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# Country's political scenario based on Pt Deendayal's ideology: CM

CM releases Assamese edition of 'Deenadayal Upadhyaya Sampurna Vangmaya'



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the contemporary political scenario in the country was based on the ideology of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.

Sarma said this while releasing the book 'Deenadayal Upadhyaya Rachanasamagra' during a programme held on the occasion of the birth anniversary celebration of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya at the Assam Secretariat

Complex premises in Guwahati on Monday. The book 'Deenadayal Upadhyaya Rachanasamagra' is the Assamese edition of Deenadayal Upadhyaya Sampurna Vangmaya (Complete Works of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya). It has been edited and compiled by Mahesh Chandra Sarma. The Assamese version of the publication has been edited by dictionary writer Sumanta Chaliha and published by the Publication Board Assam.

Addressing the event, Himanta Biswa Sarma

said, "The Bharatiya Jana Sangh leader, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya emerged as an idol for the society through his works. He realized the importance of having a strong foundation of social and cultural life, as he was of the opinion that political freedom alone was not sufficient for a nation to keep moving ahead in the path of progress."

Referring to the term "integral humanism", coined by Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, the Chief Minister said it meant human beings are at the core of the social, political and economic model. It is opposed to both Western liberalism and Marxian socialism, which it views as materialistic ideologies incapable of dealing with native problems. Referring to the concept of Antyodaya of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, Sarma said its notion remains a key component of integral humanism.

"The current dispensation at the Centre under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been following the concept of Antyodaya in its day-to-day policy implementations, offering and actionable model of community development based on self-reliance," Sarma said. Speaking on other scholastic works currently being undertaken (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## SC asks UIDAI, state to ensure Aadhaar cards for displaced persons

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) and the Manipur government to take steps to ensure that Aadhaar cards are provided to people displaced in the bloody ethnic conflict in the state whose records are already available with the UIDAI. Observing that it does not propose to run the administration in Manipur, the apex court said necessary verifications shall be carried out before issuing the Aadhaar cards expeditiously.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud clarified that UIDAI, which would have the biometric details of people to whom Aadhaar cards were already issued, will match the claims of those displaced about the loss of their cards.

The bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, directed the secretary of Manipur's finance department to issue appropriate instructions to all banks in the affected parts of the state to make available the details of bank accounts to those who have lost the documents. It said secretary of Ma-



nipur's health department shall take all expeditious steps for issuing disability certificates/duplicates of disability certificates to specially-abled persons in relief camps.

The bench issued the directions while it was considering the reports filed by the apex court-appointed all-woman committee of former high court judges headed by Justice (ret'd) Gita Mittal. The panel also includes Justices (ret'd) Shalini P Joshi and Asha Menon.

In the reports filed in the apex court, the committee had sought certain directions on issues includ-

ing lost personal documents of those displaced. "The deputy director general of UIDAI, regional office, Guwahati, and the secretary of Manipur's department of home affairs, shall take all steps to ensure that Aadhaar cards are provided to all displaced persons, who may have lost their Aadhaar cards in the process of displacement, whose records are already available with UIDAI," the bench said.

During the hearing on a batch of pleas, including those seeking court-monitored probe into cases of violence, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

### HT BRIEFS

#### Three arrested

**AGARTALA:** Three people were arrested with fake currency notes in Tripura's Dhalai district on Monday, police said. The vehicle was intercepted at Chakmaghat during a checking on the Assam-Agartala highway as part of the police's three-month-long drive against drugs, they said. "During the search, ₹ 75,000 in ₹ 500 denomination was found in a luxury vehicle. Three youths who were in the vehicle were detained along with the counterfeit notes," said sub-divisional police officer of Ambassa, Nityanana Sarkar. A case has been registered against the accused, who are all below 25 years of age. They are currently being interrogated. The police also searched their houses at Baigaridafa under the Teliamura Police Station but nothing incriminating was found. An investigation is underway, police said.

#### Heroin seized

**ITANAGAR:** A person was arrested in Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district after heroin worth ₹ 70,000 and unaccounted cash of ₹ 2.5 lakh were seized from his possession, police said. Acting on a tip-off, a team of the ALO police personnel apprehended the person from the Piyi area and recovered 8.5 grams of narcotics, West Siang superintendent of police (SP) said. Two mobile handsets, empty soap cases and plastic tobacco containers were also seized from his possession, the SP said.

#### Ayushman Bharat cards

**NEW DELHI:** As many as 177 Ayushman Bharat cards are made and 30 hospital admissions undertaken per minute under the Centre's flagship scheme for providing health insurance, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday. Highlighting the benefits accruing to the most vulnerable and poorest communities of the country, Minister of State for Health SP Singh Baghel urged Delhi, Odisha and West Bengal to join the AB-PMJAY scheme. He was speaking at the inaugural session of Arogya Manthan, being held to celebrate five years of Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) and two years of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).

## Eight exotic animals seized in Assam, five held

**SILCHAR, Sept 25:** Eight exotic animals, suspected to be smuggled from Myanmar, have been seized by the police in Assam's Cachar district. The police also apprehended five people in this connection, an officer said on Monday.

Acting on a tip-off, an operation was launched and the animals were recovered from a vehicle coming from Mizoram at the Lailapur Gate along the Assam-Mizoram border on Sunday evening, Cachar superintendent of police, Numal Mahatta said.

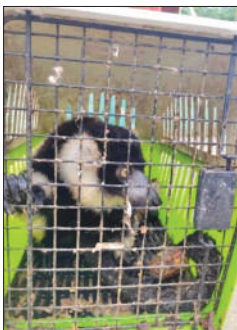
"We suspect that the exotic animals were smuggled from Myanmar and the consignment was going to some other state of India," he said. The caged animals were handed over to the forest officials after rescue and they are being shifted to the Assam State Zoo in Guwahati.

The seized wildlife species include two Panamanian white-faced capuchins, which is a very rare species of

monkey, four black gorillas and two common opossums, also called southern black-eared opossum which is also a rare species of monkey, Cachar divisional forest officer, Vijay Palve said.

"All these species are not Asian natives," he said. "Since they are not familiar with the weather of our area, we have shifted them to the Assam State Zoo to keep them alive under controlled conditions," Palve said. Most of the rescued animals are African natives and it is suspected that these were smuggled through different countries before the consignment reached Assam, the official said.

In April this year, seven spider monkeys and two black and white ruffed lemurs were rescued from a vehicle near the Assam-Mizoram border. These wildlife species are usually smuggled from Myanmar or Indonesia and the consignments enter India through Mizoram, he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



## Canada's defence minister urges India's cooperation in murder investigation

**TORONTO, Sept 25:** Canada's defence minister Bill Blair has voiced concern over the measures taken by India including the suspension of visa services for Canadians and urged New Delhi to cooperate fully in the investigation of the killing of a Sikh separatist leader to uncover the truth and work together to resolve it in an appropriate way.

Tensions flared between India and Canada following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's explosive allegations of "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, 45, on his country's soil on June 18 in British Columbia. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020.

India has angrily rejected the allegations as "absurd" and "motivated" and expelled a senior Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move to Ottawa's expulsion of an Indian official over the case. India last week asked Canada to crack down on terrorists and anti-India elements operating from its soil and suspended visa services for Canadians.

"We received and believe we have very credible intelligence that

causes us to be deeply concerned and the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) have now initiated an investigation," Blair said in an interview with Canada's national public broadcaster CBC News on Sunday.

"One of the things I need to be very careful about is not confirming or identifying either the sources of any information we're acting on or the evidence or the type of evidence that forms part of that investigation, because the outcome of that investigation is critically important to Canada. It's also important to our allies in the world..." he said, without divulging details of the ongoing investigation into the case. When asked whether he was concerned about some of the measures adopted by India, Blair said, "I am concerned about the measures that they're taking because we have a very significant (and) important Indo-Canadian population in this country, people who are connected to family and through business and other relationships to India."

He said that Canada recognizes the impact that some of these measures may have and at the same time (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Bodies of Assam youths recovered in Nagaland

HT Bureau

**KOHIMA/GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** The bodies of two youths from Assam were recovered under mysterious circumstances in Nagaland's Mon district on Monday.

According to police sources, the victims reportedly hailed from Sonari in Charaideo district in Assam.

Sources said that the duo, Lalit Nowholia and Uptal Tassa, had reportedly gone to the Mon district for certain business purposes on Sep-

tember 22. Their mutilated and half-naked bodies were reportedly found in a mountainous area. Their bodies had several injury marks, sources said. It is suspected that the youths were murdered by unidentified miscreants.

The slain youths were reportedly carrying ₹ 1.80 lakh and the amount was also not found at the time of the recovery of the bodies.

Police from both Mon and Charaideo districts went to the areas and started a probe.



## First C-295 aircraft inducted into IAF



**GHAZIABAD, Sept 25:** The first C-295 medium tactical transport aircraft was inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF) on Monday, boosting its logistics capabilities.

The induction ceremony took place at the Hindan Air Force Station here in the presence of Union defence minister Rajnath Singh. He later took part in a 'Sarva Dharma Pooja' that was performed in the hangar to mark the occasion.

IAF chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhary along with senior of-

ficials of the IAF as well as of Airbus attended the induction ceremony. The first C-295 aircraft was inducted into Squadron No. 11 of the IAF. It is one of the oldest squadrons of the Indian Air Force (IAF) and is currently based at Vadodra Air Force Station.

The aircraft was unveiled at the hangar after two sliding screens, bearing '11 SQN: Pioneers of C-295 MW', 'Rhinos: The Trailblazers of C-295 MW', and image of the newly-inducted aircraft, moved

sideways. One-horned rhino is the emblem of Sqn. No. 11.

The IAF chief had on September 13 received the first of the 56 C-295 transport aircraft two years after India sealed a deal worth Rs 21,935-crore with Airbus Defence and Space to procure the jets to replace its ageing Avro-748 fleet.

The aircraft had landed in Vadodra on September 20, days after it was handed over to the IAF in the southern Spanish city of Seville.

Airbus will deliver the first 16 aircraft in fly-away condition from its final assembly line in Seville by 2025 and the subsequent 40 aircraft will be manufactured and assembled by Tata Advanced Systems (TASL) in India as part of an industrial partnership between the two companies.

The production of components of these aircraft has already started in the Main Constituent Assembly facility in Hyderabad. These parts will be shipped to the Final Assembly Line (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Man arrested for duping woman

HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, Sept 25:** Ajit Kalita of Gaurisagar, Sivasagar district was arrested on Monday on charges of duping a woman of cash and her mobile phone by posing as an official of the Jorhat Municipal Board.

Kalita, met the woman Mainee Tanti, a widow, while she was shopping at the Unnayan Bhawan complex on Saturday. The three storied Unnayan Bhawan also houses the Municipal Board and Zila Parishad office, apart from several shops let out by the Board. Posing as an official of JMB, Kalita said that he would facilitate a widow pension scheme for her if she paid him an amount of ₹ 20,000. Lured by his proposal, Mainee brought the amount on Monday and gave it to him (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Yephthomi appointed as Nagaland BJP president

HT Correspondent

**DIMAPUR, Sept 25:** Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP on Monday appointed Benjamin Yephthomi as the new president of Nagaland BJP, replacing Temjen Imna Along, who is also a minister in the state cabinet.

BJP national president JP Nadda has appointed Yephthomi as the state president of Nagaland BJP, party national general secretary and headquarters in-charge Arun Singh said in an organizational appointment letter.

Yephthomi, who hails from Dimapur district, has been an active member of the party for a long time and held various positions in the party. He was the state vice-president of the party and state BJYM president for two consecutive terms.

Yephthomi played a key role in the election management of the party in 2018 and 2023 state assembly elections and campaigned for the party (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## 7WEAVES Research Foundation found 62 bird species flocking Ramsar site

## Deepor Beel witnesses decline in migratory birds

By: Hiranya Barman

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** Bird watchers and environmentalists are in for a disheartening experience as the number of migratory birds flocking the Deepor Beel located on the outskirts of Guwahati have declined.

The Autumn bird count conducted by 7WEAVES Research Foundation at Ramsar site at Deepor Beel found 62 species of birds flocking the site as on September 24.

The findings surprised ecologists and environmentalist alike, who are of the view that number and species of birds coming to Deepor Beel has declined over the years.

The winter bird count done in December 2002 found 219 species of birds flocking the site.

"I am surprised by the reduction of local species of birds dependent



on wetlands," Pramod Kalita environmental activist and secretary of Deepor Beel Suraksha Mancha said told The Hills Times.

Kalita also raised concern on the rising water level of Deepor Beel this year as the excess water from the Beel could not be channelled out to the Brahmaputra due to shut-

ting of the sluice gates on Khana-jan channel.

"Migratory birds like to thrive on swallow waters. The time is ripe now for the migratory birds to come to Deepor Beel to breed. However, the rising water levels of the Beel may cause a hindrance," Kalita lamented.

Meanwhile, a team of 43 participants divided into four groups and led by a team leader conducted the bird counting at Azara, Boragoan, Jalukbari and Dharapur.

Taniya Talwar, ecologist at 7WEAVES Research Foundation presented the findings from the Winter, Spring, and Autumn Bird Counts in relation to the Deepor Beel community activities.

As many as 40 species have been found at Jalukbari, 29 species at Dharapur, 32 species at Dharapur and 23 species at Boragoan.

The team found 38 (20 in Jalukbari, 18 in Dharapur) numbers of Lesser Whistling Duck in Deepor Beel.

The species that have been found in the recent bird count are ducks, pigeons and doves, rails, gallinules and allies, cuckoos, shorebirds, storks, cormorants and aningas, herons, ibis, hoopoes, kingfishers, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## 1 arrested, heroin worth over ₹ 3 crores seized in Karbi Anglong

HT Correspondent

**BOKAJAN, Sept 25:** The police on Monday arrested one person and seized 583.08 grams of heroin worth over ₹ 3 crores from him at Kara Gaon in Karbi Anglong.

Based on specific information in the early hours of Monday, a team of police led by SI (P) Swmdwn Swargiary along with ASI Juwel Gogoi and Ravi Gill, assistant commandant of CRPF Bokajan apprehended a person near Kara Gaon that is located at about 150 metres towards Balijan area under the Khatkhathi Police Station.

The accused was reportedly going towards Balijan on foot with a plastic bag when the police stopped him.

47 soap boxes containing 583.08 grams of heroin was recovered from his possession.

The person has been identified as Samsul Haque (43 year), son of late Sokat Ali. He is a resident of Guashpur village in Karimganj district.

Seizure was done under the supervision of ASP (S) and independent witnesses. Seized items were sealed at the spot in presence of independent witnesses, Sankar Bishwakarm, and Ravi Thapa. Both are residents of Karagaon in Karbi Anglong. The signature of the witnesses, accused, seizing officer and GOs are taken on the spot following all the procedures of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

The police have registered a case against the accused.



# RBI 'not comfortable' with NPAs in urban co-op banks, asks lenders to focus on governance

**MUMBAI, Sept 25:** RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday said the central bank is "not comfortable" with the gross non-performing assets ratio of 8.7 per cent in urban cooperative banks (UCBs) and asked them to work towards improving the same.

Addressing directors of UCBs in the financial capital at an RBI-organised conference, Das urged that such lenders should improve the governance standards, avoid related-party transactions and focus on credit risks, among others.

It can be noted that the UCB sector has been fraught with multiple challenges and also witnessed difficult times in the recent past, like the implosion of the city-headquartered Punjab and Maharashtra Bank.

Das reminded the directors of the UCBs that banks run on depositors and added that protection of the hard-earned money pooled in from the middle class, poor and retirees is far more sacred than going to a temple or a gurdwara.

While the overall picture at an aggregate level looks nice, the situation on GNPA and capital adequacy is "not at all satisfactory", Das said.

He said the overall GNPA has improved to 8.7 per cent, which is

"not a good number. It is not a comfortable number even at an aggregate level".

Scheduled commercial banks' GNPA stood at a decadal best level of 3.9 per cent in March 2023 and are widely estimated to improve further.

To manage the scourge of NPAs better, Das suggested that there should be a focus on credit risk management with better underwriting.

He said the RBI has come across instances of conflicts of interest or related party transactions, which need to be avoided.

Similarly, there have been instances of many of the top defaulters being individuals or businesses having the ability to pay, Das said.

The top 20 defaulters account for over 60 per cent of the loan overdue, and focusing on this segment can help improve the overall NPAs, he added.

On the capital adequacy front, he noted that there has been an improvement in the ratios to 16.6 per cent at the end of FY23 from 15.5 per cent a year ago.

Making it clear that he wants to share the RBI's concerns with the lenders, Das exhorted the UCBs to focus on the quality of governance by paying attention to compliance,



risk management and internal audit.

He said the RBI has come across instances where there is only "paper compliance" and no compliance is observed when an on-field inspection takes place, Das said, adding that the internal audit function also requires focus.

The governor asked bank management to present a risk analysis report to the board on a quarterly basis, rather than making it into an annual effort.

It is also necessary for the directors who are elected and not appointed based on their skill sets,

unlike the SCBs - to understand the financial sector, credit risk, banking, information technology and risk management, Das said.

The Reserve Bank of India has prescribed a board of management to help the elected board members with professional help in running a bank, and the same should not be seen as an impediment, he added.

Stressing that the board discussions should be free and fair, Das said it is important to have any dominance of one or two persons in the decision-making.

"There should be free, frank and democratic discussions. Board

members should be encouraged to ask whatever questions they have on their mind," he said.

Das also expressed the RBI's discomfort with board committees like those handling important functions, such as audit and risk not meeting regularly, stating that it has come across instances where such meetings are not held for months or even multiple years.

He also asked UCBs to monitor asset-liability mismatches, follow transparent accounting practices and recruit people based on requirements and ability to spend.

On the technology front, he said the RBI has found that the quality of the core banking solution is not at all satisfactory in some banks, and the treasury operations are not getting reflected in the CBS.

Going ahead, the UCB segment will be facing competition from tech-savvy entities like digital lenders, fintechs, non-bank lenders and micro-lenders, and hence, need to focus more on technology, Das said.

The governor said the UCB sector built to serve as the neighbourhood bank - is "doing well" from an overall perspective, and also made it clear that the RBI is fine with some of the entities in the sector growing big. (PTI)

# Sensex, Nifty edge up on gains in financials shares amid weak global trends



**MUMBAI, Sept 25:** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed marginally up in highly volatile trade on Monday, snapping their four-day losing streak even as weak global trends and foreign fund outflows dented the investor sentiment.

After gyrating 461.6 points during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex eked out a marginal gain of 14.54 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 66,023.69. During the day, it hit a high of 66,225.63 and a low of 65,764.03.

Snapping its four-day losing streak, the broader Nifty settled marginally up 0.30 points at 19,674.55 as 24 of its components advanced while 26 declined. Gains in financials, consumer durables, realty and banking shares were offset by losses in IT, oil & gas and pharma shares.

In the four sessions to Friday, the 50-issue barometer declined 3.37 per cent or 518 points while Sensex plunged 1,829 points or 3 per cent following a record 11-day rally. Analysts said a fresh uptick in US treasury yields is making investors jittery amid rising concerns over inflation and high interest rates while FIIs continue to offload shares in local equities.

Among the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance jumped the most by 4.64 per cent. Bajaj Finserv, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, ICICI Bank, NTPC, JSW Steel and Tata Steel were among the major gainers.

Infosys, Mahindra & Mahindra, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services, IndusInd Bank and HCL Technologies were the major laggards.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said,

"The day presented a mixed picture in the market, with sectors such as realty, banking, and consumer durables performing well while IT and pharma struggling. Investors were actively repositioning, shifting away from stocks tied to the global economy and focusing on the domestic economy."

Concerns loomed over a potential global economic slowdown due to the prolonged period of high-interest rates, Nair added.

Analysts also said that India's entry into JP Morgan's Emerging Markets Government Bond Index is benefiting the financial sector in anticipation of a reduction in funding cost.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.46 per cent and smallcap index advanced 0.12 per cent.

Among the indices, realty jumped 1.56 per cent, financial services climbed 0.46 per cent, consumer durables (0.43 per cent), bankex (0.29 per cent) and commodities (0.23 per cent).

Industrials, IT, telecommunication, auto, capital goods and tech were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the negative territory while Tokyo settled in the green. European markets were trading lower. The US markets ended in negative territory on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.39 per cent to USD 93.63 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,326.74 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. FIIs have pulled out over ₹ 10,000 crore from Indian equities in the first three weeks of September. (PTI)

# KFC India introduces sign language bucket to promote inclusivity

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** In anticipation of the upcoming International Day of Sign Languages, KFC India is making a unique move to raise awareness for Indian Sign Language (ISL). The fast-food giant is leveraging its iconic bucket, a distinctive brand asset, to spearhead a campaign aimed at fostering inclusivity and communication.

The Sign Language Bucket, a specially designed creation, takes center stage in KFC India's 'Speak Sign' campaign. This innovative bucket features step-by-step visual tutorials of commonly used words and phrases in Indian Sign Language, offering consumers a chance to learn and engage in effective communication with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. This unique offering will be available at all KFC restaurants across India, demonstrating the brand's commitment to inclusivity and empowerment.

Aparna Bhawal, Chief Marketing Officer of KFC India & Partner Countries, expressed the company's motivation behind this initiative, stated, "Our founder, Colonel Sanders, firmly believed that everyone has a seat at his table, and his values & beliefs continue to inspire us even today. Through KFC Kshamata and our Speak Sign campaign, we are committed to enhancing inclusivity for the hearing and speech impaired. This year, ahead of International Day of Sign Languages, we really wanted to challenge ourselves and bring Sign Language to the forefront for consumers. So we took Sign Language to our biggest and most distinctive brand asset - the bucket. By transforming it with visuals that demonstrate ISL, we are presenting consumers with a way to actively learn the language. It's a huge win in our journey towards inclusivity if people walk out of our restaurants having learnt the basics of sign."

# LG launches Wi-Fi convertible side by side refrigerator for the future of refrigeration

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** LG Electronics India, a leading consumer durables and air conditioner brand, has introduced a groundbreaking Wi-Fi Convertible Side by Side Refrigerator. This innovative appliance allows users to convert the freezer section into a fridge from anywhere using the LG ThinQ App, revolutionizing convenience and control in home appliances.

The 2023 Wi-Fi Convertible Side by Side Refrigerator range offers 9 models in both Matt and Glass finishes, featuring chrome-finished door handles and exquisite metallic decorations inside. These refrigerators come in a capacity of 650 liters and are priced between ₹1,22,999 and ₹1,52,999. The LG Wi-Fi Convertible Side by Side Refrigerators showcase a sleek and minimalist flat design with metallic embellishments, combining functionality with elegance. The standout feature is remote operation via the LG ThinQ app, allowing users to control settings and temperatures remotely, reducing cold air loss. This innovation offers unparalleled convenience by enabling users to convert the freezer into a fridge from anywhere. Hyoung Subji, Director

Home Appliances & Air Conditioners, LG Electronics, commented on the launch, saying, "The LG Wi-Fi Convertible Side by Side Refrigerator ushers in a new era of flexibility and control. Whether converting your freezer to a fridge while at work or adjusting temperature settings from your couch, this refrigerator adapts to your lifestyle. This launch reaffirms LG's dedication to providing solutions that simplify our customers' lives while bringing an exquisite blend of design and functionality to modern kitchens."

The latest LG Refrigerators feature Smart Learner powered by AI, which analyzes usage patterns and optimizes cooling accordingly. With the help of various algorithms, these refrigerators monitor data hourly, daily, and weekly to ensure long-lasting freshness for fruits and vegetables. The Side by Side Refrigerators are equipped with Hygiene Fresh+ air filters, reducing bacteria activity by up to 99.99% according to third-party validation by TÜV Rheinland. Additional features include DoorCooling+™ for faster cooling, Smart Diagnosis for troubleshooting, and a Smart Inverter Compressor for enhanced energy efficiency and quieter operation.

# Godrej Properties sells around 670 flats worth over ₹ 2,000 crore in new project in Noida

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** Realty firm Godrej Properties Ltd on Monday said it has sold about 670 flats worth more than ₹ 2000 crore in its new housing project at Noida on strong demands.

Godrej Properties purchased the land through an e-auction conducted by the Noida Authority in November last year.

In a regulatory filing, Godrej Properties informed that it has "sold 670 homes worth over ₹ 2,000 crore in its project, Godrej Tropical Isle, located in Sector 146, Noida."

This is Godrej Properties' most successful ever launch in terms of the value and volume of sales achieved, the company

said. The project was launched in August.

Gaurav Pandey, the MD and CEO of Godrej Properties said, "Noida is an extremely important market for Godrej Properties and we will look to further strengthen our presence in the years ahead."

Godrej Properties, an arm of business conglomerate Godrej Industries, is one of the leading real estate developers in the country. It mainly focuses on the Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Bengaluru and Pune markets for the development of residential projects.

The company expects 14 per cent growth in sale bookings this fiscal year to a record

₹14,000 crore.

During the April-June quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal, Godrej Properties' sales bookings declined 11 per cent to ₹ 2,254 crore from ₹ 2,520 crore in the year-ago period.

On financial performance, Godrej Properties has posted a nearly three-fold jump in consolidated net profit at ₹ 124.94 crore in the June quarter as against ₹ 45.55 crore in the year-ago period.

