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SECURITY PERSONNEL ON ALERT TO PREVENT UNTOWARD INCIDENT

Manipur government asks public to exercise restraint, CBI investigating students' death

IMPHAL, Sept 26: Hours after photos of the bodies of two students, who had been missing since July, went viral on social media, the Manipur government has asked people to exercise restraint and allow authorities to investigate the "kidnapping and killing" of the duo.

In a statement issued by the secretariat of Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh late on Monday night, the state government said the case has already been handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

The two students were identified as Phijam Hemjit (20) and Hijam Linthoingambi (17).

"The state police, in collaboration with the central security agencies, are actively investigating the case to determine the circumstances surrounding their disappearance and to identify the perpetrators who murdered the two students. The security forces have also started the search operation to nab the perpetrators," the statement said.

Security personnel have been put on alert and additional measures have been taken to prevent



any incident following the viral photos of the students, a senior officer said.

The government assured people that "swift and decisive action will

be taken against all those involved in the kidnapping and killing of Phijam Hemjit and Hijam Linthoingambi," the statement said.

The government is committed to ensuring justice and will impose severe punishment on any perpetrator found responsible for the heinous crime, it said.

The administration urged people to "exercise restraint and to let the authorities handle the investigation".

Two photos of the missing students surfaced on social media on Monday.

One of the two photos purportedly showed the students with two armed men in the frame and the other one was of two bodies.

The two students went missing on July 6.

The police had previously said that the whereabouts of the two were not known and their mobile phones were found switched off.

The last location of their handsets was traced at Lamdan near the winter flower tourist spot in the Churachandpur district, they had said earlier.

Meanwhile, more than 30 students, mostly girls, were injured in Manipur's Imphal Valley on Tuesday as the police fired tear gas shells and baton-charged a mob protesting (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Govt introducing talent enriching programmes for country's youths: Sonowal

GUWAHATI, Sept 26: Union minister of ports, shipping and waterways and Ayush, Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday said the Union government is working on several talent enriching programmes to nurture young talents of the country.

The minister was in Guwahati to address a Rozgar Mela on Tuesday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed Rozgar Melas in 46 locations across the country and virtually distributed about 51,000 appointment letters to newly inducted recruits. These recruits selected from across the country will be joining the department of posts, Indian audit and accounts department, department of atomic energy, department of revenue, department of higher education, ministry of defence, ministry of health and family welfare among others.

Addressing the Rozgar Mela Sonowal said, "India is standing at the cusp of greatness, as it continues to break shackles of its past economic, social and political deprivation. It attempts to find itself a new, revitalized identity of a Bharat which is strong, confident, proud, considerate and inclusive. India has become the youngest talent factory in the world. To harness

India's rich talent pool, the government is working on different talent enriching programmes to incubate talent to become a reckoning force in the march towards an Atmanirbhar Bharat."

'Start Up India', 'Digital India', 'PM Vishwakarma', 'Skill India Mission', 'Make In India', 'PM Mudra Yojna', Rozgar Mela and many programmes have been introduced by the Union government to help generate employment for youths of the country.

"Under the able leadership of Prime Minister Modi ji, as many as 8 lakhs 18 thousands youths joined the government service via

Rozgar Melas since its inception almost a year ago. Under the visionary leadership of PM Narendra Modi ji, the effort has been to change the mindset of youth from the role of job seekers to job creators. Self employment and entrepreneurship are becoming popular occupational choices. In the Start Up space, 2.60 lakh jobs were created in 2022 and over 9 lakh jobs created since 2017."

The Union minister said that India has now become one of the most admired nations in the world since PM Narendra Modi. The presidency of G20 and its successful outcome (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



UNC appeals warring communities for dialogue

GUWAHATI, Sept 26: The United Naga Council (UNC) Peace Committee, while saying that it has been initiating dialogue between the Meitei community and the Kuki-Zo community, appealed to the two warring communities to come to the dialogue table.

In a statement issued to Newmai News Network today, the UNC Peace Committee said that the solution to the Meitei and Kuki-Zo problem is not in the court of New Delhi.

"Solution is in the courts of the Kuki-Zo community and the Meiteis, and not in the court of New Delhi," the Naga body peace committee pointed out. The peace committee further said that holding dialogue between the two communities is the only way towards a solution to the problem.

The UNC Peace Committee then said the Meitei leaders and the Kuki-Zo leaders need not worry about their security or safety if they are willing to hold dialogue. "We will ensure their safety or security in the event of holding dialogue," the UNC Peace Committee assured. The Naga committee also said that halting violence and firing is a vital prerequisite for dialogue.

As the Meitei and Kuki-Zo violence prevails nearly for five months now in Manipur, and fear and anxiety continue to grip among the various communities, the UNC Peace Committee had, a few days ago, urged the state government as well as the central government to "tirelessly work without fear and favour (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

CM inaugurates Assam Bhawan at Vellore



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 26: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday inaugurated Assam Bhawan at Vellore in Tamil Nadu during a function held today.

It may be noted that the Bhawan built on an area of 4340 square metre with a financial outlay of ₹ 23 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister termed the day momentous, as he dedicated Assam

Bhawan in Vellore to the service of the people of Assam.

"The bhawan will be very helpful to the patients and their attendants from Assam, who come to Vellore for advanced treatment. It will also be beneficial for the students from the state who come here for higher studies. The Assam Bhawan will address the accommodation issue of the patients and students alike," said Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The Assam Bhawan has been built in four phases as this six storied building has suites, double bedded accommodation, one 2BHK unit, 40 double bedded guest room, three five siter female dormitory, one seven siter female dormitory, one reception and lounge, one dining hall, one kitchen, one store, one office, one Assam Emporium, an office and one staff dormitory.

12 sanctioned posts have also been created for the management the bhawan. The Chief Minister also said that the presence of the Christian Medical College and Vellore Institute of Technology within a 10 kilometer radius has increased its importance.

"For the convenience of the people of the state our government has already set up Assam Bhawans in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, New Delhi and Shillong. We are also initiating steps steps for reconstruction of Assam Bhawan situated at SP Marg in New Delhi and Russel (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

India puts spotlight on complex web of security challenges facing Indo-Pacific

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: India on Tuesday called for concerted efforts by like-minded nations to realize the shared vision for a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific with Union defence minister Rajnath Singh flagging concerns over the region facing a "complex web" of security challenges, including boundary disputes.

His comments at the opening session of the India-hosted 13th Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs' Conference (IPAC) came against the backdrop China's growing military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific as well as the border row in eastern Ladakh.

In his remarks, Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande said the Indo-Pacific emerged as "pivotal theatre" in contemporary "geo-strategic" canvas and that India's outlook for the region emphasizes respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states as well as peaceful resolution of disputes.

"While efforts by countries are converging towards affecting a free and stable Indo-Pacific, yet we are witnessing manifestations of inter-state contestations and competitions," Gen Pande said.

Chief of Staff of the US Army Gen Randy George said the partnership between the US and Indian Army is crucial for stability in the Indo-Pacific, noting the region is facing a challenging strategic environment.



The two-day conference, attended by delegates from over 30 countries, which included chiefs of around 15 armies. The US Army is the co-host of the event.

"We all know how important trust and friendship are in a challenging global security environment. Having great allies and partners is more important than ever before," Gen George said. India also showcased some of its indigenously-developed military platforms (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

3 children missing in Dhansiri

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Sept 26: Three children aged between five to 12 years from Dhansiri valley of Karbi Anglong district have gone missing since September 16 and are still untraceable.

The matter had come to light only when the guardians of the missing children accompanied by Dhansiri member of autonomous council (MAC), Tilutoma Hasnu shared about the incidents with the media.

The missing children are five year old Dinesh Gour, son of late Rajkumar Gour, Opho Hasnu, son of Bishnu Hasnu and Rahul Munda. Both Hasnu and Munda are from Dikhangsi village in Dhansiri. The children went missing from the house of Gopal Kumal of Nawgaon Basti in Dhansiri. Gopal's wife reportedly pro-

vided free tutoring classes to children of the area.

An FIR was lodged at the Dhansiri police outpost the following day.

MAC Hasnu said that the guardians of the missing children informed her on September 16 about their children going missing and to assist them in filing an FIR at the local Dhansiri police outpost.

According to the guardians, the children had gone missing from the house of Gopal Kumal.

"Despite searching for the past 10 days, the children have not been found. I along with local women visited the house of Kumal, where the missing children were staying. Children are not safe in their house," Hasnu said.

However, Kumal's wife said all the children were asleep in her house (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

China, India have 'ability' to find way for friendly coexistence

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: China hopes to "accelerate" the resumption of practical cooperation with India and both sides have the "ability" to find a way for friendly coexistence and jointly create the 'Asian century', Charge d'Affaires at the Chinese embassy Ma Jia has said.

At an event hosted by the embassy last evening to mark the 74th anniversary of the founding of China, Ma also said the two countries need to jointly oppose "zero-sum games and keep our region away from geopolitical calculations".

In her remarks, she also touched upon the eastern Ladakh border row.

"The two sides maintained communication through diplomatic and military channels to move the border situation from emergency response to normalized management and control," she said, repeating what Beijing has been claiming on the lingering border row in eastern Ladakh.

India has been consistently maintaining that the situation at the border in eastern Ladakh is not normal and that peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) were key for normalization of overall ties.

The senior Chinese diplomat said China hopes to "accelerate" the resumption of practical cooperation with India and both sides have the "ability and wisdom" to find a way for friendly coexistence and jointly create the 'Asian century'.

"We hope to firmly stick to the correct direction of China-India relations. China and India are eternal neighbours who need to accurately understand each other's strategic intentions, and to support and contribute to each other's success instead of undermining and doubting each (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Governor reviews development activities in Dhemaji

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 26: Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria who was on a one day visit to Dhemaji district on Tuesday, reviewed the various development activities taking place in the district.

He held several meetings with the Dhemaji district commissioner, superintendent of police, heads of security agencies, and department heads at the DC Conference Hall in the presence of state education minister, Ranoo Pegu and state labour and employment minister, Sanjoy Kisan.

During the meeting, the Governor took stock of and assessed the implementation of both central and state government schemes in the district and their likely dates of completion. He also took note of the development works along with prevailing law and order in the district.

Dhemaji district commissioner Ankur Bharali apprised the Governor of different flagship schemes being undertaken in the district along with their progress. He further took note on the functions of the departments and asked the department heads to see that the public are being benefited from their respective schemes.

Kataria also asked the DC to identify the problems and issues at the ground level for the expeditious implementation of the PMAY-G scheme. He also advised the panchayat and rural development department to strictly enforce the MNREGA scheme for the maximum benefit of the general public. Taking stock of the education scenario and enrolment in the district, he also asked the officials concerned to take adequate steps in increasing enrolment of women in higher (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Silica nanoparticles-coated cotton fabric developed using rice husk

IIT-Guwahati develops fabric to aid in tackling marine pollution

GUWAHATI, Sept 26: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Guwahati on Tuesday said they have developed a fabric that can separate oil from water, which will help in tackling marine pollution caused by oil spills.

The silica nanoparticles-coated cotton fabric has been developed using rice husk, an agricultural waste, as the primary source material, said Vaibhav Goud, a professor in the IIT-Guwahati's department of chemical engineering.

The aim is to convert an agricultural waste into a sustainable value-added product to mitigate marine oil pollution, he said.

Oil spills due to industrial dis-



charge or mishap cause irreversible damage to the aquatic ecosystems. Conventional cleaning techniques such as skimming or in-situ burning are ineffective, costly and cause additional pollution, said

Goud, who authored a paper on the research along with Sutapa Das.

"Our technology has multiple beneficial effects on the environment. Rice husk is an agricultural byproduct, rich in silica that is gen-

erated in millions of tons every year. It is usually burnt unscientifically, causing air pollution, but with our technique, this waste rice husk is converted into 3D sorbents that mitigate oil contamination by following a selective active-filtration process," Goud said.

In this process, rice husk is gradually heated and converted into charcoal, also known as bio-char. Subsequently, this bio-char is subjected to further heating to transform it into silica nanoparticles.

Finally, these treated nanoparticles are coated over a cotton material, creating a natural three-dimensional sorbent for separating oil-water mixture, the professor said. "Our experiments have demonstrated (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Tea Board to revert to old English auction system pan India

KOLKATA/GUWAHATI, Sept 26: The Tea Board India has written to registered auction organisers across the country, producers associations and buyers associations that it has been decided to revert to the old English auction system for which it has issued necessary time-limits.

The letter issued on Monday said that it has been decided to introduce the practices of the erstwhile English auction system under the ambit of the Bharat auction model.

Earlier, the Bharat auction system was introduced in North India in April 2023, while the same was already in force in South India earlier.

The letter said that the Tea Board had already held consultations with NSEIT Limited regarding the re-introduction of the features of the English auction system in the newly configured software.

While the Tea Board had earlier suggested dropping of sale numbers 39 and 40 in all the auction centres across India, the statutory body revoked the decision after producers' bodies said the tea companies would suffer financially if these two sales were dropped.

It said that sale number 41 to be held on October 17, 2023, will be held live under the English auction system.



All the stakeholders in North India had been saying that price discovery under the Bharat auction system was not optimal, unlike the English auction system.

A tea broker said that the Tea Board's decision to revert to the English is welcome and will benefit all those involved in the trade.

Meanwhile, a report from Guwahati said the decision to 'bring in practices of the erstwhile English auction model under the ambit of the Bharat model' was taken following representations and meetings by stakeholders with officials as well as the Union Commerce Minister.

The tea growers, sellers, buyers and other stakeholders had maintained that there were several issues under the Bharat model,

including low price realisation, and had urged for returning to the old system.

Tea Association of India (TAI) secretary general PK Bhattacharjee, in a letter on Monday, said that the decision to drop the sales 'may have adverse consequences on the cash flow of tea companies, especially at a time when all tea garden managements are already facing financial obligations to meet their bonus commitments'.

"The deferment of the sale of catalogued teas could potentially result in a severe cash crunch for all tea companies, making it challenging to fulfil impending financial commitments and possibly creating a law and order situation in the garden," he said.

The TAI requested for proceeding

with the scheduled sales while simultaneous work to revert to the English auction is undertaken in the background.

The Nilgiri Wayanad Tea Association also dashed off a letter to the Tea Board over its 'abrupt decision...without the concurrence of affected stakeholders'.

"We request you to kindly rescind this decision with immediate effect and call for a proper discussion to decide on a proper and acceptable timeline to bring back the English Auctions," the association president CM Joseph said.

"In view of the concerns expressed in the representations, Board has considered their requests to allow conducting sale no 39 and 40 across all auction centres of India as per schedule," the later order issued by the controller of licensing said.

The Bharat system has been better received in South India, but the auctioneers and other stakeholders in Northern India have expressed "dissatisfaction" over the new model and have been pursuing returning to the former English auction system.

A basic difference between the two systems is that in the Bharat Auction model, the bids are entered before the lots offered go live, while in the English system, the bids can be made till a lot is sold. (PTI)

Rupee falls 14 paise to settle at 83.27 against US dollar

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: The rupee stayed on the downward track for the second straight day to settle 14 paise lower at 83.27 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday due to a firm greenback against major currencies overseas and persistent foreign capital outflows.

