, Islamophobia, in real sense qualifies a certain level of study and understanding, especially to find out the extent of dread a religious ideology could articulate. Is Hinduism any match to such vitriolic exclusivist behavior? Are the religions in the world equally kind and magnanimous to the non-believers? Why are faith based religions more acrimonious than Hinduism that propagates the idea of divine presence in everything? Does Udaipur beheading remind us of the religious intolerance that was easily executed in a country populated with 80 percent Hindus? Why is Hinduism easily targeted in India and elsewhere with no collective acrimony reacting to such vituperations? The reason is simple. Hinduism as such can never be compared with any religion that came up with a particular fence of restrictions surrounding it and a particular person inventing its principles. Hinduism is almost like an open garden which offers easy access to anybody irrespective of what he belongs to. Everybody can sense the fragrance of flowers in it. But religions, hardbound with stiff ideologies and beliefs, would easily get provoked. Mostly, systematically framed narratives have often been used to vilify Hinduism and this has been a usual practice. It got severe as the government at the centre, supported by a majoritarian wave, has engraved its eminence and its leader, who certainly had contributed to strengthen its weaker links for almost a decade, is seen to be emerging for the third consecutive term.

This was again the case of the Dismantling of the Global Hindutva movement, a sign of Hinduphobia irrationally raising its ugly head to principally malign Hinduism. The conference was convened in the pretext of resisting the political emergence and regimentation of Hindus especially since 2014. The activists and scholars under the veil of academic freedom and expression were all set to unleash their agenda of fear-mongering and dehumanizing Hindus around the world. While the reality is entirely different: the Hindus, except for casteism and its discriminatory tendencies, have always been a peaceful group of people who prayed and propagated from the pe-

riod of the Vedas for peace and coexistence of humanity. Lord Krishna, in Bhagavad Gita explains the Varma system, which can roughly be equated with the contemporary caste system, as a design of the divine; that he further justifies was his creation for a better social order. Undoubtedly, with the passage of time, much damage has been done to some sections of the Hindu society and casteism has been a dominant factor. Hinduism has always been generous and inclusive and its well-known Vedic maxim "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti" translated as "Truth is one; the wise call it by different names" vividly illustrates its deep-rooted generosity and acceptance for other religions and faiths that exist in the world.

Indubitably, Tamil Nadu Minister and DMK leader Udayanidhi Stalin's tirade on the "eradication of Sanatan Dharma" triggered a massive outrage and public discourse. Politicians have frequently been denouncing Hinduism for decades. But the outrage and anger on such remarks began to have serious repercussions ever since the majority, the Hindus began to metamorphose its essential being into a political consolidation. This was gradual and probably the result of the denigration ran on its essence by some political parties over and over again in the name of minority appeasement. The Congress regime's 'Hindu Terror' narrative to its Prime Minister outrightly advocating for the Muslims to have first claim on the country's resources has deeply wounded the majority that otherwise remained peaceful and secluded. Alarming, no profound voices were heard criticizing Udayanidhi's statement. What should have been the impact of such a statement being flung against a minority religion in India? Imagine the amount of violence and destruction that would take place across India and the reaction of some oil-rich countries.

Top media houses from across the globe would have defamed India by painting its democracy anti-minority and loudly calling it Hindu supremacist. Members in the I.N.D.I.A block of the opposition have maintained a studied silence while some leaders in the group preferred to murmur their discontent without much harm being done to the coalition. Rebellious narratives to demonize the majority in India would further deepen the crisis of the country's political opposition. With the Prime Minister publicly seeking to defend the essence of Sanatan Dharma, irresistible political consolidation of the Hindus is bound to degenerate the aspiration of his opposition once again. (The author is a freelance journalist)

Iran's parliament passes a stricter headscarf law days after protest anniversary



DUBAI, Sept 21: Iran's parliament has approved a bill to impose heavier penalties on women who refuse to wear the mandatory Islamic headscarf in public and those who support them.

The move came just days after the anniversary of the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who had been detained by the morality police for violating the country's dress code. Her death in custody ignited months of protests in which many called for the overthrow of Iran's theocracy.

The bill also extends punishments to business owners who serve women not wearing the mandatory headscarf, known as hijab, and activists who organise against it. Violators could face up to 10 years in prison if the offence occurs in an organised way.

The bill, which was approved by 152 lawmakers in Iran's 290-seat parliament on Wednesday, requires ratification by the Guardian Council, a clerical body that serves as constitutional watchdog. It would take effect for a preliminary period of three years. The demonstrations sparked by Amini's death on Sep-

tember 16, 2022, faded early this year following a heavy crackdown on dissent in which more than 500 protesters were killed and over 22,000 detained.

But many women continued to flaunt the rules on wearing hijab, prompting a new campaign to enforce them over the summer. Iran's clerical rulers view the hijab law as a key pillar of the Islamic Republic and blamed the protests on Western nations, without providing evidence.

The protesters said they were motivated by anger over the dress code as well as what they see as the corruption and poor governance of the country's ruling clerics.

In a separate incident on Wednesday, a gunman shot a cleric to death in the northern Iranian town of Sejas. Police detained the assailant, and authorities said the motive was a personal dispute, according to the semi-official Fars and Tasnim news agencies.

Several clerics were attacked at the height of the protests. An armed guard at a bank shot and killed a senior Shiite cleric in April. (AP)

UK PM Rishi Sunak defends shift in climate policy as 'realistic' approach

LONDON, Sept 21: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Thursday defended his shift in climate action policy as a "pragmatic and realistic approach" towards delivering the country's Net Zero target, amid criticism over proposed delays in certain measures. A day after his speech set out a pushback of petrol and diesel car ban and other cost-intensive measures to reduce the country's carbon emissions, Sunak fought back suggestions that he was filtering down the UK's climate commitments.

Amid criticism from within his own party and also from Opposition and industry, he stressed that his updated approach was designed to protect "hard-pressed British families" from "unacceptable costs". "We're very confident — being in government, with all the information at our disposal — that we are on track to hit all our targets," Sunak told the BBC in an interview.

"We're absolutely not slowing down efforts to combat climate change. I'm very proud of our country's leadership. We've decarbonised faster than any other major economy in the G7 — not a fact you hear reported that often," he said. "For those who disagree with me — and there are plenty of people as we can see over the last day or two, lots of people who disagree with me — the question is for them, they should explain to the country why they think it's right that ordinary families up and down the country should have to fork out GBP 5,000, GBP 10,000, GBP 15,000 to make the transition earlier than is necessary," he added.

As a year approaches since the 43-year-old Conservative Party leader took the top job at 10 Downing Street following political turmoil, his latest intervention is widely seen as a voter pitch for the next general election — expected in a year's time. It comes just before the annual party conference season kicks off early next month when all the major parties will set out their stalls for an upcoming election campaign.

"The first year I've had this job, I've brought stability and competence into government, our country, and our economy, which was necessary and important. But what I want to do now is, in a series of decisions, change the direction of our country," Sunak told the BBC. "And I believe that, if we want to do that, we have to change the way we do politics. You can't chase the short-term headline. You've got to do the things that are right in the long term. That's not going to be easy. I know I'll get criticism and flak for it, as you've seen over the last day or two. But I'm not going to be deterred from doing what I think is right for the long-term future of our children," he insisted. Meanwhile, the criticism he referred to has continued to flow from the Opposition benches, with Labour branding Sunak "rattled, chaotic and out of his depth" on the issue.

Within Sunak's own ranks, Britain's Indian-origin Tory MP and president of the COP26 Summit in Glasgow in November 2021 warned against the "chopping and changing" of climate policies. "Concerned about the fracturing of UK political consensus on climate action. Chopping and changing policies create uncertainty for businesses and the public. Ultimately this makes it more difficult to attract investment and pushes up costs for consumers," tweeted Sir Alok Sharma, knighted in King Charles III's New Year Honours list "for his contribution to combatting climate change through his leadership at COP26".

"The UK has led the world on Net Zero, climate action and tackling climate change at COP26. Our international partners have concerns about the stance taken today. Leading on a green growth agenda is good for the economy, investment, jobs and the environment," he said. (PTI)

Pakistan's general elections to be held in last week of January 2024: Election Commission

ISLAMABAD, Sept 21: Pakistan's election commission on Thursday announced that the general elections in the country will take place in the last week of January 2024, amid mounting pressure from political parties that pressed for timely elections in the cash-strapped country.

In a statement, the electoral body said that it reviewed work on delimiting constituencies and the initial list for the delimitation of constituencies would be published on September 27. It said parties would be able to file objections after that the ECP would address all objections and suggestions.

After hearing objections and suggestions regarding the list, the final list would be issued on November 30, which would be followed by the election schedule, it said.

It said that by the end of delimitation, it would announce a 54-day election program and "polls will be held in the last week of January 2024." The National Assembly was dissolved on August 9 and



constitutionally, the elections should be held within 90 days but the process was delayed by the ECP due to the delimitation exercise which became mandatory in the wake of the new census held this year.

The previous government just days before the end of its term endorsed the results of the census which obligated the ECP to set up a new electoral district on the basis of the latest population. The move led to fears that the polls meant to be held within 90 days may be delayed till next year as the delimitation process would take about

four months to complete.

The decision to shorten the timeframe of the delimitation comes amid mounting pressure on the ECP from several political parties that pressed for timely elections. The Constitution also provides that the ECP should complete the delimitation process within 120 days. Currently, a caretaker government is running the country and it will continue until the new prime minister is elected through the elections.

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said the interim government is committed to upholding the democratic process in Pakistan by holding general elections and it will not make any excuse to delay it.

In a letter to the ECP chief earlier this month, President Arif Alvi, who was a founding member of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, unilaterally proposed November 6 as the day for the polls, but the top election body avoided comment on his suggestion. (PTI)

The early morning missile attack was Russia's largest in over a month, and came a day after reports of sabotage at a Russian military airfield in Chkalovsk near Moscow

Russia strikes cities from east to west Ukraine, starting fires and killing at least 2

KYIV, Sept 21: Russian missiles pounded cities across Ukraine on early Thursday morning, according to Ukrainian authorities, starting fires, killing at least two people and trapping others under rubble.

The early morning missile attack was Russia's largest in over a month, and came a day after reports of sabotage at a Russian military airfield in Chkalovsk near Moscow.

It also coincided with the United Nations General Assembly summit in New York, where Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky delivered a speech and presented a Ukrainian "peace formula," and came on the International Day of Peace.

The same day, Poland said it would stop transferring its own weapons to Ukraine as it works to modernise its own military.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki said the decision was not related to a temporary ban on Ukrainian grain imports, nor would it affect weapons transfers

through Poland.

A dispute about whether Ukrainian grain should be allowed to enter the domestic markets of Poland and other European Union countries has pushed the tight relationship between Kyiv and Warsaw to its lowest point since Russia invaded Ukraine last year.

"We are no longer transferring any weapons to Ukraine because now we will arm ourselves with the most modern weapons," he said in an interview on the private TV broadcaster Polsat News late Wednesday.

Morawiecki stressed that Poland would defend its economic interests but added that the dispute over grain imports would not hurt Ukraine's security. He said a NATO and US hub in the Polish city of Rzeszow used for transporting weapons into Ukraine would not be affected.

"We are not going to risk the security of Ukraine," he said. Poland has transferred large amounts of its older weapons to Ukraine and has been upgrading its own inven-



tory with new equipment purchased from South Korea and other countries.

In the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, near the front lines, two people were killed Thursday and at least five injured after a strike hit a residential building, said regional Governor Oleksandr Prokudin.

Seven people were injured in Kyiv, including a 9-year-old girl, reported Mayor Vitalii Klitschko, and some residential and commercial buildings were damaged.

The Ukrainian Air Force said it

had intercepted 36 of 43 cruise missiles launched deep into Ukraine. Closer to the front lines, Kherson was struck with S-300 missiles and Kharkiv was likely targeted with other, shorter-ranged, weapons.

At least six strikes hit the Slobozhynskiy district of Kharkiv, damaging civilian infrastructure, said regional Governor Oleh Syniehubov. The city's mayor added that two people had been sent to hospitals.

At least 10 people were injured and at least one person was res-

cued from under rubble in Cherkasy, in central Ukraine, according to Ihor Klymenko, minister of internal affairs of Ukraine. Up to 23 people may still be buried under rubble in Cherkasy after the morning strike, said Cherkasy regional Governor Ihor Taburets. Rescue services were working to clear the debris.

An industrial zone was hit in the western region of Lviv, damaging buildings and starting a fire, but no information on casualties was immediately available, Klymenko added.

Regional Governor Vitalii Koval reported strikes in the city of Rivne in the northwest region of the same name, without immediately providing details.

Russia's Ministry of Defence said 22 drones were taken down overnight by air defense systems, 19 above Russian-annexed Crimea and three others in the Kursk, Belgorod and Oryol regions near Ukraine. The defence ministry did not say whether there were any casualties. (AP)

Zelenskyy returns to Washington to face growing dissent among Republicans to US spending for Ukraine

WASHINGTON, Sept 21: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy returns to Washington on Thursday for a whirlwind one-day visit, this time to face the Republicans now questioning the flow of American dollars that for 19 months has kept his troops in the fight against Russian forces.

Zelenskyy will meet with President Joe Biden at the White House, speak with U.S. military leaders at the Pentagon and stop at Capitol Hill to talk privately with Republican and Democratic leaders of the House and Senate as the world is watching Western support for Kyiv.