Total income during the first quarter of this fiscal rose to ₹ 1,265.98 crore from ₹ 426.40 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year. (PTI)

# PhonePe launches Indus Appstore Developer Platform for Indian app developers

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** PhonePe has announced the launch of the Indus Appstore Developer Platform, inviting Android app developers to register and upload their apps. These apps will be featured on the soon-to-be-launched "Made-in-India" Indus Appstore, providing a localized experience in 12 languages tailored for Indian users.

For the first year, app listings on the Indus Appstore Developer Platform will be free. Afterward, a nominal annual fee will be applied. Developers will not be charged any platform fees or commissions for in-app payments and can integrate any payment gateway of their choice.

Akash Dongre, CPO & Co-Founder of Indus Appstore, commented on the launch, saying, "India is poised to have over 1 billion smartphone users by 2026, offering us a massive opportunity to build a new-age, localized Android app store. Despite being such a large consumer market, app developers have always been forced to work with only one app store - Google Playstore - for distributing their apps. Indus Appstore hopes to provide app developers a credible alternative to the Google Playstore - one that is more localized and offers better app discovery and consumer engagement. We are excited to open up the Indus Appstore Developer Platform today and invite all developers to list their apps on the Made-in-India app store."

# H Tech launches Honor 90 5G in Assam



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** HTech, a prominent provider of comprehensive solutions, has unveiled the Honor 90 5G smartphone in the northeastern region of Assam, marking a significant expansion of its product offerings. This latest addition to the HONOR smartphone lineup boasts a range of cutting-edge features, including a remarkable 200MP Main Camera with AI Vlog Master capabilities and an industry-leading Quad-Curved Floating Display equipped with 3840 Hz PWM Dimming technology. The Honor 90 5G aims to deliver a blend of groundbreaking hardware and innovative software to cater to the needs of the constantly connected generation, providing them with personalized experiences and solutions that prioritize human-centric design. HTech's CEO, Madhav Sheth, expressed his enthusiasm regarding the launch, stating, "At HTech, we take great pride in achieving a significant milestone by reintroducing a strong brand to the Indian market—one that embodies cutting-edge technology and fosters a self-reliant ecosystem. With a firm commitment to empowering consumers with leading-edge technology, Honor consistently strives to bring innovations in display technology, battery technology, software, and artificial intelligence. These innovations are underpinned by our robust research and development capabilities. Leveraging Honor's extensive network and value chain, we are delighted to introduce the HONOR 90 5G, marking the debut of this exceptional smartphone in India."

# IHCL expands footprint in Sikkim, opens resort in Gangtok

**KOLKATA, Sept 25:** Tata group hospitality firm Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) on Monday announced that it has expanded its footprint in Sikkim with the opening of a resort in state capital Gangtok.

The 69-key resort, spread over 14 acres of land, is a serene hideout and is a blend of Sikkimese aesthetics and contemporary design, the company said in a statement.

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang attended the opening of the resort. (PTI)

# Rupee falls 20 paise to close at 83.14 against US dollar

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** The rupee declined by 20 paise to settle at 83.14 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday due to rising crude oil prices and a strong American currency against major rivals overseas. Subdued equity markets and withdrawal of foreign funds also weighed on the domestic currency, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened weak at 83.04 and traded between a high of 83.04 and a low of 83.15 against the greenback. It finally settled at 83.14 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 20 paise from the previous close. On Friday, the rupee climbed 19 paise to close at 82.94 against the US dollar. Friday's gain in the rupee was attributed to JP Morgan's announcement that it will include Indian government securities in its global bond index starting June 2024, a move which is expected to bring in USD 25-30 billion

of inflows into the Indian debt market.

On the other hand, the dollar strengthened due to an increased month-end demand of the American currency by importers and rising US Treasury yield amid concerns of further interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said, "Indian rupee declined on Monday on a strong dollar and weak domestic equities. Selling pressure from FIIs also put downside pressure on the rupee. US dollar gained on hawkish FOMC last week".

He said the rupee is likely to trade with a slight negative bias on strong dollar and risk aversion in global markets. "FII outflows and elevated crude oil prices may put further downside pressure on the domestic currency. However, any intervention by the RBI may support the rupee at lower levels. (PTI)

# Tata Motors launches new gen NEXON at Kamakhya Motors Jonali

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** Tata Motors, one of India's leading automotive manufacturers, unveiled the new generation NEXON at Kamakhya Motors in Jonali, Guwahati. The launch event was graced by Assamese film actor Gaurab Borah as the Chief Guest. Among the notable attendees were Yogesh Malhotra (CMD Kamakhya Motors), Madan Malhotra (CMD Kamakhya Motors), Prakhya Baruah (Senior Manager Tata Motors Passenger Vehicle Ltd), Anjan Baruah (Territory Sales Manager Tata Motors Passenger Vehicle Ltd), Rishi Khemka (Senior Manager Tata Motors Passenger Vehicle Ltd), Upen Sarmah (GM Kamakhya Motors), and Binoy Tiwari (Deputy General Manager Tata Motors).

The new generation Nexon represents a blend of versatility, aspiration, and innovation, offering significant upgrades across all aspects of the vehicle. It stands out in the compact SUV market, providing a digital-inspired design, segment-leading safety features, modern technology, and exceptional performance.



ance. The new Nexon is available in four distinct personas: Fearless, Creative, Pure, and Smart, and is offered with both petrol and diesel powertrains. Sales of the new Nexon commenced with an introductory price of ₹ 8,09,990 lakh.

This launch marks a significant step in Tata Motors' commitment to providing advanced and innovative vehicles to meet the needs and preferences of consumers across India.

# S&P retains India's FY24 growth forecast at 6 pc on slowing world economy, rising risk of subnormal monsoons

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** S&P Global Ratings on Monday retained India's growth forecast for current fiscal at 6 per cent citing slowing world economy, rising risk of subnormal monsoons and delayed effect of rate hike.

The US-based agency sees the recent spike in vegetable price inflation as being temporary, but revised up the full fiscal retail inflation forecast to 5.5 per cent, from 5 per cent earlier, on higher global oil prices.

"Growth this year will be weaker than in 2022, but our outlook remains broadly favourable. Notwithstanding the strong expansion in India in the June quarter, we maintain our forecast for fiscal 2024 (ending March 2024), given



the slowing world economy, the delayed effect of rate hikes, and the rising risk of subnormal monsoons," S&P said in its Economic Outlook for Asia Pacific Q4 2023 report.

Indian economy grew 7.2 per cent in 2022-23 fiscal year which ended March 2023.

While retaining its growth forecast for the current fiscal at 6 per cent, S&P also maintained that

India's economy will grow 6.9 per cent in both 2024-25 and 2025-26 fiscal years.

S&P said India's consumption growth as well as capital expenditure remained "strong" in the June quarter. With regard to growth in the Asia Pacific region, S&P said it remains a "multi-speed region" and slightly raised its forecast for 2023 to 3.9 per cent amid domestic resilience.

"In all, growth in the region has generally remained resilient. Year-on-year GDP growth picked up in the second quarter in both developed and emerging Asian economies. India led again, with GDP growing 4.2 per cent quarter on quarter to a level 7.8 per cent up on a year ago," S&P said. (PTI)



# Union power minister allocates additional 179 MW of power to state



**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Union power minister of India, RK Singh, has allocated an additional 179 MW of power to the state of Assam. This decision comes after chief minister, Himanta Biswa

Sarma, met with Union power minister RK Singh in Delhi on September 9, where he highlighted the unprecedented 26 per cent increase in power demand due to the growth of productive sectors in the economy.

The allocation is being made from NTPC's Dadri-I Plant, with the power previously allocated to Haryana up to September 30, 2023. The allocation to Assam will be effective from October 1, 2023, for a period of

one year at the CERC determined tariff.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed his gratitude to Union power minister RK Singh on social media, stating, "My heartfelt gratitude to Hon'ble Union Power Minister Shri @RajKSinghIndia ji for considering my personal request and allocating an additional 179 MW of power to the State. We are committed to ensuring adequate supply of power to industries and households that fuels the Assam growth story."

CM Sarma also mentioned that load shedding is being closely monitored, and they are working on increasing MW in partnership with various businesses to provide continuous power supply to the residents.

The additional allocation of power is expected to help meet the increasing energy demands in Assam and support the state's economic development.

## NHRCB urges eradication of drug trafficking

**HT Correspondent**  
BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 25: The Assam government has taken decisive actions to combat criminal activities and protect the younger generation from the menace of drugs. Assam police have arrested numerous drug traffickers, and some individuals involved in this trade have been killed in encounters. The National Human Rights and Crime Control Bureau (NHRCB) in Assam has emphasized the need for HIV testing, a deadly cause of AIDS infection. In a statement conveyed through State Media Officer Mrinmay Kumar Nath, NHRCB State President Nishant Thard highlighted that the Assam government's efforts, in collaboration with Assam Police, to make Assam a drug-free state have instilled hope.

## BJP observes Pt Deendayal Upadhyay's 107th birth anniversary in West KA

**HT Correspondent**  
DONGKAMUKAM, Sept 25: The ruling national party, BJP, celebrated the 107th birth anniversary of its founder member, Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay, in Ghilani, near Dongkamukam, the district headquarters of West Karbi Anglong.

During the commemoration program, BJP WKADC president Radip Ronghang shared insights into the life of this great leader. He emphasized that Pt Deendayal Upadhyay was not just a visionary leader but also an educationist, journalist, scholar, literary figure, and economist. Born on September 25, 1916, his untimely demise at the age of 52 on a train remains surrounded by mysteries. Ronghang stated that Pt. Deen-



dayal Upadhyay's legacy will always be remembered. The event was attended by BJP WKADC VP and Chairman of the Veterinary Development Board, Ditola Hasnu, along with District Kishan Morcha, David Kro, District

Mahila Morcha, Munmi Teronpi, and others.

Earlier in the day, District President Radip Ronghang, along with other committee members, paid their respects by offering floral tributes to the late leader.

## Guwahati airport handles 1,000 metric tonnes of cargo in last three months



**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Sept 25: The Lokpriya Gopinath Bardoloi Domestic Cargo Terminal in Assam has seen a substantial increase in cargo handling in the last three months. The terminal dealt with a total of about 1000 metric tonnes of inbound and outbound cargo during this period, including 146 tons in June, 411 tons in July, and 426 tons in August.

The cargo terminal is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for handling general and valuable cargo, dangerous goods (DGR), tem-

perature-sensitive cargo like perishables, life-saving drugs, human remains, postal mails, couriers, and various other commodities. It plays a vital role in transporting goods from Assam and the North East to various parts of the country.

Currently covering an area of 550 square meters, there are plans to develop an international cargo terminal building in the near future. The Chief Airport Officer emphasized the untapped potential of perishable air cargo in Assam and the Northeast. The region produces unique products like Bhut Jalakia, pineapple, ginger, kazinemu, and other vegetables, which have global appeal. The infrastructure is being developed to ensure that these products can reach international markets within 24 hours, contributing to economic prosperity in the region.

This development highlights the growing importance of air cargo in facilitating trade and connecting regional products to a wider consumer base.

## Counterfeit money seized in Murajhar

**HT Correspondent**  
DOBOKA, Sept 25: In a joint operation, the Murajhar and Debastan police have apprehended a businessman in possession of counterfeit Indian rupees and ganja in Barballi village under the Murajhar police station in Hajo district. The arrested businessman has been identified as Abdul Qudus from Barballi village in Murajhar, Hajo district. During the operation, the authorities seized a total of 55,700 fake Indian rupees, 140 grams of ganja, and a 150 cc Pulsar bike from Abdul Qudus.

Following his arrest, the businessman was presented before the Hajo Sankardev Nagar Court on Sunday afternoon. He has been remanded in police custody for two days to facilitate further investigation into the case. The police are actively pursuing the investigation, and additional details will be disclosed as they emerge.

## BJP's agenda is 'wait for your rights but vote for us now': AICC spokesperson



**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** AICC spokesperson Mahima Singh on Monday said though the Women Reservation Bill has been passed by both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, it cannot be implemented till the next census is completed and this is typical of the BJP's agenda of "wait for your rights but vote for us now".

"Why has Prime Minister Narendra Modi played the cruel joke on the women of this country as he has asked us to wait yet again, to claim our political right of representation?" Singh said while addressing a press conference here.

The BJP must answer what is the logical link between census, delimitation and reservation, she asked.

"Did it take BJP nine years to hastily bring out this bill by just changing its name, as everything else remains the same but it seems that the BJP's message to the women of the country is wait for your rights but vote for us now," she said.

Singh alleged that the BJP is not interested in securing political space for women and it was for this

reason in 1989, BJP leaders late Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L K Advani had opposed the idea of 33 per cent reservation for women in local bodies, a bill envisioned by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that was passed in the Lok Sabha but fell short of seven votes in the Rajya Sabha but was realised by P V Narsimha Rao in 1992.

She claimed that the 2010 bill which is the main premise for the current women reservation bill was a result of the efforts of a high level committee that had been constituted by the Congress-led UPA government to conduct a comprehensive study on the status of women since 1989.

"It is as a result of that vision that we have more than 15 lakh women representatives across local bodies. In spite of the government's lack of interest, in 2016 the then Congress president Sonia Gandhi had demanded that the Modi government pass the Women Reservation Bill in line with the BJP's slogan of "minimum government maximum governance," she said.

"In 2023, months ahead of the general election, a 'nervous' BJP called a special session of the Parliament primarily faced with imminent challenges by the opposition bloc INDIA and tabled the women reservation bill as the 'Naari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' .... which would be implemented on completion of census and delimitation", Singh said.

All that the BJP has given to the women of this country is the "deafening silence" of the Prime Minister and the Women and Child Development minister on crimes against women whether it was in Kathua, Unnao, Hathras, or on the streets of Delhi when the champion daughters of this country were being dragged on the road, she alleged.

"As far as Assam is concerned, there is certainly one woman who has been empowered at the cost of the rights of crores of Assamese women and that one woman is Riniki Bhuyan Sarma (wife of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma) while this is a state with the highest rate of crimes against women and maternal mortality rate," Singh said. (PTI)

## ABVP appreciates implementation of Lyngdoh Mission in DGC

**HT Bureau**  
DIPHU, Sept 25: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), East Karbi Anglong, expressed its gratitude to Dr Nirab Kumar Samra, the principal of Diphu Govt College (DGC), for fully implementing the Lyngdoh Mission for Diphu Govt College Student's Union Society (DGCSUS) elections in

the current academic session.

In a press release, ABVP East Karbi Anglong stated that the authority of Diphu Govt College (DGC) is prepared to conduct the DGCSUS election for the academic session 2023-2024 in accordance with the Lyngdoh Commission's guidelines. The Lyngdoh Commission allows the post of president to be con-

tested by students, a demand that ABVP has been advocating for, and it has now been fulfilled.

ABVP Karbi Anglong District (East) expressed its appreciation to Dr. Nirab Kumar Samra for fully implementing the Lyngdoh Commission's recommendations and meeting the students' demands.

## Naga Rengma LP School in need of urgent repairs



**HT Correspondent**  
KOILAMATI, Sept 25: Naga Rengma LP School, located in Sathi Rengma village and part of the Nilip Educational Block, is facing several challenges that require immediate attention. The school is situated 25 kilometers away from Koilamati.

During a recent visit to the school, it was observed that the school building's wall was damaged, and there was no kitchen room for cooking mid-day meals. While there is a toilet facility for students and a teacher's quarter, the tin roof has leakages

due to rust, and the doors are kept open. Additionally, there are an insufficient number of benches and desks for the students.

Media personnel who visited the school found that the headmaster, Kamal Podal, was not present during their visit.

The villagers informed the visiting media that the school is 74 years old. They also revealed that the teachers from two different schools have to share accommodations at the Mai Gaon LP School. Since there are no separate quarters, the teachers use classrooms as their sleeping quarters. They arrange two to three benches together to create makeshift beds for the night.

Nilip Educational Block consists of 131 LP schools, 14 ME schools, and 6 high schools. The villagers have called upon the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, Executive Member (EM) of KAAC Education, Richard Tokbi, Nilip Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) Pobitra Rongpi, and Nilip Educational Development Block Chairman, George Rongpi, to address the pressing issues at Naga Rengma LP School.

## Wild elephant succumbs to injuries after infighting

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Sept 25: A male adult wild elephant, injured in a confrontation with another elephant, has sadly passed away in Assam's Sonitpur district. The injured elephant was discovered with a front right leg injury on September 19 near Phulbari Tea Estate in the Rangapara area of the district, which shares its border with Arunachal Pradesh.

The forest department's veterinary doctor had been providing treatment, and local villagers had been providing food for the elephant for the past six days. Despite these efforts, the elephant's condition did not improve, and it succumbed to its injuries on Monday.

This marks the second wild elephant death in Sonitpur district this month. On September 20, another elephant had tragically lost its life after falling into a gorge near the Assam-Arunachal border. These incidents emphasize the ongoing need for wildlife conservation efforts and measures to protect these majestic creatures in their natural habitats. (With inputs from PTI)

## Leopard creating havoc in Karongakhat village trapped by forest department

**HT Correspondent**  
JORHAT, Sept 25: A leopard that had been causing fear and losses among the residents of Karongakhat village, located under the Titabar Forest Beat of Mariani Range in Jorhat Forest Division, was successfully trapped in a cage in the early hours of Monday.

The Forest department had installed a cage in response to complaints from villagers who reported that the animal had killed several cattle and was posing a threat to the community.

Local residents have also mentioned the presence of more leopards in the surrounding areas of the village. They have called for these animals to be captured and removed by the Forest de-

partment to ensure the safety of the community.

Earlier this year, two individuals in Jorhat district were injured due to leopard attacks as these animals ventured into villages. They had also killed cattle belonging to the villagers. The Forest department has been actively using cages to capture several of these big cats.

It's important to note that leopards occasionally stray into human settlements, including villages and tea garden areas, where they prey on domestic animals and sometimes come into conflicts with humans. In such situations, people may resort to defensive measures against the wild animals, sometimes resulting in the death of the leopard.

## Tezpur Cancer Care Centre launches 'Project Soundarya' to support cancer patients

**HT Correspondent**  
TEZPUR, Sept 25: Tezpur Cancer Care Centre, a unit of the Assam Cancer Care Foundation, has launched 'Project Soundarya', a special initiative for cancer patients under the guidance of renowned oncologist Dr. Venkata Pradeep Babu. This initiative aims to support cancer patients, particularly women, who face hair loss due to chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

Many female cancer patients experience hair loss during their treatment, which can lead to depression and social withdrawal. Some patients even abandon their treatment. 'Project Soundarya' was launched in collaboration with the Council For Child Welfare (ICCW), Tezpur branch, led by social worker and physician Dr. Lakshmi Goswami, with support from Natco CSR.

The project provides special wigs and other support to help patients regain their confidence and beauty. It aims to address the mental and emotional challenges faced



by cancer patients undergoing treatment.

Dr. Venkata Pradeep Babu, known for his dedication to the welfare of cancer patients, is currently serving at Tezpur Cancer Centre. He had previously initiated 'Project Khisiri' to provide nutritious food and assistance to needy cancer patients.

In a recent program held at the Tezpur Cancer Centre auditorium, medical offi-

cers from the Assam Cancer Care Foundation, members and officials of ICCW, Tezpur branch, and other dignitaries were present. Wigs and other support were distributed among female patients during the event. Binu Bhuyan, a member of ICCW, Tezpur branch, expressed their commitment to helping needy patients in collaboration with the cancer care center.

## Couple arrested for fraud at 5 Air Force Hospital in Jorhat

**HT Correspondent**  
JORHAT, Sept 25: A couple was arrested by the Jorhat police on Sunday night on charges of committing fraud at the 5 Air Force Hospital at Rowrah in Jorhat.

The police have successfully recovered the sum of money that had been defrauded, as of Monday evening.

The couple was arrested under sections 120 B, 420, 406, and 471 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), in Jorhat Police Station case number 435/2023, following the lodging of a First Information Report (FIR) by hospital

authorities.

According to a police source, Jupitara Kalita, the wife, who worked at the hospital, deposited a bill amounting to approximately ₹ 78 lakh, intended for payment to a private firm, into the account of Jay Prakash Gupta, who was reportedly involved in collusion with them.

Gupta subsequently transferred a certain amount of the money to Arun Dey, the husband of Jupitara.

The investigation into this case is ongoing, and further details will be provided as they become available.

## AASAA plans second annual Karam Utsav

**HT Correspondent**  
MARGHERITA, Sept 25: The Margherita Regional Committee of the All Adivasi Students Association of Assam (AASAA) held a general meeting on Monday at the Auditorium of Margherita Town High School. The meeting was presided over by Jamel Minz, the general secretary of AASAA's Tinsukia District Committee. During the meeting, it was decided that the second annual celebration of Karam Utsav 2023 would be held in Margherita. To facilitate the organisation of the event, a reception committee was formed with Anil Manki as the president and Ruben Ureya as the general secretary. Karam Utsav is a significant cultural festival celebrated by Adivasi communities, and this event aims to promote and celebrate their rich cultural heritage. The planning and coordination of such events play a vital role in preserving and sharing the diverse traditions and customs of these communities.





## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*I believe things cannot make themselves impossible.*  
- Stephen Hawking

## Canada and Sikh separatist groups

If Pierre Yves Elliott Trudeau, the iconic father of Canada's current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, were alive today, he might have found himself deeply concerned, if not distressed, by the presence of small Sikh extremist groups within his beloved nation. These groups appear to be tirelessly working towards the separation of India's Punjab, a province situated some 11,500 kilometers away, with the aim of establishing Khalistan as an independent state. Pierre Trudeau, a charismatic and controversial figure in Canadian politics, played a pivotal role in quelling the Quebec separatist movement of the 1970s and 1980s, cementing his status as one of Canada's most recognizable political figures, both domestically and internationally. However, it is disheartening to note that Pierre Trudeau did not take decisive action to curb the illegal entry of Khalistani Sikh terrorists into Canada, even after they perpetrated a heinous bombing of an Air India passenger flight in the mid-1980s. This apparent inconsistency seems to have been inherited by Justin Trudeau, as Sikh extremist groups continue to thrive in Canada despite inter-group conflicts, violent incidents, and attacks on non-Sikh Indian residents and students. We must unequivocally condemn all acts of violence and ensure swift investigations. Justin Trudeau's concern over the June 18 killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent figure in the Khalistan Tiger Force, is understandable. However, his call for India's official 'cooperation' in the investigation raises questions.

Canada has become a perplexing focal point for Sikh separatist groups dreaming of turning Punjab into Khalistan, a stance that remains unconnected to India's Sikh community of 22 million, known for their valor and strong entrepreneurial spirit. Sikhism, founded by Guru Nanak in the 15th century, initially emerged as a protective response to Muslim insurgencies, and India's Sikh regiment is the country's most highly decorated infantry regiment. Over 95 percent of India's Sikh population proudly consider themselves Indians. Punjab, bordering Pakistan and other Indian states, boasts one of India's most robust state economies, driven by agriculture. The Sikh community's connection to the Khalistan movement in Canada is entirely unfounded. Hence, Canada's support for and tolerance of Sikh separatist groups remains inexplicable. The discrepancy between the sluggish investigation into the Air India bombing case in the 1980s and 1990s and the swift inquiry into the Khalistani terrorist murder case today raises questions about the intent behind these actions. While a few individuals were arrested and tried in the Air India bombing case, only one person, Inderjit Singh Reyat, a dual British-Canadian national, was convicted. Reyat pleaded guilty to manslaughter in 2003.

Canada hosts more than 770,000 Sikh citizens, forming a formidable political force. The country is also home to nearly 1.4 million individuals of Indian ethnic or cultural origin, constituting about 3.7 percent of the population. A significant portion of this demographic identifies as Sikhs, representing around two percent of Canada's total population. Jagmeet Singh's New Democratic Party, a center-left to left-wing party with 25 MPs in the 338-member Canadian Parliament, stands as the fourth-largest political party, closely trailing the Bloc Québécois, which champions Quebec's sovereignty, social democracy, and regionalism. Canada's complex relationship with Sikh separatist groups raises concerns about its consistency and intent. As a nation with a strong commitment to the rule of law and international relations, Canada should strive for transparency and fairness in all investigations, ensuring that its actions are grounded in evidence and principles rather than political considerations.

## A classic case of caste discrimination in Kerala

By P. Sreekumar

An incident of caste discrimination in the most progressive state in the country! Unbelievable? But it is true. The execrable act occurred in Kerala, "God's Own Country", in January this year. The horrendous details of the abomination first. The shocking incident took place at a lamp-lighting ceremony in Payyannur Nambiarakavil Shiva temple on January 26 this year. The incident came to light eight months after it occurred only when Kerala's Devaswom Minister K. Radhakrishnan revealed it on September 18.

Radhakrishnan, a senior leader of the CPI(M), said the chief priest, after lighting the map place it on the floor instead of directly handing it to him. The Minister who felt slighted gave vent to his strong feelings and gave the temple officials and the priest a piece of his mind at the temple itself. He also refused to light the lamp. The soft-spoken Radhakrishnan said he did not want to create a controversy, but he responded to the incident to bring about a change in the caste system prevailing in the society. It is a blot on the society. The people's mind-set has not changed despite the nation's achievements like the Chandrayaan, he pointed out. The question, however, is: why he took eight months to talk about the incident? It was typical of the man, who detests controversies and avoids triggering a row. As expected, the incident evoked strong condemnation cutting across party lines. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the incident shocked him. The government viewed the matter seriously. It is an insult to Kerala's civic society, he opined. The Minister in the meantime has met the CM and briefed him about the incident.