Besides, weak equity market sentiment and elevated levels of crude oil prices -- hovering above USD 92 a barrel -- weighed on the domestic currency, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.19 and traded between a high of 83.17 and a low of 83.27 against the greenback during the day. It finally settled at 83.27 (provisional), registering a fall of 14 paise from its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee declined by 19 paise to close at 83.13 against the dollar.

Analysts attributed the downward movement of the rupee to a strengthening dollar amid weak Asian markets and rising US Treasury yields.

The US dollar surged to a ten-month high level after a Federal Reserve policymaker hinted at a longer interest rate hike due to resilience in the US economy. The 10-year US treasury yields also rose to a 16-year high.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said: "Indian rupee depreciated on Tuesday on a positive tone in US dollar and weak domestic markets. Weak Asian markets and FII outflows also weighed on rupee".

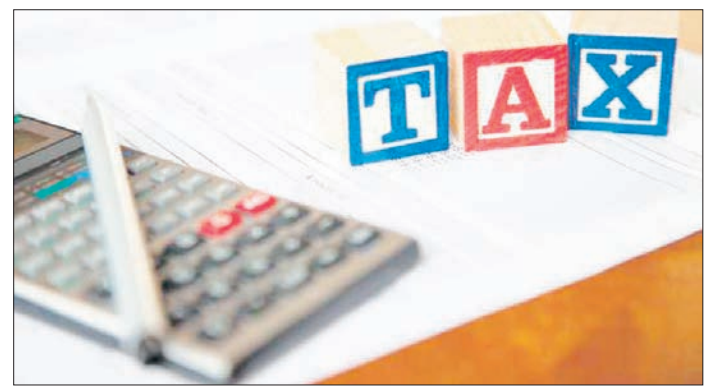
He said global risk sentiments deteriorated on the renewed housing crisis in China after Evergrande missed a bond repayment. "However, decline in crude oil prices prevented a sharp fall in the domestic currency."

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on risk aversion in global markets amid the rising US dollar and hawkish US Federal Reserve stance. Selling pressure from FIIs may put further downside pressure on the rupee. However, the decline in crude oil prices may support the rupee at lower levels."

"Traders may take cues from US consumer confidence and new home sales data which is expected weaker than the previous reading. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 82.80 to ₹ 83.80," Choudhary added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.06 per cent to 105.94. (PTI)

Tax department notifies 'Angel Tax' rules for valuing investments in startups



NEW DELHI, Sept 26: The income tax department has notified rules for valuation of investments by resident and non-resident investors in startups, thus paving way for implementation of the changes brought in 2023-24 Budget.

As per the changes in Rule 11UA of I-T rules, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) provides that the valuation of compulsorily convertible preference shares (CCPS) and equity shares issued by unlisted startups can be based on the fair market value.

The amended rules also retain the five new valuation methods proposed in the draft rules for consideration received from the non-residents viz., (i) Comparable Company Multiple Method, (ii) Probability Weighted Expected Return Method, (iii) Option Pricing Method, (iv) Milestone Analysis Method, and (v) Replacement Cost Method.

The rules come into effect from September 25.

Deloitte India Partner Sumit Singhania said from investors' standpoint, revised rules offer wider range of valuation methodologies to work with, and that ought to make compliance less onerous, henceforth.

"Also, safe harbour permitting 10 per cent deviation from fair value makes room for valuation adjustments when needed. Overall, the trajectory is to align tax valuation methodologies with permissible exchange control norms," Singhania said.

Nangia & Co LLP Partner Amit Agarwal said the amendments to Rule 11UA of the Indian Income Tax Act bring positive changes by offering taxpayers flexibility through multiple valuation methods, simplifying the valuation data consideration, incentivising venture capital investments, facilitating investments from notified entities, providing clarity on CCPS and encouraging foreign investments.

"The inclusion of a tolerance threshold for minor valuation discrepancies further enhances efficiency and fairness in tax assessments, ultimately benefiting both taxpayers and the government."

"These changes offer taxpayers a broader range of valuation methods to choose from, including internationally recognized approaches, thereby attracting for-

eign investments and fostering clarity. Moreover, the notified final rule introduces an additional sub-clause specifically addressing CCPS," Agarwal said.

SW India Managing Partner and Co-founder Atul Puri said the CBDT has amended Rule 11UA, for arriving at the fair market value of unquoted shares issued to resident and non-resident investors.

Rule 11UA at present prescribes two methods for the valuation of unquoted shares i.e.: DCF (Discounted Cash Flow) method and NAV (Net Asset Value) method for resident investors.

However, there was no specific reference to the valuation of shares issued to non-resident investors and this would lead to confusion and litigation between tax officers and non-resident investors.

Amended Rule 11UA includes five more valuation methods available as an option to non-resident investors, in addition to DCF and NAV methods. However, the option to value equity shares as per any of these five methods is not available to resident investors.

"The amended Rule 11UA is a welcome move, which brings in more clarity for both investor and investee, basis which an appropriate valuation method can be adopted, thereby, reducing the chances of any future litigation and addressing illegitimate or non-genuine transactions while promoting investments in eligible startups," Puri said. AKM Global Tax Partner Amit Maheshwari said the new angel tax rules have very well taken care of an important aspect of CCPS valuation mechanism which was not the case earlier since most of the investments in India by VC funds is through the CCPS route only.

"The extension of 10 per cent safe harbour to CCPS investments as it was earlier meant for equity shares will give necessary margin of safety for taking care of foreign exchange fluctuations and is a welcome move," Maheshwari added.

The CBDT had in May come out with draft rules on valuation of funding in unlisted and unrecognised startups for levying income tax, commonly termed as 'Angel Tax' and had invited public comments on it.

The amended rules are aimed at bridging the gap between the rules outlined in FEMA and the Income Tax. (PTI)

Jaipur Rugs unveils Rug Utsav 2023

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 26: Jaipur Rugs, a renowned leader in handmade rug manufacturing, is delighted to announce the much-anticipated 2023 edition of its annual Rug Utsav, commencing on September 27th. This year's Rug Utsav offers customers exclusive discounts on a wide range of rug categories, interactive sessions with talented weavers, and a heartfelt initiative to support education through the JR Meritorious Scholarship Program. Customers are invited to explore the world of exquisite craftsmanship with exclusive discounts on Dhurries, Hand Tufted, Handloom, and Hand Knotted rugs. Additionally, for the first time, the highly-acclaimed Manchaha collection from Jaipur Rugs will be available at special discounted prices, allowing customers to own pieces of artisanal excellence.

Jaipur Rugs invites customers to engage in a unique journey by interacting with skilled weavers. At various Jaipur Rugs stores, customers can immerse themselves in the art of rug making and even try their hand at tufting under the expert guidance of rural craftsmen. Discounts ranging from 10% to a generous 80% are offered across diverse rug categories.

These rugs, crafted using 2500-year-old weaving traditions, are designed with a focus on sustainability and contemporary design, making them original Indian rugs with a modern twist.

In a commitment to uplift the lives of weavers, a portion of the Rug Utsav proceeds will contribute to the JR Meritorious Scholarship Program. This initiative sponsors the education of deserving meritorious students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement, securing more than 75% marks in their board examinations. The program aims to provide these young talents with opportunities to advance their careers and fulfill their potential.

The 2023 Utsav Rug Festival is a celebration of artistry, craftsmanship, and education. Join from September 27th to explore stunning rug collections, engage with weavers, and make a significant contribution to the education of deserving students. For more information and to avail of these offers, please visit the [Jaipur Rugs website] (www.jaipurrgs.com) or stop by one of the Jaipur Rugs stores near you.

Progressive TRAI recommendations to propel digital development in NE

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 26: The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has welcomed several important recommendations by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) that align with the industry's long-standing requests. These recommendations are expected to boost the expansion of telecom and broadband services in North-East India, fostering socio-economic and digital progress for citizens.

One of the key recommendations is the complete exemption of Right of Way (RoW) charges in rural, tribal, and hilly regions for a duration of five years. This move aims to encourage Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) to invest further in network deployments in less populated areas.

TRAI also recommends prioritizing electricity supply to telecom sites within 15 days of connection requests, and at Utility/Industrial tariff rates, which are lower than the Industrial tariff. Additionally, last mile installation charges for extending electricity connections to remote and hilly telecom sites should be waived or subsidized. The use of renewable energy for telecom is also encouraged through a proposed government scheme to fund renewable energy instal-

lations at strategic remote telecom sites. To expedite telecom infrastructure development, provisions are recommended to be incorporated into the Ministry of Environment and Forests' policy to hasten the accord of environmental clearance to TSPs for installing mobile towers and DG sets for tower locations.

Furthermore, TRAI advises the implementation of earlier recommendations regarding the use of street furniture for small cell and aerial fiber deployment to strengthen 5G deployments.

Lastly, TRAI suggests that the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) engage with the Department of Expenditure (DoE) to extend the execution timeline for projects proposed by states under the 'Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment for FY 2022-23' scheme, especially those involving the extension of last-mile connectivity using Optical Fiber Cable (OFC). This extension would help ensure that planned development efforts in the region are not disrupted or delayed.

These recommendations, if implemented, have the potential to significantly enhance digital infrastructure and access in North-East India, promoting economic growth and connectivity for its residents.

Sensex falls 78 pts on profit taking in IT & banking shares, FII outflows

MUMBAI, Sept 26: Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by 78 points in a listless trade on Tuesday due to select profit taking in IT and banking shares in line with weak Asian markets and continuous foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell 78.22 points or 0.12 per cent to settle at 65,945.47 with 14 of its components closing lower and 16 advancing. During the day, it declined 158.06 points or 0.23 per cent to a low of 65,865.63.

The broader Nifty dipped 9.85 points or 0.05 per cent to end at 19,664.70. As many as 23 Nifty shares declined while 27 closed in the green.

Among Sensex shares, Infosys Bank fell the most by 1.29 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra (1.28 per cent), Kotak Bank (1.24 per cent) and Infosys (1 per cent).

Asian Paints, ICICI Bank, Titan, and Bajaj Finserv were among the losers.

On the other hand, Nestle India rose the most by 1.58 per cent. Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank and



Tata Consultancy Services were among the gainers.

"Markets witnessed a listless trading session and lingered in negative territory for most part of the trading session due to weak Asian and European cues. Traders resorted to selective profit-taking ahead of the next week's RBI policy outcome, while external factors like strength in dollar index and rising treasury yields continue to

dampen sentiment," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.09 per cent and the smallcap index climbed 0.33 per cent.

Among the indices, IT fell 0.46 per cent, bankex declined 0.45 per cent, teck (0.36 per cent), consumer durables (0.23 per cent) and financial services

(0.21 per cent).

Commodities, consumer discretionary, FMCG, industrials and telecommunication were among the gainers.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said, "Trading remained flat as headwinds from the global market and continued selling by FIIs kept domestic investors under vigil."

"While bargain hunting was visible in small-cap stocks due to the recent correction and favourable valuation compared to large and mid-caps, IT indices slid due to the fear of one more rate hike by the FED and a consequent reduction in spending."

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended in positive territory on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.79 per cent to USD 92.55 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 2,333.03 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

Global shares dip with eyes on the Chinese economy and a possible US shutdown

TOKYO, Sept 26: Global shares mostly sank Tuesday over worries about a possible US government shutdown and the troubled Chinese economy. France's CAC 40 lost 0.7% in early trading to 7,076.82. Germany's DAX fell 0.5% to 15,329.25. Britain's FTSE 100 edged up 0.2% to 7,638.01. US shares were set to drift lower with Dow futures down 0.3% at 34,158.00. S&P 500 futures lost 0.5% to 4,359.25.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index slipped 1.1% to finish at 32,315.05. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 dipped 0.5% to 7,038.20. South Korea's Kospi dropped 1.3% to 2,462.97. Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 1.5% to 17,470.31, while the Shanghai Composite fell 0.4% to 3,102.27. Investors are watching for Chinese economic indicators being released later in the week.

"The Chinese property woes are far from over, as the notorious developer Evergrande defaulted on its 4 billion yuan onshore bond repayment and delayed the restructuring meetings," said Tina Teng, market analyst at CMC Markets APAC & Canada.

While the crisis is not shocking to those closely following China's property market, concerns are growing that Chia's housing sector is still deteriorating, raising risks of financial instability, said Stephen Innes, managing partner at SPI Asset Management. (AP)

Axis Bank plans to extend branch network in Gujarat

The lender opened its 5000th branch in Ahmedabad city on Tuesday

AHMEDABAD, Sept 26: Axis Bank plans to extend its branch network in the state by adding 28 more branches and 69 new ATMs this financial year, as it aims to enhance accessibility for the people of Gujarat.

The lender opened its 5000th branch in Ahmedabad city on Tuesday, 29 years after it launched its first branch in the same city.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel inaugurated the new branch. Axis Bank MD and CEO Amitabh Chaudhry and other senior officers were also present on the occasion.

The bank has 389 branches in Gujarat, out of which 147 branches are in the metro, 60 in urban regions, 106 in semi-urban, 18 in rural and 58 in unbanked rural regions.

The Bank's very first branch was opened here in 1994, then known as UTI Bank. This first branch was inaugurated by former Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, Axis Bank said in a statement.



"The bank plans to extend its branch network in the state by adding 28 more branches and 69 new ATMs in this fiscal year. This strategic expansion demonstrates Axis Bank's commitment to enhance accessibility and convenience for the people of Gujarat," it said.

Chaudhry told reporters that the bank is betting big on its three "distinct propositions" of Bharat banking, digitisation, and 'Spars'. The Bharat banking business caters to the needs of rural and semi urban populations, and digitisation remains a huge area of focus for the bank, Chaudhry said, adding that Spars is a programme meant to drive consumer obsession in the bank.

Bank's Group Executive and Head of Branch Banking, Ravi Narayanan said Axis Bank is looking to open 500 branches through this fiscal.

"By the end of the first half of this year, we should be somewhere around the 50 per cent mark, which should ensure that the pace that we are going, we should be comfortable in terms of what we have set out as our aspiration," he said.

The bank engages over 1,040 village-level entrepreneurs in Gujarat to provide financial support to its large customer-base in the rural regions and has also committed ₹ 37 crores from FY 2024 to 2027, to support 28,520 rural families in Gujarat through various Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, it said. (PTI)

SELF DECLARATION

I, Busam Ramadasu, S/o B Nancharai is hereby declare that my original name is Busam Ramadasu. Whereas, in some of my son's documents named Naga Mallikarjuna Rao B is wrongly mentioned as B Ramdas and Nancharai Ramdas. I also hereby declare that I don't have any issues if my son mentioned my name as Busam Ramadasu in his documents here onwards.