It is Zelenskyy's second visit to Washington since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and comes as Biden's request to Congress for an additional \$24 billion for Ukraine's military and humanitarian needs is hanging in the balance. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby called the Ukrainian president "our best messenger" in persuading U.S. law-



makers to keep vital U.S. money and weapons coming.

"It's really important for members of Congress to be able to hear directly from the president about what he's facing in this counteroffensive," Kirby told reporters on Wednesday, "and how he's achieving his goals, and what he needs to continue to achieve those goals."

Biden has called on world leaders to stand strong with Ukraine, even as he faces domestic political divisions at home.

A hard-right flank of Republicans, led by former President Donald Trump, Biden's chief rival in the 2024 race for the White House, is increas-

ingly opposed to sending more money overseas.

As the White House worked to shore up support for Ukraine before Zelenskyy's visit, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and top intelligence officials briefed senior lawmakers behind closed doors Wednesday to argue the case. But some Senate Republicans walked out of the briefing no more convinced than before about the necessity of spending more on Ukraine. "It's not close to the end," Sen. Josh Hawley, a Missouri Republican, said. "What we're basically told is, 'Buckle up and get out your checkbook.'"

Since the start of the war,

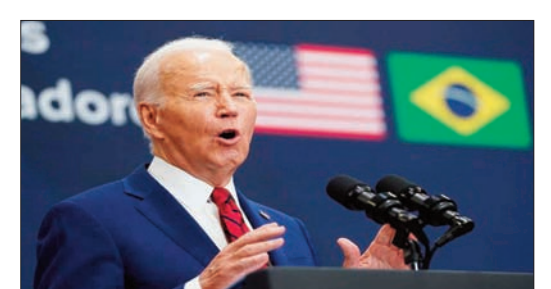
most members of Congress supported approving four rounds of aid to Ukraine, totaling about \$113 billion, viewing defense of the country and its democracy as an imperative, especially when it comes to containing Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Some of that money went toward replenishing U.S. military equipment sent to the frontlines. Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona, who traveled to Kyiv this week, said cutting off U.S. aid during the Ukrainians' counteroffensive would be "catastrophic" to their efforts.

"That would clearly be the opening that Putin is looking for," Kelly said Wednesday. "They cannot be successful without our support."

The political environment has shifted markedly since Zelenskyy addressed Congress last December on his first trip out of Ukraine since the war began. He was met with rapturous applause for his country's bravery and surprisingly strong showing in the war. (AP)

Under pressure over border, Biden administration to protect hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans



WASHINGTON, Sept 21: The Biden administration said that it was granting temporary legal status to hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans who are already in the country — quickly making them eligible to work — as it grapples with growing numbers of people fleeing the South American country and elsewhere to arrive at the US border with Mexico.

The move — along with promises to accelerate work permits for many migrants — may appease Democratic leaders who have pressured the White House to do more to aid asylum-seekers, while also providing grist for Republicans who say the president has been too lax on immigration.

The Homeland Security Department plans to grant Temporary Protected Status to an estimated 4,72,000 Venezuelans who arrived in the country as of July 31, 2023, making it easier for them to get authorisation to work in the US. That's been a key demand of Democratic mayors and governors who are struggling to care for an increased number of migrants in their care.

That's in addition to about 2,42,700 Venezuelans who already qualified for temporary status before Wednesday's announcement. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas granted the expansion and an 18-month extension for those who already have temporary status due to "Venezuela's increased instability and lack of safety due to the enduring humanitarian, security, political, and environmental conditions", the department said in a statement.

The administration said that it would accelerate work authorisations for people who have arrived in the country since January through a mobile app for appointments at land crossings with Mexico, called CBP One, or through parole granted to Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who have financial sponsors and arrive at an airport. It will aim to give them work permits within 30 days, compared to about 90 days currently.

The promise of accelerated work permits does not apply to people who cross the border illegally and seek asylum, who, by law, must wait for six months to receive work permits. Mayors and governors have been clamouring for President Joe Biden to figure out a way for the administration to get newly arrived migrants to be able to work legally, so they can support themselves.

Democratic officials in New York, Massachusetts, Chicago and elsewhere have complained about the strain that newly arrived migrants are putting on their resources, especially in New York where the government is required to provide housing for anyone who needs it. (AP)

King Charles III is to visit fire-damaged Notre-Dame cathedral on day 2 of his visit to France

PARIS, Sept 21: King Charles III praised France and the United Kingdom's "indispensable relationship" and its capacity to meet the world's challenges, including the war in Ukraine and climate change, in an address on Thursday to French lawmakers.

On the second day of his state visit to France, Charles also met with sports groups in the northern suburbs of Paris and was scheduled to pay a visit to fire-damaged Notre-Dame cathedral.

The king received a warm welcome from French lawmakers from both the upper and lower houses of parliament gathered at the Senate, who stood and applauded him at length. The partnership between the two nations "remains absolutely vital as

together we confront the challenges of this world," he said. "The United Kingdom will be one of France's closest allies and best friends."

"Our determination and our alliance are more important than ever" in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he added. "Together, we are unwavering in our determination that Ukraine will triumph and that our cherished freedom will prevail."

Charles offered to adapt the Franco-British "Entente Cordiale," a 1904 series of agreements that settled former disputes and significantly improved relations, into an "entente for sustainability to respond more effectively to the global climate and biodiversity emergency."

"There's no challenge we can't meet, as we have so often done in the past," he said. Charles and Queen Camilla then headed to Saint-Denis, north of Paris, to meet community sports groups and stars as France currently hosts the Rugby World Cup.

front of Notre-Dame Cathedral to see the ongoing renovation work aimed at reopening the monument by the end of next year, after it was devastated by a fire in 2019.

"I look forward to visiting that magnificent cathedral ... to see how centuries-old crafts have been revived and passed onto apprentices who are helping to restore Notre-Dame to its former glory," he said in Versailles.

Charles and Macron will also attend a reception for British and French business leaders about financing climate-related and biodiversity projects.

The king will end his trip on Friday with a stop in Bordeaux, the southwestern city that is home to a large British community. (AP)

Meghalaya govt turns down opposition demand to pass resolution against UCC

SHILLONG, Sept 21: Meghalaya government on Thursday turned down the opposition's demand for an official resolution against the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) on the ground that the Centre was yet to come up with a Bill on the matter.

The resolution was moved by opposition Congress legislator Charles Mangar and supported by MLAs of the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) and Voice of the People Party (VPP) in the Assembly.

In his reply, chief minister Conrad K Sangma said the state government is against the concept of the UCC as it goes against the idea of India which is 'diversity'.

However, the government cannot just pass a resolution prematurely without knowing the content of the UCC Bill, he added.

"Question arises that can we as legislators oppose or pass a resolution without knowing the content of the UCC Bill. Outside the House, we can speak on the basis of what we think may happen, but as a legislator, the first thing we need to have in front of us is the UCC Bill," Sangma said.

He said it doesn't mean just because other states have done it, Meghalaya too should pass a res-

olution.

"That is why we need to apply our mind. Only after seeing the UCC Bill, we will take a stand as a government," he added.

The chief minister assured that the House will stand united to oppose any move by anybody including Parliament to dilute the identity, rights, culture and practices of the indigenous people of Meghalaya.

"If there is any proposal in the proposed Bill to dilute the practices of the tribals in terms of religion, marriages and inheritance, the state government and the Assembly will never agree to it," he said.

He informed that the matter was also discussed during an MDA meeting on how to proceed on the issue.

Meanwhile, the chief minister informed that the state government will soon submit its views and suggestions on the UCC to the Law Commission.

Satisfied with the reply of the chief minister, Mangar decided to withdraw the resolution.

"Since I now understand the mind of the government that it is also concerned about the UCC, I beg to withdraw this resolution," he said. (PTI)

Mobs try to storm police stations over arrest of 5 youths, curfew reimposed



MANIPUR VIOLENCE

IMPHAL, Sept 21: More than 10 people were injured when Manipur security forces fired tear gas shells on protesters for trying to storm police stations and court arrest demanding the unconditional release of the five arrested youths on Thursday.

As a precautionary measure, the state government cancelled curfew relaxations in the twin districts of Imphal from 5pm, officials said. Responding to a call by six local

clubs and Meira Paibis demanding the release of the five village volunteers, hundreds of protesters holding placards and shouting slogans tried to enter the Porompat police station in Imphal East and Singamei police station and Kwakeithel police outpost in Imphal West district.

However, police and RAF personnel deployed at strategic positions fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the crowd.

A protester, identified as Th Bi-mola at Porompat said, "We were left with no option but to court arrest as the government failed to release the five village volunteers. If such village volunteers are arrested, who will protect the Meitei villages in the periphery of the hills and the valley Kuki Zo militants."

Similar attempts to enter Mayang Imphal police station in Imphal West district and Andro police station in Imphal East district

were also reported.

All Lathagabal Kendra United Clubs Coordinating Committee president Yunnam Hitler said, "The decision to launch the 'voluntary mass arrest' agitation was taken after the government took no steps to release the five arrested youths."

On September 16, Manipur Police had arrested five persons for carrying sophisticated weapons and donning camouflage uniforms. In a statement, police said the five had been produced before the judicial magistrate and remanded to police custody.

In the evening, the state government cancelled curfew relaxation in the twin districts of Imphal in the wake of the violence.

According to an official order by the district magistrate of Imphal West, "Curfew hours, which was relaxed from 5am to 9pm on September 21, stands withdrawn with effect from 5pm and restriction of movement of general public outside their residences is enforced in all areas of Imphal West district."

Similar orders were also imposed in Imphal East district, officials said. (PTI)

Teacher from Nagaland recognised as best associate NCC officer in NER



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 21: During the North East NCC Summit held on September 20, 2023, at NCC Directorate NE Region in Shillong, Meghalaya, Associate NCC Officers (ANOs) representing the North Eastern states under NER NCC Directorate were honored for their dedication and exemplary service in NCC for the year 2022-23. Sixteen teachers were recognized for their commitment and professionalism.

DISMANTLING OF GOODS SHED IN LINE NO. 1 AT NEW GUWAHATI

E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 33 of 2023;
Date: 19-09-2023. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No.: DENGSHY-02-2023. Name of work & Location: At New Guwahati: Dismantling of Goods Shed in line No. 1. Tender Value: ₹33,85,118.75; Earnest Money: ₹67,700.00. E-tender will be closed at 13:00 hrs. on 12-10-2023 and will be opened at 13:00 hrs. on 12-10-2023. For details please visit www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Engineer/Guwahati, Malignaon
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving customers with a smile

Arunachal CM urges people to shun 'money culture' during elections

ITANAGAR, Sept 21: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu has called upon the people of the state to join his campaign against 'money culture' during elections in the state.

Addressing a public meeting at Yachuli in Lower Subansiri district on Wednesday, the chief minister urged the people to elect leaders 'based on performance' and 'not through money culture' in the assembly elections, due next year.

"We always complain against corruption. But have we ever thought where it begins? It begins when a voter casts his or her valuable vote in exchange of money. Unfortunately, in our state, the candidate who pumps out the most cash, wins the election. This must be stopped," he said.

Khandu termed money culture as the reason for eligible, capable and honest people losing out to represent their constituency and work for people's development.

"Where is the time and zest for the representative, who spends crores of rupees to win elections, to think for development. His five years will be spent to recover the spent cash, earn more cash to invest in his next election," he emphatically said.

Khandu made a fervent appeal to youngsters, society leaders, community-based organisations and religious leaders to set out against this ill so that the coming election is fought on clean and impartial grounds and sincere and honest people make it to the Legislative Assembly. Talking about corruption, he reiterated his warning, especially to government employees, to refrain from any form of corruption or face action. He regretted that despite repeated warnings and government's best intentions, the incident of paper leakage occurred in one of the recruitment examinations held by the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC), in recent times. (PTI)

State-level marathon held to promote HIV/AIDS awareness, healthy living in Kohima

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 21: In a significant stride towards promoting HIV/AIDS awareness and fostering a culture of healthy living among the youth, the state-level Red Run Marathon was held in Kohima on Thursday. The marathon that commenced at PHQ Junction concluded at Ruzhukhrie Government Higher Secondary School Kohima.

The event aimed to educate peers, family members and the community about HIV prevention practices, promoting support and empathy for those affected by HIV/AIDS and combating stigma and discrimination.

Initiated by the National Youth Festival 2023 and backed by the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), Nagaland's additional secretary of the health and family welfare department S Tainiu Khiamniungan flagged off the marathon with a pledge to create awareness about HIV/AIDS.

The journey to the state-level marathon began with district-level marathons held in 12 districts of Nagaland on August 12 to commemorate International Youth Day. A total of 519 students from 58 institutions participated, with 24 exceptional participants (both male and female) selected to compete at the state level. The winners of the first and second positions in both male and female categories will represent Nagaland in the up-



coming national-level Red Run Marathon scheduled to be held in Goa on October 8.

Dr Ahu Sekhose, project director, Nagaland State AIDS Control Society (NSACS), who chaired the flagging off programme, said the event saw a fervent gathering of participants and supporters.

Highlighting the significance of the Red Run Marathon, Sekhose said the initiative aims to engage young people in a healthy lifestyle and physical activities to maintain their well-being and reduce the risk of lifestyle diseases and HIV/STIs.

He explained the campaign's objectives such as raising visibility for HIV/AIDS and drug abuse issues, promoting safe sexual behaviour among youths and increasing basic knowledge about HIV/AIDS and related services.