Leader of the opposition V D Sathesnan identified himself with the sentiments expressed by the Chief Minister. He said Kerala's conscience has been shocked by the incident. Sathesnan also called for speedy prosecution of the perpetrators of the insult. Education Minister V Shivankutty and Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) also joined the chorus of criticism. Meanwhile, the tantric of the temple has come up with a far from convincing explanation of the shocking act. In his initial reaction, the tantric said he was in the dark about the incident, adding that he came to know about it only from the media after the minister made it public.

However, the tantric's contention that it should not be construed as an act of caste discrimination is, to say the least, shocking. His reasoning: the whole incident might have happened because of the inexperience of the chief priest! He however, admitted that the priest could have handed it to the minister as no custom prevented him from doing that. But in the same breath he said nobody should point an accusing finger at him! Queer logic, indeed. It is also tantamount to defending the indefensible. He should have refrained from defending the priest. It would have been better if he had sought a probe into the serious matter and waited for its findings.

In direct contrast has been the reaction of the Sivagiri Mutt chief Swami Sathchidananda. The revered Swami demanded immediate dismissal of temple priest. Sathchidananda, who is the president of the Sree Narayana Dharmom Sangham Trust, was caustic in his condemnation. What the Minister had to undergo was an act of untouchability pure and simple, he said. It is sad and shocking to note that untouchability still prevailed in the State. "This is a disgrace to the State that gave birth to Sree Narayana Guru." The Swami said that the minister should have raised a protest the same day itself instead of waiting for over seven months. He also wanted the State Government to take a tough stand on the issue. Practising untouchability is a crime punishable under the law against the evil act. The Chief Minister has promised to take action after talking to the Minister. The sooner the better. For a progressive state like Kerala cannot afford the luxury of allowing such incidents to go unchallenged. Swift punishment must visit the perpetrators of this crime against humanity. (IPA Service)

## Sankaradeva: A renaissance luminary of Assam's culture and spirituality

In the intricate tapestry of Assam's rich history, culture, and spiritual heritage, the luminary figure of Sankaradeva stands as an indelible beacon of enlightenment. A true polymath of his era, his multifaceted contributions reverberate through the annals of Assamese society, leaving an enduring legacy. Sankaradeva's profound impact transcended the boundaries of culture, spirituality, and literature, ushering in a renaissance of unparalleled significance. His visionary ideals found expression in the sacred doctrine of eka-sarana-nama-dharma, igniting the fervent flames of the bhakti tradition that he ardently nurtured and propagated during the vibrant 15th century, forever reshaping the spiritual and artistic landscape of Assam.

Sankaradeva's entry into this world in October 1449 was into a noble lineage, born to Kusumvara Kāyastha Bhūyān and Satyandhā, the Siromani of Bhūyāns. Fate, however, wove a different path for him as the untimely loss of his parents compelled his upbringing by his devoted grandmother, Kheruti. In the embrace of knowledge, young Sankaradeva was enrolled in a tola, guided under the nurturing wing of Mahendra Kandali, where he immersed himself in the profound wisdom of ancient texts, emerging as a master of their profound teachings. Upon completing his scholastic journey, the mantle of Siromani Bhūyān's responsibilities fell upon him. Life's course led him to the tranquil waters of matrimony with Suryāvati, and together they welcomed the gift of a daughter, either known as Manu or Haripriyā. Yet, destiny's somber touch cast a shadow when his beloved wife departed, leaving his heart cloaked in sorrow.

In the transformative year of 1481, Sankaradeva embarked on a sacred odyssey that would reshape the very essence of his being. Journeying through the hallowed landscapes of North India, he encountered a tapestry of experiences that etched an enduring impression on his social, spiritual, philosophical, and religious convictions. Amidst the sanctity of Badarikāshrama, his creative spirit soared as he composed his inaugural Borgeet, a melody that resonated with divine inspiration. These peregrinations served as the crucible for the emergence of the Neo-Vaishnava bhakti doctrine, expanding the horizons of his spiritual perception. The arrival of Jagadīśa Mīśra's complete Bhāgavata Purāṇ further enriched his spiritual tapestry, infusing his outlook with profound depth. These pivotal moments held profound implications for Sankaradeva's life and spiritual journey. Upon returning from his pilgrimage, although entrusted with the responsibilities of Siromani Bhūyān once more, he chose the path of unwavering devotion, dedicating himself wholeheartedly to the propagation of the Bhakti message. A second marriage, to Kalindi, marked the dawn of an active phase in his mission to spread the bhakti creed, culminating in another transformative pilgrimage in 1550.

Throughout his enduring and dynamic existence, Sankaradeva found himself in a perpetual dance with adversity, facing formidable adversaries that included not only powerful monarchs but also staunch orthodox factions within society, all vehemently resistant to his pioneering religious movement. To evade the relentless storms of opposition, he was compelled to embark on a nomadic journey, perpetually shifting his base of operations. And so, the great polymath's earthly sojourn, marked by unwavering resilience and an indomitable spirit, reached its final chapter in 1568, leaving behind a legacy that would endure as a beacon of enlightenment for generations to come.

Sankaradeva's spiritual legacy, known as eka-sarana-nama-dharma or Mahapurushiya dharma, embodies a profound de-

votion and a singular path of worship, centered on the veneration of one deity, primarily the divine incarnation of Viṣṇu as Krishna. In the tapestry of this tradition, the term 'sarana' resonates with a deep resonance, signifying the quest for refuge, shelter, and divine protection. Thus, at its core, eka-sarana-nama-dharma beckons seekers to find solace and sanctuary in a singular God. Rooted in the sacred verses of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa, Sankaradeva's teachings and religious principles draw inspiration from a tapestry of texts, including the Bhāgavata-gītā and Vāmana-purāṇa, weaving a rich and intricate fabric of devotion that continues to resonate through the ages.

Sankaradeva's paramount mission was the purification of Assam's religious landscape by shedding extraneous elements that had encroached upon its sanctity. He ardently advocated the practice of two primary forms of bhakti, namely śrāvāna (the act of devoutly listening to the name of God) and kīrtana (the fervent chanting of the divine name). To disseminate the philosophical and spiritual essence of the Neo-Vaishnava bhakti tradition, he ingeniously devised practices and institutions. Among these, the establishment of cultural sanctuaries such as Namghars and Satras held pivotal significance, serving as hubs for collective prayers while emphasizing the importance of inner and outer purity. These venerable institutions remain steadfast in their role as guardians of literature, music, theater, dance, manuscript craftsmanship, painting, and the preservation of diverse crafts, etching their enduring influence on Assamese cultural and spiritual heritage.

To truly fathom the profound impact of Sankaradeva's religious philosophy and spiritual vision, one must align them with his role as a visionary social reformer. At the heart of his bhakti tradition lay the potent message of universal brotherhood, a vital catalyst in the sculpting of Assamese society, particularly against the backdrop of its fragmented history. Assam's social tapestry, a mosaic of linguistic diversity, religious affiliations, tribal identities, and linguistic communities, was interwoven with intricate rituals and practices. In the face of such division, Sankaradeva's bhakti message served as a unifying force, harmonizing disparate elements into the cohesive Neo-Vaishnava community. Despite fierce opposition from orthodox quarters, he tirelessly endeavored to disseminate his message among the masses through his literary creations, thus sowing the seeds of unity, integration, and enlightenment amidst the multifaceted landscape of Assamese society.

*"Kīrata Kachari Khasi Garo Miri Yavana kanka goala Asama malaka Rajaka Turuka Kuvacha mlechha chandala Anō Jata nara Krishna sevakara Sangata Pavitra haya (Bhagavata 12/70/1271)"*

Translation: The Kiratas, the Kacharis, the Khasis, the Garos, the Miri (Misings), the Yavanas, the Goalas, the Asamas (Ahoms), the Malukas, the Rajakas, the Turukas, the Kuvachas, the Mlechhas, the Chandalas, and others become pure in the company of the devotees of Krishna.

*"Kukura Srigala gardhabaro atma Rama Janiya savako pari Kariba pranama. (Kīrtana 1823)"*

Even the dogs, srigalas, and asses are verily God. Knowing this, respect and salute them all.

Srimanta Sankaradeva embarked on a transformative mission to reshape society, with a fervent drive to bridge the yawning gaps that divided people. His creation of Namghars stood as sanctuaries where in-

dividuals from myriad castes and communities could congregate, uniting their voices in the harmonious acts of śrāvāna and kīrtana. Yet, perhaps the most profound facet of his religious philosophy lay in its inclusive nature, a testament to his commitment to fold people from diverse backgrounds into the embracing embrace of the Neo-Vaishnava order. He labored tirelessly, translating sacred Vaisnava texts into the accessible language of Brajwali, disseminating spiritual wisdom among the masses, while endeavoring to strip away the external trappings that had encrusted the core of religious rites and rituals. In this pursuit, Sankaradeva carved a path toward unity, compassion, and spiritual awakening, erasing the lines that once separated the people of Assam.

Among the myriad legacies bestowed upon Assamese society by Sankaradeva, his indelible mark on the realms of literature, art, and culture gleams with resplendent brilliance. Within this vast tapestry of contributions, one encounters the unmistakable imprint of extraordinary literary prowess and genius. Sankaradeva's literary oeuvre, a mosaic of translations, devotional literature, doctrinal treatises, soul-stirring devotional songs, compilations, and adaptations, resonates as a testament to his multifaceted talents. It's in the lyrical embrace of the Brajwali language that he wove these literary treasures, etching his name forever as a luminary

whose creative legacy continues to illuminate Assamese heritage.

At the heart of Sankaradeva's profound religious tenets lies the sacred Bhāgavata-purāṇa, serving as the wellspring of his spiritual wisdom. A remarkable literary luminary, he meticulously translated eight of the twelve books contained within this venerable scripture, with the Adi Dasama, chronicling the enchanting tales of Krishna's early childhood and playful exploits, emerging as a cherished gem among them. Not content with mere translation, Sankaradeva composed the Nimi Nava Siddhi Samvāda, a doctrinal treatise infused with the essence of the Bhāgavata's eleventh chapter. Yet, perhaps most astonishing was the creation of Gunamala, a magnum opus conceived in a single night, encapsulating the Bhāgavata's quintessence in six soul-stirring kīrtans. His literary tapestry further unfolded with early compositions like Hariścandra-upākhyāna and Rukmini Harana Kavya, while the opus known as Kīrtana-ghoṣā, a compendium of devotional songs designed for congregational prayers, ascended to revered status within the Assamese community, echoing through the hallowed halls of Namghars during daily devotions. Beyond these, his literary legacy encompassed Bhakti Pradipa, fervently denouncing the worship of deities other than Krishna, the translation of the Uttara-Kāṇḍa section of the Rāmāyaṇa (an augmentation to Madhav Kandali's Saptakāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa), Bhatimas, an innovative form of poetry extolling gurus and God, Borgeets, devotional songs, and the timeless Ankiya Naats, among other enduring compositions.

Sankaradeva's impact on the performing arts stands as an unmatched legacy, a symphony of creativity that resonates through time. His innovations span a rich tapestry of artistic endeavors, from the conceptualization of Ankiya Naats, enchanting theatrical plays, to the soul-stirring melodies of Borgeets that echo with devotion. The Bhaonas, his vivid dramatic productions, breathe life into ancient tales and spiritual narratives, while the elegant Sattriya dance style, a transcendent expression of grace and spirituality, continues to enrapture audiences with its timeless beauty. In the realm of the performing arts,

Sankaradeva's genius remains an enduring source of inspiration, a testament to his profound impact on the cultural heritage of Assam.

Sankaradeva's Ankiya Naats stand as extraordinary theatrical creations, a bridge between religious philosophy, native entertainment forms, and the structural finesse of classical Sanskrit drama. These plays, a medium for the dissemination of Neo-Vaishnavism's profound tenets, epitomize his artistic ingenuity. Among them, the inaugural performance of "Cihna Yatra," although regrettably lost to the sands of time, marked the genesis of this theatrical tradition. Sankaradeva's pen gave life to six enduring Ankiya Naats, including "Kālī Damana Yātrā," "Patni-Prasād," "Keli Gopālā Nāṭaka," "Rukmiṇī Harāṇa Nāṭa," "Pārijāta Harāṇa Nāṭaka," and "Śrī Rāma-Vijaya Nāṭa," all composed in the lyrical embrace of Brajwali and steeped in Vaisnava scriptures. Remarkably, these one-act wonders defy conventional divisions, embracing a seamless narrative flow. The vibrant performances, known as Bhaona, come to life within the sacred precincts of Namghars during special occasions, further elevated by the graceful Sattriya dance form. Rooted in classical tradition, Sattriya dances unfold with precision, guided by rules of rhythm, presentation, and melodic harmony, embodying the essence of Sankaradeva's artistic vision.

Sankaradeva's gift of Borgeets, these sacred devotional songs, stands as a timeless testament to his enduring influence. These living traditions, cherished and sung by people to this very day, resonate with spiritual resonance. Composed in the lyrical embrace of Brajwali, these Borgeets are a tapestry woven with the threads of ragas and talas, their melodies intertwining seamlessly. Accompanied by a symphony of musical instruments, these songs are an enchanting expression of devotion set to harmonious tunes. According to the Katha Guru Carita, the biography that chronicles the life of Sankaradeva and other Vaisnava saints, the treasury of Borgeets stands at an impressive count of 240, a treasure trove of spiritual melodies that continues to echo through the ages.

In the realm of artistic expression, Sankaradeva's contributions extended to the mesmerizing world of painting. His early foray into this domain was noted during the performance of the play "Cihna Yatra," a testament to his multifaceted talents. Among his notable masterpieces, the "Vrindavani Vastra" stands as a dazzling gem, a gift bestowed upon King Narayanaraya. This remarkable cloth, spanning a breathtaking 180 feet, unveiled a rich tapestry of scenes from Krishna's life, each miniature accompanied by evocative captions. Furthermore, the "Chitra Bhagavata" emerged as another awe-inspiring compilation, a visual symphony that breathed life into the Tenth book of the Bhagavata Purana through its captivating illustrations. In the hands of Sankaradeva, the canvas itself became a portal to the divine, a testament to his profound artistic vision and craftsmanship.

Sankaradeva's imprint upon the religious and socio-cultural tapestry of the greater Assamese community stands as an unrivaled legacy. His stature as a champion of Neo-Vaishnavism transcends regional boundaries, echoing as a resounding chapter not only in Assam's history but also in the broader narrative of bhakti traditions that resonate across the expanse of the country. His profound influence continues to reverberate, an enduring testament to his pivotal role in reshaping the spiritual and cultural landscape, forging a path of devotion and unity that resonates through the ages. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

## BRICS expansion creates a global super power in renewable energy

By: K Raveendran

The planned expansion of the BRICS bloc, through the addition of new members Saudi Arabia, Iran, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Ethiopia and Argentina, will transform the grouping into a global leader in renewable energy in the coming decades.

The six new members will join the BRICS group of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa in January 2024. As the transition to cleaner technology accelerates, the alliance is projected to derive over 80 percent of its power from renewable sources by 2050, with total capacity reaching 11 terawatts (TW), more than double the combined 4.5 TW expected in the Group of Seven (G7) nations Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US, Rystad Energy says in an analysis of the implications of the new development.

Renewable energy is rapidly gaining prominence as costs decline, making it an increasingly attractive prospect for investors in the BRICS+ nations. This appeal is reinforced by the abundant natural resources and affordable labour in most member countries. This creates an opportunity for significant growth in gross do-

mestic product (GDP) per capita, while population growth remains relatively conservative by comparison, underscoring the economic strength of some of the incoming members.

Despite rapid economic growth, BRICS+ nations face a challenge in reducing emissions due to their heavy reliance on fossil fuels. In the G7 nations, the early adoption of green technologies and policies has seen their emissions decline. Both groups are setting ambitious climate targets, underscoring the pivotal role sustainable energy will play in the global energy transition.

According to Rystad analysts, the BRICS+ alliance is fundamentally reshaping the global energy landscape, challenging established paradigms and committing to ambitious sustainability targets. As this emerging superpower's economies expand and energy demands continue to evolve, ensuring a stable and secure energy supply will become

paramount. This provides an opportunity to directly shift towards advanced sustainable energy infrastructure rather than relying on outdated frameworks.

BRICS+ nations, led by China, are critical players in the clean tech supply chain, especially for batteries and solar panels, which are essential for the transition to cleaner energy. A notable illustration of this trend can be seen in UAE, where Masdar, a subsidiary of state-owned Mubadala Investment Company, recently secured a groundbreaking contract to expand the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum solar park by adding 1.8 gigawatts (GW) of solar energy for the highly competitive rate of 1.6215 US cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) – the lowest traded price for energy in UAE.

An important indicator of the pace of the energy transition is the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs). China, a BRICS+ member, currently leads the world in

pure battery EV (BEV) sales, outpacing the G7 countries. This robust growth in EV adoption is attributed to advancements in battery technology, infrastructure development and supportive government policies.

China's remarkable expansion in solar capacity, which is targeted to reach 1 TW by 2026, plays a significant role in the transition to cleaner energy sources, reducing the carbon footprint of its transportation sector. This integrated approach underscores China's commitment to transform its energy landscape and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, a trend that correlates with the approach taken by fellow BRICS+ nations. Our estimates suggest that EVs will account for over 60% of all new car sales in the expanded bloc by 2035.

Furthermore, as the bloc continues to invest in EV charging infrastructure and maintain its lead in battery technologies and raw materials processing, the share of EVs in total vehicle sales across the BRICS+ nations is projected to reach 86 percent by 2040 under a 1.6 degrees global warming scenario. This is an increasingly probable scenario based on recent growth rates in EV sales, supportive policies, technological learning rates and

shifting demand patterns.

The analysis sees the BRICS+ bloc as poised to play a pivotal role in global oil production, with members set to collectively meet two-thirds of the world's crude oil demand. Within an evolving landscape, BRICS+ members such as Russia and newcomer Saudi Arabia are primed to play vital roles. Western sanctions imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine have prompted Russia to start offering discounted oil to buyers. This has proved advantageous for India, the world's third-largest oil importer, which is actively diversifying its sources of crude oil supply to meet growing demand. As a result, India has significantly increased oil imports from Russia which have surged from 1 percent before the conflict to 34%, totalling 1.64 million barrels per day as of March this year.

In terms of natural gas production, the BRICS+ grouping will account for 37 percent of liquids and 33 percent of gas production globally. This underscores the energy production focus of the new members and positions BRICS+ as a global leader, even compared to the G7's liquids production, which stands at 27 percent of the global total amid the rise in US production. (IPA Service)



# The New Suez moment? India's G20 and the Tectonic Transition

By: Samir Saran

It has been 14 years since the world's leaders met at Pittsburgh and declared that the G20 was the world's "premier forum for international economic co-operation". In all these years, the G20 has broadened its horizons and extended its mandate, but it has never, till India's presidency, offered a new vision for multilateral economic governance. This is not surprising. The Pittsburgh Summit, held in the shadow of the 2008 financial crisis, had a single-minded focus on saving a financial system distant from the streets of Mumbai or Mombasa. An organisation built for crisis management could not be expected to advance a wholly new vision for global governance.

In recent years, the G20 has been a lukewarm affair with political leaders largely being relegated to talking heads. Since February 2022, there has been a real risk that the G20 agenda would, given its crisis management lineage, attempt to become a forum for addressing the war in Ukraine. The New Delhi Summit has not only course-corrected, but it has also given this group a new lease of life. The "bankers' G20" has been replaced, now and forever, with a "people's G20".

India's achievement in producing a consensus, and a communiqué, has rightly been hailed. The G20 may not be a politico-security forum, but as all the meetings preceding the leaders'

summit demonstrated, there was no getting around Ukraine. New Delhi and Prime Minister Modi were up to the task. The United Nations Security Council, with only five vetoes, has failed to simply reaffirm the basic values of the UN Charter. But with India's stewardship, the G20—a body with 20 vetoes, not one—was nudged into reminding us that "all states must refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition against the territorial integrity and sovereignty or political independence of any state".

But what is even more important than India's ability to deliver a consensus is that India's G20 has humanised global governance. From climate finance to women-led development, India has taken up issues that so many struggle with and championed their solutions. In an era where populism has been simply wished away as a residual by-product of elite globalisation, India has used that same channel of multilateral cooperation to try and help the world's underserved.

**Partners in democracy: The US and India**

India's leadership, and the new direction it has given the G20, should come as no surprise. The world of 2023 is vastly different from the one in 2009. And India's ascent to global deal-making has implications for the other great powers of the world: The United States (US), China, and India's emerging-economy peers.

The Pittsburgh Summit was



hosted by the world's only superpower. Since then, a generation has passed. Attitudes have darkened.

The superpower that, with such enviable confidence, steered the Pittsburgh agenda has turned its back on internationalism. It has raised gates to trade and walls against immigrants, and it now forces its money and energy to stay home rather than travel the world. But the global system abhors a vacuum, whether of leadership or ideas. Time fashions its own alternatives. And, so, another vast democracy has risen to shoulder responsibility. As Capitol Hill recedes, Raisina Hill has stepped in. To be sure, it seems the US is shepherding India's rise, albeit with hesitations that all incumbents have to grapple with.

It is the rare succession in power in which its new wielder is welcomed by those who came before. But India's vision for a renewed multilateralism is one that is welcomed by the US, for it is

in America's own interest as well. The tango amongst democracies was visible to all at the G20 Summit in Delhi. President Biden made it a point to be standing next to Prime Minister Modi at any and every opportunity. It is easy to see why. Trump's assault on multilateralism offended the US' oldest allies in Europe; his open contempt alienated the developing world. The US, still reeling from those four years, has been failing to reach out to powers old and new. It appears now to have found a way.

This is, indeed, a Suez Moment. As, in 1956, an older power found it needed a newer one to make a difference in the world, the US today has understood that certain geographies and actors require that India play a leading role. In that sense, the Delhi Declaration presaged a tectonic transition in global affairs. Biden, at least, has concluded that India's leadership is good for America. This will not be hard to sell back

home. Some progressives in his party might carp, but India enjoys a wide spectrum of support in US politics.

The US will find it useful to work with India not just on new, 21st-century issues, but to manage some of its 20th-century relationships that have become more tenuous today. Its relationship with Saudi Arabia is an excellent example; India plays a bridging role, allowing for new agreements on infrastructure and connectivity. And India's presence in the room allows the US, Brazil, and South Africa to have a conversation among friends.

Joe Biden is proving he can put into practice ideas from Barack Obama's presidency that had remained merely slogans. The US is, indeed, "leading from behind" under Biden. Ten years ago, that phrase might have sounded patronising or might have been a façade for the exercise of imperial power. But today, as the world has changed, it is a real formula for effective international relations.

**India's G20 presidency: Development for all**

India's formula for multilateralism has been welcomed by emerging economies from Brazil to Egypt to South Africa. They recognise that India can be trusted to steer the ship of multilateralism in the direction of their priorities. India's leadership is not built on solitary, hoarded power. Nor is it the sort that Delhi demonstrated in the 1950s, while navigating between two brooding

superpowers. Some thought the 'Trump slump' in multilateralism and America's turn inwards would doom international cooperation. Instead, the sheer volume of cooperative activity has skyrocketed, albeit of a different nature from traditional multilateralism, and with novel arrangements.

The framework that time has fashioned and India has embraced is one that relies neither on the caprices of America nor on vassalage to China. It consists of multiple informal, mutually beneficial, and purpose-driven partnerships, built on agreements between sovereign governments that are based both on principles and on centring their peoples' needs. In a sense, these attributes mirror India's foreign policy approach over the last few years. Over the past decade, India has pioneered a multilateralism that is built around limited-liability, flexible partnerships: From the Quad to I2U2 to BRICS.

After the Delhi Summit, the emerging world knows that India's achievements are commensurate with the breadth of their shared aspirations. Look at the scope of the commitments taken on by the G20 under the Indian presidency—from biofuels to the reform of international development banks. There is not one that is not of great—in some cases existential—importance to the developing world. And in all these initiatives, India is either a catalyst or a driver.

Global leadership today must

take on the task of reshaping the world's economy to the benefit of those who seek to still benefit from globalisation in a new avatar. Fortunately, IBISA (India, Brazil, South Africa) will be in the chair of the world's most multilateral grouping for another two years. And they have supported each other admirably. Just as India aided Indonesia in the last-minute scramble for agreement at Bali last year, the emerging market democracies came together to make a Delhi consensus possible.

But even among these nations, India is first among equals: With the largest population, greatest economy, and highest growth rate. It also has a geography that makes it impossible to ignore. The task of leadership cannot be avoided, and India has stepped up to do its duty. India matters. And India delivered. In that sense, the Delhi G20 is the intellectual and political successor to the Pittsburgh G20.

Another generation from now, the world would have changed again, but this time thanks to India's rise. The world moulded by the Delhi Summit will be one of people-focused principles, and agile, trust-based partnerships. It will be one in which, for the first time in human history, global governance will be directed towards the needs of the majority of the global population. India's foreign minister, Dr S Jaishankar, said it best. This G20, he told us, was making the world ready for India and India ready for the world. (Courtesy: ORF)

## What would signal life on another planet?

By: Elise Cutts

In June, astronomers reported a disappointing discovery: The James Webb Space Telescope failed to find a thick atmosphere around the rocky planet TRAPPIST-1 C, an exoplanet in one of the most tantalising planetary systems in the search for alien life.

The finding follows similar news regarding neighbouring planet TRAPPIST-1 B, another planet in the TRAPPIST-1 system. Its dim, red star hosts seven rocky worlds, a few of which are in the habitable zone — at a distance from their star at which liquid water could exist on their surfaces and otherworldly life might thrive.