ASSOCIATED WORKS AT TINSUKIA DIVISION

E-Tender Notice No. TSK/Engg/85 of 2023 Dated: 22-09-2023. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Brief Description of Item:** Associated works for merging of L-Xing gate AT/2 & AT/3 by elimination of AT/2, AT/4 & AT/5 by elimination of AT/5, AT/6 & AT/8 by elimination of AT/6, AT/7 & AT/8 by elimination of AT/7, AT/10 & AT/11 by elimination of AT/10 under jurisdiction of ADEN/Simaluguri Jn. **Tender Value:** ₹5,24,70,951/- **Earnest Money:** ₹4,12,400/- **Date & time of closing of Tender:** 15:00 hrs. of 16-10-2023 & opening at 16:00 hrs. of 16-10-2023. The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 16-10-2023 in the website www.irops.gov.in **DRM (W), Tinsukia** **NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY** *Serving Customers With A Smile*

NAME CORRECTION

My name is Sabbir Hussain but wrongly recorded in my all Academic school documents e.g Admit Card, Marksheet, Certificate etc as Md Sabbir Hussain in place of Sabbir Hussain. That Sabbir Hussain and Md Sabbir Hussain is the same and one person.

That's corrected by an affidavit Before Notary Public Darrang, Mangaldai.

Name : Sabbir Hussain
S/O : Badsha Ali
R/O : No 2 Thekerabari
P/O : Balabari
P/S : Dhula
Dist : Darrang (Assam)

Minister Pijush Hazarika assesses flood and erosion impact in Jorhat district

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Sept 26: Pijush Hazarika, the minister for parliamentary affairs, water resources, information and public relations; printing and stationery; social justice and empowerment, conducted an extensive inspection of flood and erosion-affected areas in Jhanji and Teok within Jorhat district.

The minister assessed the extent of erosion along the Jhanji River at Jhanji Rajabari Boragaon and engaged in a discussion with local residents. After consulting with officials from the Water Resources Department, Hazarika assured the community of taking necessary measures to address erosion in Hatimuria, Sensowa, Boragaon, Gayangaon, and Dhemajigaon before the upcoming monsoon season. Additionally, he assessed the condition of transportation infrastructure and roads in these villages.

Workshop on music organised by Sur Sadhna at Nagaon

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Sept 26: Sur Sadhna, a renowned musical institute in the small town, joined hands with the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, to host a special music workshop from September 23 to September 25. The workshop took place at the Sur Sadhna hall located in New Amulapatty.

The workshop featured notable folklore experts such as Dr Bidyut Bikas Senapati, Ajoy Rajbanshi, and Atikur Rahman as key trainers. Over 50 participants from across the district enthusiastically took part in the workshop. The valedictory session was graced by distinguished guests, including Chitradev Mahanta, Mousam Mahanta, Naba Kr Mahanta, and Dr Karabi Devi. During this session, certificates of participation were distributed to the attendees.

This collaborative effort between Sur Sadhna and the Sangeet Natak Akademi provided a platform for music enthusiasts to enhance their skills and knowledge under the guidance of experts in the field.

Assam Rifles organises drawing competition

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 26: Assam Rifles, under HQ Inspector General Assam Rifles (East), organized a drawing competition with the theme 'World Environment Health Day' for students of Gyan Vikas Academy in Chariduar.

The competition aimed to stimulate the creative abilities of students, foster fine motor skills, and encourage their interest in art. Drawing competitions like these provide an excellent platform for young minds to develop their artistic skills, express their creativity, and gain recognition for their talents.

Urpad Beel in Goalpara considered for Conservation Reserve status



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 26: The Assam Forest Department is currently working on declaring Urpad Beel in Goalpara district as a conservation reserve or wildlife sanctuary. This wetland is known for hosting thousands of migratory waterfowl annually and was recently recognized as an Important Bird Area by the Bombay Natural History Society.



Hazarika also visited Banai village along the riverbank to evaluate the damage caused by recent floods and erosion. He pledged to initiate projects to raise and widen the embankment in this area within the next two months.

During his visit, Hazarika interacted with villagers at the Hanuman Mandir in Banai to gain insight into their problems and concerns. Residents from villages incorporated into the Mariani constituency due to the recent delimitation process also attended and raised their issues, which the minister duly noted.

Accompanied by Mariani MLA Rupiyoti Kurmi, Hazarika promised the people at the meeting to convey their request for the paving of the existing 25 km embankment along the Jhanji River to the chief minister.

Hazarika proceeded to the Susabat area, inspecting the sluice gate and assuring villagers of its prompt functionality. Later, he held a public meeting in the Jokaichuk and Simaluguri Mouza areas, where he took note of the concerns voiced by the local population.

Accompanying the minister during his tour were officials from the Water Resources Department, Mariani MLA Rupiyoti Kurmi, AIDC chairman Santanu Puzari, Jorhat district unit BJP president Hemanta Kalita, and several district office-bearers of the ruling party.

KSA seeks renaming and development of DMC&H

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Sept 26: The Karbi Students Association (KSA- Jemson Timung faction) has submitted a memorandum to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, conveyed through the district commissioner of Karbi Anglong. They have put forward several demands concerning the Diphu Medical College & Hospital (DMC&H).

The key requests made in the memorandum are - Renaming: The KSA has requested the renaming of DMC&H to Semsonsing Ingti Medical College & Hospital in honor of the founder of Karbi Anglong district.

Introduction of New Courses: The association has proposed the introduction of new courses such as BDS degree, BHMS degree, and medical Diploma courses like Postgraduate Diploma in TB & Chest, among others.

Infrastructure Development: They have emphasized the need for infrastructure development, especially due to the college's vulnerability to flooding during the monsoon season.

Administration Role: The KSA has demanded that the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council be given authority in the administration of the medical college, particularly concerning staff up to grade-III level. The memorandum bears the signatures of KSA general secretary Ram Singh Tokbi, vice president Moniram Teron, and publicity secretary Kangthim Engti.

Seminar on Fatheae-Dowaz to be held

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Sept 26: A two-day celebration of Prophet Muhammad's birth and death anniversary, known as Fatheae-Dowaz-Daham, and Edd-E-Milad-un-Nabi, will be held at Iddagah Maidan in Garam Bazar on October 7, 2023.

The first day of the program will include activities such as a quiz competition, recitation of the Quran, and Nate-e-Rosul (poetry praising the Prophet) among children and students from different Zamats (Muslim communities).

On the second day of the celebration, a seminar will be held with the topic "Misuse and Ignorance About the Principles of Islam as the Root Causes of the Rise of Islamic Phobia in the World."

Brahmaputra erosion continues to affect Ligoribari and Desangmukh

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Sept 26: Recent erosion by the Brahmaputra River has caused significant damage to hundreds of bighas of land in Ligoribari and Desangmukh, leading to concerns among the local population. According to local youths, the Water Resource Department has been spending over Rs one crore annually on superficial erosion protection measures.

Rajani Panging, a social worker, stated that erosion in Desangmukh began in 1988 and has impacted villages like Aphala, Ligoribari, Saraipora, and others. Political leaders have promised permanent measures to protect Desangmukh, but these measures have not yet been implemented.

Water resource minister Pijush Hazarika recently visited the site when the Brahmaputra's water level was high, but erosion occurred soon after the water level receded. Locals criticize the use of geo mats or geo shields as a waste of public money because they were haphazardly placed without effective embedding in the soil.

Eminent social worker, artist, and former ward commissioner Prabin Patowari passes away

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Sept 26: The greater Tezpur area mourns the loss of eminent social worker, former ward member of Tezpur Municipality Board, and renowned artist, Prabin Patowari, who passed away on Monday at his residence in Brajen Nagar. He was 74 years old.

A dedicated member of the Asom Gana Parishad, Patowari served the regional party in various capacities throughout his life. His passion for addressing the issues in his ward and his active involvement in problem-solving gained him popularity in the area, leading to his election as a ward member of the Tezpur Municipality Board, representing Ward Number 19, twice.

Prior to his political career, Patowari worked for the Assam State Electricity Board under the Tezpur division. Upon his retirement from service in 2003, he joined the Asom Gana Parishad. During his tenure at the ASEB, he actively led employees' organizations and trade unions, advocating for workers' rights. He also played a significant role during the Assam agitation. In addition to his political endeavors, Patowari founded the renowned socio-cultural organization, Brajen Barua Memorial Sangha, in his area.

An ardent lover of art and theater, the late Patowari was closely associated with the world of painting and theatrical activities during his lifetime. As a committed actor on stage, he portrayed various roles in several plays.



His sudden demise has led to widespread mourning in Tezpur, with numerous organizations and individuals, including MLA Tezpur, Prithiraj Rabha, former MLA Brindaban Goswami, Tezpur district committee president of AGP Ratul Nath, former chairman of Tezpur Municipality Board Pampa Deka, and other notable figures expressing their condolences. Patowari is survived by his two sons, daughters-in-law, and many grieving relatives.

RPF rescues rare tortoises from illegal transport



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 26: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of NF Railway, acting on intelligence information, successfully recovered a significant quantity of rare tortoises that were being transported illegally on train no 13176 (Silchar - Sealdah) Kanchenjunga Express.

On September 25, 2023, an intelligence report alerted IPF/CIB/LMG regarding the illegal transportation of a large number of tortoises by unidentified individuals. The information was promptly shared with IPF/RPF/LMG and GRP/LMG. A joint team comprising CIB/LMG officials, RPF, and GRP Luming conducted a thorough search and inspection of train no. 13176 upon its arrival at Luming Railway station.

During the inspection, they discovered three suspicious black bags under the custody of two individuals located beneath their berths. The individuals were asked to open the bags, revealing six plastic containers in total. These containers held a total of 74 tortoises. Upon further questioning, the individuals confessed to transporting the tortoises from Silchar to Guwahati. RPF/Post/LMG took custody of the recovered tortoises, along with the plastic baskets and bags, and detained the two individuals for further legal action.

The incident was reported to the forest range officer, Luming Range, who promptly arrived at RPF/Post/LMG to take custody of the 74 tortoises with the necessary documentation. Both individuals were apprehended under the Wildlife Protection Act, and a case was registered by the LMG forest range officer. The accused individuals were produced in the Lower District Court of CJM/Hojai for legal proceedings.

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ONGC CISF unit in Jaysagar commended for community service

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Sept 26: The ONGC CISF unit stationed in Jaysagar received praise for its recent community service efforts. On September 25, the CISF unit conducted a cleanliness and plantation drive in the Rongpur ME School campus and Sundarpur Primary School campus. This initiative also extended to the campus of Jaysagar High School and two schools in Meteka, where saplings were planted along the Chipahi gaon road.

A team of 25 CISF personnel, led by Assistant Commandant Akash Saxena and Inspector Jayant Panda, actively participated in these activities. They also engaged in an interactive session with students from the schools, focusing on creating awareness about the harmful effects of consuming substances like betel nuts, tobacco, and cigarettes. The local community highly appreciated the social service performed by the CISF unit.

Dibrugarh plans eco-friendly Durga Puja celebration

HT Bureau
DIBRUGARH, Sept 26: The Dibrugarh district administration is gearing up to celebrate this year's Durga Puja in an eco-friendly manner, in response to global warming and environmental challenges.

A meeting held at the Dibrugarh District Commissioner's conference hall brought together key stakeholders, including District Development Commissioner (DDC) Jitu Kumar Das, Additional SP (Security) David R Neingaita, circle officers, administrative officers, and presidents and secretaries of various puja committees.

During the meeting, the puja committees were urged to provide a written declaration to the Dibrugarh Municipal Board confirming their commitment to use eco-friendly materials for making idols of Goddess Durga and her entourage, replacing plaster of Paris.

Additionally, the Additional SP instructed the presidents and secretaries of all puja committees to promptly submit a list, including contact numbers of volunteers, presidents, secretaries, and their preferred immersion ghats. The committees were also encouraged to apply for Puja permissions through the 'Seva Setu' app.

Romuda's Smriticharan Sabha held

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Sept 26: A public commemorative meeting in honor of prominent Assam Movement leader Pranabjit Chaliha, also known as Romuda, was held at Chaliha's Phukan Nagar residence. The event was attended by admirers and followers of Romuda.

Noted social and spiritual leader Lakhikanta Mahanta inaugurated the meeting by lighting a ceremonial lamp in front of Romuda's portrait and reciting verses from the Gita.

Former MP of Borpeta Parliamentary Constituency, Kumar Dipak Das, spoke at the meeting. He praised Romuda's unique style in advocating for the rights of the exploited Assamese people and his role in fostering a sense of Assamese nationalism. Das also noted that Romuda was a prominent volleyball player. He expressed hope that the commemorative volume dedicated to Romuda would reflect the multifaceted personality of this true Assamese leader.

Manoj Bhagawati, secretary of the Sivasagar Sports Association, remembered his association with Romuda and paid tribute to his fighting spirit as a legendary sports person.



The all-faith religious prayer session was led by Mukheswar Mohan, the Tai purohit.

Rantu Paniphukan of Bir Lachit Sena paid tribute in his speech and emphasized how they discovered the indomitable spirit in Romuda. The Tinsukia district unit of Bir Lachit Sena released a commemorative song in memory of Romuda's struggle for self-expression.

Sringkhal Chaliha, Romuda's son, described his father as a true patriot and a courageous man who never compromised on Assamese nationalist aspirations.

Niren Sarma, a former leader of AGP in Jorhat, stated that Romuda shaped the destiny of Sivasagar AASU (All Assam Students' Union) into a strong, vocal patriotic group that could oppose the world when necessary.

Jogesh Bora, former secretary of AGP, Sivasagar District Committee, emphasized that Romuda was an uncompromising individual who fought for the Assamese people from the language movement of 1962 to the Assam Movement of 1979-1985 from the frontlines.

Pabitra Pran Bhattacharjya, Principal of Kalugaon Girls' High School, spoke about how Romuda inspired an entire generation of Assamese youths.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

You only grow when you are alone.
- Paul Newman

BJP-AIADMK Alliance Dissolves

In a decisive and somewhat expected turn of events, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) have officially ended their alliance, signaling a shift in the political dynamics of Tamil Nadu. After weeks of mounting tensions and public disagreements, AIADMK General-Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami has called it quits, stating that he can no longer tolerate the assertive behavior of Tamil Nadu BJP Chief K. Annamalai. This rupture in the alliance can be traced back to a fundamental disagreement between the two parties. Palaniswami had been urging the BJP leadership to rein in Annamalai and appoint a neutral alliance convener, distancing Annamalai from the decision-making process. However, the BJP chose to support Annamalai, primarily driven by its broader electoral strategy that seeks to pit Sanatana Dharma against Periyar's Dravidian principles in Tamil Nadu. The BJP views Tamil Nadu as a laboratory to test its Hindutva-driven politics, a strategy that Annamalai's assertiveness aligns with. His frequent anti-AIADMK remarks and provocations further exacerbated the situation, causing a significant strain on the already fragile alliance. The alliance, as one AIADMK politician aptly put it, had become "non-existent" and was destined to fall apart before the 2024 general elections.

Contrary to AIADMK's characterization of Annamalai as a "destructive pest," the BJP sees him as a dynamic force driving change in Tamil Nadu politics. This divide highlights the evolving landscape in Tamil Nadu, where traditional political norms are being challenged. While MK Stalin may appear to be in a strong position now, he should not become complacent. The 46-year-old Udhayanidhi Stalin cannot maintain a hero-like status indefinitely in the ever-changing world of politics. Expecting Annamalai to play a subordinate role to Palaniswami was unrealistic. The BJP would not agree to Palaniswami leading the TN state NDA, as evidenced by Palaniswami's private meeting with Amit Shah in New Delhi. The widening gap between AIADMK and BJP was insurmountable. AIADMK leaders attempted various strategies, from playing the "self-respect card" to demanding action, but they could not sway BJP's top leadership. The AIADMK-BJP alliance was destined to crumble, and this outcome marks a short-term victory for Annamalai and a setback for Edappadi Palaniswami. However, it's essential to note that South India, aside from Karnataka, remains uncharted territory for the BJP. Tamil Nadu remains beyond the BJP's reach, and Kerala is a challenge due to its unique political landscape.