1st NSCCI concludes in Nagaland

DIMAPUR, Sept 21: The 1st Northeastern States Chamber of Commerce and Industry Business Conclave (NSCCI) came to a close at Niathu Resort in Chumoukedima near Dimapur, Nagaland, following three days of productive discussions and insights. The event, hosted by the Confederation of Nagaland Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CNCCI) from September 18, was graced by esteemed guests and leaders, including Advisor to the Nagaland chief minister and chairman of Investment & Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN), Abu Metha.

In his closing speech, Abu Metha expressed his appreciation for the successful hosting of the conclave and commended the delegates who had gathered from across the northeastern region. He acknowledged the value of their ideas and suggestions for future plans.

Abu Metha reflected on Nagaland's journey and highlighted the state's contributions to the nation's development despite facing numerous challenges. He emphasized the importance of progress and equitable development across the region, creating opportunities for youth to excel in various fields.

Technology was a central theme in Abu Metha's speech, where he emphasized its transformative impact on human lives. He urged government leaders and stakeholders to harness technology for improved living standards and efficient service delivery.

Discussing the geographical advantage of the Northeast, Abu Metha highlighted its role as a gateway for both eastern and western regions. He encouraged the business community to recognize this dynamic and shape the narrative accordingly.

Abu Metha also emphasized the tourism sector's potential in the Northeast, which can significantly contribute to the economy. He noted the growth projections for the Indian tourism industry and emphasized its role in the region's economic growth. (NNN)

CM-ELEVATE program launched in Meghalaya to boost entrepreneurship and economic development

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 21: Meghalaya witnessed a significant moment in its history as chief minister Conrad K. Sangma officially inaugurated the CM-ELEVATE program at Vivanta, Shillong. This flagship initiative aims to empower, employ, and promote economic development among the state's youth.

The launch ceremony was graced by distinguished personalities, including chief guest Conrad K. Sangma, chief minister of Meghalaya, special guest Dr Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh, minister of agriculture and farmers' welfare, government of Meghalaya, and special guests Bah Paul Lyngdoh, minister of tourism, government of Meghalaya, and Alexander Laloo Hek, minister of animal husbandry and veterinary, government of Meghalaya, among others.

Conrad K. Sangma outlined the program's goal of engaging, employing, and empowering over 20,000 individuals across various sectors in the next three years, with an investment of approximately ₹ 300 crore. He emphasised the government's collaborations with public and private sector banks to facilitate easy access to credit for aspiring entrepreneurs. Financial support ranging from 35 to 75 percent of the project cost is offered to mitigate credit risks. The program provides term loans covering up to 95% of



the project cost, with varying loan terms and moratorium periods, coupled with variable interest rates across different schemes. The chief minister stressed the government's role in formulating policies, creating a conducive ecosystem, and providing essential facilities to support entrepreneurs.

Bah Paul Lyngdoh, minister of tourism, government of Meghalaya, highlighted the CM-ELEVATE program's commitment to the betterment of Meghalaya's youth and future. It is expected to create around 700 direct employment opportunities and numerous indirect job opportunities, benefiting the youth. Notable schemes under the Tourism Department, such as Green Villa Scheme, Homestay Scheme, Motorhome Meghalaya Scheme, and Prime Tourism Vehicle Scheme, were mentioned.

Dr Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh emphasized the program's significance for agriculture. By providing 50% financial aid for the establishment of polyhouses, the program promotes the cultivation of high-value vegetables and floriculture crops. In its initial phase, the program aims to subsidize the setup of 1,000 polyhouses, fostering agricultural development.

Dr Vijay Kumar D. IAS, highlighted that the program creates an entrepreneurship ecosystem and introduces 15 different schemes. The goal is to support up to 20,000 businesses in the next five years, with the government providing subsidies ranging from 35% to 75% to support these endeavors. The program also features a user-friendly single-window portal for applications, ensuring a seamless experience for aspiring entrepreneurs.

GOVT. OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER: BAITHALANGSO DIVISION (IRRIGATION) HAMREN (Temporary Campus at Hongkram, West Karbi Anglong, Pin-782450)

NO. EE/BDI/T/1/Part-II/2023-24/

Dt.

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Executive Engineer, Baithalangso Division (Irrigation), Hamren on behalf of Governor of Assam invites the Percentage basis rates for registered contractor of class-I, II & III of Irrigation Deptt. as per existing norms for different irrigation Schemes under SOPD, 2023-24 in separate Groups, under Baithalangso Division (Irrigation) Hamren, (Temporary Campus at Hongkram) under the administrative control of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu for the year 2023-24. Detail particulars may be seen in office of the undersigned during office hours from 19/09/2023 upto 1.00 PM of 04/10/2023.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Baithalangso Division (Irrigation)
Hamren

Memo No.EE/BDI/T-I/Part-II/2023-24/ 465 -A

Date: 19.09.2023

No.CHD/UDD-1/15thFC/Un-Tied/NIT-CS/2023/285

Dated Kokrajhar the 12th September/2023

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders are invited from experienced & competent contractors for the following works under 15th FC (Un-Tied grant) 2nd Installment for the year 2020-21:

Sl. No.	Group No.	Name of the work	Quantity	Last Date & time of submission of tender	Technical Bid Opening : Date & Time
1	Group -1 to 2	Supply of 220 GSM Tarpaulin for BPL/EWS beneficiary in Urban area of Gossaigaon Town and Goreswar Town.	616 nos.	03-10-2023 (2.00 PM)	03-10-2023 (3.00 PM)
2	Group -3-11	Supply and Installation of Solar LED Home Light System 150Watt for BPL/EWS beneficiary in Urban area at 9 nos. of ULB's of BTC.	302 nos.		

The details can be obtained from the Office of the undersigned during Office hours from 13-09-2023 to 30-09-2023. Payment is subject to release of fund from BTC in due course. The undersigned "reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof and does not bind her/him to accept the lowest rate.

Sd/- CHD,
Urban Development Department,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/522

No.CHD/UDD-1/15thFC/Tied/NIT-CS/2023/283

Dated Kokrajhar the 12th September/2023

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders are invited from experienced & competent contractors for the following works under 15th FC (Tied grant) 1st Installment for the year 2021-22:

Sl. No.	Group No.	Name of the work	Quantity	Last Date & time of submission of tender	Technical Bid Opening : Date& Time
1	Group -1 to 6	Supply of Tractor with Stainless Steel water tanker @ 2000 litre at 6 nos. of ULB's of BTC.	6 nos.	03-10-2023 (2.00 PM)	03-10-2023 (3.00 PM)
2	Group -7-15	Supply of Stainless Steel Water Filter (Capacity 32 litres), for BPL/EWS beneficiary in Urban area at 9 nos. of ULB's of BTC	1318 nos.		

The details can be obtained from the Office of the undersigned during Office hours from 13-09-2023 to 30-09-2023.

Payment is subject to release of fund from BTC in due course. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason, thereof and does not bind her/him to accept the lowest rate.

Sd/- CHD,
Urban Development Department,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/523

No.CHD/UDD-1/6thFC/Devolution/2nd Inst./NIT-CS/2023/273

Dated Kokrajhar the 8th September/2023

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders are invited from experienced & competent contractors having proven tract record for the following works under 6th ASFC (Devolution Fund) 2nd Installment for the year 2021-22:

Sl. No.	Group No.	Name of the work	Quantity	Last Date & time of submission of tender	Technical Bid Opening : Date & Time
1	Group -1-9	Supply and installation of Solar LED Home Light System 100 Watt for BPL/EWS beneficiary in Urban areas of BTR.	340 nos.	30-09-2023 (2.00 PM)	30-09-2023 (2.00 PM)
2	Group -10-16	Supply of 220 GSM Tarpaulin, for BPL/EWS beneficiary in Urban areas of BTR.	2480 nos.		
3	Group -17-25	Supply and Installation of 30Watt LED Solar Street Light in Urban areas of BTR.	179 nos.		

The details can be obtained from the Office of the undersigned during Office hours from 08-09-2023 to 29-09-2023.

Payment is subject to release of fund from BTC in due course. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof and does not bind her/him to accept the lowest rate.

Sd/- CHD,
Urban Development Department,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/524

Canada-based gangster Sukhdul Singh killed in Winnipeg

CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI, Sept 21: Gangster Sukhdul Singh alias Sukha Duneke, one of Punjab's most wanted criminals, was killed in the Canadian city of Winnipeg by unidentified people, sources said on Thursday.

"It is believed to be the result of inter-gang rivalry," a source said.

The killing of the Canada-based gangster, who had at least 18 cases against him including those for murder, attempt to murder and robbery, took place on Wednesday night Canada time, the sources said.

The development comes at a time when India and Canada are embroiled in a diplomatic row over the killing of Khalistani separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia in June. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has alleged the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar.

Hailing from Duneke Kalan village in Punjab's Moga district, the gangster fled to Canada in December 2017, official sources said.

An active member of the Davinder Bambiha gang, Duneke was



closely associated with Canada-based gangster-turned-terrorist Arsh Dalla, gangster Lucky Patial, Malaysia-based gangster Jackpal Singh alias Lali and other criminals.

The dreaded gangster was managing the activities of the gang from foreign soil and was also involved in running an extortion racket, targeted

killings of rival gang members in Punjab and neighbouring areas through his local contacts and managing the network of his foreign-based associates, the sources said.

In the last few months, the number of extortion calls made by Duneke had increased considerably in Punjab and neighbouring areas,

they added.

In January, two of Duneke's associates -- Kulwinder Singh alias Kinda and Paramjeet Singh Pamma -- were arrested by the counter-intelligence wing (Bathinda) and three pistols and cartridges seized from their possession.

The two men were part of the extortion racket run by Duneke.

After his father died in 1990, Duneke got a peon's job at the Moga deputy commissioner's office on compassionate ground. During the eight years he continued with the job, he became addicted to drugs, the sources said. A lookout circular was issued against Duneke in 2022.

His name had also figured in connection with the killing of international kabaddi player Sandeep Nangal Ambian in March last year. He was accused of arranging the shooters for the killing.

Duneke's name also cropped up following the killing of two rival gang members -- Manpreet Singh and Vicky Singh -- by the shooters of the Bambiha gang in January 2022. (PTI)

Cutting across party lines, Rajya Sabha MPs support women's reservation bill

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: Cutting across party lines, Rajya Sabha members on Thursday supported the bill to provide 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lower House of Parliament and state assemblies, even as some opposition members termed it an election gimmick.

During the debate in the Upper House on the 128th Constitution Amendment Bill that seeks to reserve a third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, members also highlighted the need to accelerate the process instead of waiting for a fresh census and delimitation exercise.

Taking part in the discussion, Elamaram Kareem of CPI(M), while supporting the bill, said the BJP had promised to bring the women's reservation bill in 2014 and in 2019 as well but did not take any action. He held the ruling party responsible for women's reservation losing nine years.

This is an election gimmick by the BJP after losing elections in Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, besides facing defeat in the civic polls in Delhi polls, he said.

Citing violence against women in strife-torn Manipur and allegations of sexual harassment by women wrestlers, Kareem alleged the government cared little for women.

Ram Nath Thakur of the JD(U) questioned the timing of bringing the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam'.

Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) MP K Keshava Rao stressed the need to accelerate the process for women's reservation and said the 2011 Census could be taken as the benchmark. He urged immediate appointment of the delimitation commission. MDMK's Vaiko also echoed similar sentiments.

Saroj Pandey of the BJP said it was unfortunate that questions have been raised on the timing and the intent of bringing the bill. As the country celebrates 'Amrit Kaal', this was the ideal moment for such a legislation, she said.

Asom Gana Parishad MP Birendra Prasad Baishya noted that the women's reservation bill has come at a "proper time" after failed attempts in the past.

JD(S) leader H D Devegowda also supported the bill and recollected steps taken by him for women's reservation while he was the chief minister of Karnataka and also the prime minister.

Manoj Jha of the RJD said demanded that the women's reservation bill be referred to a select committee to consider extending similar benefits to Other Backward Classes.

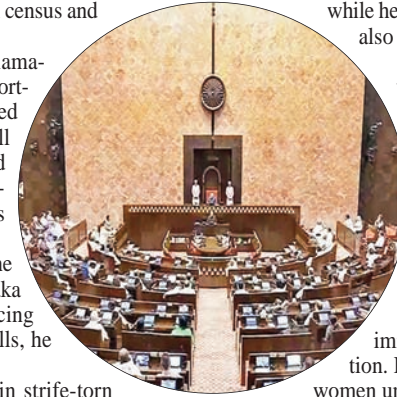
V Vijayasai Reddy (YSRCP) also supported the bill and said the reservation for women must also be extended to Rajya Sabha and state legislative councils.

KC Venugopal of the Congress sought immediate implementation of the legislation. He also sought reservation for the OBC women under the bill.

Venugopal claimed the Narendra Modi government did not make any effort to bring the bill in the last nine years and it is due to the political calculations that the government has brought the legislation now. "Life-transforming legislations should come from the heart and not from the head," he said in the Upper House.

Rajani Ashokrao Patil of the Congress and Mausam Noor of the TMC also supported the bill.

Sulata Deo of the BJD, Subhas Chandra Bose Pilli of the YSRCP, Ravichandra Vaddiraju of the BRS and K Ravindra Kumar of the TDP also participated in the discussion. (PTI)



PM to address mega meet of BJP workers in poll-bound MP on Sept 25

BHOPAL, Sept 21: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address a large gathering of BJP workers here on September 25 to mark the formal culmination of the party's five 'Jan Ashirwad Yatras' being held to reach out to the masses before the year-end assembly polls in MP, a party leader said on Thursday.

This will be Modi's third visit to the state in the past 45 days, an indication of the BJP's attempt to retain power in the central state by leveraging his popularity.