What it would take to detect that life, if it exists, isn't a new question. But thanks to the JWST, it's finally becoming a practical one. In the next few years, the telescope could glimpse the atmospheres of several promising planets orbiting distant stars. Hidden away in the chemistry of those atmospheres may be the first hints of life beyond our solar system. This presents a sticky problem: What qualifies as a true chemical signature of life?

"You're trying to take very little information about a planet and make a conclusion that is potentially quite profound — changing our view of the whole universe," says planetary scientist Joshua Krissansen-Totton of the University of Washington.

To detect such a biosignature, scientists must find clever ways to work with the limited information they can glean by observing exoplanets.

**Chemicals in context**  
Even the most powerful telescopes, including the JWST, almost never "see" exoplanets — by and large, astronomers know these distant worlds only by the flickering of their stars.

Instead of viewing planets directly, astronomers train their telescopes on stars and wait for planets to "transit," or pass between, their sun and the telescope. As a planet transits, a bit of starlight filters through its atmosphere and dims the star at certain wavelengths, depending on the chemicals in the atmosphere. The resulting dips and peaks in the star's brightness are like a chemical barcode for the transiting planet.

Perhaps the most intuitive way to look for a biosignature in that barcode is to scour it for a gas that was clearly produced by life. For a time scientists thought that oxygen, which is abundant on Earth because of photosynthesis, served as a stand-alone biosignature. But oxygen can arise from other processes: Sunlight could break apart water in the planet's atmosphere, for example.

And that problem isn't unique to oxygen — most of the gases that living things produce can also arise without life. So instead of treating single gases as biosignatures in their own right, scientists today tend to consider them in context. Methane, for instance, can be produced both with and without life. It wouldn't be a convincing biosignature on its own. But finding methane and oxygen together "would be hugely exciting," says planetary scientist Robin Wordsworth of Harvard University; it's very difficult to produce that combination without life. Likewise, work by Krissansen-Totton and colleagues recently showed that finding methane along with the right amounts of other gases, such as carbon dioxide, would be hard to explain

without life.

Watching how an exoplanet atmosphere changes over time might also provide valuable context that could strengthen otherwise weak biosignatures. Seasonal variations in the concentration of ozone, for example, could be a fingerprint of life, scientists reported in 2018.

**Surprises, not assumptions**

Of course, "if you're looking for individual gases like oxygen or methane, then built into that are assumptions about what type of life is elsewhere," says Krissansen-Totton. So some scientists are developing agnostic biosignatures that don't assume alien biochemistry will be anything like Earth's biochemistry.

One possible agnostic biosignature is an exoplanet atmosphere's degree of chemical "surprisingness" — what scientists call chemical disequilibrium.

An atmosphere close to equilibrium would be chemically uninteresting, a bit like a closed flask of gas in a laboratory. Of course, no planet is as boring as a lab flask. Chemical reactions in a planet's atmosphere can be powered by their stars and geological processes like volcanic activity can increase disequilibrium, and thus increase the chemical surprisingness of the atmosphere.

Life can also push planets away from equilibrium. And assuming that alien life produces gases of some kind, they could push a planet's atmosphere much further from equilibrium than it would be otherwise. Yet disequilibrium alone "is not an unambiguous indicator," says Krissansen-Totton.

In 2016, he and his colleagues calculated the thermal disequilibrium of the atmosphere of every planet in the solar system and Saturn's moon Titan. By this measure, the Earth's atmosphere stood out as extreme — but only if the oceans were built into the calculations. Ignoring its interactions with the ocean, the Earth's atmosphere is actually closer to equilibrium than the atmosphere of Mars.

Still, even if it might not point to biology, finding an exoplanet atmosphere far from equilibrium would tell astronomers that something interesting is happening. Krissansen-Totton says, something that's "modifying the atmosphere in a dramatic way that we need to understand."

David Kinney, a philosopher of science at Yale University, recently worked with biophysicist Chris Kempes of the Santa Fe Institute to develop a new way of detecting possible agnostic biosignatures. It's a deceptively simple idea: To find life, look for the weirdest planets.

Telescopes like the JWST that are trained on distant planets may observe the signatures of particular elements or molecules in the planet's atmosphere, which are revealed in the peaks and valleys of transmitted light. But the signature of a molecule doesn't explain its origin: A similar signature might arise from very different planetary processes, whether active volcanoes, frozen oceans or biological activity.

If no assumptions are made about what alien life is like, practically any gas could be a biosignature in the right context. In 2016, MIT astrophysicist Sara Seager and colleagues proposed a list of about 14,000 molecules for consideration as possible biosignatures. Kinney and Kempes developed their assessment method

by using that list of compounds, along with methods inspired by machine learning algorithms designed to recognise the odd image out in a set. This led to a way to precisely define and score the "weirdness" of a hypothetical exoplanet's atmosphere compared to a set of other hypothetical atmospheres.

Kinney and Kempes argue that the weirdest atmospheres in a set are the most likely to host life. This rests on a few basic assumptions: Life in the universe is rare, it leaves traces in planetary atmospheres, and it's hard to mimic those traces without life. Of course, those assumptions might turn out to be false, Kinney says. But "if we want to make no assumptions at all," he adds, "then I think it's very hard to make any kind of scientific progress, let alone in the area with such severe uncertainty as this one."

**First, understand non-life**

To reduce that uncertainty, scientists will need to be able to confidently rule out non-life explanations for any potential biosignature. That requires a thorough understanding of alien geology and atmospheric chemistry. So instead of focusing on whether a planet is habitable, some scientists argue that studying obviously lifeless planets will bolster the search for alien life.

"There are so many really basic things that I think we need to learn about the planets first before we can even begin to ask the question of habitability," says Laura Kreidberg of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy in Germany, coauthor with Wordsworth of an overview of rocky exoplanet astronomy in the 2022 Annual Review of Astronomy and Astrophysics.

One enormous question is whether the potentially rocky planets that JWST can observe will have atmospheres at all. The only stars whose habitable-zone planets are within the telescope's reach are red dwarfs, like TRAPPIST-1. These stars have a nasty habit of spewing harsh radiation that many scientists think would inevitably strip away the atmospheres of any habitable planets, which might explain the scant or nonexistent atmospheres of TRAPPIST-1 B and TRAPPIST-1 C.

Red dwarf stars also happen to be the most common in the Milky Way — so if their rocky planets can't hold on to atmospheres, it would substantially winnow down the number of potentially habitable worlds. If we can observe enough rocky exoplanets, "we're going to be in a much, much stronger place to understand what a biosignature means," says Wordsworth. "One really powerful thing that exoplanets give us is statistics." Scientists first confirmed the existence of exoplanets in 1992 and the discoveries have been coming fast and furious ever since. The word "biosignature" may evoke a smoking gun. But, says Krissansen-Totton, "exoplanet life discovery is going to be a gradual accumulation of evidence." As that evidence continues to roll in, scientists can begin to test their hypotheses about rocky planets in a rigorous way, and perhaps reevaluate them.

"Astronomy is, at its heart, such a discovery science," says Kreidberg. "For all of our best-laid plans and frameworks and systems, as soon as we start getting data and observing things, everything turns upside down." (Courtesy: The Wire)

## 'Whoever controls media, controls the mind' – TikTok Trial Of Depp v Heard

By: Tarini Kakkar

I had the rare vantage point of seeing, in real time, how institutions protect men accused of abuse."

Even if you are the most detached-from-social-media person who has expressed even an ounce of interest in Hollywood online, you probably (willingly or unwillingly) know what the Depp-Heard case is. After their 4-year relationship and divorce in 2016, in December 2019, Amber Heard released an op-ed in the Washington Post about her experience and vantage point as a survivor of abuse who faced extreme criticism and uproar from the public for speaking out.

Between 2019 and 2022 came the legal flurry that was the \$50 million defamation lawsuit that Depp filed against Heard, wrapped in constant confusion and misconstruction from the public's side. As the jury ultimately found Depp guilty on one count of defamation and Heard guilty on three, the reaction of the general was shaped by the misconception that Heard was the only one found guilty — and that too, not of 'defamation', but of domestic abuse.

It is almost a waste of time to chronicle or put a timeline to their relationship, especially the legalities involved — between Heard's temporary restraining order against Depp at the time of their divorce to the time to the time Heard was arrested and accused of domestic violence towards her ex-girlfriend (a claim that the ex-girlfriend herself refuted and clarified). But what is most important to note is that Heard was found guilty of 'defamation' and not domestic violence in the overtly-publicized case. Instead of trying to comprehend or justify the perspectives involved in this case, this piece will focus on the role the media and social media played in shaping Heard's image as one of a villain over the last half-decade or so.

**Social Media, and the Progression from Newspapers to 45-second Videos**

"Whoever controls the media, controls the mind." This Jim Morrison quote has plagued journalists for years now, but one can't help reflecting on the way it rings true time and time again — often when the media starts to sway in favour of one perspective, one can count on it taking years and years for the tables to turn.

The various forms of social media at our constant disposal have also transformed our definition of 'media', completely metamorphosing how we consume news and information. Data from Forbes states that 4.9 billion people globally have now become social media users by 2023, with the most engaging type of content being short-form videos. Over 66% of these users engage with these bite-sized, eye-catching videos (making us wonder what our attention span will look like in 5 years' time, or if we'll have to play Subway Surfers videos alongside lectures in classrooms to keep students' attention).

The dissemination of information, and often of opinions disguised as information, on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and more is a double-edged sword. It allows diverse vantage points to come to the forefront, reaching a global audience and making sure suppressed voices don't go unheard. Or at least, that was the initial purpose of these networks.

However, its disadvantages are unignorable — as words on social media are interpreted, distorted and reinterpreted, the threat of misinformation is ever-eminent. The creation of echo chambers on these networks also has a significant impact on shaping what we get to know and understand, and often propagates one single narrative under the guise of displaying many perspectives. In subtle as well as overt ways, social media plays what is arguably the most prominent role in shaping public opinions today.

**'The First TikTok Trial' – How Social Media Impacted this Case**

The Depp vs. Heard defamation case has been aptly dubbed 'the first TikTok trial', publicized and meme-ified on a massive scale. There are multiple facets to this publicization, beginning with the livestream of the trial to the public — turning it into a source of entertainment for the public to watch like a sitcom, acting as though they're sitting on the jury themselves.

TikTok, the short-form platform that took the world by storm a few years ago, was like the third party in this trial. Clips from the trial taken entirely out of context went viral, portrayed as shocking turn-points or 'hilarious' moments (especially in emotional or intense moments, such as when Heard was in tears recounting stories of abuse). As the trial went on, video edits of the key players became increasingly popular.

While clips of Depp's lawyer, no matter how professional or unprofessional her behaviour was, were compiled with upbeat 'girlboss' songs in the background, Heard and her lawyer were under constant public scrutiny as every little mistake was edited into compilations of 'clown moments' intercut with video memes that had nothing to do with the situation. Soundbites from the trial went viral as 'audios', used by millions to mock and ridicule Heard's testimonies.

These short audios and emotional video content was also turned into 'memes', recreated by influencers on Instagram and TikTok alike. Copying Heard's mannerisms in a blonde wig seemed to be every comedian's go-to joke for a few months, titling their videos 'Acting out Amber Heard's testimony' or 'Amber Heard be like' with 7 laughing emojis. 'Professionals' and 'Experts' on social media also got their 5 minutes of fame, whether it was by analyzing Heard's allegedly guilt-filled body language or giving their legal advice to her lawyer. This



light approach towards the harrowing issue of domestic abuse — regardless of whose 'side' one was on during the trial — is proof that social media is a lawless land. No serious topic is 'too much' to joke about, and anything can be 'meme'd' about.

Along with Instagram reels and TikToks came Depp's unmovable fanbase on Twitter, a community that never missed an opportunity to villainize or mock Heard. Depp had been well-loved by the public for his quirky, funny roles (such as Jack Sparrow from Pirates of the Caribbean) for a long time before the trial, which made sure his public image as a cute 90s heartthrob remained pristine.

Even as proof of him saying he wanted to rape and burn Heard came to light, his Twitter 'stans' started new trends to support Depp every week, labelling him 'adorable' and 'innocent'. The infantilization of adult, famous (and often white) cis men is no strange phenomenon on Twitter, but the magnitude of its tone-deaf nature was amplified during this trial. Videos of Heard fighting back tears during the trial were mere fodder for these fans, while Depp's lawyer was a 'boss lady' for the books, ever-prepared.

The Amplification of Imbalanced Power Dynamics A critical aspect of the trial that the general public mostly ignored was the clear power imbalance between Depp and Heard, in more than one way. Examining the issue on a larger scale, Depp's iconic status as an A-list star played a significant role in shaping the public's opinion on him — contributing to their constant denial of his violent tendencies against all proof. Additionally, his influence due to his career holds a significant amount of power within the industry.

Societal perceptions of gender roles are another indubitable aspect of celebrity relationships that are easily accessible to the public eye. Depp's crafted image as a 'male victim of abuse' put him in a certain position for the public — one where he was viewed as the sole victim, and Heard as the villain. Male victims of abuse and domestic violence most definitely should get a platform to speak out and share their stories to gain justice.

However, Depp's image led to more misconception on the trial being a case of defamation and contributed significantly to his portrayal as helpless and innocent. Additionally, it is important to note that the 22-year age gap between Depp and Heard could also have a consequential effect on their relationship, and the power dynamics between them personally.

**Privacy, or lack thereof, in the Depp-Heard Case**

The need for privacy for victims of domestic violence cannot be overstated — beyond physical scars, it leaves an intense mental and emotional impact and often leaves people traumatized. Survivors are often left struggling to cultivate an environment that feels secure and supportive, after a constant state of stress and fear of violence. Between rebuilding, healing and seeking protection, survivors must be given a space where they feel like it is possible for them to break away from violence and abuse. Respecting the boundaries and need for peace of victims is crucial to ensuring wellbeing in victims, making sure they do not feel vulnerable or unsafe.

This trial, on the other hand, had the exact opposite effect. As social media amplified biased perspectives and polarized discourse on the case, Heard was widely — and violently — hated on across the platforms. Selective information and extreme viewpoints led to the constant ridiculing and abhorrence towards Heard, making it difficult to have a single objective discussion about the case. Depp and Heard's relationship as well as their timeline of abuse was sensationalized for clicks, throwing the possibility of looking at the situation with nuance away completely. The case highlighted the need for critical-thinking and fact-checking in this digital age where the 'drama' of an issue this grave overshadowed legal proceedings and even, at times, logical reasoning.

Amber Heard's unfortunate position as a victim of domestic abuse in a deeply-ingrained abusive industry and (often misogynistic) social structure sheds a glaring light on the constant mistreatment of survivors' stories, even in today's political climate post the #MeToo movement. As long as society continues to discredit or silence women, our fight against domestic violence will remain far from over — but should remain unwavering and ever-empathetic, particularly in times when institutional injustice and suppression is persistent. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)



Tensions between France and Niger, a former French colony, have mounted in recent weeks

## Prez Macron says France will end its military presence in Niger, pull its ambassador after coup

PARIS, Sept 25: President Emmanuel Macron announced on Sunday that France will end its military presence in Niger and pull its ambassador out of the country as a result of the coup that removed the democratically elected president.

Niger's junta said in response that the announcement signals a "new step towards the sovereignty" of the country.

"Imperialist and neo-colonialist forces are no longer welcome on our national territory. The new era of cooperation, based on mutual respect and sovereignty is already underway," it said in a statement.

The announcement was a significant, if expected, blow to France's policy in Africa, with French troops having had to pull out of neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso in recent years after coups there. France had stationed thousands of troops in the Sahel region at the request of African leaders to fight Islamic extremist groups.

French reporters end an unsuccessful strike against a new editor known as a far-right supporter

France has maintained some

1,500 troops in Niger since the July coup, and had repeatedly refused an order by the new junta for its ambassador to leave, saying that France didn't recognize the coup leaders as legitimate.

But tensions had mounted in recent weeks between France and Niger, a former French colony, and Macron said recently that French diplomats were surviving on military rations as they holed up in the embassy.

Macron's announcement came after the coup leaders issued a statement earlier Sunday that they were closing Niger's airspace to French planes, commercial and military, so that the new leadership could "retake total control of its skies and its territory." The decision did not apply to other international aircraft.

Ali Sekou Ramadan, an aide to Niger's deposed President Mohamed Bazoum, told The Associated Press that Bazoum requested that Macron withdraw the French ambassador, Sylvain Itte, "in order to reduce tension."

In an interview with the France-2 and TF1 television networks, Macron said he



spoke to Bazoum on Sunday and told him that "France has decided to bring back its ambassador, and in the coming hours our ambassador and several diplomats will return to France." He added, "And we will put an end to our military cooperation with the Niger authorities because they don't want to fight against terrorism anymore."

He said the troops would be gradually pulled out, likely by the end of the year, in coordination with the coup leaders "because we want it to take place peacefully."

He said France's military presence was in response to a request from Niger's government at the time. That military cooperation between France and Niger had been suspended

since the coup, however. The junta leaders claimed Bazoum's government wasn't doing enough to protect the country from the insurgency.

The junta is now under sanctions by Western and regional African powers.

Insa Garba Saidou, a local activist who assists Niger's new military rulers with their communications, said they would continue to monitor developments until the French ambassador leaves the country.

He also demanded a clear deadline for the withdrawal of the French troops.

"This announcement from the French president announces the victory of the people of Niger. However, we are going to take it with a lot of reservation because I no longer

believe in Mr. Macron," said Saidou.

The junta in August gave the French ambassador 48 hours to leave. After the deadline expired without France recalling him, the coup leaders then revoked his diplomatic immunity.

In New York on Friday, the military government that seized power in Niger accused U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of obstructing the West African nation's full participation at the U.N.'s annual meeting of world leaders in order to appease France and its allies. Experts say that after repeated military interventions in its former colonies in recent decades, the era of France as Africa's "gendarme" may finally be over, as the continent's priorities shift.

Andrew Lebovich, a research fellow with the Clingendael Institute, a think tank, said the decision marks both an acceptance of a "harsh reality for France in the region and may possibly put some limits on the U.S. deployments in Niger, though as we have seen, the U.S. and France have not followed exactly the same positionings in Niger." (AP)

## Philippines vows to remove floating barrier placed by China's coast guard at disputed lagoon

MANILA, Sept 25: Philippine officials vowed Monday to remove a floating barrier placed by China's coast guard to prevent Filipino fishing boats from entering a disputed lagoon in the South China Sea.

They said the 300-metre (980-foot) -long barrier at the entrance to the lagoon at Scarborough Shoal is "illegal and illegitimate". Chinese coast guard vessels laid the barrier, held up by buoys, on Friday as a Philippine government fisheries vessel approached. More than 50 Philippine fishing boats were outside the shoal at the time, the Philippine coast guard said.

"We condemn the installation of floating barriers by the Chinese coast guard," Philippine National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano said. "The placement by the People's Republic of China of a barrier violates the traditional fishing rights of our fishermen."

Ano said in a statement that the Philippines "will take all appropriate actions to cause the removal of the barriers and to protect the rights of our fishermen in the area". He did not elaborate. In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the shoal and its adjacent waters are "China's inherent territory," where Beijing "has indisputable sovereignty".

A Philippine government fisheries vessel "trespassed into the waters" without China's permission on Sept 22, Wang said, and "attempted to intrude into the lagoon" of the shoal. "China's coast guard took the necessary measures to stop and warn off the ship in accordance with the law, which was professional and with restraint," he added.

It's the latest flare-up in long-simmering territorial disputes in the busy and resource-rich waterway, most of which is claimed by China. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan are involved with China in the conflicts, which have long been regarded as a potential Asian flashpoint and a delicate fault line in the US-China rivalry in the region.

Washington lays no claim to the sea passageway, a major global trade route, but US Navy ships and fighter jets have carried out patrols for decades to challenge China's expansive claims and promote freedom of navigation

and overflight. China has told the US to stop meddling in what it says is a purely Asian dispute.

The Chinese barrier denies Filipinos access to the rich fishing lagoon surrounded by underwater coral outcrops, Philippine coast guard spokesperson Commodore Jay Tarriela said. He said China's coast guard installs the removable barrier when Philippine fishing boats show up in large numbers near the shoal.

"It's an illegal and illegitimate action coming from the People's Republic of China," Tarriela told reporters. "Definitely it affects our food security."

A Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources ship which anchored off Scarborough on Friday and at least 54 Filipino fishing boats were ordered by four Chinese coast guard ships by radio to leave the territory, saying the Filipinos were breaching Chinese and international law. The Philippine fisheries ship insisted in its radio response that it was on a routine patrol in Philippine waters, Tarriela said.

The Philippines says Scarborough Shoal lies within its exclusive economic zone, a 200-nautical mile (370-km) stretch of water where coastal states have exclusive rights to fish and other resources. Those rights were upheld by a 2016 arbitration decision set up under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Ano said.

China refused to participate in the arbitration sought by the Philippines in 2013, a year after a tense standoff between Chinese and Philippine ships at Scarborough. Beijing refused to recognise the 2016 arbitration ruling and continues to defy it.

The 2012 standoff ended with Chinese ships seizing and surrounding the atoll.

Chinese coast guard ships have also blocked Philippine government vessels delivering supplies and personnel to Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal, resulting in near-collisions that the Philippine government has condemned and protested.

Washington has said it's obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under attack, including in the South China Sea. (AP)

## EAM Jaishankar holds bilateral meetings with global counterparts on UNGA sidelines

NEW YORK, Sept 25: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a series of bilateral meetings with his global counterparts on the sidelines of the high-level UN General Assembly session here, exchanging views on reforming multilateralism and cooperation in G20.

He held separate bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Mexico, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Armenia on Sunday. Jaishankar said it was a "real pleasure" to meet with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Alicia Bárcena of Mexico.

"Discussed taking forward our Privileged Partnership focusing on business, science & technology, education, economy and traditional medicine. Also exchanged views on reforming multilateralism and our work together in G20," he said in a post on X. The external affairs minister also met his counterpart from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Elmedin Konakov and discussed growing bilateral ties with a focus on trade and economy.

Terming his meeting with Konakov on the sidelines of the UNGA session as "good", Jaishankar said, "Discussed growing our bilateral ties with (a) focus on trade and economy." Jaishankar also met with his counterpart from Armenia, Ararat Mirzoyan.

"Appreciate his sharing assessment of the current situation in the Caucasus. Affirmed our strong bilateral relationship,"

he posted on X.

Jaishankar is scheduled to meet UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the President of the 78th UN General Assembly session, Dennis Francis, on Monday. On Saturday, Jaishankar called on Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet and discussed the progress of the bilateral development partnership and the situation in Myanmar.



The two leaders met on the margins of the high-level UN General Assembly session here.

"Pleased to call on Prime Minister Hun Manet of Cambodia. Conveyed the warm greetings of PM @narendramodi. Discussed the progress of our development partnership," Jaishankar posted on X.

"Noted as well our expanding defence and cultural cooperation. Exchanged views on Myanmar," he added. Jaishankar also held bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Egypt, Guinea Bissau, Cyprus and Uganda on Saturday.

He began a nine-day visit to the US on Friday, primarily to attend the annual session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York and to host a special event on Global South. He would also participate in various plurilateral and bilateral meetings in New York. He is scheduled to address the General Debate from the UN General Assembly hall on Tuesday. (PTI)

## EU commissioner, in China, calls for more balanced trade and warns that Ukraine could divide them

BEIJING, Sept 25: The European Union's trade commissioner called for a more balanced economic relationship with China on Monday, noting a trade imbalance of nearly 400 billion euros (USD 425 billion), while also warning that China's position on the war in Ukraine could endanger its relationship with Europe. Valdis Dombrovskis, in a speech at China's prestigious Tsinghua University, said that the EU and China face significant political and economic headwinds that could cause them to drift apart.

"The strongest, yet not the only, headwind is Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and how China positions itself on this issue," he said, according to a prepared text of his remarks.

Dombrovskis is in China to co-chair high-level economic and trade talks on Monday with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng. EU leaders have expressed concern about the bloc's growing trade deficit with China, which reached 396 billion euros last year. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen recently announced an investigation into Chinese subsidies to electric vehicle makers, saying a flood of cheaper Chinese cars is distorting the European market.

The Chinese government has called the investigation a protectionist act aimed at distorting the supply chain. Dombrovskis, in his Tsinghua address, said it would follow well-established rules and be done in consultation with Chinese authorities and stakeholders. The EU trade commissioner urged China to address the lack of reciprocity in the economic relationship, saying "the figures speak for themselves."

He said that China has created a more politicised business environment to protect its national security and development interests, resulting in less transparency, unequal access to procurement, and discriminatory standards and security requirements.

Dombrovskis cited as examples a new foreign relations law and an updated anti-spying law that has European companies struggling to understand their compliance obligations.

"Their ambiguity allows too much room for interpretation," he said about the laws, adding they deter new investment in China.

Chinese officials have been trying to lure back foreign investment to help the economy emerge from a sluggishness that has persisted despite the lifting of pandemic restrictions last December. The Chinese government has tried to remain neutral in the war in Ukraine rather than joining the United States and much of Europe in condemning the Russian invasion. Dombrovskis, who is Latvian, noted that territorial integrity has always been a key principle for China in international diplomacy.