The emergence of the INDI-Alliance has complicated the BJP's prospects in South India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah may struggle to make inroads in Kerala and Tamil Nadu unless Annamalai can secure Lok Sabha seats for the BJP. Nevertheless, the BJP's attempts in the south have often been unsuccessful, leading to perceptions of it as an invading force from North India. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and INDI-Alliance strategist MK Stalin recognizes that the BJP faces significant challenges in the state. Despite efforts like relocating Jawaharlal Nehru's Sengol to the New Parliament, the BJP's influence in Tamil Nadu remains limited. The party's plans for alliances in other southern states, such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, have also encountered obstacles. Only Karnataka remains a stronghold, but recent elections suggest that change may be on the horizon there as well. The south continues to be a complex and challenging region for the BJP to navigate.

Political outsider Stefanos Kasselakis wins race to head Greece's Left wing Syriza

By Satyaki Chakraborty

In an event of huge political significance for Greece as also Europe, an outsider Stephanos Kasselakis, with no previous experience in the politics of Greece was elected as the President of the Syriza, the main leftwing opposition party in the Greece which ruled the country from 2015 to 2019 as the leader of a leftwing coalition.

The Greek-American entrepreneur, who announced his candidacy for the post barely a month ago, received 56.69% of the vote against 43.31% for Efi Acharioglou, a former labour minister who had long been viewed as the favourite. Kasselakis replaced the former prime minister Alexis Tsipras, a former communist party member who built the Syriza and stormed to power in 2015 elections.

Syriza has been so long known as the left wing party having many members who were once connected with the Communist Party of Greece as also with its labour and student wings. In the recent national elections, Syriza faced badly leading to disappointment among its supporters. After Tsipras's resignation, Syriza was looking for a leader who can energise the demoralized ranks. The 35 year old Kasselakis joined the election fray with his new programme to impart a centrist focus to the Syriza known for its leftist approach.

Amid jubilant scenes outside Syriza's headquarters in Athens on Sunday September 24 night the 35-year-old leader told supporters: "Today light won and hope collectively, hope for the future ... I am not a phenomenon. I am the voice of a society and I'm not going to let you down. Tomorrow the hard work begins." The new Syriza head aroused big interest in his short campaign and his programme attracted the young in such a way that the victory was unprecedented signalling that most of the Syriza members gave the newcomer a big welcome.

The Greek-American has indicated that he will apply root-and-branch change to Syriza, a progressive alliance that includes Marxists, Euro-communists, ecologists and social democrats. He has stated that if the party ever wants to taste power again it should "just copy the US formula as soon as possible" by transforming into a "big tent" US-style Democratic Party. Among the array of policy priorities proposed by the businessman were "drastic" tax relief for private and public sector employees, the separation of church and state, judicial reforms, citizenship for migrant children born and brought up in Greece and legalising same-sex marriage. The Syriza members are looking for more focused policy announcement from the new leader but Kasselakis has promised that he will come out with more after he officially takes over as the party chief.

The election of a businessman with no political background as party chief has shocked the traditional left leaders of Syriza. "This is the end of leftwing Syriza as we know it," Stelios Kouloglou, a Syriza MEP said after the results were out. "That party died tonight. Kasselakis will make huge changes and in the future case studies will be conducted because what he has pulled off is so stunning. He appeared almost from nowhere and now is in charge. It's crazy, a scenario that no one would have believed a few months ago."

As against this, the young supporters of the new President said that Kasselakis is young and full of ideas who has the potential to defeat the present prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. They said that more new people will now join Syriza and the Party will once again be in a position to challenge the ruling right party. The new youth brigade of the elected leader are projecting Kasselakis as their new messiah who will take out the Syriza from stagnation and decline since 2019.

Political analysts of Greece are of the view that in the coming days a section of the party belonging to the traditional left may leave Syriza and join KTE, the Communist Party of Greece which improved its position in the last national elections. The issue is how the labour unions belonging to Syriza look at the new president? In any case, the main opposition party is undergoing transformation. One has to wait for some more time to arrive at any conclusion. (IPA Service)

Tourism development: Strategies and challenges for Assam's growing industry



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

In today's global landscape, virtually every country is actively vying to bolster its economic prowess through the promotion of tourism. Advanced nations have long recognized tourism as a potent instrument for economic advancement. Tourism serves as a catalyst for multifaceted progress, encompassing the preservation of arts and culture, environmental conservation, job creation for self-sufficiency, global resource promotion, infrastructure development, investment stimulation, and improved connectivity. This sector plays a pivotal role in not only boosting a country's economic standing but also in fostering cultural heritage and safeguarding the environment while simultaneously generating employment opportunities and expanding international outreach.

The tourism industry is incredibly diverse, encompassing a wide range of elements, from small-scale businesses like barbers and laundries to luxurious five or six-star hotels. This versatility has made tourism a highly sought-after sector in countries around the world. Notably, even small nations have harnessed the potential of tourism to bolster their economies. Some of these smaller countries have managed to thrive in the tourism industry while preserving their valuable resources. They've achieved this by leveraging their rich cultural heritage and the collective strength of their ethnic communities, emphasizing tourism as a form of social service, blending art and commerce, and valuing their ethnic heritage. Countries like Bhutan, Nepal, and Thailand, situated near India, stand out as prime examples of how tourism, with a focus on social and ethnic assets, has propelled them to significant economic progress.

While the organized history of the tourism sector in Assam is relatively recent, the region has been drawing tourists for centuries. Notably, during the six centuries of Ahom rule and two centuries of British colonial influence, Assam saw its fair share of visitors. Going even further back to the 7th century AD, the Chinese traveler Hsien Tsang explored Assam during the reign of Kumar Bhaskarvarma. However, it's important to recognize that the appeal of Assam to tourists cannot be summarized with such a simple analysis. The state has been a magnet for travelers throughout history, thanks to its natural beauty, diverse geography, cultural diversity, and a wealth of historical treasures from the era of kings and maharajas.

Looking at the history of tourist arrivals up to the early 21st century, it becomes evident

that Assam boasts a multitude of attractions. Beyond its breathtaking landscapes of rivers, mountains, and streams, the region offers both visible and hidden natural wonders, as well as cultural and societal creations that continue to enthrall visitors from near and far.

The tourism industry holds the potential to become a unique and vital resource for Assam's economic development in the near future. However, it is evident that the tourism industry has yet to tap into various artificial resources that could attract tourists. At present, tourism is not accorded the status of a major income-generating industry in Assam, but it's increasingly clear that such recognition is overdue. Unfortunately, there is a noticeable dearth of research and discussions regarding how the tourism sector could play a pivotal role in bolstering Assam's economy. This lack of in-depth analysis has left many unaware of the numerous benefits that the tourism industry can bring, such as fostering societal unity and providing an economic boost to propel the state forward. In these circumstances, some may shift the blame to the prevailing poverty among the majority of the population. However, it is worth noting that tourism has proven capable of helping many countries combat poverty, as the industry has opened up opportunities for the less fortunate.

The foremost challenge facing the tourism industry in Assam is effective marketing. To promote the rich tourism resources of Assam, various media channels, social platforms, and websites can be employed to reach audiences across different countries. However, the backbone of tourism development lies in a well-established transportation and communication system. Destinations lacking proper road infrastructure and transportation facilities tend to struggle in attracting tourists. Furthermore, there is a dearth of knowledgeable guides who can provide insights into Assam's key attractions. Additionally, the ab-

sence of dedicated department blogs for effective publicity is noticeable. To foster a more positive perception among tourists and contribute to shaping a safer global future, steps must be taken to influence attitudes and encourage responsible tourism practices.

The development of the tourism industry is not solely the responsibility of the tourism department; it requires the collective efforts of all departments. To enhance the quality of tourism in a country, various measures must be taken. While the tourism department can focus on beautifying tourist areas and facilitating their development, it is equally crucial that other departments maintain the roads leading to these destinations. Neglected road infrastructure can leave a negative impression on tourists. Additionally, maintaining cleanliness in towns and villages falls under the purview of municipal and panchayat authorities. Their actions directly impact tourists' perceptions. The growth of the tourism industry encompasses a wide range of services, from barbers, laundries, and tailors to drivers, hotels, restaurants, shops, banks, insurance, and the overall ambience of the local community. It's a collaborative effort that cannot be shouldered by the tourism department alone. For the tourism industry to thrive, every department must work in harmony towards its development.

The growth of the tourism industry doesn't hinge solely on the presence of five-star hotels; it requires a more diverse approach to cater to varying tourist preferences. Not all travelers seek the amenities of luxury hotels; some are drawn to spending nights amidst nature or opting for simpler accommodations to better appreciate natural beauty. There are tourists who relish rural experiences, immersing themselves in village life, agriculture, education, and cultural heritage. Addressing these nuanced aspects is essential for tourism development. While regulations can't dictate the behavior of small hotel and restaurant owners or guide the decor of shops that cater to

hungry tourists, the psychological aspects are equally critical in the tourism sector. Without a shift in the mindset of those directly or indirectly involved in the industry, even with beautiful tourist destinations, achieving the right objectives becomes challenging.

The mindset of the local drivers in a region plays a crucial role in fostering the growth of the tourism industry. They should recognize that tourism and tourists are vital for their own livelihoods, with tourists serving as their primary source of income. Unless drivers, whether they operate cars or rickshaws, perceive tourism as the linchpin for their future sustenance, the development of the tourism sector, no matter how robust, will fall short of its objectives. It's imperative that everyone prioritizes how to cater to and satisfy tourists. Unfortunately, it often appears that a significant portion of our society is more focused on exploiting tourists rather than upholding the reputation of the tourism system, the country, the state, and the local community.

The advancement of the tourism sector requires a collective effort aimed at promoting tourism across all aspects. Specifically, the tourism department plays a pivotal role in shaping a comprehensive plan for tourism development. Success in the tourism industry hinges on the formulation and effective execution of a multifaceted, people-centric strategy that encompasses all regions within a state. Only by crafting and implementing such a well-rounded scheme can the tourism sector truly thrive.

Fostering cooperation among all stakeholders is the most crucial step towards developing the tourism sector in a state like Assam. To achieve this, it is essential to raise awareness among the public, and higher education institutions can play a pivotal role in this endeavor. Colleges and universities possess the potential to effectively create awareness among the populace, thereby promoting Assam's tourism industry. However, the onus of driving this initiative lies with the tourism department itself. Notably, higher education institutions in Assam can contribute to tourism sector awareness without incurring additional costs, as many of them are eager to participate in such efforts. Several colleges and universities have already taken steps in this direction, and recognizing and honoring the best-performing institutions in these awareness campaigns can further motivate and inspire them to continue their valuable awareness initiatives.

The primary imperative for tourism development in Assam likely revolves around data collection. This entails gathering es-

sential information on various aspects of tourism, such as the number of tourists who visited specific destinations, their countries of origin, and their feedback on these places. Furthermore, it's crucial to understand which districts attracted how many tourists from different countries and the reasons behind their choice of those particular districts. Delving into the motivations of tourists, including why they sought experiences in specific areas, is equally vital. This comprehensive data acquisition will serve as the foundation for informed decisions and strategies to enhance tourism in Assam.

To facilitate the comprehensive evaluation of the tourist experience and address any shortcomings, the government should compile an annual report based on pertinent data. This report should serve as a basis for in-depth analysis by relevant government departments to determine whether tourists are receiving the satisfaction they seek and to identify any areas where expectations are not being met, as indicated by tourist feedback. Establishing data collection centers at Assam's airports is essential, and extending such facilities to every district is equally important. Additionally, each district should have a designated Director of Tourism or Tourism Officer to decentralize decision-making and empower every district to become a tourism hub. Just as there are officers for agriculture, transport, and forests, the appointment of a Tourism Officer in each district is crucial for the holistic development of the tourism sector. This decentralized approach will play a pivotal role in ensuring the proper growth of tourism in Assam.

To effectively organize and fortify the tourism sector in Assam, it is imperative to appoint Sub-Division Tourism Officers or Chakra Tourism Officers at the sub-division and district levels. The establishment of offices in every district, sub-division, and chakra is an essential step for the advancement of tourism, and this cannot be overlooked. Despite the existence of the Tourism Department for several decades, decentralization has not been fully realized. The department remains centralized in its operations. Similarly, despite the presence of the Tourism Development Corporation, the holistic growth of the tourism industry in Assam has been hindered by the absence of decentralized authority and decision-making power. To propel the tourism sector forward, embracing decentralization and empowering officers at various administrative levels is imperative. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

Tourism ushers in Peace and Smile

By: Lalit Garg

World Tourism Day is celebrated every year on 27 September with different themes; this year's theme is 'Tourism and Green Investment'. Every year one country is selected by the United Nations World Tourism Organization to host the Tourism Day; in 2023 'Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia' is hosting the events of this important day. Last year, Bali, an island of Indonesia was chosen as the host country for 2022. Today, the situation of war has deepened at the global level; every person is surrounded by some or the other problems, like - inflation, unemployment, disease, epidemic etc. In this era of fear and life crisis, it seems as if happiness and smiles have gone somewhere else. Despite all this, every person should definitely find some time in his life to have happiness, peace and joy coming alive; and tourism is a powerful medium for such wonderful moments. To embrace happiness and peace, one must embark on the world's itinerary.

Tourism will not only help in bringing back the happy moments in our lives, but it will also play an important role in the social, cultural, political and economic development of any country. Due to many reasons, clouds of economic crisis are looming over the world, in these circumstances the first need of every country is to strengthen the economy, and tourism will play an important role in it. The economy of many countries revolves around the tourism industry. European countries, coastal African countries, East Asian countries, Canada, Australia and India etc.

are such countries where the income from the tourism industry strengthens their economy. India attracted many foreign travelers in the past due to its perceived wealth, cultural splendour, resplendent nature and picturesque views; the arrival of the Chinese Buddhist monk Hsien Tsang in India is one such example. Emperor Ashoka and Emperor Harsh got many constructions done to strengthen the pilgrimage. Indian economics indicates the importance of tourism sector infrastructure for governments, which has played an important role in the past. After Independence, the tourism sector has continuously been a part of five year plans. After the Seventh Five Year Plan, various forms of tourism like business tourism, health tourism and wildlife tourism etc. were introduced in India. India's tourism sector ranks sixth in its contribution to the world's gross domestic product (GDP), with a contribution of US\$178.0 billion in 2021, as the World Travel and Tourism Council reports.