"Modiji is going to address a 'Karyakarta Mahakumbh' at Jamboree Maidan in Bhopal on September 25, the birth anniversary of Deendayal Upadhyaya (Bharatiya Jana Sangh co-founder)," state BJP media cell in-charge Ashish Agrawal told PTI on Thursday. Bharatiya Jana Sangh was the forerunner to the BJP.

He said the final minute-to-minute programme is not yet out.

The BJP has set an ambitious target of cobbling up 10 lakh people for Modi's address, said party insiders. With the mega event, it wants to show-

case its strength ahead of the polls, they said. The BJP rolled out five yatras -- mass contact programme -- early this month, with party president JP Nadda flagging off the first one from Chitrakoot in Satna on September 3.

These yatras are meant to cover more than 10,500 kilometres in 210 of the state's 230 assembly constituencies before culminating into a mega workers' meet in Bhopal on September 25, party leaders said.

In the run-up to the MP assembly polls, the BJP has come up with the slogan "abki bar 150 par" (victory in more than 150 seats this time).

In the November 2018 assembly polls, the Congress won 114 of the state's 230 seats, while the BJP finished second with 109 seats.

The Congress formed a coalition government with the support of Independents, BSP, and SP under Kamal Nath. However, it collapsed after 15 months when a string of Congress MLAs led by Jyotiraditya Scindia, now a union minister, joined the BJP, paving the way for the return of Shivraj Singh Chouhan as chief minister. (PTI)

Karnataka CM, Dy CM meet Jal Shakti minister, say unable to release Cauvery water to TN

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah and deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar on Thursday called on union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat here and informed him of the state's inability to comply with the CWMA's order of releasing 5,000 cusecs of water per day till September 28 to Tamil Nadu, citing a drought-like situation. The meeting came in the backdrop of protests by farmers bodies against the release of Cauvery river water to Tamil Nadu.

However, the Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with orders of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee directing the Karnataka government to release 5,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu.

During the meeting, the deputy CM also sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention to resolve this matter by convening a



meeting of four states -- Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry. BJP MPs, including union ministers Shobha Karanraje, Bhagawanth Khuba and A Narayanswamy as well as state Congress ministers, were present in the meeting.

"All MPs have supported and the Jal Shakti Minister has assured justice will be given to the state. He has asked the state officials to provide

the facts and they (Centre) are also waiting for the Supreme Court decision," Shivakumar told reporters after the meeting. During the meeting, the minister informed that farmers and various organisations are protesting against the release of water to the neighbouring state.

Karnataka is facing water shortage due to lack of monsoon rainfall. The state needs more than 106 TMC

of water for not only drinking but for irrigation and industries. However, there is only 51 TMC of water in four reservoirs at present. The inflow of water is reducing day-by-day. The state has lost the kharif crop and it will be a difficult situation for the rabi crops as well, he said. Shivakumar further said that the state government was able to comply with earlier orders issued by the CWMA. The latest one issued on September 18 is not possible to comply. However, the state government is releasing about 4,000 cusecs of water per day to the neighbouring state, he said.

"Though Tamil Nadu is aware of the distressing situation, I think they have used the opportunity to have more crops. But we don't want to intervene on that issue. We feel that Karnataka is facing a lot of problems," he added. Shivakumar informed the central minister that the state in August faced a rainfall shortage for the first time in 123 years. (PTI)

Bombay HC grants activist Raut bail in Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case

MUMBAI, Sept 21: The Bombay High Court on Thursday granted bail to 33-year-old activist Mahesh Raut, an accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, noting the evidence relied upon by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) against him was hearsay and not corroborated.

At the most, Raut can be said to be a member of the CPI (Maoist) but no covert or overt terrorist act has been attributed to him and NIA has placed no evidence to show that he was involved in recruiting persons to the banned outfit, said a division bench of Justices A S Gadkari and Sharmila Deshmukh.

After the bench pronounced its order, special public prosecutor Sandesh Patil, appearing for the NIA, sought it to be stayed for two weeks. The bench stayed the operation of its order for one week.

Raut was arrested in June 2018 and is presently in judicial custody at the Talaja prison, on the outskirts of Mumbai.

"In the present case, the incriminating material does not in any manner prima-facie leads to draw an inference that the appellant (Raut) has committed or indulged in a 'terrorist act' as contemplated under section 15 of the UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act)," the court said in its judgment.



The bench added that at the most it can be said that Raut was a member of CPI (Maoist) and that this would attract only provisions of Sections 13 and 38 of the UAPA.

It added that the maximum sentences under these sections are seven years and ten years.

"According to us, there is no material on record

to indicate that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusations against the appellant under Sections 16, 17, 18, 20 and 39 of the UAPA are prima facie true," the court said.

These sections pertain to recruitment, punishment for terrorist activities, conspiracy to commit terrorist activity, punishment for being a member of a terrorist group and committing an offence to support a terrorist group.

The court said Raut was in pre-trial incarceration for more than five years and there are no criminal antecedents, so a case to grant bail has been made out.

The bench directed Raut to furnish a surety of ₹ 1 lakh as bail and permitted him to furnish cash bail for a period of eight weeks.

Raut shall not leave Mumbai and must seek prior permission from the special NIA court if he desires to travel outside the city, the HC said, directing the activist not to tamper with evidence.

The bench in its order noted that the allegations against Raut are that he is a member of a banned organisation, he was actively involved in recruiting persons in the organisation and was handling and transferring funds to co-accused.

Raut had moved HC in 2022 seeking bail and challenging the order passed by the special NIA court refusing him bail. (PTI)

Boeing comes out with 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' approach for P-8I aircraft; eyes additional orders

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: US aerospace major Boeing on Thursday outlined its plan for enhancing engineering, manufacturing, and sustainment capabilities of the P-8I long-range maritime surveillance and anti-submarine warfare aircraft in India, eyeing an additional order of six planes.

At present, the Indian Navy has 12 P-8I aircraft. The company said it had already generated a substantial economic impact, amounting to USD 1.7 billion to support the current P-8I aircraft fleet in service with the Indian Navy.

Boeing said it envisions that increasing the P-8I fleet to 18 aircraft will increase investments, approximately USD 1.5 billion, while creating further indigenisation opportunities within India's aerospace and defence sector by 2032.

"Boeing's commitment to advancing the Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision drives our dedication to the P-8I fleet," said Salil Gupte, president of Boeing India.

"As we respond to the Indian Navy's need for more P-8I aircraft, we are actively looking to enhance engineering, manufacturing, and sustainment capabilities in India, for India, and the world, benefiting both Indian and global customers," he said at a media briefing.

Since its induction in 2013, the P-8I aircraft, based on the 737 next generation platform, has become an integral part of the Indian Navy's fleet and has surpassed 40,000

flight hours with high mission readiness rates.

Boeing played a pivotal role in establishing the Ashok Roy Training Simulator Complex at INS Rajali, and the Kochi training complex, inaugurated in April this year, officials of the company said.

They said this ground-based training reduces on-aircraft training time, boosting mission proficiency and aircraft availability for the Indian Navy.

"We're proud to partner with the Indian Navy on the exceptional capability that the P-8 delivers as a proven multi-mission aircraft while enhancing the interoperability and maritime security requirements for India and the Indo-Pacific," said Dan Gillian, vice president and general manager, Mobility, Surveillance and Bombers, Boeing Defense, Space and Security.

"Boeing is also committed to expanding its P-8 supplier network in India, which presently includes 15 public and private Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises that are part of Boeing's global supply chain and are delivering critical parts, components, and services for the P-8."

The P-8 global fleet totals over 160 aircraft that have accumulated more than 500,000 mishap-free flight hours around the globe, Boeing said.

Besides India, the aircraft is being operated by the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, and Germany. (PTI)

Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam gift to ISRO women scientists

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam', which will provide 33 per cent reservation for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies, is a gift by a grateful nation to the women scientists of space agency ISRO.

Initiating a discussion in the Lok Sabha on the success of Chandrayaan-3 mission and other achievements of the nation in the space sector, Singh said that of the 424 foreign satellites launched by India so far, 389 have been launched in the last nine years of the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said that with the successful launch of foreign satellites, India's space sector is rapidly gaining a prominent place in the world.

"This special session of Parliament is dedicated to the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam'. In such a situation, I consider the bill as a gift presented by a grateful nation to the women scientists of ISRO, and along with them the entire female scientific community of India," he said amid thumping of desks by members.

He said the House and the nation salute, appreciate and express gratitude to the women scientists of

ISRO and every Indian daughter.

The defence minister emphasised that while science is crucial for the development of a nation and humanity at large, culture holds equal importance. He voiced the government's resolve to provide equal importance to both aspects.

"Science is value neutral. It can give us knowledge of nuclear power, but it is our culture which tells us whether we use that power in the form of energy for our own development or in the form of a weapon to destroy others," he said.

He said it doesn't matter how much progress science makes, it will remain incomplete without culture and values.

"As Martin Luther King said: 'Science gives man knowledge, which is power. Religion gives man wisdom, which is control'. Those who say that we should get rid of our culture and adopt science, they must understand that culture and science complement each other," he said.

Singh said the sources of this success were hidden in the country's past, when there was harmony between science and faith.

He said that due to the foreign invaders, there was a halt in the progress, but now once again it is roaring



with more strength than before and are ready to touch the sun, moon and stars.

The defence minister stressed the importance of cultural security, describing it as equally important to border, space, cyber, economic, social, food, energy and environmental security.

He said cultural security is necessary to maintain the identity of a nation and the government, while

giving importance to Indian cultural heritage, is as serious about cultural security as it is about security issues.

"No nation has made economic, social, political and scientific progress without cultural renaissance," he said, adding that to take the nation forward, it is imperative to learn from India's own culture.

Singh said India's faith and culture is of inclusive nature and its cultural nationalism teaches everyone the concept of brotherhood of all humanity.

He said despite geopolitically difficult global circumstances, India successfully organised the G20 summit and ensured consensus on the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration.

"Behind this is the message given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi: 'One World, One Family, One Future'. This feeling of India's global brotherhood was evident when the Prime Minister termed the G20 as not just India's success but that of the entire world," he said.

Heartily congratulating the ISRO scientists and the broader Indian scientific community for their successes, the defence minister said it is the result of the intellectual capacity of the ISRO scientists and their dedication towards the development of the nation

that today the country has stood in the line of leading nations in the world of science.

The defence minister said the entire nation is proud of these scientists.

"If Chandrayaan-3 has set foot on the Moon, then not only is it a success for ISRO, it is also an indication of the scientific eco-system of our country, in which crores of Indians have contributed," he said.

Singh said that after Independence, the country has moved forward step by step to reach this stage. "Therefore, if today we reach any achievement, then all those who gave any kind of support in this journey and gave birth to scientific temperament within the nation are equally deserving of congratulations," he said.

Singh said it is a natural development of the country's social, cultural and scientific trend that has been going on for thousands of years.

The defence minister said India will carry out more such missions and the moon mission was just the beginning.

"In the coming times we will reach Mars and Saturn and our country will wave its flag even from those places where no one has been able to reach till now," he said. (PTI)

Overcrowding in jails, delayed justice have become pressing concern, most prisoners undertrials: Parl panel

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: A parliamentary panel has observed that overcrowding in jails and delayed justice have become a pressing concern, leading to a series of consequences for both the prisoners and the criminal justice system as a whole.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs, headed by BJP MP Brijlal, also recommended that special attention should be given to pregnant women on the line of a judgement of the Supreme Court where it was observed that a jail must have adequate facilities for prenatal and post-natal care for female prisoners as well as their children.

"The committees, notes that the issue of overcrowding and delayed justice has become a pressing concern, leading to a series of consequences for both the prisoners

and the criminal justice system as a whole. The committee recommends that prisoners from overcrowded jails may be transferred to other jails with vacant cells in the same state or other states by signing MoUs to that effect. This kind of an arrangement can be mutual in nature between the states signing the MoU," it observed.

The panel recommended that the babies born in prison be allowed to stay with their mothers until the



age of 12 in order to provide a nurturing environment during their early years while ensuring their well-being and development.

According to guidelines, emphasis should be given towards proper care of children relating to food, shelter, medical care, education, and physical growth, it further said. Apart from this, sports and entertainment facilities are also to be provided to these children.

The committee said transgender prisoners are to be provided the same standards of healthcare available to other inmates and should have access to necessary healthcare services without discrimination on the grounds of their gender

identity

It observed that the overcrowding in Indian prisons has long plagued the country's criminal justice system. Despite various steps to reduce the number of inmates from jails, the total inmates in India stands at 5.54 lakh against the total prison capacity of 4.25 lakh.

The national average occupancy rate in prisons across India is 130.2 per cent and the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Haryana together make up for more than 50 per cent of the total prisoner population in the country.

In four of these six states, the oc-

cupancy rate in prisons is more than the national average. Further, the state of Uttarakhand has reported the highest occupancy rate of 185 per cent. Delhi with the highest crime rate in the country of 1479.9 has an occupancy rate of 182 per cent.

The committee observed that the problem of overcrowding in the Indian prisons is mostly because of a very large number of undertrial prisoners. Of all the prisoners in the country, more than 50 per cent being undertrials.

According to the Prison Statistics India 2021 Report prepared by the NCRB, there are 22,918 women inmates. Out of total women prisoners, 1,650 women inmates are with 1,867 children.

The panel observed that women prisoners are more vulnerable than male prisoners. Many of them are incarcerated in common prisons because there are fewer female prisons in India.