"Russia's war is a blatant breach of this principle," he said, according to his prepared remarks. "So it's very difficult for us to understand China's stance on Russia's war against Ukraine, as it breaches China's own fundamental principles." (AP)

## North Korea calls South's leader a 'guy with a trash-like brain' as it slams his UN speech

SEOUL, Sept 25: North Korea on Monday called South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol "a guy with a trash-like brain" and "a diplomatic idiot" as it blasted him for using a U.N. speech to issue a warning over the North's deepening military ties with Russia. In a speech at the U.N. General Assembly last week, Yoon said South Korea "will not sit idly by" if North Korea and Russia agree to weapons deals that would pose a threat to the South.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's trip to Russia earlier this month to meet President Vladimir Putin and visit key military sites raised international concern about a possible push by North Korea to receive sophisticated nuclear and weapons technologies in return for replenishing Russia's conventional arms inventory depleted by its war with Ukraine.

"Puppet traitor Yoon Suk Yeol, even at the 78th U.N. General Assembly, malignantly slandered the relations between (North Korea) and Russia," the



North's official Korean Central News Agency said in a commentary. Without addressing the worries about a possible weapons deal with Russia, KCNA said it's "quite natural" and a "legitimate right" for neighboring countries to keep close ties with each other.

"It's self-evident that such a guy with a trash-like brain cannot understand the profound and enormous meaning of the development of (North Korea)-Russia friendly relations," KCNA said. "No one in the world would lend an ear to the hysteric fit of puppet traitor Yoon Suk Yeol, who is only wearing disgraceful ill-famed 'political immature,' 'diplomatic idiot' and 'incompetent chief executive.'"

Koo Byongsam, a spokesperson for South Korea's Unification Ministry, said the KCNA insults demonstrated North Korea's "substandard system that lacks basic etiquette and common sense."

Since taking office last year, Yoon, a conservative former prosecutor, has sought to strengthen South Korea's military alliance with the United States, drawing an angry response from North Korea. Monday's KCNA dispatch accused Yoon of "voluntarily acting as a servile trumpeter and loudspeaker for the U.S."

Also Monday, the South Korean and U.S. navies began three days of joint naval drills off the Korean Peninsula's east coast to improve their joint operational capability, according to South Korea's navy. North Korea views South Korean-U.S. military exercises as invasion rehearsals and typically reacts with its own missile tests. (AP)

## Kosovo mourns a slain police officer, some Serb gunmen remain at large after a siege at a monastery

PRISTINA, Sept 25: Kosovo on Monday was observing a day of mourning for the Kosovar Albanian police officer killed by Serb gunmen who then barricaded themselves in an Orthodox monastery in an attack that left three assailants dead and further raised tensions between the two former wartime foes as they seek to normalise ties.

Flags were at half mast on all public buildings in the capital Pristina to mourn Afrim Bunjaku. In the north, where most of Kosovo's ethnic Serb minority lives in four municipalities around Mitrovica, police were patrolling in search of the armed assailants after they left the monastery.

About 30 gunmen dressed in combat uniforms were involved in the attack, but it is not clear who they are or who is supporting them.

Pristina accuses Belgrade of backing the "terrorists," an accusation Serbia denies, saying they are Serbs from Kosovo protesting the government there.

On Sunday the masked gunmen opened fire on a police patrol at about 3 a.m. (01:00 GMT) in Banjska, a village located 55 kilometres north of Pristina, killing Bunjaku and injuring another officer.

They then used an armoured vehicle to break down the gates to the monastery in the village, where they remained in a stand-off with Kosovo police until evening.

The two sides exchanged gunfire sporadically until darkness fell, when

the assailants escaped from the monastery on foot.

Three of the attackers were killed and two injured. Another Kosovar police officer was injured in the confrontation near the monastery.

Two of the gunmen and four Serbs discovered nearby with communication equipment were arrested and are being investigated for terrorist acts.

Police seized vehicles used by the gunmen which contained an arsenal of firearms of different calibres, explosives, ammunition and logistics capable of equipping hundreds of persons, according to Kosovo Interior Minister Xhelal Svecla.

"It's a terrorist, criminal, professional unit that had planned and prepared what they did and who are not a smuggling band but a mercenary structure which is politically, financially and logistically supported by official Belgrade," said Prime Minister Albin Kurti.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said the gunmen were local Kosovo Serbs "who no longer want to stand Kurti's terror."

Vucic condemned the killing of the Kosovo policeman, but still said the clash was the result of "brutal" pressure on Kosovo Serbs by the Kosovo government. He denied that Belgrade had anything to do with the attack.

Vucic also blasted the West and its "hypocrisy" over Kosovo.

"You can kill us all. Serbia will never recognize the independence of Kosovo, that monster creation that

you made by bombing Serbia," Vucic said, referring to the 1999 NATO intervention which led to Kosovo separating from Serbia.

Serbia and its former province, Kosovo, have been at odds for decades. Their 1998-99 war left more than 10,000 people dead, mostly Kosovo Albanians.

Kosovo unilaterally declared independence in 2008 but Belgrade has refused to recognise the move.

The international community condemned the "heinous attack." The European Union and the NATO-led international peacekeeping force in Kosovo are in close contact with Kosovar authorities.

Earlier this month, an EU-facilitated meeting in Brussels between Kurti and Vucic to normalise ties ended in acrimony. The United States has supported the negotiations and the EU's position in trying to resolve the ongoing source of tension in the Balkans.

In February, the EU put forward a 10-point plan to end the latest round of heightened tensions between Serbia and Kosovo.

Kurti and Vucic gave their approval at the time, but with some reservations that have still not been resolved.

The EU warned both countries that the commitments the leaders made in February "are binding on them and play a role in the European path of the parties" — in other words, Serbia and Kosovo's chances of joining the 27-nation bloc. (AP)

## Suella Braverman orders review into UK police firearms regulations

LONDON, Sept 25: UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman has launched a review into the legal protections for officers on firearms duties after a revolt within Scotland Yard ranks following a murder charge against a Metropolitan Police officer who had discharged his gun while on duty.

The UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD) is said to have offered soldiers as backup support for armed police in London after several officers turned in their weapon-carrying permits since their colleague was charged last week. The UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had authorised charges against the officer, granted legal anonymity, in connection with a shooting in September last year.

"We depend on our brave firearms officers to protect us from the most dangerous and violent in society. In the interest of public safety, they have to make split-second decisions under extraordinary pressures," Braverman said in a post on X on Sunday.

"They mustn't fear ending up in the dock for carrying out their duties. Officers risking their lives to keep us safe have my full backing, and I will do everything in my power to support them. That's why I have launched a review to ensure they have the confidence to do their jobs while protecting us all," Indian-origin Braverman said.

The Met Police chief, Sir Mark Rowley, welcomed Braverman's review into the issue in an open letter on Monday and stressed that it was important to "let the police police".

"It is essential that we have a system which commands the confidence of officers and the communities they serve," wrote Rowley.

"The system that judges officers' actions should be rooted in integrity, and decisions should be reached swiftly, competently and without fear or favour. A review is needed to ad-



dress accountability mechanisms, including the policies and practices of the Independent Office for Police Conduct and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), ideally with a focus on the threshold for investigating police use of force and involvement in pursuits," he said.

More than 100 officers are believed to have handed in permits allowing them to carry weapons after their colleague was charged over the shooting of Chris Kaba, 24, in south London.

"The CPS reminds all concerned that criminal proceedings against the officer are active and that he has the right to a fair trial. It is extremely important there should be no reporting, commentary or sharing of information online which could in any way prejudice these proceedings," said Rosemary Ainslie, head of the CPS Special Crime Division, last week.

The CPS Special Crime Division deals with the most complex and sensitive cases in England and Wales, including serious criminal allegations against police officers.

An estimated 2,595 officers are licensed as firearms officers in the Met Police, governed by a set of rules, procedures and accountability processes for being authorised to carry weapons. (PTI)

## Islamabad HC orders transfer of Imran Khan to high-security Adiala prison

ISLAMABAD, Sept 25: A top Pakistani court on Monday ordered authorities to shift former prime minister Imran Khan from the Attock jail in Punjab province to high-security Adiala prison in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, his party said.

In August, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) petitioned the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to transfer the deposed party chief to Adiala prison where A-class facilities are available, keeping in view Khan's affluent family background, social and political status.

The IHC issued the order while hearing the case, the party said.

"IHC Chief Justice has ordered moving PTI chairman Imran Khan from Attock Prison to Adiala Prison in Rawalpindi," it said.

Khan, 70, has been kept in the Attock Jail since August 5 after his conviction in the Toshakhana corruption case. His sentence was suspended by the IHC on August 29, but he continues to remain in Attock prison in the cipher (secret diplomatic cable) leakage case.

A special court, established under the Official Secrets Act, on September 13 extended the judicial remand of Khan till September 26 in the cipher case.

The Islamabad trial court which had sentenced Khan to three years in jail had directed the authorities to lodge him at Adiala prison. However, after his arrest, he was shifted to Attock jail. (PTI)



# Manipur violence: Giving hearing part of healing process; we are a people's court, says SC

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** We are a "people's court" and giving a hearing is part of the healing process, the Supreme Court said on Monday while asking the members of the Bar in violence-hit Manipur to ensure no lawyer is denied access to the court proceedings in the state.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said the state of Manipur, in consultation with the acting chief justice of the high court there, shall ensure that video-conferencing facilities are set up in all the nine judicial districts of the state so lawyers or litigants desirous of appearing before the high court through virtual mode are able to address the court.

The direction from the bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, came after it was alleged that lawyers belonging to a particular community were not allowed to appear before the high court there.

The apex court also asked the lawyers appearing in the matter to stop "mud-slinging" against any community by the rival communities in the court.

The bench was hearing arguments on a batch of pleas, including those seeking court-monitored probe into cases of violence, besides measures for relief and rehabilitation.

When one of the lawyers said he also has

many things to say before the court, the bench observed, "Equally, as we know that we are a people's court. There is a limit to our remit as well."

"Giving a hearing is part of a healing process," the CJI observed.

When an advocate said lawyers were being prevented from appearing before the high court, the bench said, "That is one side of the picture. We don't believe that High Court of Manipur is not functioning."

"Are lawyers from any community prevented from appearing before the high court?" the bench asked the president of the Manipur High Court Bar who was present.

The bar president said every lawyer is allowed in the court and they can appear either physically or through virtual mode.

"Next time, just produce before us a compilation of sample orders indicating that lawyers from all communities have appeared before the high court," the bench said.

"We want to be satisfied. Our conscience has to be satisfied that members of the Bar are not prevented, irrespective of their community ...," the bench said.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the Manipur government, told the bench that lawyers were not being prevented from appearing before the high court there.

He said there appears to be a conscious at-



tempt to "aggravate the situation" unfortunately using the forum of the court.

"It is our duty to ensure that court process is not misused. Equally, our conscience has to be satisfied that there is no barrier to access to justice," the bench said.

Mehta referred to an affidavit filed by the chief secretary of Manipur in the apex court.

He said as per the affidavit, between August 30 and September 14, a total of 2,683 cases were listed for hearing before various benches of the high court there and several

virtual hearing log-in were recorded.

The bench noted that nine judicial districts in the state of Manipur cover all the 16 districts in the state.

It said if video-conferencing facilities are already available, they be operationalised so as to ensure that any member of the bar or litigant in person desirous of appearing before the high court through virtual platform is able to address the court.

The bench said the video-conferencing facility be operationalised within a period of one week from the date of its order.

"The members of the Bar shall ensure that no lawyer who seeks to address the court is denied access to the court proceedings," it said, adding any violation of its order shall be treated as a contempt of the directions of the court.

Manipur descended into chaos and violence in May over a high court order directing the state government to consider including the non-tribal Meitei community in the list of Scheduled Tribes.

This order led to rampant ethnic clashes. More than 170 people have been killed and several hundred others injured since ethnic violence first broke out in the state on May 3 when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for ST status. (PTI)

## Nagaland 2<sup>nd</sup> state in country to implement 'Teach Tool'



**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Sept 25:** Nagaland has become the second state in India after Andhra Pradesh to implement the Teach Tool, a standardised classroom observation tool designed by the World Bank, according to an official report on Monday.

This initiative is part of the Nagaland Education Project-The Lighthouse (NECTAR), with Leadership for Equity (LFE) serving as the technical agency. With the support of the World Bank, the state education department launched the Nagaland Enhancing Classroom Teaching and Resources (NECTAR) with an aim to improve and enhance quality and learning outcomes of government schools in the state.

The Teach Tool serves as a crucial diagnostic instrument to gain a comprehensive understanding of current teaching practices and the quality of education within classrooms.

The baseline observation data collected through the Teach Tool will be instrumental in designing relevant and effective learning opportunities for teachers in the state.

A 10-day training programme for master trainers, also known as Trainers of Teachers (ToTs), began on September 13 at the Mount Tabor Retreat Centre in Kohima. The objective of this training was to build internal capacity for monitoring the quality of teacher-stu-

dent interactions in the classroom. Approximately 400-500 observers from all 16 districts of Nagaland will be trained to use the Teach Tool. They will, in turn, mentor other teachers in the coming years. The insights gathered from the Teach Tool are expected to significantly enhance future Teacher Professional Development (TPD) practices.

The implementation of the Teach Tool is one of several interventions under NEP-The Lighthouse (NECTAR) aimed at improving the quality of education, teaching practices, capacity building, and the learning environment in government schools throughout the state.

Altogether 37 ToTs affiliated to various educational block resource centres under the Samagra Shiksha have successfully completed the certification process.

Additionally, three officials from the Nagaland Core Team from the school education department and SCERT, along with three from the NECTAR team, have also qualified and been certified.

Speaking at the valedictory programme of the training programme, commissioner and secretary, school education and SCERT, Keivleno Angami urged the trainees to light the fire of quality teaching and learning practices in Nagaland, creating effective and safe learning spaces for the children.

## General public condemns violent incident between two armed groups in Noney

**IMPHAL, Sept 25:** The Khunbu, the Khullak, the Peidai (Customary Court) and the general public of Chakanlong (Charoichagotlong) village deplored the violent incident that took place between two armed groups in the afternoon of September 24, 2023, at Phoibut, Chakanlong Part-I in Noney district, Manipur.

A joint press statement of the above authorities said that in that "unfortunate" incident, a cadre belonging to Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) identified as David Gomei of Namduanjang, Chakanlong Part-II was killed on the spot. The statement then said Chakanlong Khunbu, Khullak, Peidai and general public shared the "grief and sorrow of the bereaved family members and also prayed for the departed soul to rest in peace in heavenly abode".

It is pertinent to note that the general public of Chakanlong are peace loving citizens and "we don't encourage any form of violence and internecine killing amongst the Naga brothers and armed groups," the statement also said.

Therefore, the authorities appealed to all the "armed outfits operating in our area not to resort to such violence and internecine killings in our village in particular and the district in general". They also appealed to all the "armed outfits/organizations" to maintain peace and tranquility through dialogue to resolve their differences and bring amicable understanding rather than resorting to violent activities. (NNN)

## Niuland DC prohibits private vehicles for commercial purposes

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** Niuland Deputy Commissioner has prohibited the practice of using private vehicles for commercial purposes.

A notice from the DC stated that these activities include transportation of passengers and goods without possessing valid permit from the competent authority.

The notice stated that such actions are in direct violation of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988. It has directed all private vehicle owners operating within Niuland District to cease and desist from engaging in these illegal practices immediately.

The notice added that any individual found to be in violation of these regulations will face penalties in accordance with the relevant sections of the Motor Vehicles Act and other pertinent provisions of the law.



The Rotary Club Orchid City Shillong observes World Rivers Day 2023 in the city with the 'Life to Rivers Rally', which attracted around 200 plus participants. UB photos.

## Two new literary awards for writers of Arunachal Pradesh



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** Two new literary awards have been instituted for the writers of Arunachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society (APLS), led by its president, Sahitya Akademi and Padma Shri awardee Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi, said.

The first award "Tagang Taki Literary Award", named after the first writer from Arunachal Pradesh (erstwhile NEFA) to immortalize his literary contributions, will be given to the best book published within the previous three years.

The second one "APS Yuva Puraskar" will be given to a writer below the age of 35 years. It will be awarded annually, an APLS official said on Monday.

The decision to introduce the two literary awards was taken during the General Council meeting of the apex literary body held here under the chairmanship of APLS president YD Thongchi on Saturday last.

The Council also decided to enhance the award money of the Luminous Lummer Dai Literary Award, from existing ₹ 10,000 to ₹ 25,000. The Lummer Dai award is conferred every year on June 1, the birthday of the late novelist.

**PROVISION OF IP CAMERA SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM**

E-Tender Notice No. N-2023-24-TSK-NIT-11; Dated: 21-09-2023.

E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: E-Tender No.: N-2023-24-TSK-T-11.

**Brief Description of item:** Provision of IP Camera Surveillance System at Interlocking Level crossing Gates of Tinsukia division. Tender Value: ₹1,03,04,717/-; Earnest Money: ₹2,01,500/-; E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 16-10-2023 and Opened at 15:00 hrs. on 16-10-2023. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

DRM (S&T), Tinsukia

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**

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## Three Rohingya minor girls detained in Tripura

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 25:** The Border Security Force (BSF) detained three Rohingya minor girls from Konaban and Harihardola areas in Tripura on Monday, sources said.

The girls had allegedly entered India illegally from Bangladesh through the Tripura border.

They were later handed over to Madhupur Police Station of Sepahijala in Tripura.

The arrest comes as it is alleged that the border region of Kamalagar constituency in Tripura

has become a hub for international women and drug trafficking.

A small group is believed to be in constant contact with Bangladeshi trafficking groups and are regularly involved in the trafficking of Rohingya women within India through the aforementioned border areas, a source said.

The police have begun an investigation regarding the apprehension of the three girls.

Their motive to enter India was not known either.



## NH-10 repairing continues, likely to be opened by Tuesday

**GANGTOK, Sept 25:** The stretch of National Highway 10, a key road connecting Sikkim and the rest of the country via West Bengal's Siliguri, which was closed for over 24 hours due to a cave-in following a landslide, is likely to be opened by Tuesday as repairing work is on in full swing, an official said.

A large portion of the highway near Sethi Jhora, around 30 km from Siliguri which is a major commercial hub in the northern part of West Bengal, was washed away following heavy rain for the past several days.

"That part of the road is closed and no vehicle is allowed. Work is going on in full swing. The road is likely to be opened partially by this evening or latest by tomorrow," the official said. The highway was closed by the authorities following a cave-in on Sunday morning and vehicles are forced to take a detour to reach their destinations, he said.

"To reach Sikkim from Siliguri or vice-versa, small vehicles are now using a diversion from Teesta via Kurseong, or via Sangsey to Lava-Gorubathan road and Coronation Bridge. Heavy vehicles are taking the Chitrey Fatak-Kalimpong town-Lava Gorubathan road-Coronation Bridge route," the official said.

The movement of heavy vehicles is allowed only between 7 pm to 6 am.

Sikkim is a landlocked state where almost all essential commodities reach via Siliguri and trucks generally use NH-10.

According to a report from the Rangpo checkpoint in the northeastern state, the number of vehicles moving from Sikkim has gone down considerably. (PTI)

## Manipur CM appeals for unity

**IMPHAL, Sept 25:** Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Monday appealed to the indigenous communities of the state "to continue to live as one" and assured that the state government's crackdown on illegal drug business will not stop. He said the present turmoil in the state is unfortunate as Churachandpur, parts of Tengnoupal, Imphal East, Imphal West, Kangpokpi and Bishnupur districts continue to remain disturbed. He made the remarks at a public function after inaugurating and laying foundation stones of various projects worth around ₹ 196 crore at Khoupum in Naga-dominated hill district of Noney.

"We are trying hard to improve the situation. The indigenous communities of the state should continue to live as one and that the government will continue to fight poppy plantations and illegal drug business. The government is there to safeguard the lives and properties of people," he said.

He said the state is trying hard to help the affected people by providing pre-fabricated homes, deploying security forces, opening national highways and lifting the ban on

mobile internet.

"On March 15, 2017, the people gave the state a BJP-led government and with God's blessings and cooperation of the people, the first five years of the government passed off peacefully without any bandhs and blockades. Unfortunately, due to Covid and some political instability, the government lost some two-and-a-half years in the previous term," he added.

He said the 'Go to Hills' programme of the government was launched to bridge the gap between the hills and the valley so that unity and equal development could be brought in the state. Appreciating the natural beauty of Khoupum, Singh assured to develop a tourist circuit and a mothers' (Ima) market at the place.

Projects for which foundation stones were laid included construction of football stadium at Khoupum (NEC) under YAS, rehabilitation and strengthening of Bishnupur-Nungba Road, construction of water supply scheme and Khongsang guest house near Khongsang railway station etc. (PTI)

## Sohra International Half Marathon 2023 on September 30



lush greenery and mesmerising waterfalls of Meghalaya.

Elijah Kipruto Kemei, an enthusiastic participant, all the way from Kenya, is taking part in the Sohra Marathon for the second time. He traveled all the

way from Kenya to share his excitement and aspirations for the event. He said, "I want to improve my performance and, ultimately, win the event. The course is fantastic, and the organisers have been excellent. The hospitality we've experienced here in

Meghalaya has been outstanding."

Isawanda Laloo, IAS, director, sports & youth affairs, said, "The 2nd Sohra International Half Marathon 2023, apart from drawing athletes from different parts of the country and even the world, is set to be a catalyst for the growth of tourism and livelihood opportunities. Meghalaya is well-positioned for being a favored international destination for sports and adventure tourism. Through this event, we aspire to cultivate a culture of athleticism and sportsmanship among our youth. In just its second edition, our Sohra International Half-Marathon has already earned recognition among international athletes, and we look forward to nurturing and expanding it in the years ahead."

The marathon's route, known for its challenging yet rewarding terrain, offers the runners a unique opportunity to test their mettle while enjoying the scenic beauty of Meghalaya. It also provides a platform for local athletes to showcase their talent on a national stage.

On September 25, 2023, a comprehensive ground inspection of the entire route and logistical preparations for the 2nd Sohra International Half Marathon were conducted.



# INDIA 'reluctantly' backed women quota bill, says PM; alleges Cong under 'urban Naxals' sway

**BHOPAL, Sept 25:** Kickstarting Madhya Pradesh poll campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the Congress and its allies in the new 'ghamandia' alliance "reluctantly" supported the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament and warned people that if given an opportunity, they will backtrack on the historic legislation.

Addressing a massive gathering of BJP workers, 'Karyakarta Mahakumbh', here, the PM tore into the Congress, equating the national party with "trusted iron" and alleging its functioning has been outsourced to "urban Naxals" and that the organisation is not run by leaders. He warned the Congress would push Madhya Pradesh back into the 'BIMARU' (laggard) category of states if given an opportunity to rule again.

Modi said the upcoming elections in MP were crucial as they will decide the way ahead for the state, which he said, has been put on path of development by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during its long rule. The mega gathering of workers was organised on the birth anniversary of Jana Sangh co-founder Deendayal Upadhyaya to mark the formal culmination of the

BJP's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatras' that crisscrossed the length and breadth of the state, seeking to connect with voters ahead of polls.

According to a BJP leader, the event was attended by more than five lakh workers.

"The Congress and its allies in the 'ghamandia' (arrogant) bloc (INDIA) supported the Women's Reservation Bill out of compulsion and hesitation as they understood the power of 'nari shakti'. Its passage (in Parliament) became possible as 'Modi hai to Mumkin hai'. Modi means the guarantee of fulfilling guarantees," the PM asserted.

He slammed the Congress and its allies for not ensuring the passage of the long-pending legislation in Parliament when they were in power at the Centre.

If given an opportunity, the Congress will back out on the quota bill that seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in Parliament and state assemblies, he said.

Modi said the Congress has lost the will power and its workers on the ground have become silent.

"First, the Congress was ruined (electorally) and then it turned bankrupt. The Congress has been now leased out on a contract. They



are framing its policies and coining slogans. It is not being run by leaders," the PM said.

He alleged the Congress has been outsourced and "urban Naxals have got the contract".

"They are holding sway in the Congress which is being felt by that party's workers on the ground. The Congress is becoming redundant on the ground," he added.

Modi said he wanted to caution women of Madhya Pradesh as the "ghamandia" (INDIA) alliance has reluctantly supported the women's quota bill.

"Its allies hampered the passage of the bill for the last 30 years. Now they raise their hand out of compulsion as women are awakened. They ran the government for decades with a majority but why they did

not push the bill through?" Modi asked.

He said women should remain alert against the efforts to divide them and added the opposition will try to find chinks in the legislation.

Modi said previous governments did precious little for women and listed the works done for them by his government in the last nine years.

"Had their intention been in the women's interest why did Modi have to get crores of toilets built? Why did they not build the toilets? I had to do these works. Women had to wait until night time (to go out to answer nature's call). They did not drop a tear at the women's plight then," he said.

The PM said his government has provided cooking gas cylinders to women who had to earlier struggle with fuels like cow dung, crops and wood, which would produce toxic smoke and adversely affect their health.

Modi also targeted Congress MP Rahul Gandhi without taking his name, saying for Congress leaders born with a silver spoon, "the life of poor people is like an adventure tourism and picnic and the poor person's agri field is a place for video

shooting and photo session."

He said first-time voters in Madhya Pradesh are fortunate that they have seen only the BJP rule in the state, which has emerged as a centre of development and education.

For a developed India, rapid growth of Madhya Pradesh is necessary, Modi added.

The PM said for its own political interest, the Congress, which has ruled the country for long after independence, wanted people to remain poor.

On the other hand, 13.5 crore people have come out of poverty in the country under the BJP rule in the last five years, he stated.