India has diverse tourism potential and richness, which offers many types of tourism, including -cultural, nature, heritage, education, sports, rural, eco-tourism etc. This diversity of India makes it a major tourist attraction. Tourism in India has the potential to promote faster, more sustainable and more inclusive growth. September 27 was chosen as World Tourism Day, because on this day the Constitution of the World Tourism Organization was accepted in 1970. Tourism Day is seen as a milestone in the efforts to promote global tourism and the purpose of celebrating this day is to disseminate and spread

awareness to the world about how tourism globally makes the world a family. It can help in developing social, cultural, political and economic values, and also increasing mutual understanding. This is the main basis of world peace. Tourism has special importance for countries like India; besides showing off the archaeological heritage or cultural heritage of the country, international tourism is also a source of revenue. The livelihood of many people is linked to international tourism sectors. Today, by looking at countries like India, old and historical buildings are being conserved and promoted in almost all the countries of the world.

India shows off innumerable tourist spots and exotic destinations. Be it grand monuments, ancient temples or tombs, rivers, waterfalls, natural scenic spots; its bright colours and rich cultural heritage have an inextricable connection with its technology-driven present. Tourist spots like Kerala, Shimla, Goa, Agra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Mathura, Kashi are always in the news for their foreign tourists. Every year lakhs of international tourists come to visit India. There are beautiful places for all types of tourists here, whether they are on an adventure trip, a cultural trip, a pilgrimage or a trip to the beautiful beaches. In Delhi, Mumbai, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and many states of South India, people spend months roaming around.

India is famous all over the world for its scenic beauty. In India, people of different sects, religions and castes live together. Due to its rich cultural, historical

and natural heritage, India ranks among the major tourist countries of the world. Every state here has supernatural and unique specialties which attract international tourists. India-travel has a special attraction for those tourists who are looking for calm, magical beauty and adventure. For these tourists, the abundant travel literature in India has been presenting itself with a special identity and usefulness. Till now, from the point of view of travel literature, Rahul Sankrityayan's 'My Tibet Yatra', Dr. Bhagwati Sharan Upadhyay's 'Sagar Ki Waver Par', Kapurthand Kulish's 'Main Dekhte Chala Gaya', Dharamveer Bharti's 'Dhale Par Himalaya' and Nehru's 'Aankhon Dekha Russia', Rameshwar Tandia's 'Memoirs of World Travel', Acharya Tulsi's travelogue. Like travel literature, my friend Shri Pukhraj Sethia's 'Aao Ghoome Apna Desh' is a poignant and interesting travelogue.

These travelogues contain all the qualities of a travelogue like factuality, geography, charm and spontaneity. Because of these texts, the diversity of the country has attracted many wandering people from across the country and the world. The aim of life of these itinerant men has been to move away from the hustle and bustle of life; and to find the meaning of life in the major tourist destinations. The search for this truth has led him to encounter various historical, natural, cultural and spiritual places. These travelogues not only describe the major tourist destinations, but also give a lively presentation of the people there, the food there, the lifestyle there, the cultural values there and the

historical facts there. This India is changing every moment, fresh, multi-dimensional and full of miraculous reality to the extent of magic. It is truly a supernatural and unique experience to encounter the complete diversity, daily innovations and contradictions of India; so that this multi-faceted India can be seen in its multi-dimensional and unique form and the beauty hidden in the layers of rough and tumble can be revealed.

We experience India like a bouquet, in which different types of flowers are arranged. Some flowers have the redness of Kashmir and some have the magic of Kamrup. Some flowers are cherished buds of Punjab, while some others have the fragrance of Shyama of Tamil Nadu. In some there are stories of sacrifice of Rajasthan and in some there is religiosity of Uttar Pradesh. In Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal and other states, cultural unity in diversity can be seen. Similarly, apart from tourism in Jaipur, the experience of detailed information about the ancient manuscripts stored there, architecture and Jain tourist places are also unique. The Indian Tourism Department had launched a campaign named 'Incredible India'. The objective of this campaign was to promote Indian tourism on the global platform, which became successful to a great extent. In the times of shrinking distances, people are curious to know about the outside world also. This is the reason why tourism has become a thriving industry in the world today. (The author is a journalist & columnist who can be reached at latitgarg11@gmail.com)

Since 2009, 'upper' caste women have won the most seats amongst women MPs, MLAs in UP: Data

By: Omar Rashid

More 'upper' caste women, in particular those from the Brahmin and Thakur communities, have been elected MLAs and MPs than women from the numerically-dominant Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the last six major elections held in Uttar Pradesh since 2009.

The UP assembly, with 403 members, is the largest state legislature in the country and politically one of the most important in terms of its bearing on national politics. UP also sends the highest number of MPs to the Lok Sabha, 80. Amid a debate on the exclusion of OBC women from the defined quota within the 33% women reservation, The Wire gathered verified information from the UP secretariat about the caste background of all women MLAs elected in the state since 2012 and also identified the caste of all women MPs elected in UP in the 2009, 2014 and 2019 general elections.

For the analysis of the caste of women MLAs, we considered the state assembly elections held in 2012, 2017 and 2022 as well as those candidates elected in by-polls held from time to time.

The number of women elected to the 403-member UP Assembly increased from 40 in the period of 2012-2017 to 46 in 2017-2022 and 48 in the period from 2022 till the present day. At the time when the assembly election results were declared, 35 women were elected in 2012, 42 in 2017 and 47 in 2022. The others were elected in subsequent by-polls.

We found that out of the total 134 women candidates elected since 2012, 46 belonged to the Scheduled Castes category, all of them winning in reserved constituencies. The traditional UC

were the second largest bloc, with 42 women MLAs while there were 39 women OBC MLAs. Seven Muslim women MLAs have also been elected since 2012.

Even if we consider the actual number of women individuals elected as MLAs since 2012 – 107 – there were more UCs (32) than OBCs (31), showing the disproportionate representation enjoyed by the UCs, who are a minority within the Hindu fold.

While 84 women MLAs were elected once, 19 were elected twice and four won on three occasions since 2012. Of the 19 women MLAs who were elected twice, there were six each from OBC and UC communities while seven were Dalits. Among the MLAs elected thrice, one was OBC, one Dalit and two UC Brahmins.

The exclusion of a defined quota for OBC women within the 33% women reservation bill introduced by the Narendra Modi government – the bill was subsequently passed by both Houses of parliament – has been a key question raised by opposition parties led by the Congress. They have even demanded a similar quota for Muslim women.

Opposition party MPs flagged concerns that without a defined quota for OBC and Muslim women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, the purpose of the Bill would be incomplete in a graded, caste-ridden society where the backward and marginalised castes and communities, in particular their women, were underrepresented in all spheres of life. The new bill provides one-third sub-quota for SC and ST women on the seats constitutionally already reserved for the SC and ST communities, and does not create a new category for



OBCs or Muslims.

Such a demand to provide a defined quota for OBC women was raised by all major opposition parties in the key states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where socialist Mandal-era parties had earlier opposed the women reservation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies on the ground that it did not provide intersectional representation. When the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance was in power, top socialist leaders Mulayam Singh Yadav, Lalu Prasad Yadav and Sharad Yadav had argued that without defined quotas within the women reservation for OBCs, SCs, STs and Muslims, the law would primarily benefit privileged women from urban areas instead of empowering marginalised women who lagged in terms of literacy, cultural and social capital.

At the Lok Sabha level, too, in the last three general elections held in 2009, 2014 and 2019, excluding by-polls, we find that UC women had a greater presence than OBC women as well as Dalit women. In 2009, 11 women MPs were elected in UP of which six were UC, two Muslim, two from Dalit communities and one, from an OBC community.

In 2014, 13 women MPs were elected, of whom five each were Dalit and OBC communities while three were UC. In 2019, of the 11 women MPs elected, five each were OBC and UC, while one was from a Dalit community. Seats are not reserved for the OBC in Lok Sabha and assembly elections.

nity.

Since accurately identifying a married woman MP's caste can be tricky in our patriarchal society, we have stuck to the surname and caste identity assumed by her after marriage rather than at birth. For instance, Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav, though born into a Kshatriya family, uses the OBC Yadav surname of her husband, Akhilesh. She is therefore counted as an OBC. It is easier to confirm the caste identity of MLAs in UP as they are expected to declare it in their bio-data in the assembly.

The Samajwadi Party came to power in UP in 2012 with a comfortable majority. In 2017 and 2022, the elections were won by the Bharatiya Janata Party with even greater seat tallies. A government-wide break-up shows that when Akhilesh Yadav was in power from the time of his elec-

tion in 2012 to March 2017, 13 OBC women, 13 Dalit women, 11 UC women and three Muslim women were elected as MLAs.

In the first tenure of Chief Minister Adityanath, from 2017 March to 2022, 13 OBC women, 12 Dalit women, 20 UC women and 1 Muslim woman were elected as MLAs. During Adityanath's second tenure, which is still on, 13 OBC women, 21 Dalit women, 11 UC women and three Muslim women were elected.

There is no accurate data for the present OBC and UC populations in the absence of a caste census.

But according to the 1931 caste-based survey and surveys published by various government commissions thereafter, the percentage of Hindu OBCs itself in UP was upwards of 40% of the total population. The 2001 social justice committee headed by Hukam Singh had calculated the total OBC population in UP to be 54.05%. The estimate of the OBC population is important to reflect the disproportionate representation enjoyed by UC candidates in power. Around one-fifth (19.5%) of UP's population is Muslim while another

21.5 % are SCs, according to 2011 Census figures.

The caste figures of just the last three assembly elections show that Muslim women represented only 5% of the women elected in the assembly, while OBC women represented 29% and UC women 31% of the total women legislators. The share of the SC women was 34%, but all of the seats they were elected from were constituencies reserved for the category.

Within the UCs, most of the women MLAs in 2012, 2017 and 2022 belonged to the Thakur and Rajput communities (21) followed by Brahmins (16), Baniya (3), Bhumihar (1) and Kayastha (1). As many as 12 Thakur and Rajput women MLAs were elected in the period 2017-2022.

The 52-member Adityanath council of ministers at present has only four women ministers. While three – Baby Rani Maurya, Gulab Devi and Vijay Laxmi Gautam – are from Dalit communities, one (Rajni Tiwari) is a Brahmin. Maurya is the only woman cabinet minister in the present government.

Overall, if we compare the council of ministers in the two governments run by Adityanath – 2017 and 2022 – we find that while UCs continue to enjoy disproportionate representation, the share of OBCs has improved in the second tenure of the BJP.

As of today, out of 52 ministers in UP, OBCs and UCs occupy 21 berths each, which is 40.38% each. Dalits hold 17.3% of the posts, with nine ministers. There is a lone Muslim minister. In September 2021, when the first Adityanath government's council of ministers had reached its maximum allowed strength of 60, it had a higher percentage of UCs. Out of the 60 ministers, 27 (45%) were UC, 23 (38.3%)

were OBC and nine (15%) were Dalits. Then too, there was just a single token Muslim minister.

One could explain the greater representation in power given by the BJP to OBCs in the second Adityanath government to the shift in politics of its main rival in UP, Akhilesh Yadav, who has openly embraced social justice rhetoric and strategy of providing more space to OBC and Dalit faces and issues. The 2022 election, which Yadav lost despite putting up a brave fight and nominating a rainbow of OBC candidates, would be remembered for him promising to carry out a caste census and providing the 'Bahujans' their 'rights, honour and representation,' as per their share in the population.

With Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also taking a leaf out of Bahujan politics icon Kanshiram's book and echoing the slogan, 'Jiski jiti sankhya bhari, uski utni hissedari (those with the numbers have the stake)', one wonders if the Congress is also willing to fully embrace social justice politics that it had shied away from for decades.

Indeed, the exclusion of a defined quota for OBC women in the women reservation and its indefinite implementation programme have provided a common ground for social justice politics for the Congress and its Mandal politics allies in UP and Bihar, which together have 120 Lok Sabha seats. The question is, will they take the narrative beyond the walls of parliament and to the people as we head to the 2024 Lok Sabha election? The caste census may be a long-time waiting but for now, can the ruling party as well as the Opposition parties tell us how many OBC and women MPs and MLAs are there in the country? (Courtesy: The Wire)

How Made in Heaven tests limits of Secular, Liberal imagination of Muslim women

By: Zehra Mehdi

Lying on the hospital bed, surviving a suicide attempt following her husband Wasim's second marriage, Shehnaz resolves to get a divorce and informs him that she is going to court. When Wasim pensively replies that he hasn't done anything illegal, Shehnaz tells him that she will fight to overturn the law of polygamy, and tells Wasim with a reflective resolve,

"Main sirf Musalman nahin, I am also a citizen of this country."

Humari bhi kuch haq hone chahiye."

(I am not only a Muslim, I am also a citizen of this country,

We should also have some rights.")

Through these words, Shehnaz in Episode 7 (The Warrior Princess) joins the diverse subset of powerful women in the series Made in Heaven, who refuse to accept their secondary status prescribed by patriarchy entrenched in skin color, caste hierarchies, heteronormativity, and ageism.

Yet unlike any other woman in the series, Shehnaz's refusal stands out.

Women against patriarchy

Confronted with the obsession with skin color, domestic abuse, extramarital affair, insecure men, casteist, heteronormative, and ageist ideas of marriage, the women in the series wrestle with societal expectations, conventions, and traditions entrusted to preserve patriarchy.

Shehnaz, however, is the only woman who isn't fighting society. In raising her voice against polygamy, she is fighting Islam and its inherent patriarchal impetus.

She isn't simply refusing the insensitivity displayed by Wasim, who went ahead with his second marriage despite being informed of Shehnaz's suicide attempt. Her refusal of being treated poorly by her husband then isn't only her refusal of patriarchy that blinds the man towards receiving her agony or being cognisant of her pain.

Her demand to be treated with respect or dignity as a woman seeks equality before the law since it is denied to her as a Muslim woman. Her refusal of patriarchy is her refusal of the unequal, anti-women, oppressive Islam. But how else does one narrate stories of Muslim women, without rendering them as prisoners of religion?

Narrating Muslim women as suffering subjects of Islam

While Made in Heaven brings us a feisty Dalit activist who celebrates her caste identity, a resolute lesbian teacher determined to commit to her lover, and an independent Christian woman who boldly vows to love herself, their narration of the Muslim woman remains an anthropological portrait frozen in time.

Moving around the big bungalow in a gharara covering her head with downcast eyes and, a feeble voice, playing the host offering demure 'aadabs', Shehnaz embodies the pathos of the forgotten wife, whose melancholic poise bears an uncanny resemblance with the long-suffering begums of philandering nawabs of the 18th century.

Unable to voice her hurt and disapproval of her husband's second marriage and fearful of seeking a divorce without losing the custody of her children, Shehnaz is lonely in her despair.

Unlike other women in the series who have mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and friends, Shehnaz has no one. Except for a son, who shares with her his reluctance to attend his father's wedding and apprehension about having half-siblings, and a mother-in-law who reminds



her about the permissible polygamy in Islam, Shehnaz almost lives a solitary life without any community or familial bonds. Why is Shehnaz's world so empty?

Bereft of any support system, the empathy of the wedding planner, Karan is crucial to Shehnaz. Sharing her admiration for his courage in fighting for his rights as a gay man, Shehnaz follows his earnest request to fight for herself as well. He doesn't only rescue her from death but lends her the vocabulary of "standing up for herself."