Female prisoners are susceptible to various problems like gender discrimination, living in overcrowded jails in unhygienic conditions, custodial rape etc.. The fewer number of women jails and low representation of women in prison staff further undermine their conditions and intensify their difficulties, it observed. (PTI)

Rajasthan min booked for grabbing granite mine, cheating

JAIPUR, Sept 21: The Rajasthan Police has booked the state's Revenue minister Ram Lal Jat following accusations that he took illegal possession of a granite mine in Bhilwara district, threatening the man who claims to be rightful owner.

The case was registered against the minister and four others earlier this week on the orders of the high court, after the local police allegedly did not act on the complaint filed with them. A day after case was filed, Kareda station house officer Om Prakash was removed from his post.

The matter is now being probed by the state CID, Asind Deputy Superintendent of Police Yogesh Sharma said.

Jat, who represents the Mandal assembly constituency in Bhilwara, faces charges under Indian Penal Code sections 406 (criminal breach of trust), 420 (cheating), 384 (extortion), 379 (theft) and 120-B (criminal conspiracy). The minister was not available for comment.

According to the FIR, complainant Parmeshwar Joshi got the site in Raghunathpura village on lease from the state's mining department in 2012. He was the director and a shareholder in the firm Aravali Granite Private Ltd along with partners Sundar Goyal and Chandrakant Shukla.

Joshi's partners had to pay ₹ 10 crore to him under the deal, according to the FIR.

They handed over ₹ 5 crore of their shareholding to Joshi and transferred the remaining share of worth ₹ 5 crore to Jat. The minister transferred the lease to his relatives and refused to pay up this amount to Joshi.

"The minister said he would not pay more than ₹ 2 crore and that too from the earnings from the mine," Joshi said in his complaint. (PTI)

Cauvery dispute: SC refuses to interfere with order asking K'taka to release 5,000 cusecs water to TN every day

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the order of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) and the CWRC directing the Karnataka government to release 5,000 cusecs of water per day to Tamil Nadu for 15 days.

The Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) in its September 12 order, which was upheld by CWMA, directed Karnataka to release 5,000 cusecs (cubic foot per second) of water every day for the next 15 days to Tamil Nadu.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai, PS Narasimha and Prashant Kumar Mishra said it was not inclined to entertain Tamil Nadu's plea challenging the CWMA decision on the ground that it was facing a drought-like situation due to rain deficit.

The bench noted that bodies like CWMA and CWRC, which have experts from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), and those on agriculture and water resource management, have considered all relevant aspects like drought, deficit rainfall, water level in the river and only then passed the order.

"We are therefore of the considered view that the factors which have been taken into consideration by both the authorities cannot be said to be irrelevant or extraneous. In that view, we are not inclined to interfere with the orders," the bench said.

It noted the two authorities are meeting every 15 days to take stock of the distress faced by both the states.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Tamil Nadu, submitted that the two authorities, despite having acknowledged there was deficient rainfall since August and the state was eligible for 7,200 cusecs of water, reduced the volume to 5,000 cusecs a day.



"I am a low riparian state...water flows from Karnataka to Tamil Nadu from where it goes to Pudukkottai. There is a shortfall of rainfall which has been taken into consideration by the authorities. In a regular year, I would have been eligible for three times more but I am not seeking that. I am seeking what is rightfully mine," Rohatgi said.

He added Tamil Nadu has five lakh acres of standing crop and is facing a drinking water problem for which more water is needed. "If the drought-like condition was taken into account and the authority calculated it to be 7,200 cusecs per day, then there was no occasion to further bring it down to 5,000 cusecs per day," he submitted.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Karnataka, said the upper riparian state was also facing drought-like conditions, and the release of 5,000 cusecs of water ordered by the authorities is against the "interest of the state".

He insisted it should be further reduced to 3,000 cusecs per day.

He said Karnataka uses Cauvery water for drinking as well as irrigation purposes while Tamil Nadu utilises it only for irrigation.

"We are facing a drinking water crisis, especially in urban areas including in Bengaluru," he said.

The bench then asked what the Centre has to say on the dispute over water sharing.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, who represented

the Centre, said contrary to the claims made by the two states drought is not the only criteria which has been taken into account by CWMA before making the decision.

"They have taken into account IMD data, rainfall, water level in reservoirs and other relevant data after which they have arrived at the figure of 5,000 cusecs," Bhati said, adding the CWMA order has not been defied and water is being released to Tamil Nadu.

The bench then told Rohatgi the court is not inclined to entertain Tamil Nadu's petition.

On August 25, the top court had refused to pass any order on the Tamil Nadu government's plea seeking release of 24,000 cusecs of Cauvery water daily by Karnataka for irrigating the standing crops.

The apex court had sought a report from the CWMA on the amount of water released by Karnataka.

Rainfall has been 25 per cent lower and water inflow into Karnataka's four reservoirs 42.5 per cent lesser, an affidavit filed by the upper riparian said, adding the stipulated release shall not be applicable this year.

The Karnataka government said in the affidavit the southwest monsoon has largely failed so far during the current water year. A "distress condition" has arisen in the Cauvery basin in Karnataka, it said.

"Karnataka, therefore, is not obliged to and it cannot be compelled to ensure water as per the stipulated relief is prescribed for the normal year," the affidavit stated.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud had earlier said a fresh bench will be set up to hear the decades-old dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over sharing of the Cauvery river water. (PTI)

World's largest Cedar tree found in J&K's Doda: Officials

BHADERWAH, Sept 21: A Cedar tree, having 54 feet trunk and 35 feet breast diameter, was found in Chanti Bala in the Bhalesa forest range in Jammu and Kashmir Doda district, which forest officials claim is the world's largest and perhaps the oldest Cedar tree.

The officials want the location of the Cedar tree to be declared as a heritage site, while the Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) members demanded that the location be brought under a tourism map.

Believed to be centuries old, the mammoth tree located on the eastern hill of Gandoh tehsil's Chanti-Bala Panchayat, 124 km from Doda town, has a religious significance for Nag devotees and has been worshipped for centuries by the community.

Surrounded by a thick coniferous forest, the visibly different tree because of its gigantic size, was located by the field staff, divisional forest officer, Bhaderwah Chander Shekhar told PTI at the scene.

"The Deodar, also known as cedar, has a trunk diameter of 54 feet and 35 feet breast size, which is the scientific way of measuring the size of a tree. As per our research and the data we have collected, this is the largest tree of this species (Cedrus Deodara) in the world and seems to be the oldest one as well," he said. Shekhar said the department would refer this to the Forest Survey of India to calculate its exact age. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Search operations continue

Movement of 182 vehicles along the National Highway-37 and 19 along the NH-2 with essential items has been ensured, the police said. Strict security measures are taken up in all vulnerable locations and security convoys are provided in sensitive stretches to ensure free and safe movement of the vehicles.

More than 175 people have been killed and several hundreds injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts. (PTI)

Hunger strike continues at

The protesting students said they should not face any disciplinary action by NIT authorities or legal steps by the Cachar district administration. They demanded setting up of a high-level committee to bring academic reforms in NIT Silchar to reduce the burden on students and ensure their mental and physical well-being.

Meanwhile, Kamriganj Lok Sabha MP Kripanath Mallah has written to Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan urging him to immediately intervene with the authorities of NIT Silchar for appropriate action to mitigate the concerns of the protesting students. He requested Pradhan to introduce the 'free-entry-exit' system under the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020, in NIT Silchar considering the pressure on the students. (PTI)

Tripura govt to launch

The council of ministers has also decided to push for an e-cabinet as part of the government's effort to make administrative work paperless.

"Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid emphasis on paperless work, we are also on the way to implement an e-cabinet.

It will be beneficial for all," he said. Chowdhury said the cabinet also cleared proposals for appointing 125 physical education teachers and school librarians, especially for newly converted Vidyajyoti schools in the northeastern state.

At present, Tripura has 125 Vidyajyoti schools in which the CBSE curriculum is being taught. As many as 50 posts of supervisors (Group-c) in the tribal and SC welfare departments will also be filled up shortly as the cabinet has approved the proposal, the minister said. Besides, 75 assistant professors for the state's degree colleges and 14 faculty members for Ujjayanta University will be recruited as the cabinet has given the go-ahead to such proposals. (PTI)

NHRC approached regarding

Asked about the claims, Sandeep said: "We cannot confirm the death of the smuggler because the group had taken him along with it. All we know is that he was seriously injured. Many plywood factories have been set up on the Arunachal side and the smugglers had entered the national park to cut down trees."

However, NEHRO added that the man was actually searching for his missing domestic cow within the reserved forest area.

Buteng Tayeng, the secretary of the organization, has urged the NHRC to conduct a comprehensive and impartial investigation into the incident.

Meanwhile, Tirap deputy commissioner Hento Karga said the relatives of the deceased have lodged FIRs with both the Arunachal Pradesh police and Assam police. A magisterial inquiry into the matter has also been ordered by the Dibrugarh district commissioner, officials said. (PTI)

UN Climate Summit: Nations

"For decades, fossil fuels have been a taboo word, rarely mentioned at climate summits despite being the root cause of the chaos. Thankfully, we are now saying the 'F-word'. Sadly, because politicians refused to acknowledge the fossil-fuel elephant in the room, it has defecated on the floor, and we need to clean it up fast. That is why we need a fossil fuel phase-out date at COP28 this December," he said.

Mads Christensen, the executive director of Greenpeace International, criticized leaders from major polluting countries for disregarding the UN secretary-general's challenge to present substantive contributions to the Climate Ambition Summit.

Christensen likened their reluctance to act on climate to a wealthy CEO trying to evade paying a train fare, saying, "In this time of catastrophic planetary crisis, this climate inaction by these leaders is not just disrespectful, it's fatal, cheap and must be called out."

Alex Scott, climate diplomacy and geopolitics lead at E3G, an independent climate change think-tank, said the summit set high expectations for the COP28 Presidency in the UAE and "the laggards left behind".

Adelle Thomas, a climate expert at the University of The Bahamas, called for clearer signals from financial actors on innovative measures to address the mounting costs of loss and damage disproportionately borne by developing nations.

She expressed disappointment with the lack of concrete proposals during the summit on how to achieve this. "Today's session acknowledged the growing impacts of climate change and the need to support the most vulnerable, but lacked concrete proposals on how this can be done," Thomas said.

"The rich countries that have historically driven the climate crisis and are continuing to expand fossil fuels were given an opportunity by United Nations Secretary General António Guterres to demonstrate their commitment to the 1.5°C global warming limit.

"Instead, we saw cowardice and a staggering failure of climate leadership. The US, Canada, Australia, the UK, and Norway, responsible for a majority of planned oil and gas extraction, either arrived empty-handed or failed to attend altogether," said Romain IOUALALEN, the Global Policy Manager of Oil Change International.

He said, "This is a slap in the face of the more than 6,00,000 people who marched on all seven continents last weekend. A slap in the face of science; a slap in the face of the people displaced and dying from escalating climate catastrophes."

As wealthy nations shirk their responsibilities, real leadership comes from people and countries least responsible for and most affected by the climate crisis. World leaders must finally find the courage to agree to the end of the fossil fuel era at COP28 in Dubai, before it's too late, IOUALALEN added.

Guterres' "no-nonsense summit", ahead of COP28 in Dubai, came at a time when the world is reeling from the devastating impacts of climate change and probably the hottest year on record.

"Humanity has opened the gates to hell," Guterres said during his opening remarks, warning that the world is heading for a 2.8-degree-Celsius warming in a business-as-usual scenario. Sultan Al Jaber, the president of COP28, closed the summit, saying the "phase-down of fossil fuels is inevitable; it is in fact essential". (PTI)

KCS units gets

Nilip KCS Zone, Suresh Tisso. The dates youth festival will be held at the Merabithi High School ground from October 21 to 24, which will be a four-day cultural extravaganza. In the meeting, MAC Rongpi was also appointed as the president of Nilip KCS Zone and Bokoram Rongphar as secretary.

Lokhi Ingti has been appointed as vice president, Mathew Tokbi as assistant secretary, Babu Ingti as office secretary; Moresh Teron as treasurer and Obetson Terang as pandal in-charge.

Former Manipur chief secretary

MS from PGI-Chandigarh, Babu retired as Manipur chief secretary after 34 years services as an IAS officer. He has diverse experience in the fields of urban development, tobacco management, district administration, education, health sector, finance and Covid-19 management.

Babu has the experience of delivering notable public services in Manipur and Andhra Pradesh.

He has held many key positions in the government including as Manipur chief secretary, additional chief secretary, principal secretary, commissioner, secretary, director of various directorates in Manipur, collector and district magistrate, etc.

Welcoming the new chancellor, RGU registrar N T Rikam lauded the ministry for the appointment as the university was functioning without a chancellor since 2018, the release said here on Thursday. (PTI)

Delhi suspends visa issuance

diplomat in a tit-for-tat move to Ottawa's expulsion of an Indian official over the case. In reflection of hardening of its position, India on Wednesday advised all its nationals living in Canada and those contemplating travelling there to exercise "utmost caution" in view of growing anti-India activities and "politically-condoned" hate crimes as well as "criminal violence" in that country.

At the media briefing, Bagchi also said that there was a degree of "prejudice" in Trudeau's allegations against. He said Canada did not share any specific information with India on the case. The India-Canada ties were reeling under some strain for the last few months in view of increasing activities of the pro-Khalistani elements in the North American country. India believes the Trudeau government is not addressing its genuine concerns. (PTI)

Govt alert to formation of new

The Chief Minister revealed that discussions with the Government of Assam and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) have begun to resolve the boundary dispute.

Jaintia Students Movement (JSM) had also written to the government on the matter based on which actions have been taken.