"During its rule, the Congress had pushed MP, which is rich in resources, into becoming a BIMARU (laggard) state whereas more than 13.5 crore people came out of poverty under the BJP rule in the last five years in the country," the prime minister said.

The Congress had turned Madhya Pradesh into a BIMARU state, having poor economic and social indicators, during its long rule after Independence. If the national party gets an opportunity to rule the state again, MP will go back to the same category, Modi warned. (PTI)

## If voted to power, Cong will conduct caste census: Rahul

**BILASPUR, Sept 25:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said his party would conduct a "caste census" if elected to power as only such an exercise would ensure "participation of OBCs, Dalits, tribals and women".

He also asked why the Narendra Modi government had not released the details of a 'caste census' conducted by the Congress (when it was in power) and sought to know if the PM was afraid of such an exercise. Addressing the state government's 'Awasth Nyay Sammelan' in Parsada (Sakri) village in Bilaspur, Gandhi also waved a remote control at the crowd and said the poor and needy were benefited when the Congress presses it, while "Adani gets ports, airports and railway contracts" when the ruling BJP does the same.

"The Congress had conducted a caste census that has the record of the population of every caste in the country. The Union government has this report but Modiji doesn't want to reveal it," he claimed.

"Caste census has to be conducted if we want to give participation to Other Backward Classes, Dalits, tribals and women. If Modiji does not conduct a caste census, then when we are elected to power our first step will be to conduct a caste census to ensure OBC participation," Gandhi asserted.

Gandhi said the government is run by secretaries and cabinet secretaries and not MPs and MLAs, and pointed out that only three of the 90 secretaries in various Union government ministries are OBCs.

These three persons control only 5 per cent of the country's budget, Gandhi said and questioned if India only had 5 per cent OBC population.

Asserting that the caste census is the answer to such questions, Gandhi asked why Modi was scared of the enumeration exercise.

At the event, during which he launched the Bhupesh Baghel government's 'Gramin Awasth Nyay Yojna (GANY)' aimed at providing financial assistance to the homeless and families having kutcha houses in rural areas, Gandhi brandished a remote control to target the Modi government.

Gandhi said he had pressed a remote control today and several thousand crore rupees went into the accounts of people of Chhattisgarh.

He said the housing scheme launched during the day covers those persons who were entitled to get assistance under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana but never got it as the Centre failed to provide funds despite repeated reminders from the state government, Gandhi said. (PTI)

## Nitish rules out return to NDA, BJP says won't take back even if he begs

**PATNA, Sept 25:** Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar on Monday ruled out returning to the NDA, an alliance he parted with a year ago, while speaking on the sidelines of a function to mark RSS icon Deen Dayal Upadhyay's birth anniversary, to which the BJP retorted he would not be welcome even if he begged for another chance.

BJP leader Sushil Kumar Modi, Kumar's former deputy, called the JD(U) supremo a "political liability who had lost his steam" and said he would not be welcomed back even if he begged for a realignment (naak ragdenge to bhi nahin). The drama unfolded at a park in the city's Rajendra Nagar locality where Kumar came to take part in the function which his government had been holding since the time it shared power with the BJP. Kumar was accompanied, among others, by his current deputy Tejashwi Yadav, whose party RJD takes pride in having remained uncompromising in its opposition to the BJP.

Yadav, who offered floral tributes before a statue of Upadhyay, one of the founding members of the BJP's former avatar Bharatiya Jana Sangh, insisted that his ideological stance notwithstanding, he was not averse to such niceties.

When some journalists claimed he had once said in the assembly that he would discontinue functions held in memory of RSS leaders upon coming to power, Yadav shot

back, "I have never said so."

When it was the turn of the chief minister to interact with journalists, he was asked, in a lighter vein, whether he was planning a return to the NDA.

Notably, a section of the media has been speculating that Kumar was unhappy with the opposition INDIA coalition not naming him as the convener and that his exchange of pleasantries with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the recent G20 event in New Delhi had more to it than what meets the eye.

However, the septuagenarian seemed displeased with the kite flying as he snapped, "What rubbish are you talking (Kya faltu baat karte hain)", even as Yadav, who stood by his side, grinned at the exchange. He also responded to queries on future activities of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) and voiced disapproval of his party colleagues calling him a "prime minister material".

Replying to a query, Kumar said he did not know why BJP leaders, who attended the function to mark the birth anniversary of the late Deen Dayal Upadhyay while in power, were not present this time.

However, BJP leaders did reach the spot shortly after the CM, his cabinet colleagues and other government officials had left and the party's state unit chief Samrat Choudhary alleged that they "were not invited to the function". (PTI)

## Sena split: Shinde group opposes clubbing of petitions

**MUMBAI, Sept 25:** After hearing arguments from Shiv Sena factions led by Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde and Uddhav Thackeray, Assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar has decided to conduct official hearing on disqualification petitions against the MLAs of the Shinde group on October 13, advocate Anil Sakhare who is representing the CM said on Monday.

The Shiv Sena split in June last year following a rebellion by Shinde, who went on to become CM after unseating the Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government.

The Thackeray faction had sought disqualification of several MLAs, including Shinde, under anti-defection laws.

Speaking to reporters on the Vidhan Bhavan premises, Sakhare said, "Speaker Narwekar heard our arguments as we are opposed to clubbing of all the petitions filed before him. Our demand is to conduct independent hearings of those petitions."

"The Speaker may announce the schedule of the hearings in the next couple of days. The first hearing will commence on October 13. Official arguments will be made regarding the hearing of all the petitions together or separately," Sakhare added. He said there was no official hearing during the day and only the procedural part was decided. (PTI)

## Bengaluru bandh to protest Cauvery water release to TN today 'Kannada Okkuta' vouches for statewide shutdown on Friday

**BENGALURU, Sept 25:** Amid ongoing protests across Karnataka against releasing Cauvery river water to neighbouring Tamil Nadu, two bandhs have been called this week - in Bengaluru today, and statewide on Friday.

The announcement for the Karnataka bandh on September 29 was made on Monday, under the banner 'Kannada Okkuta' -- led by Kannada activist Vatal Nagaraj, days after the 'Karnataka Jala Samrakshana Samiti', an umbrella outfit of farmers' associations and other organisations led by farmer leader Kuruburu Shanthakumar gave the call for Tuesday's Bengaluru shutdown. The two bandhs reflect the divide among the farmers and pro-Kannada organisations, and has also now led to a confusion about who is supporting the bandh on which day, and whether services will be available today.

While Shanthakumar has said that they will go ahead with the Bengaluru bandh on Tuesday, Vatal Nagaraj, who has called for a state bandh on Friday, made it clear that Kannada Okkuta is not supporting tomorrow's bandh.

Shanthakumar said they have received support from a number of organisations for their bandh call tomorrow and will go ahead with it.

"We will come in a protest to Bengaluru's Freedom Park and stage a demonstration there with our demands. The state government, the chief minister, will have to receive our memorandum. If there is no proper response to our protest from the government, we will decide on our further course of action," he said.

Calling for a peaceful bandh, he also appealed to the police to take adequate measures to ensure there are no untoward incidents.

Vatal Nagaraj said they had asked 'Karnataka Jala Samrakshana Samiti' to postpone their



bandh call and to observe it together with them on September 29.

"What we have called is Akhanda Karnataka bandh (entire Karnataka bandh) on September 29. It will be observed across the state without leaving any district. Our fight is for entire Karnataka. Kannada Okkuta has organised more than 50 bandhs in the whole state so far," he said, as he questioned why the bandh was called by others only for Bengaluru. Meanwhile, Ola-Uber Drivers' Association today said they would extend full support for the September 29 Karnataka bandh called by pro-Kannada organisations but will not support tomorrow's bandh.

"Tomorrow our services will be normal. This decision was taken in a meeting held today in the presence of pro-Kannada and various organisations," the association in a statement published on Monday said, adding that drivers are in the midst of financial difficulties and they are of the opinion that they cannot afford to lose two days of work. The Hotel Owner's Association too has decided to withdraw support for the bandh today, citing confusion, and said all hotels and restaurants will be open.

However, associations and unions operating

autos and taxis have extended their complete support for tomorrow's bandh call, and KSRTC Staff and Workers' Federation too had asked Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL) staff not to bring out any buses from depots from dawn to dusk (6 am to 6 pm).

Metro services are likely to be unaffected by the bandh call and would continue to function as usual. Most private schools and colleges across the state have already declared a holiday in the wake of the Bengaluru bandh today.

JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy said his party would support tomorrow's bandh.

"I have asked my party workers to support the bandh. Our workers will support. There should be no chance for any untoward incident," he said. Deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar also said that the people have the right to protest but that there should be no violence. Addressing media here, he said, protest is everyone's right in a democracy and it will not be curtailed.

"Our party people too called and spoke to me about the protest, I said, it's your right and protect it...but one has to understand about court orders before calling for protests or bandh, just giving such calls for media publicity is not right, as such calls may have legal repercussions," he said, adding that keeping everything in mind, let them decide.

If the public doesn't cooperate, the bandh will not have any value, said Shivakumar, citing alleged lack of consensus among the organisations on the bandh call, and two bandhs being called. "The government will not interfere in it."

City police are taking all adequate security measures to ensure that no untoward incident takes place, officials said. (PTI)

## Indian institutions likely to face issues in implementation of multiple entry and exit system: Parliament panel

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** The multiple entry and exit system is being operated by western educational institutions quite effectively but Indian institutions are likely to face several issues in its implementation, a parliamentary panel has noted. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, headed by Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Thakur, said in its report tabled in the Upper House last week that the institutions have not thought very clearly about this problem and how they will resolve it when it is at their doorstep.

"New Education Policy (NEP) proposes multi-entry and multi-exit options for the students. While it looks like a flexible system, which is being operated by western educational institutions quite effectively, Indian institutions are likely to face

several issues in implementing this system. Due to high population, the estimated intake of students in higher education every year is quite high.

"If institutions allow MEME (multiple entry and multiple exit), it would be very difficult for the institutions to predict how many students would exit and how many would join midway. Since institutions would not know the in- and out-traffic, it will certainly disturb the Pupil-Teacher Ratio," the report said.

The panel has noted that uneven geographical distribution of higher education institutions would create hurdles in managing MEME in several areas, mostly countryside.

"The institutions have not thought very clearly about this problem and how they will resolve it when it is at their doorstep,"

it said. According to the "Guidelines for Multiple Entry and Exit in Academic Programmes offered in Higher Education Institutions" issued by the University Grants Commission (UGC), flexible learning is important to choose one's academic pathway leading to the award of certificate, diploma, and degree.

"There are occasions when learners have to give up their education mid-way for various reasons. The records of the clearance of credits for such incomplete academic programmes remain unaccounted. Some contingency approaches are followed in a few HEIs by allowing the learner to settle for a lower level of certification. Such rigid boundaries need to be removed to ensure zero-year-loss to students in the event of exiting in between," the guidelines stated. (PTI)

## Gujarat govt seeks time from HC to submit SIT's final report in Morbi bridge collapse case

**AHMEDABAD, Sept 25:** The Gujarat government on Monday sought time from the high court to submit before it the final report of the special investigation team (SIT) probing the collapse of a suspension bridge at Morbi town in October last year, in which 135 people were killed.

The division bench of Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice Aniruddha Mayee granted the government two weeks while observing that no further adjournment will be given in the suo motu (on its own) PIL admitted last year after the tragedy. The court said that the difficulty arises because everything is prepared at the last moment. The British-era suspension bridge on the Machchu river in Morbi town of Gujarat collapsed on October 30 last year, killing 135 persons, including women and children, and injuring 56 others.

The state government had appointed a five-member SIT to probe the collapse and it submitted an interim report in December last year,

in which it found several lapses in repairs, maintenance and operation of the structure by the Oreva Group (Ajanta Manufacturing Ltd), whose Managing Director Jaysukh Patel is the main accused in the case and is currently in jail.

During the last hearing on August 31, Advocate General Kamal Trivedi informed the court that the SIT's final report of its probe into the collapse would be out in three weeks and subsequently submitted before the bench. Trivedi had also told the court that the government has paid Rs 50 lakh each to the kin of the seven children who lost both their parents in the bridge collapse and the government is taking care of their schooling and food under different government schemes.

The kin of each deceased had been given Rs 20 lakh, of which Rs 10 lakh was from the government and an equal sum from the Oreva Group, which was responsible for the operation and maintenance of the more than 100-

year-old suspension bridge.

In November last year, the Supreme Court had asked the high court to periodically monitor the probe and other aspects of the tragedy, including rehabilitation and award of compensation to the victims or their families.

Ten people have been named as accused in the case. Apart from Oreva Group MD Patel, two managers of his firm and two sub-contractors who had repaired the bridge are still in jail, while three security guards and two ticket booking clerks, also arrested in the case, were recently granted bail by the high court.

All the accused, including Patel, have been charged under the Indian Penal Code sections 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 336 (an act which endangers human life), 337 (causing hurt to any person by doing any rash or negligent act) and 338 (causing grievous hurt by doing rash or negligent act). (PTI)

## Hindu saints torch effigies of Udhayanidhi and other leaders

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** Scores of Hindu saints on Monday staged a protest against DMK's Udhayanidhi Stalin over the Sanatan Dharma row and burnt his effigies near Tamil Nadu Bhawan here.

The protesters also raised slogans against political leaders who also made similar remarks and issued statements supporting the DMK leader.

The protesters under the banner of Delhi Sant Mahamandal held placards denouncing Udhayanidhi Stalin and other leaders and marched from a temple in Sarojini Nagar towards Tamil Nadu Bhawan.

Police stopped them at Africa Avenue after which they torched effigies of Udhayanidhi and others. The protesters said that heads of different political parties should restrain their leaders from issuing statements against 'Sanatan Dharma' and demanded an apology from Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Stalin for his son's actions. President of Delhi Sant Mahamandal, Narayan Giri Maharaj, said it was surprising that state governments were silent over the issue.

"Even the Supreme Court has taken cognisance of the hate speech of politicians against Sanatan Dharma. The language used by politicians against Sanatan Dharma creates animosity among communities and strict action should be taken against such political leaders," he said. (PTI)

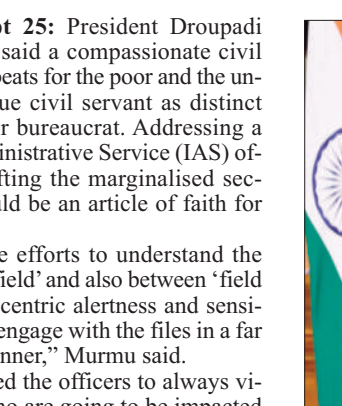
## Compassionate civil servant whose heart beats for poor people is true civil servant: Prez

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said a compassionate civil servant whose heart beats for the poor and the underprivileged is a true civil servant as distinct from merely a career bureaucrat. Addressing a group of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers, she said uplifting the marginalised sections of society should be an article of faith for them.

"You should make efforts to understand the link between 'file to field' and also between 'field to file'. This people-centric alertness and sensitivity will make you engage with the files in a far more meaningful manner," Murmu said.

The President asked the officers to always visualise the people who are going to be impacted by the files "you deal with". A group of 182 IAS officers of 2021 batch, currently posted as assistant secretaries in various Union ministries and departments, had called on Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre here.

"I have seen from close quarters the difficulties and problems faced by the people living in backward areas and belonging to the deprived segments of our society. I have also seen some sensitive civil servants who went the extra mile



to help such people," she said. A compassionate civil servant whose heart beats for the poor and the underprivileged is a true civil servant as distinct from merely a career bureaucrat, the President said.

She said an inclusive, progressive and sensitive society allows greater space to women in all walks of life.

"The nation is on the path of women empowerment and women-led development. I am very



happy that the historic 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' has been passed by both the Houses of Parliament. Women are breaking stereotypes and the glass ceiling. They are playing increasingly larger roles in all aspects of growth and development," Murmu said. She expressed happiness over increase in percentage of women IAS officers in the past four years.

"I have been told that in the batches from 2019 to 2022, the percentage of women IAS officers had ranged between 28 per cent to 34 per cent. I am very happy to note that the percentage of women IAS officers has gone as high as 42 per cent for the batch 2023."

"Also, out of the top 25 ranks, 14 positions have been occupied by women. These are fresh winds of positive changes. All of you have to further strengthen this trend and make our society more and more inclusive," Murmu said.

She said their training component include "Bharat Darshan and Bharat Bhraman" and that they have learnt a lot from it.

"You should build upon the glimpses of our great nation seen by you and make your awareness deeper and wider through continuous learning," the President said.

Murmu told the officers that their service is unlike any other service in terms of authority, role and responsibility.

"In fact, it is not a service, it is a mission. It is the mission to take India and its people forward under the framework of good governance. Serving the nation and its people is your destiny. Making India an inclusive and developed nation is your collective destination," she said.

The President said that they are fortunate that their career span is almost co-terminus with "Amrit Kaal" - the period up to 2047, the centenary of India's independence.

"This Amrit Kaal is rightly being described as 'Kartavya Kaal' for every Indian. This period also covers the larger time-slice of our remaining window of demographic opportunity. You can make a huge contribution by enabling the fellow young citizens to realise their potential in different fields. You have the great opportunity to contribute to building the developed India of 2047," she added.

Murmu said that the officers can become effective change-agents in transforming the country through their commitment and creativity. (PTI)



# AIADMK severs ties with BJP-led NDA alliance, to lead separate front in '24

**CHENNAI, Sept 25:** Ending its four-year-old ties with the BJP, the AIADMK on Monday announced walking out of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and said it would lead a separate front for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

The decision to break away from the NDA was taken at a high level meeting chaired by party chief Edappadi K Palaniswami at the AIADMK headquarters here. The decision was met with cheers from the Dravidian party workers who burst crackers outside the headquarters here.

The move to call it quits comes days after senior AIADMK leaders called on BJP chief J P Nadda in New Delhi and apprised him about the ground situation in the state arising out of the saffron party's Tamil Nadu chief K Annamalai's aggressive style of politics.

They had then sought Annamalai's apology for making a remark on Dravidian stalwart CN Annadurai or that he be replaced.

Briefing reporters on today's deliberations, former minister and



senior leader K P Munusamy said the party has unanimously adopted a resolution to part ways with the NDA and steer a combine of like-minded parties in next year's polls.

The resolution, though did not name anyone individually for the souring of ties, blamed the BJP's "state leadership," a pointer to Annamalai.

With an ulterior motive, the AIADMK said the BJP's state leadership deliberately defamed Annadurai and late party matriarch J Jayalalitha and incumbent chief Palaniswami. The BJP has also been critical of its policies and "be-littled" the August 20, 2023 Madurai conference of the party.

Such slanderous, wanton criticism aimed at the AIADMK has been going on for the past about one year and it led to deep resentment and outrage among the cadres and office-bearers, the resolution said.

Top party office-bearers, district secretaries and MLAs and MPs took part in the AIADMK's consultative meet to decide on its ties with the BJP-led NDA.

Amid bursting of crackers at the party headquarters here, Munusamy said the unanimous decision honours the sentiments and aspirations of over two crore party workers.

While the AIADMK cadres celebrated the decision with bursting of crackers, the official party handle and supporters posted messages on X with the hashtag "#Nandri Meendum Varatheeragal (Thank you please do not come again)," seen as a snub to the BJP.

Incidentally, senior leader D Jayakumar had last week called off the alliance with BJP, saying he was conveying the party's stand. (PTI)

## J'khand tribals celebrate Karam festival

**RANCHI, Sept 25:** People from Jharkhand's tribal community on Monday celebrated Karam, also known as Karma festival, with traditional fervour.

One of biggest festivals after Sarhul, the tribals worship the Karam tree on the occasion and pray to mother nature to ensure rich harvest after the kharif season. Also, sisters pray for the wellbeing of their brothers on the occasion. Jharkhand Governor CP Radhakrishnan participated in Karam Mahotsav, organised by the department of tribal and regional languages of Ranchi University.

"Karam, also known as Karma festival, reflects the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the country," the governor said. Radhakrishnan said the festival depicts the deep and unbreakable relationship between the nature and humans. "Our tribal brothers and sisters are the true protectors of nature. They honour and respect the nature and give message of its protection to the world," he said. He said that today the whole world is facing various environmental challenges due to global warming and in such a situation Karma Puja sets a better example for the whole world. Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren also extended greetings on the occasion of Karam festival.

He wrote on X, "Karam festival is a symbol of our rich culture that has been going on for centuries. May this holy festival, which reflects the unity of human life with nature and the utmost love and respect between brothers and sisters, bring happiness in the lives of all of you. I wish you all to remain healthy, happy and prosperous."

On the occasion, tribals clean their houses and decorate them with flowers and leaves. In the evening, they worship the Karam tree, said Adivasi Jan Parishad president Prem Sahi Munda.

"The festival is celebrated for three different reasons. After the sowing season is over during Kharif, farmers expect good harvest. So, we worship Karam tree praying for good harvest. This is also important for brothers and sisters. Sisters fast and pray for well-being their brothers," he said. He said the third one is related to Karma. "The festival is also known as Karma festival as it inspires people to do good deeds in life," he said. (PTI)

## SKUAST launches agri-entrepreneurship startup training programme

**SRINAGAR, Sept 25:** The Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) on Monday launched a skill training programme for creating the next generation of agri-entrepreneurs in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has granted 550 skill training programmes to SKUAST for implementation in the current year, officials said.

"We have to take our farming community from subsistence agriculture to sustainable commercial agriculture. We have to strive to achieve the goal set by the JK government to double the agricultural GDP in the next five years," Vice chancellor of the SKUAST Nazir Ahmad Ganaie told reporters.

Last year the university implemented 66 skilling programmes.

He said it is important that the country shifts toward startup culture as India is emerging as a big startup ecosystem in the world.

"The universities have a very



important role to play in bringing Jammu and Kashmir on the startup ecosystem map of the country," he added.

Sajad ul Akbar Wani, a beneficiary of last year's training programme, said skill development is a good programme.

"The educated youth are sitting home, some are suffering from migraine and some have gone into depression. My wife also is educated and wanted to contribute to family income. She has done MSc and MEd but a teacher's job in the private sector would just fetch her a few thousand rupees salary," he said.

Wani said he brought his wife to the training programme last

year to attend this skill training programme.

"We decided to start an entrepreneurial unit. We decided to promote saffron as a cash crop and we did some innovation. We launched a new perfume... We made a small beginning and... got a good return. We want the educated youth of Kashmir to benefit from this training," he said.

Wani said there is talent in Kashmir but the youth do not have exposure. "By attending these training programmes, they will get direction and guidance on how to become entrepreneurs," he added.

Saheel Alaqaband, nodal officer of the programme, said 20 startups were registered after last year's programme which indicated the success of the training.

"The passouts from these programmes have a totally changed mindset. They want something of their own and that's what is needed. That will build the economy of the region, of the state and of the country," he said. (PTI)

## Delhi HC issues fresh notice to BBC on plea for damages claiming its documentary cast slur on India's reputation

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** The Delhi

High Court on Monday issued fresh notice to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on a plea by an NGO seeking damages, claiming its documentary "India: The Modi Question" casts a slur on the country's reputation and makes false and defamatory imputations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian judiciary.

Besides BBC (UK), Justice Sachin Datta also issued fresh notice to BBC (India) on the plea filed by Gujarat-based NGO Justice On Trial.

The counsel for the petitioner NGO informed the high court that notices were issued to BBC (UK) and BBC (India) earlier but they could not be served. Advocate Siddharth Sharma, representing the NGO, sought more time to serve the notices to the defendants.

"Issue fresh notice to the defendants through all permissible modes," the high court ordered, and listed the matter for further

hearing on December 15.

It had on May 22 issued notice to the defendants on the plea which has said BBC (UK) is the national broadcaster of the United Kingdom and has released the news documentary -- "India: The Modi Question" -- which has two episodes and BBC (India) is its local operations office. It said the two episodes were published in January 2023.

The petitioner has sought damages of ₹ 10,00,000 crore in favour of the NGO and against the defendants on account of the "loss of reputation and goodwill caused to the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, the Government of India, the Government of the State of Gujarat as it was during the period of the Gujarat Riots, and also the people of India".

The documentary relates to the 2002 Gujarat riots when Modi was the state's chief minister.

The government had banned the documentary soon after it was released.

The plaintiff organisation, which says it is a society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and also registered as a Public trust under the provisions of the Bombay Public Trust, 1950, has filed the suit for damages and also sought permission to file as an indigent person.

It has contended that the documentary contains content which casts a slur on the reputation of the country and also makes false and defamatory imputations and insinuations against the Prime Minister of India, the Indian judiciary and the Indian criminal justice system.

The plea claimed the "disparaging and defamatory" statements of the defendant have caused grave and irreparable injury to the reputation of and denuded the goodwill that has been built by the Prime Minister of India, the Government of India, the Government of the State of Gujarat and also the people of India. (PTI)

## Snowfall, rain bring relief to Kashmir after record high temperatures

**SRINAGAR, Sept 25:** Snowfall in higher reaches of Kashmir and rains in the plains ended a prolonged dry spell and brought down the mercury significantly in the Valley which experienced record high temperatures this month, officials said on Monday.

Moderate rains lashed most parts of the valley. Srinagar city recorded 18.3 mm of rainfall till 8.30 am on Monday. Snowfall was recorded in higher reaches of south Kashmir including around the holy cave shrine of Amarnath and Gulmarg in north Kashmir, they said. The downpour has ended the heatwave which was witnessed in the second week of September. The Valley saw high temperatures which broke the record of 89 years.