It's a deeply moving scene since it's the only time anyone expresses any concern for Shehnaz and speaks to her as a person.

His concern has a profound impact on her and for the first time in the episode, we hear her speak decisively about what she wants. It feels like an arrival. Shehnaz doesn't need to stay with a man who renders her invisible! But the story isn't simply about Shehnaz finding her voice.

It's about her finding her voice to say that unlike Islam which gives her no rights, she seeks her rights in being a citizen.

In a series where all minority women – caste, sexuality, and religion – are women of grit and joy, nuance and jubilation, confidence and mirth, the Muslim woman is portrayed essentially as the silent suffering subject, whose despair is attributed to the evils of Islamic patriarchy.

Of course, there is Faiza Naqvi – the artist, the complicated sensitive woman, who is released from any markers of religion, and defined only through her class. Muslim women are either free of their religion or imprisoned in it.

Instances abound in Muslim women breaking free

With Muslim women leading the anti-CAA protests as well as fighting for their constitutional rights to wear the hijab in educational institutions, there is ample evidence of their courage and resistance in present-day India.

One wonders why stories about Muslim women fail to capture their indomitable spirit or narrate the struggles that lay eclipsed in them.

Muslim women, like most women, lead rich, complex, layered lives. Their wedding stories are also stories of resistance and defiance. Some are of fighting to get married to someone they love who the family doesn't approve because of caste (Pasmanda), sect (Shia-Sunni), or religion (Hindu, Christian, Sikh), some stories are of fighting against the pressure to have lavish weddings, dowry demands, living with in-laws, working after marriage.

Several Muslim women make the painful choice of letting their families go in the process of standing up for themselves. I know many who turn down marriage proposals because

their prospective Muslim in-laws didn't understand their desire to wear the hijab. These women choose their right to be pious subjects rather than succumbing to the demand to look like 'progressive Muslims.'

Why can't we have stories about Muslim women navigating the world, its insurmountable demands, and finding their joys, not necessarily in secular possibilities?

Following the stereotypical trope of the oppressed Muslim woman, the writers not only define Shehnaz through her subjection but also make her a 'Good Muslim' woman who chooses nation over religion.

While the Dalit woman embraces her caste, and the Christian woman shapes her own wedding ceremony, the Muslim woman must move away from her religion and find the vocabulary of her freedom in the legal discourse.

Liberating Muslim women?

The otherwise pronounced differences between the Hindu right and the secular liberals blur on the question of liberating Muslim women from the shackles of Islam and the violence of its men.

While the right-wing liberates them from cunning Muslim men by banning triple talaq, the secular liberal relentlessly urges them to choose education over hijab, freeing them from regressive Islamic practices.

Having a Muslim woman address her agony by seeking her rights as a citizen otherwise denied to her in Islam, the show not only reiterates the widespread conviction across ideologies that Islam oppresses Muslim women but also posits law as their saviour.

It's ironic for the writers to resort to legal imagery especially when the purported court that is meant to extend Muslim women's rights not only released the rapists of Bilkees Bano but is consistently delaying hearing an appeal challenging the acquittal. Does the law only 'protect' Muslim women from the violence of 'Muslim men'? It certainly doesn't protect them from being repeatedly invoked as targets of rape in hate speeches by Hindu monks and vigilantes in huge processions attended by Hindu men who raise their swords and vow to rape Muslim women. Nor does the law protect them from being auctioned online.

The point, of course, is not to pursue a comparative tirade between agents of violence deciding who is the bigger oppressor. There is no denying of violence against Muslim women within the community, just as there is no denying the violence against them outside the community.

The burgeoning right-wing calls for violence against them in the name of jingoistic nationalism however is particularly alarming given the multiple fronts at which it is carried out from social media to political rallies. Yet, the frame of violence for Muslim women continues to be Islamic.

Despite the inability of the right-wing and the unwillingness of the secular liberals to admit that Islam accords a woman several rights, especially of seeking a divorce, without forfeiting the custody of her children (where did the writers get that from!), by pitting Islam vs citizenship, particularly in the context of women's rights the writers underscore their tacit support to the universal application of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

For all its progressive claims and radical politics, when it comes to representing Muslim lives, namely Muslim women, the show sadly reflects the secular liberal justification of BJP's 2024 campaign promise. (Courtesy: The Quint)



By: Shahnaz Hussain

It's that time of year again when the leaves start to change colour and the air becomes crisp. The changing colours, crisp weather, and the anticipation of the holiday season and everything that goes with it make it a favourite season for many. As we say goodbye to summer, this is also the time of year to switch out your current summer skincare routine. With the change in season comes a change in weather and, for many, a change in the skin.

Autumn is often unpredictable in terms of temperature changes, which can be difficult on your skin. Autumn brings cooler weather and a drop in humidity, which makes for dry, stale air and even drier skin.

Autumn isn't just lovely for its beautiful foliage and perfectly crisp temperatures—it also provides ample time for us to prepare for the impending chilly turmoil. Autumn skincare can get overlooked as "a thing" but as a transition season between summer and winter, autumn can give our skin a tough time adjusting without the right support. It's that time of the year again. As we skip into a brand new season, here's everything you need to do to keep your skin healthy and glowing.

Exfoliate regularly in Autumn

The weather can cause your skin to dry up, leaving a lot of dead skin cells on top of your skin that make it even more difficult to moisturize your skin. As the seasons change and your tan starts to fade, it's time to reset your skin with regular exfoliation. Invest in a good-quality scrub or an exfoliating face mask.

Exfoliate your skin at least twice a week to get rid of all the dead skin cells as well as cellular regeneration without risking irritation from excessive skin scrubbing. Releasing the dead cells also helps your skin creams to sink in more easily and reduces the likelihood of dead cells contributing to spots by congesting pores.

When you do exfoliate, avoid products with exfoliating beads, scrubs, and other ingredients that can be too harsh for sensitive fall skin. Instead, look for gentler yet effective ingredients like lactic acid and PHAs.

Inject more moisture

Moisturizing is the key to a healthy and hydrated skin.

Your skin must work extra hard to hold on to hydration in the autumn, so a good day cream and a rich night cream are autumn skincare essentials for all skin types. Your skin definitely needs a little more moisture now that the temperatures are falling again, but stick with something relatively lightweight—like a serum rather than a heavy-duty cream—for the time being.

Serums are perfect for treating your skin with special ingredients depending on your skin's needs. Since your skin needs more hydration in autumn, use a serum that hydrates and protects the skin. Your regular moisturizer might have gotten you through the summer, but a thicker

moisturizer in the fall will help better protect your skin from the cool, crisp autumn air. Look for hydrating ingredients and ingredients that suit your skin's specific needs.

If you have oily skin, you can even opt for a light moisturizer. Oilier and acne-prone skin types might want to use a light moisturizer or oil like jojoba that they may not have needed in summer. They'll keep skin supple but overall should avoid thicker products that may clog or contribute to oiliness.

The skincare love doesn't need to stop at the face. You should also moisturize the rest of your body to prevent irritation and dryness caused by colder, drier weather. Use body lotion, hand cream, chapstick, and anything else that will keep you comfortable and hydrated.

Watch your diet

At the end of the day, what we put inside our bodies is just as important as what we put on the outside. Healthy skin comes from the inside out.

High-fiber foods like dark, leafy vegetables and berries help keep the skin healthy but also acne-free. So it's great to develop a taste for them. To maintain your summer glow into the autumn, eat plenty of fruit and veggies, stick to healthy fats and oils, and keep drinking plenty of water throughout the season to maintain your hydration from the inside.

Drinking water is one of the oldest remedies in the book for glowing skin. Drinking water helps improve elasticity and can save you from wrinkles showing up in the long run! Drinking water helps your skin fight off toxins more effectively because your skin is functioning the way it was always supposed to. High-glycemic foods, such as sweets and refined carbohydrates, can cause sugars and hormones to rise, worsening acne and other skin problems by clogging our skin.

Vitamin C will help to brighten and boost skin, stimulating collagen production so skin can better retain moisture, and helping to protect it from external aggressors. The use of vitamin C will help to correct and reverse the damage and assist with maintaining an even skin tone and texture and enhancing the skin's natural glow. Coffee and alcohol are known to make your skin dry. So keep your coffee intake to a minimum, especially during these months when the skin needs more moisture than ever.

Avod long showers

Try showering with lukewarm water instead and limit your time in the shower to a maximum of 10 minutes. Showers that are too hot and too long strip the skin of their natural oils. It is also vital that you moisturize right after you're done with the shower.

These easy autumn skincare tips will help your skin transition from summer to fall. Just remember to be gentle with your skin, hydrate often, and protect it from the elements.

Healthy skin isn't achieved by a spot-treatment mindset, but by investing in your skin 24/7. (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India)

Biden said his administration is requesting Congress approve \$200 million in new assistance for the region

Biden tells Pacific islands leaders that he hears their warnings about climate change and will act

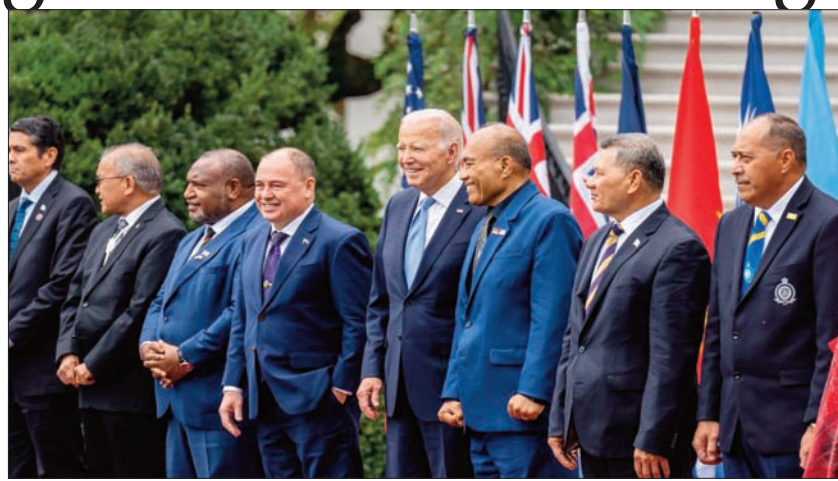
WASHINGTON, Sept 26: President Joe Biden on Monday told leaders from the 18-member Pacific Islands Forum that he has heard their warnings about the impact of climate change on their region and that his administration is committed to helping them meet the challenge.

Pacific islands leaders gathered on Monday for the start of a two-day Washington summit. Many have been critical of rich countries for not doing enough to control climate change despite being responsible for much of the problem, and for profiting from loans provided to vulnerable nations to mitigate the effects.

At the summit's start, Biden said his administration is requesting Congress approve \$200 million in new assistance for the region, including financing to help the islands prepare for climate and natural hazards and improve infrastructure. Biden has put a premium on improving ties in the Pacific at a time of rising U.S. concern about China's growing military and economic influence.

"I want you to know I hear you, the people in the United States and around the world hear you," Biden told the leaders. "We hear your warnings of a rising sea and (that) they pose an existential threat to your nations. We hear your calls for reassurance that you never, never, never will lose your statehood, or membership of the U.N. as a result of a climate crisis. Today, the United States is making it clear that this is our position as well."

"Today, we celebrate shared history, common values and people-to-people ties between our two nations. Tagelagi said at the Niue ceremony." We have been look-



ing forward to this day."

Brown welcomed the elevation of U.S. relations with the Cook Islands and said the U.S.-Pacific islands partnership could be an important tool for helping the region achieve its aspirations.

"These milestones celebrate areas of change and demonstrate that with unshakable resolve and leadership, remarkable achievements are possible," Brown said.

The forum includes Australia, the Cook Islands, Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Kiribati signed onto a \$29.1 million partnership with the U.S.-backed Millennium Corporation Challenge. The group will assist the island country with dozens

of low-lying atolls and help boost its workforce.

Some of the leaders attended an NFL game in Baltimore on Sunday and visited a U.S. Coast Guard cutter in the city's harbor for a briefing on combating illegal fishing and other maritime issues. Biden announced Monday that later this year he would deploy a U.S. Coast Guard vessel to the region to collaborate and train with Pacific islands nations.

At last year's summit, the White House unveiled its Pacific strategy, an outline of its plan to assist the region's leaders on pressing issues like climate change, maritime security and protecting the region from overfishing. The administration pledged the U.S. would add \$810 million in new aid for Pacific islands nations over the next decade, including \$130 million on efforts to stymie the impacts of climate

change.

The leaders also met on Monday with Biden's special envoy on climate, John Kerry, for closed-door talks focused on climate change. Blinken and U.N. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield were hosting the leaders at the State Department for a dinner.

Kerry and Samantha Power, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, will host the leaders on Tuesday for climate talks with members of the philanthropic community. The leaders also plan to meet with members of Congress. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will host a roundtable with the leaders and members of the business community. Power last month travelled to Fiji to open a new USAID mission that will manage agency programs in nine Pacific islands countries: Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau. The U.S. this year has opened embassies in Solomon Islands and Tonga, and is on track to open an embassy in Vanuatu early next year.

Biden earlier this year had to cut short a planned visit to the Indo-Pacific, scrapping what was to be a historic stop in Papua New Guinea, as well as a visit to Australia for a gathering with fellow leaders of the so-called Quad partnership so he could focus on debt limit talks in Washington. He would have been the first sitting U.S. president to visit Papua New Guinea.

Biden is set to honor Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese with a state visit next month. (AP)

Nepal PM 'Prachanda' apparently declines to endorse Prez Xi's security doctrine during China visit

BEIJING/KATHMANDU, Sept 26: Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', currently on an 8-day visit to China, has apparently declined to endorse President Xi Jinping's security doctrine even as the two countries agreed to undertake a "joint inspection" of their boundary.

A joint statement issued after Prachanda's talks with Xi and Chinese Premier Li Qiang only referred to the Global Development Initiative, (GDI), proposed by Xi, but his other two doctrines – the Global Security Initiative (GSI), which advocates a common global security paradigm, and the Global Cultural Initiative (GCI) – promotion of culture were conspicuously missing.

"The Nepali side supports the Global Development Initiative (GDI) proposed by China, and will consider to join the Group of Friends of the GDI," the Joint Statement issued after Prachanda's talks Li said.

Prachanda had earlier met Xi on the sidelines of the Asian Games in Hangzhou on September 23.

Ahead of his China visit, Prachanda said the GSI, which also advocates joint security, is not in the interest of Nepal to maintain a strategic balance between India, China and the US.

Reports from Kathmandu said Prachanda sidestepped China's pressure to welcome Xi's new doctrines, the GSI, and the GCI but endorsed the GDI.

Before leaving for China's Hangzhou, in an interview with Kantipur daily in New York, Prachanda had categorically denied the chances of Nepal joining a security-related alliance. The Kathmandu Post reported on

Monday.

Speaking in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) during the interview, the prime minister stated that China is initiating the GSI, the GCI and the GDI and among these, there is no hesitation to participate in the GDI.

"But, we cannot wade into security-related issues. It is our stated policy not to be under the umbrella of any side. Ours is a non-aligned foreign policy. On the other hand, we are saying the American Indo-Pacific Strategy and State Partnership Programme are part of security initiatives. If we are not taking part in one initiative (IPS, SPP), we cannot join others too," Prachanda said.