"Regarding the new militant outfit, official complaints have not come to us in the form of FIRs. Intelligence reports have also not come to us and we are relying on newspaper clippings (about the arrest of two members of the militant group). But we don't take anything lightly. We are taking things seriously to ensure protection required is given to our people," the chief minister assured.

Earlier, Sungoh had alleged that the intention of the new militant group was to create fear among the Khasi-Pnar people living in the disputed Block I along the border between West Jaintia Hills and West Karbi Anglong specifically in the Elaka Labang-Nongphylut-Pangam Raliang area.

BJP Mahila Morcha grateful

Minister Modi for the positive attitude shown to women. With the passing of the bill women now more women can actively participate in politics." She said with the passing of bills in Parliament, the same should be done in the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and in municipal boards. KAAC should take a decision for the reservation of 33 per cent seats for women.

The programme was presided over by Mahila Morcha BJP-EKADC, president Roshmi Teronpi and attended by Member of Autonomous Council (MACs), Kache Rongpi and Kadam Terangpi, secretary, BJP Mahila Morcha, Assam Pradesh Newlyborn Teronpi and other leaders.

Govt unveils new Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar, to be awarded on National Space Day

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: The Centre on Thursday unveiled a new set of national awards in science, technology and innovation, called the 'Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar', and scrapped nearly 300 awards by various science departments.

An official statement said the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar will be one of the highest recognitions in science, technology and innovation, to be given across four categories -- Vigyan Ratna, Vigyan Shri, Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar and Vigyan Team.

Scientists will be selected across 13 domains by a committee headed by principal scientific advisor to the government.

"People of Indian Origin staying abroad with exceptional contributions benefiting the Indian communities or society shall also be eligible for the awards," it said.

The Vigyan Ratna award will recognise lifetime achievements and contributions in any field of science and technology while the Vigyan Shri will acknowledge distinguished contribu-



tions. All the awards will carry a citation and a medal.

The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar awards, given by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research since 1958 across seven domains, will now be given across 13 categories to young scientists up to the age of 45 for exceptional contributions in any field of science and technology.

The Vigyan Team award will be given to a team comprising three or more scientists/researchers/innovators who have made an exceptional contribution working in a team in any field of science and technology.

The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar will be one of the highest recognitions in science,

technology and innovation in India.

Scientists/technologists/innovators working in government, private sector organisations or any individual working outside any organisation, who have made distinguished contributions in terms of pathbreaking research or innovation or discovery in any field of science, technology or technology-led innovation shall be eligible, the statement said.

The awards will be given across disciplines such as physics, chemistry, biological sciences, mathematics & computer science, earth science, medicine, engineering sciences, agricultural science, environmental science, technology & innovation, atomic energy, space science and technology, and others.

The nominations will be invited from January 14 to February 28 every year.

The awards will be announced on National Technology Day on May 11 and conferred on National Space Day on August 23. (PTI)

SONAM KAPOOR JOINS JIO MAMI AS BRAND AMBASSADOR FOR 'WORD TO SCREEN'

MUMBAI, Sept 21: Bollywood actor Sonam Kapoor will return as the brand ambassador for Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival's market initiative 'Word to Screen'.

The Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival is back with its on-ground edition after a gap of three years. It will take place from October 27 to November 5 here.

'Word to Screen' is an options market that offers a unique platform to writers, publishers, and filmmakers to engage and option stories for various film formats, according to the organisers. A first-of-its-kind initiative, Word to Screen, was launched in 2016 by Jio MAMI and has since served as a dynamic and inclusive platform that explores the synergy between the power of the written word and the magic of cinema.

Kapoor, known for films like "Neerja", "Veere Di Wedding" and

"Aisha", said the 'Word to Screen' initiative can be a great platform for narrating compelling stories.

"As actors, we are constantly looking for compelling, disruptive and engaging stories that touch the hearts of the people. By supporting a platform like Word to Screen, I am taking a step towards ensuring the industry benefits from this initiative and we tell a lot more meaningful stories to our audience.

"As a voracious reader, I understand the power of an incredible story and how a well-written book can form the backbone of a compelling film narrative," the 38-year-old actor said in a statement.

Kapoor would announce nominations for the Book on Cinema award at the Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival event. She urged publishers, writers, and creators to make the most of this platform. (PTI)



Atlee on working with Shah Rukh and Vijay: Both are ideologically and professionally similar



NEW DELHI, Sept 21: As someone who has worked with both Shah Rukh Khan and Vijay, two of the biggest superstars in Indian cinema, filmmaker Atlee says he found the actors to be "ideologically and professionally" similar in many ways.

Atlee is currently basking in the success of "Jawan" that marks his debut in Hindi cinema and his first collaboration with Shah Rukh. He has worked with Vijay in Tamil hits such as "Theri", "Mersal" and "Bigil".

The director, who turned 37 on Thursday, said both the actors wear their stardom lightly and approach every project like it's their first.

"I think both are ideologically and professionally very similar because I've worked with both of them. They're very dedicated. They take filmmaking seriously and they don't get tired... They will give their hundred percent.

"So, I had similar synergies from both. I've been with Shah Rukh sir for four years and I've been with Vijay sir for the same four years. I can see both are really dedicated and hardworking. They never take success, fame or name into their system. They work like a newcomer," Atlee told PTI in an interview.

Recalling his experience of working with Shah Rukh on "Jawan", the filmmaker said the actor surrenders to the vision of the director even after being the business for so many years.

"Shah Rukh sir, having these many audiences, these many footfalls and giving a blockbuster like 'Pathaan', even then when he comes to our set, he comes like a newcomer.

"He's like, 'So, what should I do?' That is why they are there (at the top). That is the learning we should take from them. I think all film technicians, actors or whoever is part of cinema should really be like them. We should feel fresh, we should feel 'This is our first day', he added.

The film, which released on September 7, has already grossed Rs 907.54 crore at the global box office, according to the makers. Atlee is among the new-age directors in Tamil cinema who are in their 30s and are rewriting the grammar of mass

cinema sensibilities with their storytelling. Nelson Dilipkumar and Lokesh Kanagaraj are the other two names who have made a mark in this genre with their films "Jailer", "Beast", and "Master" and "Vikram", respectively.

Asked how he would define "mass cinema", Atlee said he draws inspiration from his origin.

"My mass is very basic, very rooted with emotions. I write it that way. I think we all are individually different, but we all make mass films and I'm happy everyone is making the best now and taking our Indian cinema to a global standard. Cinema is in safe hands to bring audiences to theatres," he said.

According to the director, Nelson delivers "mass with humour" and Lokesh is great with "twists and turns".

"Everyone has their own way of telling mass. I love Nelson, I call him Nelson anna ('elder brother' in Tamil). So, Nelson anna has his way of giving mass with humour, which I think is unmatched. No one has done it in that genre.

"Loki's (Kanagaraj) mass has a very surprising standard of twists and turns, not going by any formula and he really surprises and I love the way he narrates a film," he added.

Praising Prashanth Neel -- best known for popular Kannada film franchise "KGF" -- Atlee said, "He creates a world, he defines the world and he makes a mass out of the world and that is something else. We have not experienced this before. There are other new talents coming up who are getting into this mass zone."

Senior filmmakers like SS Rajamouli and Shankar are at some other level, he said.

"Even Rishab Shetty of 'Kantara'... He has done a brilliant job with that world. It really strikes as a mass that I still remember. Everyone has their own route of understanding mass and delivering it.

"I stick to the basics. My father is a MG Ramachandran fan. MGR sir, NTR (N.T. Rama Rao) sir and Amitabh (Bachchan) sir, they have created a math on mass cinema and I am trying to understand that and deliver in my way," Atlee added. (PTI)



'3 IDIOTS' FAME ACTOR AKHIL MISHRA DIES AT 67

MUMBAI, Sept 21:

Actor Akhil Mishra, best known for his role in "3 Idiots", died after a fall at his residence here on Wednesday evening, said a publicist for his actor-wife Suzanne Bernert. He was 67.

The publicist said Mishra, who had blood pressure issues, succumbed to injuries following the accident in the kitchen.

"He was on a chair in the kitchen trying to do something when he fell down and hurt his head

and back. He was later rushed to the hospital by the family and neighbours.

"He was still coherent while going to the hospital. And then internal haemorrhage started. Despite the doctor's best efforts, he could not be saved," the publicist told PTI on Thursday.

According to the publicist, Bernert was in Hyderabad for a shoot when Mishra passed away.

Mishra, who mostly played character roles

in films and TV shows, is best remembered for his role of librarian Dubey in "3 Idiots", starring Aamir Khan, R Madhavan and Sharman Joshi.

He had also worked in films and serials such as "Don", "Gandhi, My Father", "Uttaran", "Udaan", and "Shrimaan Shrimati", among others.

According to the publicist, Mishra's mortal remains have been sent for a post-mortem examination. (PTI)

Multiplex Association of India sets Oct 13 date for National Cinema Day

MUMBAI, Sept 21: Multiplex Association of India (MAI) on Thursday announced that the National Cinema Day will be held on October 13 this year. Movie enthusiasts will be charged only Rs 99 per admission at cinema halls across the country, the national multiplex trade body said in a press release. Over 4,000 screens at multiplexes from India, including PVR INOX, Cinepolis, Miraj, and Delite, have teamed up to participate in the National Cinema Day celebrations, it stated. "This special occasion brings audiences of all ages together for a day of cinematic bliss, celebrating the incredible success of multiple films at the box office this year.

"It's a heartfelt 'thank you' to all the moviegoers who contributed to this success and an open invitation to those who haven't yet returned to their local cinema," the association said. According to MAI, cinegoers can watch any show of any film on October 13 for Rs 99, excluding the recliner and premium formats. (PTI)



'Jaane Jaan', 'Last Days of Summer' to open 2nd Himalayan Film Festival; 'Three of Us' to close gala

MUMBAI, Sept 21: Films "Jaane Jaan" and "Last Days of Summer" will open the second edition of the Himalayan Film Festival (THFF) in Ladakh on September 29, the organisers announced on Thursday.

"Three of Us" will bring the gala to a close on October 3.

Starring Kareena Kapoor Khan, Jaideep Ahlawat and Vijay Varma, Sujay Ghosh's "Jaane Jaan" premiered on Netflix on Thursday. "Last Days of Summer", a Ladakhi short film, is directed by Stenzin Tankong.

Avinash Arun Dhaware's "Three of Us" stars Shefali Shah, Ahlawat and Swanand Kirkire.

Ghosh said he is honoured to be part of

the Himalayan Film Festival 2023.

"As fellow warriors, we all must be inspired by the efforts of THFF and similar festivals to take films to every part of the world. That is so fantastic and we should all walk together because nothing unites us more than a good film. My film 'Jaane Jaan', which released on Netflix India, will be screened at the festival and I could not be happier," the filmmaker said in a statement.

Kareena, who made her streaming debut with "Jaane Jaan", said she is happy her film will be screened at the festival in Ladakh, which happens to be one of her most favourite places.

"It's an absolutely wonderful place and I

have such a deep connection with it," she added.

Ladakh-born Tankong said there is no bigger honour to have his film "Last Days of Summer" showcased at home.

"THFF is my home. The film deals with real issues that my community faces due to climate change. The nomadic culture of Changthang is on the brink of extinction. I would like for the world to come together in understanding our issues, issues of one of the remotest regions, rarest of cultures and heritage of India and world at large," he said.

Dhaware, director of the closing film "Three of Us", said he is elated to present his movie on his first visit to Leh, Ladakh.

"This will be my first trip to Leh, Ladakh. And what could be a better opportunity for me to visit this beautiful, spiritually enlightened land, than with the screening of my film, 'Three Of Us', which is extremely personal to me for many reasons. I am looking forward to interacting, to receive, and to celebrate the spirit of Ladakh and its people," the filmmaker said.

Shah described "Three of Us" as a "delicate film". THFF is organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) of the Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh, in collaboration with Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh. (PTI)



Ashwin isn't on trial, no threat to Surya's place in side: Dravid

MOHALI, Sept 21: A bowler of Ravichandran Ashwin's calibre can't be put on "trial", while someone possessing Suryakumar Yadav's ability need not worry about his place in the World Cup squad, an unusually aggressive head coach Rahul Dravid said on the eve of three-match ODI series against Australia.

Ashwin has been called up alongside Washington Sundar as a possible replacement for Axar Patel if the spin-bowling all-rounder fails to recover from his quadriceps tear. While this ODI series has been billed as a trial between Ashwin and Washington, the India head coach doesn't want

to use the word "trial" for someone of the stature of the veteran off-spinner. "I will not say that for him it is a trial or anything (for Ashwin), we know his quality. This is a chance for him to play in this format and we just want to give him an opportunity to play in two or three games," Dravid said during the media conference.

"If we have a player like Ashwin, who we can rely upon if someone is injured, it's a blessing for us. It's a good chance for him to test himself because he has not played 50-over cricket for a long time," Dravid said about the bowler, who has 151 ODI wickets in 113 games but has played only



two 50-over games for India in the past six years.

In case Axar can't make it, Ashwin will be an ideal candidate to

bat at No. 8. Someone we always thought of that in case, there are certain opportunities opened, he is someone, who is definitely a part of your plans," Dravid explained the rationale behind calling Ashwin to play this format after 19 months. In case of Suryakumar, the 'Wall' was more or less bullish the team is fully backing the T20 stalwart to come good in a version where has an average of less than 25 in 27 ODIs.

So, should Surya worry about September 27, the day India will announce its final 15 for the World Cup?