The minimum temperature in Srinagar last night was 10.8 degrees Celsius, down from 13 degrees Celsius a night earlier.

"People got relief from hot temperatures which were due to a prolonged dry spell in August and September. The valley witnessed less rain which resulted in low water levels in water bodies due to which people faced a shortage of water," Director MET Department Sonam Lotus said.

He said the weather will remain cloudy across Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh while a few places in the valley will receive light rainfall on Monday.

"On the 26th the weather will remain cloudy but better than today, the 27th and 28th of September, the weather will remain dry. There will be wet weather on the 29th and 30th due to Western Disturbances," he added. He said some places in Kashmir valley received good amounts of rainfall. "The harvesting season is on and the farmers may face some difficulties but there is no forecast of heavy rainfall," he said.

Lotus said the upper reaches of Kashmir valley received light snowfall. "On average, weather is good, intermittent rainfall is predicted but there are no signs of heavy rains," he added.

Minakshi Muhiya, a tourist from Assam who has been in the Valley for four days, said was relieved that the weather has turned pleasant now.

"(When I arrived) I thought the weather would be cold but it was hot. Now it is cool and we feel like it is getting colder. The weather is very pleasant now," she said.

Bisma Yousuf, a local resident, said the rains had brought relief to the people.

"People were suffering from the scorching heat. We were wearing summer clothes but since yesterday, the change in weather has made people wear sweaters and jackets. Rain has given relief to native people as well as tourists," she added. (PTI)

## Man held for attacking, injuring four policemen in Thane district

**THANE, Sept 25:** A 27-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly attacking and injuring four policemen in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Monday.

The city police on Sunday arrested Aniket Mhatre, a resident of Alibag, for the attack that occurred on September 23, the official said.

A trailer was on its way to Nhava Sheva around 10 pm on September 23, when three persons intercepted it at Mankoli Naka, beat up the driver and stole ₹ 3,50,000 from him, sub-inspector Santosh Shinde said.

Two accused jumped out of the vehicle and escaped, while the third accused Mhatre proceeded towards Saket bridge in the trailer, he said.

When the police came to the driver's rescue, Mhatre allegedly vandalised the trailer and threw broken pieces of glass at the police team and even bit some of them, the official said.

Four policemen were injured in the attack, he said.

An offence under sections 394 (voluntarily causing hurt in committing robbery), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code was registered, the official said, adding that a manhunt has been launched for the other two accused. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Country's political scenario based

by the state government, Sarma said the works related to translation of the book written by writer Arup Kumar Dutta on Mahabir Lachit Borphukon into 24 Indian languages are going on in full swing and there are plans to release these books across the country in the coming months. This would help the people of those states learn more about the great medieval era's army general from Assam. Moreover, works on a book with the theme "Political History of Assam" was also underway, he added. The event was also attended by state ministers, Ranaj Pegu and Jayanta Mallabaruah, MP and political secretary to the Chief Minister Pabitra Margherita, vice-chairman of Publication Board Assam, Sumanta Chaliha, New Delhi-based Research and Development Foundation for Integral Humanism's Ambar Agarwala, along with a host of other dignitaries.

## SC asks UIDAI, state

besides measures for relief and rehabilitation, the bench observed that for issuing Aadhaar cards, the authority will have to verify whether these are genuine residents or citizens. "What if somebody is an illegal entrant?" it asked and added "We will say the authorities will verify whether the person is genuine."

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the Manipur government, said several of these issues can be sorted out if the committee discusses them with the authorities. "Let the committee be aware of its remit," he said. The bench said the committee has not pressed for several of the directions mentioned in its reports. Mehta said if the government authority does not respond to the reports or directions of the committee, then the panel can bring it to the court's notice. "They have possibly misconstrued their role," he said, adding, "I would request the committee that a telephonic call to the chief secretary can sort out most of the issues rather than troubling your lordships." One of the lawyers appearing in the matter raised the issue of properties, which were burnt during the violence, being occupied by others. "This is eventually an aspect of law and order. The committee is seized of it," the bench observed.

On the issue of disposal of dead bodies, Mehta said the authorities are acting as directed by the committee. "Everything that happens here is publicized irrespective of what work has been done on the ground, what directions are being given by the committee. Allow that process to work out," the bench observed. When lawyers appearing in the matter referred to various issues, the bench said, "You tell us one thing, either we scrap the committee and hear this matter after every four weeks because we are not going to hear it every week. We don't have time to hear this matter every week because we don't propose to run Manipur administration in the Supreme Court."

The apex court said the committee is handling several aspects and these issues can be brought to the notice of the panel. One of the advocates referred to the status report filed by the state on recovery of arms from "all sources" in the ethnic violence-hit state. "That sealed cover report be given to the committee," the lawyer said. The solicitor general objected to the submission.

The bench observed the committee, in one of its reports, has sought a direction to the Manipur High Court and the state government to urgently complete the process of appointing secretaries of the district legal services authority (DLSAs) in all 16 districts there. It noted the advocate general of Manipur has told the court there are nine judicial districts in the state and secretaries of DLSAs in each one of them has already been appointed. The bench said the state government shall place adequate funds at the disposal of the Manipur state legal services authority/district collectors/competent authorities for releasing compensation to the victims under the Manipur Victim Compensation Scheme, 2019. In order to accommodate the requirements of such displaced people as may have temporarily resettled outside the state, the bench directed the Centre to nominate one nodal officer in Delhi who would guide and direct the grievances of such persons to the appropriate channel. "If steps are already taken in that regard, no further action may be required," it said. The bench noted Mehta's submission that in order to obviate the need for the court to pass individual directions on the committee's reports, the panel may contact the chief secretary of Manipur so necessary remedial action can be taken immediately. The bench posted the matter for hearing after a week. Manipur descended into chaos and untrammelled violence in May over a high court order directing the state government to consider including the non-tribal Meitei community in the list of Scheduled Tribes. This order led to rampant ethnic clashes. More than 170 people have been killed and several hundred others injured since ethnic violence first broke out in the state on May 3 when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organized in hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for ST status. (PTI)

## Eight exotic animals seized

These species are sold in states like Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, to people who like to keep exotic species as pets and they buy these at very high prices, he added. (PTI)

## Man arrested for duping

at the Unnayan Bhawan. Telling her that he would fill up her form online, he disappeared for a while inside the building. He told Mainee to wait for him outside. He reappeared after sometime and asked her to give him her mobile phone as an OTP would be sent there. He then disappeared. When Mainee went in search of him after an hour or so, she could not find him anywhere inside the building, following which she lodged a police complaint.

## First C-295 aircraft inducted

in Vadodara which is expected to be operational by November 2024. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid the foundation stone of the manufacturing facility for C-295 planes in Vadodara in October last year. It will be the first military aircraft to be manufactured in India by a private consortium.

The IAF is procuring the C-295 aircraft to replace its fleet of ageing Avro-748 planes that entered the service over six decades ago. The C-295 is known to be a superior aircraft used for tactical transport of up to 71 troops or 50 paratroopers and for logistic operations to locations that are not accessible to current heavier aircraft. The aircraft can air-drop paratroops and loads, and also be used for casualty or medical evacuation. The aircraft is capable of performing special missions as well as disaster response and maritime patrol duties.

Meanwhile, former IAF chief Air Chief Marshal (ret'd) RKS Bhaduria said the induction of C-295 aircraft "heralds a new era for the Air Force" and this fleet will in times to come become the backbone of the force's tactical lift capability. Bhaduria said this aircraft is "state-of-the-art" and "hugely capable".

"It's a great day for the IAF as it was one of the very critical requirement to replace the Avro fleet. And, from that perspective, this induction ceremony is heralding a new era for the Air Force in terms of the tactical airlift capability," he told PTI at Hindan airbase.

This fleet will in times to come become the "backbone of tactical lift capability," Bhaduria added. "And, more importantly with indigenous manufacturing in private sector, this would be a game changer for the private industry and for the Air Force in the long-run, from the point of view of maintenance, sustenance, etc.," the former IAF chief said. Asked if the C-295 aircraft delivery in future will be in consonance with change in technology, he said, "The aircraft that we are inducting is a state-of-the-art one, and in near future there is no worry from this perspective."

The avionics, these kind of technology keep getting upgraded, Bhaduria said. "In due course, in times to come, there will be a need to upgrade it further as per technology development, that is life cycle is each aircraft, it will happen in future," he said. The first batch of Rafale fighter aircraft was inducted in September 2020 during Bhaduria's tenure as the IAF chief. (PTI)

## Yephthomi appointed as

in elections of various states like Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Bengal, Karnataka and Maharashtra. He was also in charge of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rally at Dimapur during the last assembly elections and had successfully organized the 'Har Ghar Tiranga Abhiyan' of the party.

## Canada's defence minister urges

it's another reason why he placed such emphasis on the investigation that's taking place that they are able to move beyond credible intelligence to evidence, strong evidence of exactly what happened. "We and the Indian government need to know the truth and have the facts so that we can work together to resolve it in an appropriate way. The only request we have made of our allies in India is that they cooperate fully in that investigation because its outcome is very important," the minister said. Canada had been seeking deeper trade, defence and immigration ties with India before the "credible intelligence," as Trudeau called it, was first raised with Canadian officials, according to Global News.

In a separate interview aired Sunday on The West Block, Blair suggested Canada will continue to pursue partnerships like the Indo-Pacific strategy while the investigation into allegations continues, calling the relationship with India "important."

"We understand that this can be, and has proven to be, a challenging issue with respect to our relationship with India," he was quoted as saying by Global News.

"However, at the same time, we have a responsibility to defend the law, defend our citizens, and at the same time make sure that we conduct a thorough investigation and get to the truth." If the allegations are proven true, Blair said, "There is a very significant concern that Canada will have with respect to the violation of our sovereignty in the murder of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil."

Blair said the Indo-Pacific strategy was still a critical one for Canada and has led to an increased military presence in the region and commitments for further patrol capabilities. The strategy commits 492.9 million dollars over five years toward those military priorities, out of a total of nearly 2.3 billion dollars over the same period. In his interview with CBC News, Blair said that every country in the world has strong trade interests in the Indo-Pacific region, as does Canada. "But at the same time, our engagement in that region or in any place of the world has to be based on those (international rules-based order) rules and Canada remains resolute in its commitment to uphold those rules," he added.

India has also asked Canada to downsize its diplomatic staff in the country, arguing that there should be parity in strength and rank equivalence in the mutual diplomatic presence. The size of Canadian diplomatic staff in India is larger than what New Delhi has in Canada.

Trudeau on Friday said that Canada shared with India "many weeks ago" evidence on the killing of Nijjar and wants New Delhi to commit constructively with Ottawa to establish the facts in the "very serious matter." When asked about Canada sharing any information in the case with India, the Union ministry of external affairs (MEA) in New Delhi said, "No specific information has been shared by Canada on this case, either then or before or after. We have, you know, as we have said, or I think we have made very clear, we are willing to look at any specific information." (PTI)

## Deepor Beel witnesses decline

bee-eaters, babet, woodswallows, woodpecker, oriole, shrikes, reed warblers and allies, martins and swallows among others. The event included an interactive session at the end of the bird watching programme, where Seema Talukdar, ecologist at TWEAVES Research Foundation and Abhinandan Saikia, professor at the TATA Institute of Social Sciences drew light on the roles of the fishing community in the conservation of the Deepor Beel. Pramod Kalita, environmental activist and secretary of Deepor Beel Suraksha Mancha addressed the audience about the challenges in conserving Deepor Beel and its biodiversity.

The inaugural session of the Winter Birding Festival (WBF) 2023 at Deepor Beel has come to an end, with participants tallying 59 bird species. Sachin Ranade, manager of the Vulture Conservation at BNHS and Narayan Sharma, professor of the Cotton University were also present on the occasion.



## SRK's 'Jawan' crosses ₹ 1000 cr mark at worldwide box office



**MUMBAI, Sept 25:** Superstar Shah Rukh Khan's high-octane thriller "Jawan" has raised ₹ 1004.92 crore gross at the worldwide box office, the makers said on Monday.

Production house Red Chillies Entertainment shared the film's latest collection on X. "Handsomeness & Awesome blockbuster ₹ 1004.92 crore worldwide gross box office collection," the post read.

"Jawan" released worldwide on September 7 in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

The film outlines "the emotional journey of a man who is set to rectify the wrongs in the society". It stars Shah Rukh in the dual role of Vikram Rathore and his son Azad.

"Jawan" also features Nayanthara and Vijay Sethupathi with Deepika Padukone and Sanjay Dutt in special appearances.

Sanya Malhotra, Priyamani, Girija Oak, Sanjeeta Bhattacharya, Lehar Khan, Aaliyah Qureshi, Ridhi Dogra, Sunil Grover and Mukesh Chhabra round out the cast. A Red Chillies Entertainment presentation, "Jawan" is produced by Gauri Khan and co-produced by Gaurav Verma. (PTI)

## 'MY FATHER THE STYLISH STAR, THE HUMBLE MAN AND THE EAGER READER'

## Son Suneil remembers Dev Anand on his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** The show goes on, says Dev Anand's son Suneil Anand ahead of his father's 100th birth anniversary, remembering the erudite actor who loved reading, the stylish movie star "always conscious of his looks" and the exercise aficionado who would never miss his yoga.

Dev Anand, who epitomised the dapper and debonair Hindi film hero in unforgettable classics such as "Guide" and "Hum Dono" and directed a series of hits, including "Hare Rama Hare Krishna", in his later years, died in 2011 at the age of 88. He would have been 100 on Tuesday. As paeans get written on the actor described as "evergreen" for his enduring stint in cinema and viewers young and old catch up on his films, Suneil said he is elated that his father's birthday is being celebrated.

With fans across the globe celebrating his father's legacy, it feels the actor-filmmaker is still around, the son said.

"I feel he is still with us, with me. He

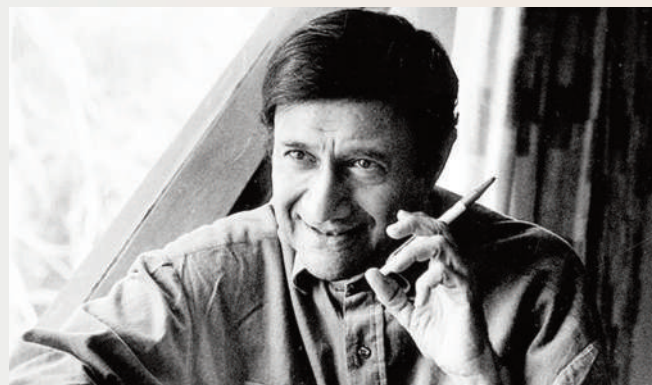
is a source of inspiration for millions of youth the world over even now. He continues to live as the evergreen romantic star," Suneil told PTI in an interview.

Also a filmmaker, the 67-year-old is currently working on a film dedicated to his father and features him as well as actors from Hollywood and England.

"It's a huge movie dedicated to my father. I am producing and directing. The show goes on. I will continue to take my father's legacy forward," Suneil said.

Dev Anand, who along with Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor, ruled the film industry for decades, stood out with his impeccable style, mannerisms and care-free attitude, summed up beautifully by Sahir Ludhianvi's memorable song: "Main Zindagi Ka Saath Nibhata chala gaya, har fikar ko dhuen mein udata chala gaya" in the 1961 film "Hum Dono". Suneil said his father was an honest man and understood that he had a duty towards his audience.

"He was also a well-read man, well



informed. He could converse on any topic with anyone in any crowd. He was as at ease with the man on the street as he was with royalty. He was very humble. It is difficult to be humble when you are such a big star." "He was the best of both worlds," Suneil said.

He said his father was "always conscious of his looks and physical appearance". "...in real life and in movies, in front of the camera and while he was moving around in public. That's an actor's responsibility towards his audience and he understood that," he said. (PTI)

## Dulquer Salmaan-starrer 'King of Kotha' to arrive on Disney+ Hotstar

**KOCHI, Sept 25:** Period action-drama "King of Kotha", headlined by Dulquer Salmaan, will have its digital premiere on Disney+ Hotstar.

The streaming platform shared the announcement on its official X page. It is yet to reveal the date of release of the big-budget Malayalam movie. "The King makes his screen comeback soon. King of Kotha on Disney Plus Hotstar! @dulquer @ritikaoffl @Anikhaofficial @nylausha @Prasanna\_actor," the

Malayalam arm of Disney+ Hotstar said in a post on Sunday.

"King of Kotha" follows the story of an alcoholic gangster.

Produced by Dulquer's Wayfarer Films and Zee Studios, the film opened to mixed reviews upon its theatrical release on August 24 during the Onam festival.

It also stars Aishwarya Lekshmi, Shabeer Kallarakkal, Prasanna, and Gokul Suresh, among others. (PTI)



## Parineeti, Raghav make marriage social media official: Our forever begins now



**UDAIPUR, Sept 25:** A day after tying the knot, actor Parineeti Chopra and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Raghav Chadha on Monday morning shared the first photographs on social media from their intimate wedding ceremony at a luxury hotel here.

Parineeti and Raghav, both 34, got married on early Sunday evening.

The baraats arrived at the Leela Palace in beautifully decorated boats.

The couple's wedding attire was aligned to the theme of the main function, which was "pearl white".

"From the very first chat at the breakfast table, our hearts knew. Been waiting for this day for a long time .. So blessed to finally be Mr and Mrs! Couldn't have lived without each other .. Our forever begins now .." the couple shared a series of pictures on Instagram.

The bride opted for an embellished ivory lehenga paired with a customised veil, which had her husband's first name 'Raghav'.

embroidered in Hindi in golden colour. She completed her look with precious stone jewellery and minimal make-up and mehendi.

Dressed in an ivory sherwani and saafa, Raghav coordinated his look with Parineeti.

For the post-wedding function, the bride chose a champagne pink sequin sari with cape, teamed it with elegant precious

stone jewellery and pink choodha (bangles). The groom opted for a classic black tuxedo.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann attended the nuptials. Fashion designer Manish Malhotra, former cricketer Harbhajan Singh with actor-wife Geeta Basra, and former tennis star Sania Mirza were also present.

Parineeti and Raghav arrived here on Friday along with their families. The pre-wedding functions, including sanget, took place on Saturday and the main ceremony was held on Sunday.

The couple got engaged in May in Delhi in a private ceremony. (PTI)



## Writers Guild and Hollywood studios reach tentative agreement to end strike

**LOS ANGELES, Sept 25:** Union leaders and Hollywood studios reached a tentative agreement Sunday to end a historic screenwriters strike after nearly five months, though no deal is yet in the works for striking actors.

The Writers Guild of America announced the deal in a joint statement with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, the group that represents studios, streaming services and production companies in negotiations.

"WGA has reached a tentative agreement with the AMPTP," the guild said in an email to members. "This was made possible by the enduring solidarity of WGA members and extraordinary support of our union siblings who joined us on the picket lines for over 146 days."

The three-year contract agree-

ment -- settled on after five marathon days of renewed talks by WGA and AMPTP negotiators that was joined at times by studio executives -- must be approved by the guild's board and members before the strike officially ends. In a longer message from the guild shared by members on social media, the writers were told the strike is not over and no one was to return to work until hearing otherwise, but picketing is to be suspended immediately.

The terms of the deal were not immediately announced. The tentative deal to end the last writers strike, in 2008, was approved by more than 90% of members.

The agreement comes just five days before the strike would've become the longest in the guild's history, and the longest Hollywood strike more than 70 years.

As a result of the agreement, nightly network shows including NBC's "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" and ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" could return to the air within days.

But as writers prepare to potentially crack open their laptops again, it's far from back to business as usual in Hollywood, as talks have not yet resumed between studios and the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. Crew members left with no work by the stoppage will remain unemployed for now.

"SAG-AFTRA congratulates the WGA on reaching a tentative agreement with the AMPTP after 146 days of incredible strength, resiliency and solidarity on the picket lines," the actors union said in a statement.

"While we look forward to review-

ing the WGA and AMPTP's tentative agreement, we remain committed to achieving the necessary terms for our members."

The statement said the guild continues "to urge the studio and streamer CEOs and the AMPTP to return to the table and make the fair deal that our members deserve and demand." The proposed solution to the writers strike came after talks resumed on Wednesday for the first time in a month. Chief executives including Bob Iger of Disney, Ted Sarandos of Netflix, David Zaslav of Warner Bros. Discovery and Donna Langley of NBCUniversal reportedly took part in the negotiations directly.

It was reached without the intervention of federal mediators or other government officials, which had been necessary in previous strikes. (AP)





## ANKITA, RUTUJA PROGRESS TO PRE-QUARTERFINALS

## Gold medal favourite Bopanna-Bhambri pair suffers shock exit

**HANGZHOU, Sept 25:** In a huge upset, gold medal favourites and top seeds Rohan Bopanna and Yuki Bhambri were on Monday knocked out of the Asian Games after being stunned by lower-ranked Sergey Fomin and Khumoyun Sultanov from Uzbekistan, here.

Bhambri struggled with his serve and strokes in the latter part of the match while the Uzbeki players raised their game against their superior opponents to walk away with a 2-6, 6-3, 10-6 win in the second round.

The defeat will rattle the Indian pair all the more as Bopanna is a top-10 player in doubles while Bhambri too is ranked among the top-100. The Uzbekis are not even in the top-300.

Serving at 3-4, 30-all in the second set, Bhambri served a double fault to go down by a break point. A wide backhand from Bhambri's racquet handed the Uzbekis the crucial break.

Sultanov made no mistake in serving out the set by consistently putting in his first serves.

In the Super-tie breaker, the Uzbekis raced to a 3-0 lead and soon the Indians were down 5-1. The Uzbekis pulled off a stunning service return winner to make it 6-1 on Bopanna's serve.



Fomin earned four match points with a backhand winner. The Indians saved the first but Sultanov found an inside-out forehand winner on the second to close the contest in their favour.

India coach Zeeshan Ali said that Bopanna did not get the required support from Bhambri in the match. "At this level and being an experienced player, one cannot afford to make many errors at crucial moments of the match. You have to be able to grab any opportunity that presents itself," Zeeshan told PTI.

"Not taking anything away from the Uzbekistan players, they probably played the best match of their lives, with nothing to lose. We had chances in the second set with a couple of break points at 3-all and, had we won that game, the outcome of the match would have been different.

Indians could not convert 12 of the 16 break-points in the match.

"Rohan played a good match but unfortunately did not get the required support needed to win today from his partner who otherwise has been having a very good doubles season," added Zeeshan. Bopanna, at 43, is playing his last Asian Games. He had won gold in the 2018 edition with Divij Sharan.

Both Bopanna and Bhambri will now compete in the mixed doubles. Bhambri and Ankita Raina are top-seeded while Bopanna and Bhosale are seeded second. Bopanna had ended his Davis Cup career last week, playing against Morocco in Lucknow.

Early in the day, India's top singles tennis player Raina was off to a flying start while Bhosale struggled past lower-ranked Aruzhan Sagandikova to move into the women's singles pre-quarterfinals.

Raina did not lose a single game in her second-round match and required just 51 minutes to send packing 17-year-old Sabrina Olimjonova from Uzbekistan 6-0, 6-0. Ranked 198th in singles and winner of a bronze medal from the 2018 edition, third seed Raina will now clash with Adithya P Karunaratne from Hong Kong for a place in the last-eight stage.

Sagandikova is ranked as low as 746 but it was far from an easy match for the Bhosale, who needed two hours and one minute to go past her rival from Kazakhstan 7-6(2), 6-2.

The first set itself lasted one hour and 16 minutes as Bhosale, ranked 336th, had to work hard for the win. (PTI)

## Jemimah Rodrigues urges Indian men's team to aim for Gold in Asian Games cricket



**HANGZHOU (CHINA), Sept 25:** India's Jemimah Rodrigues on Monday urged the men's team to aim for the gold after the women's team created history in the final of the Asian Games.

India Women's side beat Sri Lanka by 19 runs in the final to clinch the gold medal here on their maiden appearance.

Batting first, India posted 116 for seven on a difficult batting track before the Titas Sadhu-led bowling attack restricted Sri Lanka to 97 for eight in 20 overs.

"We have spoken to the men's team. We have told them that we are bringing the gold; you guys also bring it," an elated Rodrigues told reporters here.

"(It) feels great. Just to win the gold is special, and being the first Indian cricket side to win the gold will make people go back in history and see that this was the team that actually won the first-ever gold in cricket in the Asian Games. It's an amazing feeling," she added. Rodrigues said it was a proud feeling to add to India's medals tally at the Games.

"It is a very different experience, wearing this India jersey is a (matter of) different pride. Also, we can add a medal to India as a sporting nation," she said.

Talking about the gold medal contest on a challenging surface, Rodrigues said the contest had its own challenges.

"It wasn't easy as Sri Lanka gave us a good fight. Their bowlers bowled spot-on, and we really had to apply ourselves. Very proud of the girls, and the way we played today displays our character," she said. "It was an important partnership between me and Smriti (Mandhana) because the Sri Lankan bowlers were at the top of their game. 'We are glad the way we played and built the partnership, along with the other girls coming in and chipping in,' said Rodrigues (42), who added 73 runs with Mandhana (46) for the second wicket in a low-scoring contest.

Rodrigues said the team had to adapt to different surfaces for every match. "We honestly did not know what to expect when we came over here," she said.

"We knew that we had to be ready for any condition, and in all three matches we had different kinds of wickets that we had to adapt to, which is the best part of our team's performance," Rodrigues added.

"It's been a great experience in general, the way everyone has welcomed us in China."