The GSI and GCI were conspicuously missing from the official Chinese media account of Prachanda's talks with Xi and Li. But the joint statement spoke of joint inspection of the China-Nepal boundary.

"The two sides agreed to undertake joint inspection of the China-Nepal boundary. The two sides agreed to bring into force the Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Nepal on the Boundary Management System as soon as possible," it said.

The two countries have, in the past, spoken of management of the boundary but this is perhaps the first time they have agreed to joint inspection. The BBC had last year quoted a leaked Nepal government report accusing China of encroaching into Nepal along the two countries' shared border.

It was the first time there were official claims from Nepal of Chinese interference in its territory, the report had said. (PTI)

Ukrainian boat captain found guilty in Hungary for the 2019 Danube collision

BUDAPEST, Sept 26: The captain of a river cruise boat that collided with another vessel in Hungary's capital in 2019, killing at least 27 people most of them South Korean tourists, was found guilty on Tuesday of negligence leading to a fatal mass catastrophe and sentenced to five years in prison.

Judge Leona Nemeth with the Pest Central District Court found that the negligence of the Ukrainian captain, Yuriy Chaplinsky, had caused his river cruise boat, the Viking Signy, to collide with the tourist boat Hableany (Mermaid) from behind, causing it to sink into the Danube River within seconds.

The court acquitted Chaplinsky of 35 counts of failure to render aid. He may appeal. The collision occurred May 29, 2019, when the Hableany, carrying mostly the South Korean tourists, sank after being struck beneath Budapest's Margit Bridge by the much larger Viking Signy.

Seven South Koreans were rescued from the water in the heavy rain following the collision, and 27 people were recovered dead including the two-member Hungarian crew.

One South Korean is still unaccounted for. Some of the victims' bodies were found weeks after the crash more than 100 kilometers (60 miles) downstream.

The Hableany spent more than 12 days underwater at the collision site near the neo-Gothic Hungarian Parliament building, before being lifted from the river bed by a floating crane.

Chaplinsky, the captain of the Viking Signy, had been in police custody since the collision, including being remanded to house arrest in Hungary since 2020.

Part of the time Chaplinsky has already served will count toward his five-year sentence.

In a final statement before the verdict Tuesday, Chaplinsky called the collision a "horrible tragedy", and said that the deaths of "so many innocent victims" kept him awake at night.

"This will stay with me for the rest of my life," he said.

Three staffers from the South Korean Embassy in Budapest were present for the reading of the verdict, but no South Korean family members of the victims attended the hearing. (AP)

SL Prez Wickremesinghe to meet IMF officials for crucial talks on economic reform plan

COLOMBO, Sept 26: Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe will meet the officials of the International Monetary Fund on Tuesday to hold crucial talks on the hard economic reforms undertaken by the government to stabilise the fiscal system of the cash-strapped island nation.

The officials of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are visiting the country to conduct the first review of its USD 2.9 billion bailout package approved for crisis-hit Sri Lanka in mid-March. The second tranche of USD 300 million is to be released after the ongoing review. During the review, the government will have to convince the global lender that it has fulfilled the conditions set by the IMF to revive the island nation's economy.

"These two weeks would be crucial for our economic reform programme. At this IMF review, we will be assessing the extent to which we have complied in setting up reforms and how far we need to go," State Minister of Finance Shehan Samasinghe told reporters here. Sri Lanka has executed some of the tough reforms to stabilise the nation's economy. Samasinghe said some of the reforms had hit the

people hard.

"These were reforms that should have been implemented a long time ago...We only started doing so when the crisis hit," he said.

Sri Lanka was hit by its worst economic crisis in history when the country's foreign exchange reserves fell to a critical low and the public came out on the streets to protest the shortage of fuel, fertilisers and essential commodities.

The country began seeking the IMF bailout only after it declared its first-ever sovereign debt default in April 2022. The resultant political crisis forced the then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign in July 2022. His successor Wickremesinghe has steered the economy out of the mess by lowering inflation.

Having entered the IMF programme, the government set in a series of tax and utility services reforms which meant higher taxes and tariff hikes.

Still, analysts say the island's economy has only partially recovered. An Indian credit line of nearly USD 4 billion provided a lifeline to the country until the bailout agreement with the IMF was reached. (PTI)



South Korea parades troops and powerful weapons in its biggest Armed Forces Day ceremony in years

SEOUL, Sept 26: South Korea paraded thousands of troops and an array of weapons capable of striking North Korea through its capital as part of its biggest Armed Forces Day ceremony in 10 years on Tuesday, as its president vowed to build a stronger military to thwart any provocation by the North.

Concerns are growing that North Korea is seeking Russian help in expanding its nuclear arsenal in return for supplying Moscow with conventional arms exhausted by its war with Ukraine.

"After looking at your imposing march today, I believe our people would trust you and have faith in our national security," Yoon Suk Yeol told cheering soldiers at the end of the ceremony in a central Seoul plaza. "I'll always support you together with our people."

Earlier, South Korea rolled tanks, artillery systems, drones and powerful ballistic missiles capable of hitting all of North Korea through the streets of Seoul, amid steady autumn rains. About 4,000 South Korean troops carrying rifles or flags followed them, accompanied by about 300 US soldiers, in the first such military parade since 2013.

As the soldiers and their weapons went past, Yoon waved, clapped and flashed a



thumbs-up.

Since taking office last year, he has been pushing hard to beef up South Korea's defense capability while expanding military drills with the United States in response to North Korea's advancing nuclear arsenal.

But a complication in Seoul and Washington's efforts to curb the North's nuclear ambitions is the latest North Korean push to deepen military cooperation with Russia. Earlier this month, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un traveled to Russia's far eastern region to meet with President Vladimir Putin and visit key military sites.

North Korea reportedly wants to receive Russian technologies to help its development of spy satellites, nuclear-propelled submarines

and powerful long-range missiles. Such weapons would pose a major security threat to South Korea and the US.

In a formal Armed Forces Day ceremony at a military airport near Seoul earlier Tuesday, Yoon said he'll strive to build "a strong military that instills fear in the enemy".

"Based on battle-ready combat capabilities and a solid readiness posture, our military will immediately retaliate against any North Korean provocation," he said. "If North Korea uses nuclear weapons, its regime will be brought to an end by an overwhelming response" from the South Korean-US alliance.

That ceremony drew about 6,700 soldiers and 200 weapons assets, the largest of its kind since 2013, according to South

Korean officials.

Yoon didn't mention North Korean-Russian ties in his speech Tuesday. But in an address to the UN General Assembly last week, he said South Korea "will not sit idly by" if North Korea and Russia agree to such weapons deals in violation of UN Security Council resolutions that ban all weapons trading with North Korea.

US officials have also said that North Korea and Russia would face consequences if they go ahead with such deals.

Also Tuesday, senior diplomats from South Korea, Japan and China met in Seoul to discuss the first summit of their leaders in four years, according to South Korean officials. Yoon said last week that Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida had expressed their support for a trilateral summit in South Korea.

Yoon's moves to strengthen South Korea's military alliance with the US and boost Seoul-Washington-Tokyo security cooperation have caused concerns that Seoul's relations with China, its biggest trading partner, will be undermined. But Yoon says Seoul-Washington-Tokyo cooperation won't marginalise any particular nation. (AP)

At least 20 dead in gas station explosion as Nagorno-Karabakh residents flee to Armenia

YEREVAN, Sept 26: At least 20 people were killed and nearly 300 others injured by an explosion at a crowded gas station in Nagorno-Karabakh as thousands of people rushed to flee the cross into Armenia, separatist authorities in the region said on Tuesday.

More than 13,500 people — about 12% of the region's population — have fled across the border since Azerbaijan's swift military operation to fully reclaim the breakaway region after three decades of separatist rule, Armenia's government said Tuesday morning.

The explosion took place as people lined up to fill their cars at a gas station outside the regional capital of Stepanakert late Monday. The separatist government's health department said that 13 bodies have been found and seven people have died of injuries from the blast, the cause of which remains unclear.

It added that 290 people have been hospitalized and scores of them remain in grave condition. First refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh arrive in Armenia following Azerbaijan's military offensive Armenia's health ministry said a helicopter brought some blast victims to Armenia on Tuesday morning, and more flights were expected. Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmet Hajiyev said on X, formerly Twitter, that hospitals in Azerbaijan were ready to treat victims, but not if they had been taken to them. Azerbaijan has sent in burn-treatment medicine and other humanitarian aid, he said.

Gasoline has been in short supply in Nagorno-Karabakh for months, and the explosion further adds to local residents' anxiety about whether they will be able to drive out. The Armenian border is about 35 kilometers (22 miles) from Stepanakert. Cars bearing large loads on their roofs crowded the streets of Stepanakert, and residents stood or lay along sidewalks next to heaps of luggage. (AP)

WHO said more than 500 suspected cases of dengue were reported across Sudan, most of them in Qadafir

UN says cholera and dengue outbreaks have been reported in eastern Sudan as conflict grinds on

CAIRO, Sept 26: Outbreaks of cholera and dengue fever have been reported in eastern Sudan, where thousands of people are sheltering in crowded camps amid deadly fighting between the country's military and a rival paramilitary force, the U.N. health agency said on Tuesday.

According to the World Health Organization, 162 people suspected of having cholera were admitted to hospitals in Qadafir province and other areas along Sudan's border with Ethiopia. Eighty cases have been confirmed, and 10 people have died of cholera, a bacterial infection linked to contaminated food or water, WHO said. Sudan was engulfed in chaos in mid-April, when simmering tensions between the military and the powerful paramilitary group exploded into open warfare in the capital, Khartoum, and other areas across the east African nation.

The medical charity Doctors Without Borders has set up two centers to treat cholera patients along with two mobile teams in Qadafir. WHO and the U.N. refugee agency have renovated the isolation center for cholera at the Qadafir Teaching Hospital, the province's main medical facility.

Cholera outbreaks are not uncommon in impoverished Sudan. The disease left at least 700 dead and sickened about 22,000 in less than two months during the country's last major outbreak in 2017.

In Ethiopia, a cholera outbreak that started in August 2022 has sickened at least 20,000



people and caused more than 270 deaths, according to WHO. The outbreak has affected seven regions, including areas along the border with Sudan.

WHO said more than 500 suspected cases of dengue were reported across Sudan, most of them in urban centers in Qadafir. Dengue is caused by the dengue virus transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes. The reported figure was "the tip of the iceberg" as the actual number is much higher, given that most of the patients rely on home remedies and often do not go to hospitals, WHO said.

The Sudanese doctors union says "hundreds" of dengue patients have died in the country's east, describing the outbreak as "a health crisis." It did not give a time frame for the deaths but said most hospitals in Qadafir have been overwhelmed by patients.

Heavy rains and flooding, meanwhile, have

destroyed or damaged at least 13,000 houses in seven provinces across Sudan since July, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. More than 72,000 people have been affected, OCHA said.

The World Health Organization reported last month that while poverty and conflict remain enduring drivers for cholera around the world, more power storms and flooding from climate change are also fueling outbreaks.

The conflict in Sudan has turned Khartoum and other urban areas into battlefields, wrecking civilian infrastructure and an already battered health care system. Without the basics, many hospitals and medical facilities have closed doors.

At least 5,000 people have been killed and more than 12,000 others wounded, according to the United Nations, though the actual numbers are likely higher. The U.N. refugee agency said last week that more than 1,200 children under the age of 5 have died in nine camps in Sudan in the past five months because of a deadly combination of measles and malnutrition.

More than 5.2 million people have fled their homes, including more than 1 million who crossed into Sudan's neighboring countries. Half of the country's population — around 25 million people — needs humanitarian assistance, including about 6.3 million who are "one step away from famine," according to U.N. humanitarian officials. (AP)

Internet shutdown reimposed in Manipur amidst student protests

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 26: The Manipur government has reissued an internet shutdown order for the next five days following widespread protests in Imphal by thousands of students demanding justice for the deaths of two Meitei teenagers.

According to the notification, "The State Government has decided to suspend/curb mobile internet data services, internet/data services through VPN in the territorial jurisdiction of the state of Manipur for five days with immediate effect until 7:45 PM on October 1, 2023."



The protests in Imphal were sparked by the brutal killings of two Meitei students who had been

missing since July 6. The demonstrations were met with a heavy police response, including the use of tear gas and smoke bombs to disperse the crowds.

The students united in their demand for justice and condemned the alleged killings by armed Kuki miscreants. They held banners and chanted slogans, calling for the punishment of those responsible for the tragic deaths.

Earlier on September 23, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh had lifted the internet ban that had been in place for nearly five months since May 3, 2023.

Dihanam competition held at Sootea

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARALI, Sept 26: On the occasion of the 575th tirobhav tithi (death anniversary) of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev, dihanam and Sankari culture competitions were organized by the Sootea regional committee of Srimanta Sankardev Nam Dharma Samaj in collaboration with the No 1 Nalbari branch of Srimanta Sankardev Nam Dharma Samaj on Monday in Sootea. The day-long event commenced with the hoisting of the religious pennant by Dharma Kanta Saikia, the president of the Sootea regional committee of Srimanta Sankardev Nam Dharma Samaj in the morning, followed by nam prasanga (devotional singing). Mohan Bora and Prabin Rajbanshi served as judges for the dihanam and Sankari Culture competitions. In the dihanam competition, the women's team from Bebeja claimed the first position, while the women's team from Charajania village secured the second position. Additionally, the women's teams from Borpam Tiniali and No 1 Nalbari jointly secured the third position. In the Sankari dance competition, Punamjyoti Medhi from Borpam secured the first position, followed by Bhagyashree Devi from Nalbari and Banya Saikia from Magurmari in the second and third positions, respectively. Sootea MLA Padma Hazarika graced the occasion as the chief guest, adding to the significance of the event.

M'laya cabinet minister advocates parking space requirement for car ownership

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 26: Concerned about the escalating traffic congestion, Meghalaya cabinet minister AL Hek has proposed a requirement for car owners to have designated parking spaces before purchasing vehicles. Hek shared his concerns with the media, stating, "The government is thinking of having multiple parking spaces with many layers of car parking facility in Shillong city... I have seen everybody buying a car but they do not have parking space at home. So

now the transport department has to issue strict instructions that anybody buying a car without permanent parking space should not be allowed to do so."

This move comes after a tragic incident on September 17 when a newborn baby died due to a massive traffic jam. The incident occurred in Ksehkohlong village of West Khasi Hills during a fishing competition at Pamphymai, which attracted thousands of people. Hek's proposal aims to alleviate traffic congestion and promote responsible car ownership in the region.

Two 5-star hotels coming up in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 26: The Nagaland tourism department and the Hotel Polo Towers Group have signed an agreement to build two 5-star hotels in Nagaland for development of the tourism sector in the state.

This agreement encompasses the development of a 5-star hotel with a mall in Dimapur and another 5-star hotel in Kohima with a total investment of ₹ 150 crore. To be operated under a public-private partnership (PPP) model, these projects will follow the design, build, maintain, operate, manage and transfer approach and have over 200 extravagant rooms. The Dimapur establishment is poised to offer top-notch accommodations, multiple dining options, entertainment centers, and retail outlets, positioning itself as a comprehensive lifestyle destination. The Kohima project will prioritise delivering an unparalleled luxury hotel experience catering to both business and leisure travelers.