"I don't think Surya needs to worry about the 27th. That's not

why we picked our team for the World Cup, and Surya is in it and we have made our decision to do that and we completely back it," said an assertive Dravid while backing the right-hander from Mumbai. "We back him (Surya) because he has quality and ability that we have seen. Yes, we know, we have at the moment, seen it in T20 cricket but we know the kind of impact a player like him can make. He can change the course of a game and we completely back him, we are clear about that," Dravid added.

The coach said Surya will play the first two games, if not all three and he is confident that he will

come good.

"There is total clarity on the fact that we are completely behind him and hopefully he will be able to turn it around."

"Hopefully, he is someone who will get these three games and at least the first couple certainly to be able to develop and continue his journey as an ODI cricketer. But in terms of selection, we made our decision."

It is also learnt that the fast-bowling unit will be rotated during the series to keep it fresh for the marquee event, something which has led the team management to rest both Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli. (PTI)

INDIA WILL NEXT PLAY MYANMAR

Chhetri strike downs B'desh, keeps India's Asian Games hopes alive

HANGZHOU, Sept 21: The Indian football team rode on a late Sunil Chhetri strike to beat Bangladesh by a solitary goal and stay alive for a place in the knockouts of the Asian Games here on Thursday.

The 39-year-old veteran scored from the spot in the 85th minute to help his team earn full points after the 1-5 hammering at the hands of hosts China on Tuesday. Asked about the lack of recovery time, Chhetri said, "The first thing is to go and recuperate, it was not easy. I'm petty sure it was the same thing for the opponents also. playing three games in five days is not easy, a lot of ice bath, eat good food and get ready." India will next play Myanmar, who beat Bangladesh 1-0 on the opening day.

After the loss to China, Igor Stimac's wards were back against their familiar South Asian foe, a team that has actually been a tough one to break down for the Blue Tigers. India were the ones to create a first attempt at goal in the ninth minute when Rohit Danu and Rahul KP combined to put the ball at the feet of Chhetri, inside the box.



The skipper's shot, though, was deflected wide.

Chhetri had another chance a few minutes later, with Ayush Dev Chhetri's cross falling to him inside the six-yard box. Chhetri played the ball across goal rather than towards it, and Bangladesh cleared with ease.

The game fell into a pattern soon after, and there was more midfield tussle than end-to-end

action. Bangladesh's pacy wingers were the focal points of their attack, constantly probing and drifting crosses into the Indian box. Rabiul Hasan and Jayed Ahmed put through a flurry of crosses into the Indian box midway through the first half, each of which was cleared with ease by a stoic Indian defence.

On the one occasion that

Bangladesh did breach the defence, Dheeraj Singh saved comfortably. The Blue Tigers' lynchpin for the first half was Bryce Miranda, the winger tirelessly running at defenders and constantly making the Bangladesh players second-guess their options.

In the 40th minute, his corner landed perfectly for Chinglensana Singh. The defender's sub-

sequent header towards goal was blocked. Despite having possession, India had not registered a single shot on target when injury time struck in the first half.

Just like in the last game though, it was in that period that suddenly the action picked up.

Unsurprisingly, Miranda was at the centre of it, if only fleetingly. It was his low-centred ball that caused panic in the Bangladesh defence, a miscued clearance and a weak punch by Mitul Marma, falling straight to Chhetri 10 yards from goal.

The skipper shot and shot hard, but Marma was up for the challenge, diving low to make the save. The rebound, after a melee, fell to Abdul Rabeeh, who shot at goal again.

Again, Marma saved. This time the rebound fell straight to Rabeeh, who had the presence of mind to lob the ball across the box to Rahul KP inside the six-yard box. Rahul rose high and headed towards goal, and again Marma was there, deflecting the ball onto the post.

Bangladesh cleared frantically and the best chances of the first half were gone. (PTI)



NEW DELHI, Sept 21: India have been drawn to play Pakistan in the World Group I Play-offs and the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) on Thursday made it clear that it won't agree to shift their home tie to a neutral venue this time.

India had drawn Pakistan in 2019 also but due to "security concerns" the Asia/Oceania Group I tie was shifted to Kazakhstan, a neutral venue.

As a mark of protest, Pakistan's top players Aisam-ul-haq Qureshi and Aqeel Khan had opted not to play the tie in which rookies Mohammed Shoaib, Huzefa Rehman and Yousaf Khalil competed for them. India had expectedly thrashed a weak Pakistan line-up 4-0. In a lop-sided contest, Pakistan won only seven games in the entire tie.

The ITF had agreed to shift the tie to a neutral venue in 2019 but it will be very tough for AITA to convince the world governing body if the national federation pushes for a neutral venue.

Pakistan's veteran player Aqeel Khan told PTI that they are hoping for the Indian team to travel to their nation.

"I hope they come and give us a chance to host," Aqeel, 43, said.

Pakistan last week beat Indonesia 4-0 at home in the World Group II tie, played on grass courts in Islamabad with Aqeel winning a singles and the doubles

rubber.

PTF President Salim Saifullah Khan said they will host India on grass court.

"They should come to Pakistan. It's not fair that they do not come to Pakistan. The Indian team is much better than us. We have a beautiful hotel just across the stadium. If Indians come it will send a good message that we are good neighbours," Saifullah Khan told PTI.

If India decide to travel, it will be the Davis Cup team's first visit across the border in 59 years, and only third in the history of the team tournament.

The last time an Indian Davis Cup team travelled to Pakistan was in 1964 when the visitors beat the hosts 4-0.

Ramanathan Krishnan had led the first team from India, which travelled to Pakistan in 1962.

Pakistan have visited India three times, but India have never lost to them in eight Davis Cup ties between the two countries.

"We have hosted Lithuania, Slovakia, Korea, Iran, Thailand. All these countries have come and there have been no issues. We won't play on a neutral venue. If India does not want to come, we will not play this tie. We will play on grass courts and the Indians are a better team. And in February-March, the weather is lovely in Islamabad," Saifullah said. (PTI)

Bilquis Mir appointed senior canoeing, kayaking judge at Asian Games

SRINAGAR, Sept 21: Bilquis Mir, the former kayaking and canoeing player from Srinagar and the first water sports coach from the region, has achieved the distinction of becoming the first Indian woman to be appointed as the 'finishing chief judge' at the Asian Games, beginning in Hangzhou on Saturday.

Mir, who hails from Khanyar area of the city, said it was a proud moment for her.

"I am the first woman from India to have been included in this jury panel," Mir told PTI on Wednesday.

"I will be the chief judge at the finishing point in kayaking, canoeing and canoe sprint events at Hangzhou. It is a very crucial position and it's an honour for me. It's a dream come true. I would like to dedicate this success to those girls who will take up this sport in future," she said.

Mir, who turned to coaching after a career as a player, said more women are in decision-making positions in the sport.

"When I started competing as a player, I saw very few women players being given such responsibilities, but today women are (in) decision-making process," she said.

Mir said there was an abundance of talent in Jammu and Kashmir which can be nurtured to

become top-level athletes.

"In the last four years, water sports has given most of the medals to J&K. I am sure, this game will produce thousands like me from here who will make the country proud. We have a lot of scope in women's sports. You will soon see women from the region representing the country in the Asian Games and Olympics," she added.

Mir is hopeful the Indian contingent will put up a good show at the Games. "I am very hopeful our country's athletes will bring (a lot of) medals... the girls will also make the country proud."

Burhan Bazaz, president J&K Rowing and Sculling Association said Mir's selection was a moment to celebrate.

"I would like to congratulate Mir. It is a proud moment for Jammu and Kashmir. It is something we should celebrate," Bazaz said. He said Mir has become an inspiration for thousands of girls and boys.

Bushra and Shaista, two aspiring water sports athletes, said they want to emulate their coach Mir. "I am happy as my coach has been selected as a jury. It is a proud moment. She is a role model for us," Bushra said.

"If she can do it, we can also do it. I also want to be successful just like her," Shaista said. (PTI)

Tarundeep Rai optimistic about Indian men's recurve team's success

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: India's only Asian Games individual medallist in recurve section, Tarundeep Rai, feels at least one from the men's archery team could win a medal in the Hangzhou edition and end a 13-year-long drought in the continental showpiece.

Rai indicated that fellow Army colleague Dhiraj Bommadevara and Atanu Das, the senior most in the recurve team, stand a chance to become individual champion.

"Hopefully, I'll get a company (as an Asian Games individual recurve medallist) before I quit next year," Rai told PTI in an exclusive interview. "I think my record will be broken this year. If they have their day, it can be a gold this time. Hopefully, I will find a company this time. I've a huge feeling that Indian men recurve archers will do better in individual events this time. More than the team we have a better chance in individual and teams like Korea, Japan, China, Malaysia and Indonesia are going to be strong medal contenders."

"A Games experience is totally different than a championship event -- most of the times you lose track and get lost in the crowd," Rai explained why India have fared poorly at the Asian Games.

He added, "The grandeur of the event, the location, the village, atmosphere altogether puts different kind of pressure. It slowly starts affecting your form, unless you are used to it."

Set for his third successive Asian Games, two-time Olympian Das has a wealth of experience, while Rai's Army "junior" Dhiraj is in the midst of a breakout season.

In his first full competitive season as a senior, the 22-year-old Dhiraj has won one silver, three bronze medals including one in individual section at the World Cup that earned him a World Cup Final berth. He impressed in his maiden World Cup Final where he shocked two-time Olympic gold medallist Kim Woo-jin of Korea, before ending a creditable fourth. (PTI)

India blank Bangladesh 3-0 in SAFF U-19 Championship

KATHMANDU, Sept 21: Gwngwmsar Goyary, Naoba Meitei Pangambam and Arjun Singh Oinam were on target as India blanked Bangladesh 3-0 in the SAFF U-19 Championship at the Dashrath Stadium, here on Thursday.

India will play their next Group B match against Bhutan on September 25 as they look to qualify for the knockout stage.

Group A consists of hosts Nepal, Maldives and Pakistan. The top two sides from each group will progress to the semi-finals.

Stepping onto the international stage after more than two years, the Blue Colts roared into action within 34 seconds.

Ishaan Shishodia received a long ball on the right before sending a cross floating into the box.

Bangladesh defender Mohammad Yousuf Ali failed to clear the ball, which landed sweetly at the feet of Gwngwmsar Goyary.

The India forward did not make a mistake as he slotted home India's first goal.

India doubled the lead in the 45+5th minute capitalising on a lapse in Bangladesh's defence with Naoba Meitei striking.

Pressing further, Indians played a series of passes near the Bangladesh penalty area that finally ended up with a pass from Shishodia to Kelvin Singh Taorem.

Taorem allowed the ball to roll past him, presenting an unmarked Arjun Singh Oinam with a golden opportunity.

Oinam unleashed a right-footer that found the back of the net. (PTI)



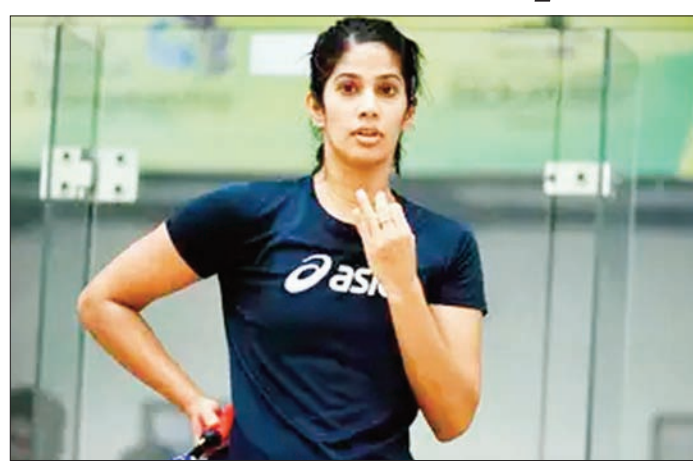
Ahead of sixth Asian Games, Joshna finds motivation to excel from Bopanna, Sreejesh

NEW DELHI, Sept 21: Playing and performing in your late 30s and 40s is incredibly hard in professional sport but squash veteran Joshna Chinappa finds the motivation to carry on when she sees the likes of Rohan Bopanna and P R Sreejesh defying age in the twilight of their careers.

The 37-year-old from Coorg will be making a "mind boggling" sixth appearance at the Asian Games, having made her debut as a 15-year-old "generations" ago in 2002.

The 43-year-old Bopanna, who recently made the men's doubles final at the US Open, and hockey custodian Sreejesh will also be probably playing their farewell Games.

"Bops is a legend. I have known him for almost 20 years as we come from the same place in Coorg. I heard he was retiring and I messaged him saying 'you are playing your best tennis now, why would you retire?'. Then he said he was only retiring from Davis Cup (laughs)," Joshna told



PTI. "He is doing his best in the later stages of his career, it is so inspirational. Same with Sreejesh (35), who is more of my age and been around for long."

"I have seen him play and it seems he is still in his 20s. All of this is inspiring as I know what it takes to be fit and strong at this age." Glad to be back at my best fitness wise

Asian Games and Common-

wealth Games have more significance for athletes from non-Olympic sports like squash, and Joshna is glad to be back at her physical best for the Hangzhou Games, having dealt with knee and neck injuries for the major part of the year.

Used to being in the top10s and top20s, the lack of game time due to injuries has pushed Joshna back to as low as 70 in the world rankings. The much

younger Tanvi Khanna is a spot ahead of her seasoned teammate in the latest PSA charts.

The injuries were a definite setback for the Chennai-based athlete but she is now ready for the grind starting with the Asian Games before turning focus on improving her rankings on the professional tour.