"It's not been easy since the communication has been a problem. But, they (the organisers) went out of their way to make us feel comfortable and make our stay easy," she added.

India coach and former international Hrishikesh Kanitkar too was delighted to have added to the country's tally.

"We rank this gold right up there because it adds to the country's tally of gold medals. So, I think it's very, very important that we directly contribute to the country," he said. Kanitkar termed India's total as a 'decent score' owing to conditions.

"We were aiming for 120, but reaching it a couple of overs early would have surely allowed us to go for 140... the nature of the soil and conditions matter. But, we ended up with a decent score," he said. "The girls responded very well. We are always open to improving, and even though we have won the gold, we are open to improving more." Despite being outplayed, the Indian coach credited Sri Lanka for their display. "They (Lankans) bowled really well, but I feel our batters battled well in the starting and the middle phases. But, credit to them (Lanka) for how they played this game."

Kanitkar also praised Rodrigues for her intent during the game. "(It was an) ultimate knock. Not so much of big-hitting, but using the mind, and I think that's very mature," he said. (PTI)

## Luck and lack of discretion cost India Silver in rowing

**HANGZHOU, Sept 25:** The Indian men's four team did remarkably well to stage a comeback and claim bronze at the Asian Games here on Monday, but with a bit of luck and discretion, it could have ended with a silver by pipping heavyweights China.

It was so near and yet so far for the Indian rowers who nearly ended the Chinese dominance on the Beizhi river but luck was not on their side in the last 20 metres, missing out on silver by milliseconds.

The Indian quartet of Jasvinder Singh, Bheem Singh, Punit Kumar and Ashish Goliyan were neck-and-neck with their Chinese counterparts in the last 500-metre of the race.

But one of their oars got stuck in the buoy as the Chinese pipped them at the post.

"It was a close race. We had tried to beat the Chinese from the start and it was all going according to plan, but a mistake in the last 20 metres of the race really cost us a silver medal by a fraction of a second," Punit said at the Fuyang Water Sports Centre.

"There was a crosswind today, which led us to go off course and one of our oars got stuck in the buoy, and that resulted in our silver medal turning to bronze."

At the same venue on Sunday, the 29-year-old seasoned oarsman was a member of the silver-

winning coxed eight team, which, again, was pipped by China.

"This will probably hurt me for a long time. But I have learned a big lesson from this," Punit said.

The Army man, who has won silver and bronze medals in the previous two editions of the Asian Championships, felt this would inspire the next generation.

"Hopefully the generations after us will realise that we have the potential to defeat China in future competitions," he said.

Home advantage is a factor but Punit's teammate Ashish Goliyan feels a good preparation is what it takes to beat the Chinese.

"It depends on practice. If you have trained well and prepared for the conditions, you can do well anywhere and win medals. Home advantage definitely has a role to play, but if you train well, you will get the results you are out to get," he said.

"There's not a lot of outside noise in the water. We are giving instructions to each other and motivating each other, so we can't really hear what's happening outside."

"It was not our day and we made a mistake which cost us a silver medal," he added.

India ended their campaign in rowing with five medals -- two silver and three bronze. (PTI)

## Srihari enters second consecutive final, Likith and team also in medal contention

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** Ace Indian swimmer Srihari Nataraj finished sixth in the men's 50m backstroke heats to progress to his second consecutive final at the Asian Games here on Monday.

Nataraj, who finished sixth in the men's 100m backstroke final on Sunday, clocked 25.43s to finish third in his heat 4 and sixth overall.

Likith Selvaraj also progressed to the men's 100m breaststroke competition. He finished with a timing 1:01.98 to just make the cut for the final.

The Indian quartet of Aryan Nehra, Aneesh Gowda, Kushagra Rawat and Tanish George Mathew too progressed to the final in the men's 4x200m freestyle event.

The Indian team finished sixth overall with a timing of 7:29.04 in the heats.

All three finals will be held later in the day.

Former bronze medallist Virdhawal Khade (men's 50m freestyle), Olympian Maana Patel (women's 50m backstroke), Anil Kumar Shylaja Anand (men's 50m freestyle), Desinghu Dhinidhi (women's 200m freestyle) and Hashika Ramachandra (women's 200m individual medley) all failed to enter the finals in their respective events. (PTI)

## It's a testament to Ashwin's skills: Abbott on Warner batting right-handed against India spinner

**INDORE, Sept 25:** Southpaw David Warner had to employ a rather bizarre tactic of batting right-handed against R Ashwin in the second ODI because of the turn the Indian was generating from the Indore pitch, said Australia bowling all-rounder Sean Abbott. Australia were never in the hunt after India amassed 399 for five to take an unassailable lead in the three-match series on Sunday.

Warner (53) and Abbott (54) were the two Australian batters who got going before the visitors suffered their fifth ODI loss in a row. Warner played some audacious strokes batting both left and right-handed. He is known for his innovative strokeplay including reverse hits but he took that to the next level on Sunday when he resorted to bat with a right-hander's stance while facing Ashwin.

The premier India spinner did get the better of Warner eventually but it was not before the 'right-hand' batter swept him for a boundary, much to the amusement of his teammates in the dugout.

"I think that's a testament to Ashwin's skills, to be honest, because I think if Davey's just going to sit there and bat left-handed and Ashwin he's not going to miss his length, too often, and with the ball spinning so much, he's got the one that goes the other way, the straighter one and all the variations that go along with that," said Abbott when asked Warner's unusual

methods.

"David just thought he had to change it up. He plays golf right handed, we obviously see how dynamic he is batting like doing his switch hitting and stuff. So he weighed up those options. They actually might have spoken about it during the test match here (in March). 'He's done it before he practices it in the nets. So I was like, 'Oh, this is different' but

Davey's Davey, so we just let him crack on, he's a great competitor," said Abbott who himself staked a strong claim for a spot in the playing eleven for the World Cup with his clean hitting.

Indian batters feasted on the Indore track but going by Abbott, it was not easy facing Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja under lights.

"It was a difficult batting wicket in the end, facing their spinners. They're very skilful. So we were going to have our work cut out for us. 'Before we went out there but we had some glimpses of some good batting especially from Davey and I just thought Ashwin and Jadeja on that wicket there, especially Ashwin... tremendous skills spinning it both ways as a finger spinner.

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"I've mentioned a couple of times already our execution in bringing those stumps into play, owning our lengths and putting pressure on the batters that way certainly has to improve. And I have no doubt of that. We've got a very skilled attack. Looking forward to the next game," he added. (PTI)

"It is far from ideal. But at the same time, we've got such a great group in that, we're communicating well out in the ground, but we've obviously just not executed as well as we would have liked.

"I've mentioned a couple of times already our execution in bringing those stumps into play, owning our lengths and putting pressure on the batters that way certainly has to improve. And I have no doubt of that. We've got a very skilled attack. Looking forward to the next game," he added. (PTI)

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## Asian Games: Roshibina Devi assures India of Wushu Bronze

**HANGZHOU (CHINA), Sept 25:** India was assured of another medal in the ongoing Asian Games on Monday, as Naorem Roshibina Devi qualified for the semi-finals in the Women's 60 kg Wushu (Sanda), thus assuring herself a bronze. She outplayed her opening opponent in the quarterfinal, Aiman Karshyga of Kazakhstan, convincingly through points difference.

Roshibina Devi had won the bronze medal at the last Asian Games in the same category.

Notably, she was a gold medallist in the same category at the 2019 South Asian Games.

In the men's section, Surya Bhanu Partap Singh reached quarterfinals after winning his pre-quarters bout against Is-lombek Khaydarov of Uzbekistan in the 60kg category in Sanda.

His bout lasted three rounds as the Indian prevailed 2-1.

Partap, also a bronze medallist from the previous edition of the Asian Games, has won a couple of medals of the same colour in the World Wushu Championships. He also won the gold medal in the 2016 South Asian Games. In the final men's bout of the day in the 65 kg category, Vikrant Baliyan was knocked out in the pre-quarters by Samuel Marbun of Indonesia by a 1-2 margin. (PTI)

## I keep telling myself competition is against me, it's about maintaining positive mindset when chips are down: Iyer

**INDORE, Sept 25:** Doubts can creep in when one has to deal with frequent injuries but Shreyas Iyer says it was his unflinching belief in his abilities that helped him to bounce back from a lonely phase.

The Asia Cup that India won marked Iyer's comeback from a back surgery after six months but a back spasm in the middle of the tournament meant he only got to bat once over the course of two weeks. However, the 14 off nine balls he made in India's opener against Pakistan gave him a lot of confidence as he desperately waited for another opportunity.

The chance finally came in Mohali last week but he got run out. Facing competition for a spot in India's middle-order for the World Cup, Iyer finally delivered under pressure in the second ODI against Australia on Sunday.

"I was desperate to come back and come back strong. I was waiting to convert the starts which I got in the previous games. Today I got the opportunity, I am grateful," said Iyer after a match-winning 105 off 90



balls. "To be honest I was not doubting my abilities because I knew I was batting brilliantly in the nets, also the start I got against Pakistan. Just a matter of one innings and I knew it was around the corner, thankfully I was able to execute," he added.

Iyer was fully aware of the competition he was up against but despite being in helpless situation that saw him miss the majority of the Asia Cup, he managed to stay calm.

"It was definitely a roller coaster ride. I would like to thank myself to be honest. For believing in my abilities and mindset at that point of time. I was feeling a bit lonely but thanks to my physios, my trainers, my family they backed me, grateful to have them around. 'I keep telling myself competition is against me. It is about mindset that I maintain especially when the chips are down. My mind was fluctuating at times but I was trying to stay

away from the outside noise. As they say ignorance is bliss so taking one step a time and staying in the present and not thinking about what happened and what will happen in the future."

"It was one of my finest innings' Considering the circumstances, Iyer rates his third ODI hundred very highly.

"It was one of my finest innings especially coming out of an injury. I was eagerly waiting to come back and perform for the team. All these games we are getting before the World Cup, it is a good platform for us, especially as I have not got a lot of games under my belt."

He was all praise for Shubman Gill with whom he forged a 200-run stand that enabled India to amass 399 for five.

"Yes Shubman Gill is in tremendous form lately and the way he is converting his starts is simply phenomenal. In the World Cup, we will be needing such starts and he is in a great mind space, the routines that he has been maintaining throughout travelling and recovery."



# Asian Games: Titas blows away Sri Lanka as Indian women earn country's second Gold



**HANGZHOU, Sept 25:** Rookie pacer Titas Sadhu singlehandedly earned a gold medal for the Indian women's cricket team in its maiden appearance as it defeated Sri Lanka by 19 runs in a low-scoring final of the Asian Games here on Monday.

On a pitch difficult for batting, the Indian women's team struggled to 116 for seven but it was just about par score.

However Titas, who is just four days shy of his 19th birthday, bowled a devastating first spell and finished with superb figures of 4-1-6-3 to play a big role in restricting Sri Lanka to 97 for eight in 20 overs.

She had an able ally in leg-spinner Devika Vaidya (4-0-15-1), who kept a tight leash on the islanders.

Left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad (3-0-20-2) and off-spinner Deepti Sharma (4-0-25-1) started off badly but were on target during the back-end as Indian women always looked in complete control.

This was one gold medal that India were expected to win, but the standard of cricket was pretty poor, and the nature of wicket didn't help matters.

The lanky Titas bowled quick and kept her deliveries on fuller length to get three wickets in her first two overs, including opposition skipper and their best batter Chamari Athapaththu (12).

The Indian women's team is missing a genuine quick bowler in its ranks since the retirement of Jhulan Goswami and Titas

looks to be a worthy successor. However, her wares would be proved once she is pitted against players of SENA countries.

Sensing the slow nature of the track, Indian skipper Harmanpreet Kaur started with off-spinner Sharma but the left-handed Athapaththu quickly went on the offensive with a slog swept six and a boundary off the very first over. The skipper brought her frontline pacers back from the second over and Titas, playing only her second T20I, got Anushka Sanjeevani (1) to play a lofted drive without reaching to the pitch of the delivery. The simple catch at mid-off was taken by Harmanpreet.

The teenager then angled one in and castled Vishmi Gunaratne (0) and in her next

over, just shortened the length for Athapaththu. The ball stopped on the batter and her slash was taken by Sharma at the edge of the circle at extra cover.

Sri Lanka were tottering at 14 for 3, but Hasini Perera (25 off 22 balls) then got some quick runs to take her team past the 50-run mark before Rajeshwari forced her to sweep uppishly, as Sri Lanka were reduced to 50 for four.

Nilakshi de Silva (23 off 34 balls) and Oshadi Ranasinghe (19 off 26 balls) added 38 runs for the fifth wicket before Vastrakar removed the former and Sharma got the better of the latter with both going for adventurous shots.

Earlier, Harmanpreet's decision to bat first was a correct one as the pitch, which wasn't conducive for stroke-play, only got slower as the match progressed.

On a track like this, it becomes a challenge to force the pace against slow bowlers and the Sri Lankan team comprised way too many such operators in its ranks.

Smriti Mandhana (46 off 45 balls), who hit four boundaries and a six, along with Jemimah Rodrigues (42 off 40 balls), added 73 runs for the second wicket.

In order to counter the slowness, both Mandhana and Rodrigues used the sweep shot with some degree of success.

Mandhana was looking in fine touch till she hurt herself while completing a quick single and post that, her footwork against the spinners wasn't as good as it was at the start of her innings.

It was one slog sweep too many that brought about her downfall. Richa Ghosh started with a six, but didn't last long.

Harmanpreet's lack of match time was evident as she struggled during her short stay. But in the end, the total was enough to ensure a second gold medal of the Games.

**Brief scores:** India 116/7 in 20 overs (Harmanpreet Kaur 46, Jemimah Rodrigues 42), Sri Lanka 97/8 in 20 overs (Hasini Perera 25, Titas Sadhu 3/6). (PTI)

## Indian 10m air rifle team claims Gold with world record score, Aishwary bags individual Bronze



**HANGZHOU, Sept 25:** Indian shooters made a telling statement at the Asian Games, winning three medals, including a team gold, as the country's marksmen asserted their class by grabbing five podium finishes in just two days of competition here.

A confident Indian 10m air rifle team led by teenage world champion Rudranksh Patil gave the country its first gold medal at the Games, securing the top place on the podium with a world record score here on Monday. Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar then earned the country an individual bronze -- India's fourth in shooting so far -- in the event after a third-place shoot-off with compatriot Rudranksh, who finished fourth.

The triumvirate of Anish Bhanwala, Vijayveer Sidhu and Adarsh Singh totalled 1718 to win bronze in men's 25m rapid-fire pistol event. In the individual section, Sidhu settled for the fourth position.

The trio of Rudranksh, Olympian Divyansh Singh Panwar and Aishwary aggregated 1893.7 in the qualification round to beat back the challenge of the shooting powerhouse China and South Korea on way to the team gold.

In the individual men's 25 rapid-fire

In one of the most dominating displays seen by Indian air rifle shooters in multi-discipline events, the 19-year-old Rudranksh shot a superb 632.5, Tomar 631.6 and Panwar 629.6 to aggregate the world record score as South Korea was pushed to second spot (1890.1), while the Chinese team was a distant third with an aggregate score of 1888.2.

"We (the team) gave our best and won gold. We did not know it initially, but were told that it was world record. We said it must be gold then," Rudranksh said later.

"It was not easy but we have beaten China in team event," Tomar said.

"I am a bit disappointed that I did not win an individual event gold. But I am really happy that I won a team gold. My two teammates are the best shooters in 10m air rifle."

India would be slightly disappointed at missing a gold, or a silver, in the individual category following the red-hot form shown by both Tomar and Rudranksh in the qualification round.

However, both the Indians could not recreate the magic of the qualification round in the

eight-shooter finals with Tomar, after a dogged battle with Rudranksh, edging out the teenage shooter to win bronze in shoot-off for third place, scoring 228.8.

Tomar was in contention for silver with Park Hajun after that but a rank bad final shot of 9.8 eliminated him, even as the South Korean went on to take the second spot behind China's Sheng Lihao, who won gold with a world record score of 253.3.

Tomar, however, said he was consistent throughout save for the 9.8 shot.

"I am very happy with my performance. I was very consistent throughout, even in the qualification. This is my first Asian Games and my first medal in these Games."

"Sometimes there will be bad shots and that is part of the game," he said.

But he admitted that there was pressure during the shoot-off with Rudranksh for the bronze medal.

"There was lot of pressure during the shoot-off but I could shoot 10.8."

Tomar also competes in 50m rifle 3P positions, and asked about it, he said, "Competing in two events is an advantage. If I don't do well in one, I can compensate with the other. If I do well in both, that is doubly good."

"My target is always the Olympics. I will try to do well in the events in the run-up to the Olympics so that I can keep my focus ahead of Paris Games."

Asked how the team beat China, he said, "Shooting is a game of points, we cannot say anything. Sometimes you score higher points more, sometimes you don't."

"Does not matter whether it is China or not. We all three can win the gold medal. We did not know whether we were in the lead or not (during the competition), we only try to shoot our best."

Rudranksh and Tomar had made it to the eight-shooter finals following their superb display in the qualification round, while Divyansh missed out thanks to an Asian Games rule that allows only two marksmen from a country to enter the finals.

Rudranksh entered the finals placed third, while Aishwary was fifth after the qualification round. Divyansh was placed eighth and, had it been a World Cup or a World Championship, or any other continental shooting competition, all three Indians would have been in the eight-shooter final. (PTI)

## PCB writes to ICC as wait for Indian visa continues less than two days before scheduled travel

**INDORE, Sept 25:** The Pakistan Cricket Board on Monday raised serious concerns with the ICC over the delay in national team's travel to India for the World Cup due to visa issues and claimed the anxious wait has already impacted its preparation for the 50-over showpiece.

The PCB wrote to the ICC as it continues to wait for visa clearance from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.

Pakistan were supposed to have a two-day team bonding session in Dubai before their scheduled arrival in Hyderabad on September 27 but it has been cancelled with uncertainty over Indian visa.

The Babar Azam-led side plays two warm-up games and as many World Cup matches in Hyderabad starting with the practice fixture against New Zealand on September 29. In the letter addressed to ICC CEO Geoff Allardice, the PCB also claimed that its concerns over visa being granted to players, team officials, fans and journalists for the World Cup in India have not been addressed for more than three years. It also added that such inequitable treatment to Pakistan will not be acceptable.

"Since the last week PCB is being informed that the visas will be received within 24 hours; but still awaiting and it has been indicated that the Indian Home Ministry has not granted NOC," a PCB

spokesperson told PTI on Monday. Pakistan last visited India for the T20 World Cup in 2016. The arch-rivals only play each other in the Asia Cup and ICC tournaments due to the tense relations between the two countries.

PCB sources informed that flight tickets of around 35-member Pakistan contingent have been re-booked now that the Dubai trip is off. Subject to visa, the team will now leave for Hyderabad from Lahore in the wee hours of September 27 and reach Hyderabad via Dubai in the night.

"Visa delay has resulted in a setback as far as team's preparation for the World Cup is concerned. The warm-up game is less than four days away and players are in a state of uncertainty. If the players are having to experience delays, one can only wonder what will happen to visa applications of fans and journalists," a source said.

Visa applications from Pakistan require clearances from three ministries -- home, external affairs and sports. Pakistan's second warm-up game will be against Australia on October 3, also in Hyderabad.

They will remain in the city for their opening two World Cup games against Netherlands and Sri Lanka on October 6 and 10 respectively before flying to Ahmedabad for the big game against hosts India on October 14. (PTI)

## Indian rowers bag two Bronze, end campaign with five medals

**HANGZHOU, Sept 25:** Indian rowers staged twin comebacks to bag two bronze and sign off their Asian Games campaign in the watersport with five medals here on Monday.

India bettered their medal count from the last edition when they had three podium finishes. However, they failed to win a gold medal this time, something the rowing squad could boast of five years ago.

Overall, India finished fifth here, an improvement of one place from their 2018 outing in Indonesia, where they had grabbed one gold and two bronze medals.

Hosts China topped the tally with 11 gold, two silver, while Uzbekistan finished second with two gold, four silver and one bronze.

The day began with the quartet of Jaswinder Singh, Bheem Singh, Punit Kumar and Ashish Goliyan narrowly missing a silver in men's fours event.

Then the men's quadruple sculls team of Satnam Singh, Parminder Singh, Jakar Khan and Sukhmeet Singh finished third on the podium with a timing of 6:08.61 seconds, behind Uzbekistan (6:04.64) and gold medalists China (6:02.65).

The quadruple sculls quartet improved from fourth place to finish third in the final 500-metre of the 2000-metre race.

In the men's four event too, after



lying fourth in the final 500-metre of the 2000m race, the quartet showed superb coordination to finish third with 6:10.81s, and was pipped by China (6:10.04) by a fraction of seconds.

Uzbekistan took the top spot in the podium with a timing of 6:04.96.

Indian rower Balraj Panwar however missed out on a maiden Asian Games podium, finishing fourth in the men's single sculls.

The 24-year-old from Karnal, who was among the top-three at the 1500-mark, faltered in the final 500m to slip to fourth place with a timing of 7:08.79s.

He finished less than nine seconds behind Hong Kong's Hin Chun Chiu who took the bronze medal (7:00.55).

China's Liang Zang secured the

gold with 6:57.06, while Japan's Ryuta Arakawa (6:59.79) and Hong Kong's Hin Chun Chiu finished with silver and bronze respectively.

The Indian oarswomen disappointed the most, finishing bottom in the five-team field of the women's eight with a timing of 7:05.71s, way behind China who took the gold medal clocking 6:33.61.

The Indian team of Sonali Swain, Ritu Kaudi, Priya Devi Thangiam, Varsha Kattathara, Aswathi Padinjariyal, Mrunmayee Salgaonkar, Tendenthai Devi Haobijam, Rukmani and Geetanjali Gurugubelli hardly posed any challenge to their opponents.

Even the fourth-placed Thailand finished more than 15 seconds ahead of the Indians. (PTI)

## Ankita, Rutuja progress to pre-quarterfinals

**HANGZHOU, Sept 25:** India's top singles tennis player Ankita Raina was off to a flying start while Rutuja Bhosale struggled past lower-ranked Auzhan Sagandikova to move into the women's singles pre-quarterfinals at the Asian Games here on Monday.

Raina did not lose a single game in her second-round match and required just 51 minutes to send packing 17-year-old Sabrina Olimjonova from Uzbekistan 6-0, 6-0.

Ranked 198th in singles and winner of a bronze medal from the 2018 edition, third seed Raina will now clash with Adithya P Karunaratne from Hong Kong for a place in the last-eight stage.

Sagandikova is ranked as low as 746 but it was far from an easy match for the Bhosale, who needed two hours and one minute to go past her rival from Kazakhstan 7-6(2), 6-2.

The first set itself lasted one hour and 16 minutes as Bhosale, ranked 336th, had to work hard for the win. (PTI)

**NEW DELHI, Sept 25:** The yellow metal might have eluded them but Indian rowing team's head coach Ismail Baig couldn't be more happier after his wards finished the competition with an unprecedented five medals at the ongoing Asian Games, here on Monday.

While India won a gold and two bronze medal at the Jakarta edition in 2018, the rowers finished with two silver and three bronze medals in this edition.

For Baig, the focus is now to earn as many qualification slots possible for the Paris Olympics in the upcoming events.

Baig, who joined the Indian team as assistant coach in 1998 and has been the head coach in 2002, has guided the team to 23 medals at the continental showpiece over last two and half decades.

"We won five medals in such a tough competition, which is a big thing." Now we will be able to return to India with pride. I am feeling very relieved but the process of hard work will not stop now," Baig told PTI Bhasha from Hangzhou on Monday.

India sent the largest sailing contingent this year (33 athletes and ten support staff) which won two silver and three bronze medals.

While he is satisfied with the performance, as a coach he doesn't believe in resting on past laurels.

"A coach is never satisfied. I feel at least the colour of one medal could have been better."

"But all this happens in sports. We have worked hard for these games for five years and brought the biggest contingent but the players did not disappoint me," he added.



China was always going to be a tough hurdle for Indians, the coach said.

"It is not easy to compete with China in their own den but we competed hard and it was close. That's a big achievement. It is expected that the performance graph will be better in coming days. We will prepare

further with hard work, change in timing module and new strategy."

The men's fours team narrowly missed out on silver by lagging behind China by a millisecond in the last twenty metres.

When asked about his future plans, the head coach

said, "After so much hard work, it is necessary to give the players a break."

"Now we will prepare for the Paris Olympics, the qualifiers of which will probably be held in Korea in April next year. The competition is very tough but we have qualified every time since the 2000 Sydney Olympics and we will maintain this record."

Last time, India played the 'B' final of the double scull event (non-medal section) in Tokyo.

Baig said, "Last time in Tokyo, we played B final in double scull but this time our eyes will be on A final."

Expressing satisfaction over the preparations for the Asian Games, he said, "This time the preparations were solid."

The presence of Bajrang Takhar, who is an Asian Games gold medalist, as an assistant coach proved to be beneficial.

Baig said, "My disciples like Bajrang (medallist in 2006, 2010 and 2014) and Inder Pal (2002), who won gold medals in the Asian Games, had accompanied me as assistant coaches this time. This is a matter of great pride for me and it also brought a lot of convenience to the players."

All the rowers are from Indian Army and the discipline and work ethic inculcated from being a part of defence forces also was instrumental in getting success.

"Being from army background, all the players are very disciplined and do not slack off in practice. A coach's job becomes much easier with this." (PTI)