"I have had a couple of bad injuries the last 12 months. I got better couple of weeks back and it is nice to be able to freely."

"From being 15 and 16 in the world (dropping to 70), it has been tough as you don't get into big tournaments (direct entry). That is what sport is. That is what life is sometimes and you have to override the challenges, the main goal was to be fit for Asian Games."

"My first Games were as 15-year-old. It feels like a lifetime and generation of athletes ago. To be here after these years is mindboggling for me," she said a day before her departure for China with the Indian squash contingent. (PTI)

Asian Games: Shafali shines as Indian women enter semi-final, courtesy better ICC ranking

HANGZHOU, Sept 21: Shafali Verma bullied an inexperienced Malaysian attack with a sparkling 39-ball-67 as India entered the semi-final of the women's cricket event at the Asian Games by virtue of better ICC rankings after Thursday's quarter-final was abandoned due to rain.

The match was reduced to 15 over-a-side affair and India scored an imposing 173 for 2, courtesy Shafali, skipper Smriti Mandhana's 27 off 16 balls and Jemimah Rodrigues' 29-ball-47. Richa Ghosh's 7-ball-21 cameo was like a cherry on top of the cake.

It was going to be next to impossible for Malaysia to even think of surpassing 100-run mark let alone chase the target, which was revised to 177 as per DLS method.

Malaysia played only two deliveries before heavy rain played spoilsport and the match had to be called off.

India are top seeded Asian team in the competition as per their ICC ranking on June 1.

On a slow deck, Malaysia skipper Winifred Duraisingam elected to field and her team did let her down due to



sloppy fielding as they dropped a few catches. Malaysia's bowling didn't have enough sting to trouble the Indian batters.

The lack of pace in their deliveries forced Shafali to walk down the track in order to meet the ball early. Mand-

hana, at the other end, got some full-tosses which were dispatched to all corners of the ground.

Mandhana was dismissed after the opening pair got 59 within the Power-play when she tried to pull a delivery, which was bowled slightly on the

fuller side from spinner Mahira Izzati Ismail.

Shafali's innings had five sixes apart from four boundaries and mostly in the region between square leg and deep mid-wicket apart from a straight six that got her to a well-compiled half-century.

Rodrigues also looked in good touch as she got six boundaries and added 86 for the second wicket with Shafali.

Shafali was also hit on her right forearm when she couldn't evade a powerful bowler's back-drive by Rodrigues and needed an urgent taping.

She got a reprieve in the deep off Mas Elysa's bowling but immediately after that was caught plumb in front. Richa came in and blasted four boundaries in the 15th and final over of the innings which took India past the 170-run mark.

Brief Scores: India 173/2 in 15 overs (Shafali Verma 67, Jemimah Rodrigues 47). Malaysia (Revised target 177) 1/0 in 0.2 overs.

Match called off. India win due to better ICC ranking. (PTI)

Iyer to prove his fitness, Surya his worth during WC dress rehearsal

MOHALI, Sept 21: Shreyas Iyer's dodgy match-fitness will be put to ultimate test while Suryakumar Yadav's desperation to alter a dismal ODI record adds a fascinating sub-text to India's three-game series against Australia, which also serves as final dress rehearsal before the World Cup, beginning next month.

With pillars of Indian batting — skipper Rohit Sharma and the brilliant Virat Kohli — resting for the first two games along with lead spinner Kuldeep Yadav and premier all-rounder Hardik Pandya, it will be head coach Rahul Dravid's final chance to assess his bench strength.

The two Mumbai batters — both very different players from each other — are fighting their own little battles to be a part of the most important tournament of their lives.

The 28-year-old Iyer hasn't played much cricket in last six months due to stress fracture surgery. A stiff back just before an Asia Cup match against Pakistan raised questions about his fitness.

As chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar has said that Iyer is good to go in the three games but whether his body is holding for 100 overs during the three games over next five days, will be observed keenly. As much as Ishan Kishan has done his bit, India will need Iyer, the proverbial slayer of spin bowling in the middle overs during the World Cup.

For Surya, literally 'SKY' has been the limit in T20s but before anything else, he perhaps need an uncluttered mind about what kind of role is he looking at in ODI cricket.

In today's day and age, 27 ODIs are a lot and less than 25 average is neither a true reflection of his talent nor his capabilities.

Surya won't be a starter in playing XI during the World Cup but for his own good, he would want the team management to be assured that they didn't make a wrong choice. Tilak Varma is hot on his heels and at 33, he won't practically get a shot at another 50-over World Cup.

'Ash' is name of the game

The small quadriceps tear that left-arm spinner Axar Patel suffered has opened an unlikely door for 37-year-old Ravichandran Ashwin to play his third and what could likely be his last 50 over World Cup in case the former doesn't recover in time.

Even two weeks back, Ashwin was not even in Indian team management's radar and now the crafty veteran and his younger state-mate Washington Sundar are locked in a battle for an outside chance to make it to the squad.

If one goes by the buzz, Ashwin even if he doesn't do well in the upcoming games, is way ahead of Washington in terms of probable chance of a look-in. Ashwin's battle against David Warner and Steve Smith could be a fan's



delight.

The absence of Kuldeep Yadav and Hardik Pandya will give both Ashwin and Washington, a chance to showcase what they have to offer to the team. But, there is every possibility that even if Ashwin does brilliantly, the team management will go with Axar if he recovers on time and plays the third ODI.

Usually, a small tear takes two weeks to heal and for a spinner, it is not a serious injury unlike for fast bowlers, where it takes more time before they can go full steam. Hence India will remain hopeful about getting Axar fit before the tournament proper starts.

Team Combination

With no Rohit at the top of the order, Ishan Kishan is likely to open with Shubman Gill while Kohli's place is taken by Iyer, who needs game time.

India's Asian Games-bound skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad is in the squad more as a cover and could be released after the second game as he would link up with T20 team flying to Hangzhou on September 28.

India haven't rested any of its fast bowlers but Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj may play two of the three games as three 50-over games have been slotted in five days and it also includes travel. Workload management of two pacers will be paramount.

Australia, the team to beat in World Cup

Australia despite losing 2-3 to South Africa recently had a quality series even as skipper Pat Cummins' injury keeps bothering them.

But having won the last ODI series in India in March and being one of the international teams which has regularly cracked the 50-over code in sub-continent, there couldn't have been a better preparation going into a marquee event where both countries will incidentally meet again on October 8.

Travis Head's injury gave Marnus Labuschagne a chance which he has taken with both hands but it will be Australia's bowling attack that will be put to test on three of the flattest decks that one comes across in sub-continent. (PTI)

My wrist has healed, hope to play all 3 ODIs against India: Cummins

MOHALI, Sept 21: Australian skipper Pat Cummins on Thursday hoped to play all three ODIs against India after completely recovering from his left wrist injury, but said new ball partner Mitchell Starc will miss the series opener.

The Australia skipper also hoped that Marnus Labuschagne will continue his good form in the series against India and stake his claim in the final 15 for the ODI World Cup.

"We have plenty of people at different stages. I am feeling pretty good. My wrist is all healed now. I am 100 per cent (fit). I will run around tomorrow and hope to play all three games," Cummins, who had a left wrist fracture, said during the pre-match press conference ahead of the opening ODI on Thursday.

"In terms of long list, (Mitchell) Starc isn't available. We will give plenty of game time to everyone but also keep an eye on the World Cup," he added.

Steve Smith, who had a good hit on Wednesday evening, has also recovered from the wrist niggle.

"He (Smith) is all good and he will play tomorrow. He has got a few good hits and he looks hundred per-

cent," the skipper informed.

Labuschagne recently came in as a concussion substitute against South Africa after all-rounder Cameron Green got hit on the head.

"Marnus (Labuschagne) is always ringing in my head, 24 hours," laughed Cummins.

"He was fantastic. He was our best batter in South Africa. Not only batting wise, his intent was excellent there in South Africa. I am sure he will get his chance in three games and push for his spot."

Cummins also hinted that Adam Zampa, who got thrashed in South Africa, could be used in death overs against India. "Particularly, if you pick four frontline bowlers, they have to be ready to bowl in all phases."

"Zamps (Adam Zampa) is not only good in keeping the run rate down but can also pick a couple of wickets in death overs, which could be hard on pace bowlers. So I won't be surprised if we keep his 2, 3 or 4 overs up our sleeves," Cummins said.

Australia wants to win the series but don't want players to get tired in sultry conditions before the World Cup. "We want to get those combinations but

don't want to already get cooked by the time we play that first game. We will try different combinations and few different players will get chance," Cummins said.

Mitchell Marsh's captaincy impressed the regular skipper and in case he takes a day off, the all-rounder will lead.

"He (Marsh) was great. Excellent. We saw in the T20 series (in SA), started off with a bang but it was disappointing finish in ODIs. We did a lot of good stuff as well. We were impressed as to how he was around the boys and looked very calm every time on the field," Cummins said.

"Hopefully I will play every game and if I am not then he will be there to step right in."

The heat in October will be the only change for Cummins, who thinks that tracks won't be different from what they got in March.

"I always find Indian pitches pretty similar whatever time of the year you play. Only difference is the heat. Quite hot this time of the year compared to March but we bowled a lot of overs here so we have pretty good information about the conditions," he added.

Cummins is happy that all-rounders Marsh, Marcus Stoinis and Green would bolster Australia's batting. (PTI)



The Asian Games: larger than the Olympics and with an array of regional and global sports

HANGZHOU (CHINA), Sept 21: The Asian Games are an attention grabber.

For starters, they involve more participants than the Summer Olympics. Organizers say more than 12,000 will be entered when the opening ceremony takes place Saturday in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou. This is more than the 10,500 expected for next year's Paris Olympics.

The giant numbers are partly due to the staggering array of events with many regional specialties, sports, and games you won't find in the Olympics. And there's also cricket, which appears headed to the Olympics as soon as 2028 in Los Angeles, and certainly for 2032 in Brisbane, Australia.

And there's squash, which has tried several times for Olympic recognition.

The regional fare includes dragon boat racing, sepaktakraw — sometimes called "kick volleyball" — wushu, a Chinese martial art, and kabaddi, a popular contact sport on the Indian subcontinent. There is also the non-Olympic martial art of ju-jitsu, and kurash, a form of wrestling popular in central Asia.

To this, add a long list of what organizers call "mind sports" from bridge to chess to xiangqi (Chinese chess) to esports.

Of course, there are the old standbys seen in every Olympics like track and field, swimming, or volleyball — and the usual grandiose opening and closing ceremonies. Nine sports will offer qualification spots for the Olympics — archery, artistic swimming, boxing, breaking, hockey, modern pentathlon, sailing, tennis, and water polo.

However, most of the 481 events offer a chance for smaller delegations to win medals, which is often impossible at the Olympics.

China won almost 300 overall medals at the last Asian Games in Indonesia in 2018. At the bottom of the table, Syria and Nepal won a lone medal each. Bhutan and Bangladesh were among nine delegations that didn't win any.

China will dominate the medal table as it has for the last 40 years, followed by Japan and South Korea — Asia's other powers. The vast region stretches from Lebanon on the Mediterranean, through central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, to North Korea with organizers saying 45 nations or territories are entered.

Organizers have said 191 participants from North Korea will be on hand. North Korea closed its border early in 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic and skipped the Tokyo Olympics, which were delayed a year until 2021. The Asian Games were also pushed back a



year from 2022 because of the pandemic.

According to South Korea's Unification Ministry, the last time North Korean athletes appeared in an international sports competition was January 2020, when North Korea competed in the Asian Football Confederation's under-23 soccer championship.

If you like political intrigue, there may be plenty of it.

The self-governing island of Taiwan will be on hand in China, which claims the democracy as a breakaway province that it has vowed to reclaim it. Known as the Republic of China, the island is officially listed as Chinese Taipei in the Olympics and Asian Games and marches under a white flag adorned with the Olympics rings. Its red, blue and white flag is in not allowed. Taiwan, with only 23.5 million, is a relative sports power in the region and finished seventh in the overall medal standings in Indonesia.

The games also begin amid an open power struggle between International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and Kuwait's Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, a long-time IOC member who is often described as the "kingmaker" who helped Bach win the IOC presidency in Buenos Aires in 2013.

The Switzerland-based IOC openly intervened in July to invalidate the presidential election of the Olympic Council of Asia. It has also suspended Sheikh Ahmad from the IOC.

The election was ostensibly won by Kuwait's Sheikh Talal Fahad Al-Ahmad

Al-Sabah, the younger brother of Sheikh Ahmad. The elder sheikh is the former 30-year president of the OCA, an organization that was created by his father.

The IOC says it will continue to recognize Randhir Singh of India as interim president of the OCA until new elections are held. Bach will attend the opening ceremony in Hangzhou and is sure to have talks with Singh.

The biggest event of the games might be a possible India vs. Pakistan gold-medal game in men's cricket on Oct. 7, which would be one of the most-watched global sports events all year. It comes just as cricket's world cup is also underway.

China will again dominate diving, and several of China's top swimmers — fresh from the world championships two months ago in Fukuoka, Japan — will shine. The field in gymnastics is weakened since the world championships in Antwerp, Belgium, clash with the Asian Games.

The biggest winner at the Asian Games might be South Korea esports star Lee Sang-hyeok, who is also known as "Faker." If he wins gold he will be granted an exemption from military service.

Tottenham Hotspur soccer forward Son Heung-min also bypassed a 21-month military stint because of a government exemption when South Korea won the gold medal in soccer at the 2018 games in Indonesia — although Son still had to do three months of basic training. (AP)

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