These monumental ventures, expected to redefine Nagaland's tourism and economic landscape, are likely to be completed in three-four years.

Deval Tibrewalla, CEO and director, Hotel

Polo Towers Group, expressed his happiness to collaborate with the Nagaland tourism department for the two projects. He said these initiatives will not only invigorate the hospitality sector but also will contribute to job creation and local economic growth.

"This aligns with our vision of establishing a hotel in every major city of the Northeast," Tibrewalla said. Tourism department director Keduosie-M Rio said this agreement marks a significant milestone in advancing Nagaland's tourism sector.

"We are thrilled to partner closely with the Hotel Polo Towers Group, known for its extensive experience in hospitality in the northeast. We eagerly anticipate providing all the necessary support to bring these ambitious projects to fruition," he added.

As the largest hospitality group in the northeast, Hotel Polo Towers Group has a robust presence in the region, known for creating and nurturing destinations. The group is known for setting high standards in hospitality, delivering exceptional service, and enhancing guest experiences.

Currently, it operates nine hotels with an additional five hotels in development.

United Tai Ethnic Consortium opposes Ahom Land demand

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Sept 26: Manoj Baruah, the working president of the newly formed United Tai Ethnic Social and Cultural Organization (UTESCO), strongly opposed the demand for a separate Ahom Land by a faction of the Tai Ahom Yuva Parishad, Asom. He addressed the media after a public meeting held at Patsaku Rural Tourists Hub on Sunday.

Baruah emphasised that the entire state of Assam, brought together by the founder of 'Bor Asom' Chauling Seukapha, con-

stitutes Ahom Land, and the demand for a separate Ahom Land for a part of it is unacceptable. During the meeting, the Charaideo and Sivasagar district units of UTESCO were formed, with Sarat Chandra Barua presiding over the event. Baruah criticized the ruling BJP-AGP front for not showing the political will to implement the assurance given to the six ethnic groups for ST (Scheduled Tribe) status. He pointed out that this was evident in the directives for constituency delimitations, where the state government

reserved 19 Assembly segments for STs but none for the six ethnic groups. Dr. Dina Chandra Sing, a professor at Arunachal University, urged all Tai ethnic groups in the North East to work together under the platform of UTESCO to develop their culture, language, and literature. Alok Narayan Singha, a descendant of the last Ahom King Purander Singha, expressed the organization's dedication to preserving, researching, and developing Tai cultural resources scattered across the state.



John Barla, Union Minister of State, Ministry of Minority Affairs handed over appointment letters to the new recruits in the various departments at the event of Rozgar Mela which was held at the State Convention Centre, Shillong on Tuesday. UB photos

Foundation laid for State-of-the-Art cancer research center in Mizoram

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 26: Chief minister Zoramthanga of Mizoram laid the foundation stone for the Mizoram State Super Specialty Cancer & Research Centre. This state-of-the-art facility, funded by the Japan International Cooperation (JICA) with a budget of ₹ 700 crore, will be located at the Mizoram State Cancer Institute Complex in Zemabawk, Aizawl.

The Chief Minister expressed his gratitude to the Japanese government and JICA for their substantial contribution to the healthcare

infrastructure in Mizoram. He emphasized the significant impact this facility will have in combating cancer and related diseases in the region, as Mizoram faces considerable challenges in this regard.

During the ceremony, Zoramthanga also appealed to the public to adopt healthy lifestyles, particularly by avoiding tobacco and its related products known to cause cancer and other serious illnesses.

Dr. R. Lalthangliana, Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Mizoram; Mr. Hajime

Taniguchi, Senior Representative, JICA India Office; and Dr. Jeremy L. Pautu, Project Coordinator cum Director, Mizoram State Cancer Institute, spoke about the establishment of the new center.

JICA will provide 80% of the project's funding, with the Mizoram government contributing the remaining 20%. The project includes a 200-bed hospital, cutting-edge equipment, and world-class specialists and researchers in the field of cancer and related diseases. Completion is expected by 2028.

LIGHTING THE LAMP



The College of Teacher Education (PGT), Shillong kick started its Diamond Jubilee Celebration at a programme held at the auditorium of the College. The celebration was graced by the presence of the Education Minister, Rakkam A Sangma on Tuesday. UB Photos



মুখ্য ন্যায়িক দণ্ডাধীশৰ কাৰ্য্যালয় :: কাৰ্বি আংলং :: অসম
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF JUDICIAL MAGISTRATE: KARBI ANGLONG: ASSAM

ADVERTISEMENT

Dated at Diphu, the 22nd September, 2023

Application in Standard Forms are invited from intending male candidates for engagement against ONE (Unreserved) temporary post of DRIVER (on contingency basis) in the establishment of the undersigned on FIXED PAY of Rs. 15,000/- (Fifteen Thousand) per month.

ELIGIBILITY :

- 1) The Candidate must be an Indian Citizen as defined in Article 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India.
- 2) The Candidate must have a valid LMV Driving Licence issued by the competent authority.
- 3) The Candidate must not be less than 18 years and more than 40 years of age as on 01.01.2023. The upper age limit will be relaxed - (i) By 5 years for ST and SC candidates i.e. up to 45 years as per the Govt. Notification No. ABP.6/2016/51, Dated 2n^o September, 2020 issued by the Department of Personnel, Government of Assam. (ii) By 3 years for OBC/MOBC candidates i.e. up to 43 years as per the Govt. Notification No. ABP.6/2016/51, Dated 2nd September, 2020 issued by the Department of Personnel, Government of Assam.
- 4) Minimum Qualification of the candidate must be Class-VIII (Eight) Passed.
- 5) Preference will be given to experienced candidates.

HOW TO APPLY :

- 1) Eligible candidates will have to apply in Standard Form of Application (published in the Gazette Part IX of Govt. of Assam) and same must be addressed to "The Chief Judicial Magistrate, Karbi Anglong, Diphu, PIN- 782460." The last date of receipt of application is 17.10.2023 till office working hours. No applications received thereafter will be entertained.
- 2) The applicant must superscribe "APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF DRIVER" on the top of the envelope and must write their MOBILE Nos. on the top of the Standard Form respectively in red ink.
- 3) The application must be accompanied with-
a. Two copies of recent coloured passport size photo,
b. Experience Certificate, If any
c. All SELF ATTESTED testimonials In support of their educational qualification and caste.
- 4) Candidates already in Govt. service must apply through proper channel.
- 5) The candidates will have to appear in the Driving Test & Interview at their own expenses and no T.A. & D.A. is admissible in this respect.
- 6) All information about date of skill test and viva-voce shall be shared through SMS and Whatsapp. So, the candidates are asked to provide their phone number in their application forms.
- 7) The applications can be submitted through ordinary/Speed/Registered Post or directly to the office of the undersigned. The office will not be responsible for any postal delay.

SELECTION PROCEDURE

- 1) The candidates who are found to be eligible shall have to undergo skill test of 50 marks.
- 2) The candidates who qualify the skill test will be called for a viva-voce of 15 marks.
- 3) List of eligible candidates for skill test and for viva-voce will be uploaded in the official website www.districts.ecourts.gov.in or www.karbianglongjudiciary.gov.in (District Court-Karbi Anglong) in due course of time.
- 4) No separate call letters will be issued individually for the skill test and viva-voce.
- 5) The selection will be made purely on merit basis.
- 6) If any candidate found canvassing directly/indirectly, his/her candidature will be rejected.

The candidates are asked to visit the official website. <https://www.karbianglongjudiciary.gov.in> and www.districts.ecourts.gov.in (District Court-Karbi Anglong) regularly for further updates.

The Selection Board reserves the right to cancel, modify or alter the advertisement or other terms and condition without any prior notice.

Sd/-
Chief Judicial Magistrate,
Karbi Anglong, Assam

BJP goes all in to retain power in MP amid spirited challenge from Congress

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: The BJP has thrown open the leadership in Madhya Pradesh and deployed its big guns, several of whom have never contested assembly polls, from the state to deliver the goods for the party in the elections where it is facing a keen challenge from the Congress.

Despite the sense that the BJP will be fielding a few of its MPs in the assembly polls in several states, the extent of their deployment has taken even many within the party by surprise, with three Union ministers and four other MPs being named as candidates in the second list of nominees for 39 seats.

Two of the ministers, Narendra Singh Tomar and Faggan Singh Kulaste, will be contesting from seats that were won by the Congress in 2018, while three of the four other Lok Sabha MPs will also fight in constituencies where the main opposition party had emerged victorious in the last assembly polls.

A former state BJP president, Tomar was appointed in July as the convener of the party's election management committee in Madhya Pradesh, a responsibility which required him to oversee the entire state.

A three-term MP, Tomar was an MLA for two terms till 2008 and has been in Lok Sabha since 2009.

Union minister Prahlad Singh Patel is a five-term Lok Sabha MP and has never been an MLA while Kulaste, a tribal leader, was last an MLA way back in 1992 before getting elected to Lok Sabha six times and Rajya Sabha once.

Among other MPs fighting assembly polls for the first time are Ganesh Singh, a four-term Lok Sabha member, and Rakesh Singh, also a four-term Lok Sabha member. Rakesh Singh has also been the state party president.

Party leaders are of the view that the leadership has sought



to send out several messages with their choices while acknowledging the strong challenge the BJP faces from the Congress, which had bettered its tally in the state assembly in 2018 for the first time after 1998.

Amid a view that chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who led the BJP to massive wins in 2008 and 2013 before found wanting in 2018, is no longer the same political force, the party has sought to keep the leadership issue open by pitting many of its big names in the contest in a signal to those supporters who may no longer be drawn to him but remain sympathetic to it.

It is also a message to these senior leaders, who include national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, long seen as an aspirant for the chief minister's chair, that they should

prove their mettle by ensuring a good show for the party before their leadership claim is considered sympathetically by its top brass, sources noted.

With all regional satraps barring Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia fighting the assembly polls expected in November-December, the party is hopeful that this will minimise factional feuds, an issue that has plagued the state organisation, and result in a cohesive campaign.

That they come from a mix of castes; Tomar and Rakesh Singh are Thakurs, Patel is a Lodhi (OBC) and Ganesh Singh is a Kurmi (OBC) while Kulaste is from a tribal community, will be helpful in social messaging, its leaders said.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said no matter who the BJP fields, people of the state have decided to oust it as he accused the saffron party of forming government in the state through the back door. The BJP had toppled the Kamal Nath government in 2020 after several MLAs close to Scindia, then in the Congress, withdrew their support.

The opposition party said that with the announcement of the list, it seems results have been declared even before the polls.

The Congress has its tail up after defeating the BJP first in Himachal Pradesh in a close contest and then in Karnataka in a landslide, following a series of reverses it has suffered at the hands of the ruling party.

Its leader Rahul Gandhi had recently claimed that his party is "certainly" winning in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

The BJP has so far named 79 candidates for the election to the 230-member Madhya Pradesh assembly. An overwhelming majority of seats for which it has named its choices are those it had lost in 2018. (PTI)

People of MP have decided to vote out those who formed govt through back door: Cong

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: A day after the BJP announced its second list of candidates for the Madhya Pradesh assembly polls, the Congress on Tuesday said no matter who it fields, the people of the state have decided to oust those who had formed the government through the back door.

The opposition party said that with the announcement of the list, it seems results have been declared even before the polls.

The BJP on Monday released its second list of 39 candidates for the Madhya Pradesh assembly polls. It fielded Union ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Prahlad Singh Patel and Phagga Singh Kulaste and four other party MPs for the elections. Besides the ministers, the MPs fielded are Rakesh Singh, Ganesh Singh, Riti Pathak and Uday Pratap Singh — all from Lok Sabha. Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera also slammed PM Narendra Modi over his remarks in rallies in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan on Monday.

He said the Congress regards him as its "star campaigner" as was the case in Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka.

"Wherever he went from Himachal to Karnataka, it benefited the Con-

gress. Therefore, we regard him as the star campaigner.

"However, we don't like to use the term star campaigner as he lies a lot. If he starts speaking a little bit of truth, he can be the best star campaigner for the Congress and the INDIA bloc," Khera said.

The Congress leader accused Modi of constantly "lying" to people and alleged that he is "the only prime minister who has made himself a certified liar".

He said Modi attacked the Congress over women's reservation when it was the grand old party that had brought a bill to reserve seats for women in local bodies for the first time in 1989. Khera said seven people had opposed the bill in Parliament at that time including Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, Ram Jethmalani and Jaswant Singh.

"You say the Congress does not care about the poor. It was MGNREGA that lifted 23 crore (people) out of poverty. You not only pushed them back into poverty, but added another 14 crore people," he said.

In Rajasthan, prime minister slammed the Ashok Gehlot government but forgot that some time back he had given a certificate to the state government for its good work during the Covid-19 pandemic. (PTI)

'India-Canada diplomatic row will not impact military ties'

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: The latest diplomatic row between India and Canada is not going to impact the ongoing bilateral military engagement and the matter has to be resolved at the political level, Canada's Deputy Army Chief Major General Peter Scott said on Tuesday.

Scott is leading a Canadian delegation at the Indo-Pacific Army Chiefs' Conference (IPACC) here that is being attended by military delegations from over 30 countries.

"To the best of my knowledge at this time, that is not going to have an impact on us. We leave the matter at hand to the political level to try and resolve," he told PTI.

"We are happy to be here and we do not see the issue clouding matters at this point at all," Major General Scott said.

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June.

India has rejected the allegations as "absurd" and "motivated" and expelled a senior Canadian diplomat in a tit-for-tat move to Ottawa's expulsion of an Indian official over the case.

"This is an issue between both our countries at a political level. And certainly our Prime Minister...he rose at the House of Commons and made a statement requesting India's cooperation on the independent investigation that is currently ongoing at this time," the Canadian Army official said.

"Between both of our armies, this is not affecting us. I spoke to your commander of the Army (Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande) last night. We both agreed that this is a political issue and has no interference on our relationship," he said. (PTI)

BJP, JD(S) politicising Cauvery issue, says Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah

MYSURU, Sept 26: Accusing opposition BJP and JD(S) of politicising the Cauvery row, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday rejected allegations that his government has failed on the issue, and said his administration has never lagged behind in protecting the interests of the state, its people and farmers.

He reiterated the importance of the distress water sharing formula and the construction of a Mekedatu balancing reservoir across Cauvery river as the resolution for the dispute with neighbouring Tamil Nadu.

The Bengaluru bandh called by farmers and Kannada organisations and backed by the BJP and JD(S) on Tuesday in protest against the release of Cauvery river water to Tamil Nadu evoked partial response, with most of the public services functioning normally, but many people staying indoors.

"It is most unfortunate that BJP and JD(S) are politicising the Cauvery issue. They are doing it for the sake of politics and not in the interest of the state or its people," Siddaramaiah said in response to a question.

Speaking to reporters here, he said everyone has the right to protest and call for bandh in a democracy, but the court has restricted processions and bandh, and hence prohibitory orders under section 144 have been invoked, aimed at ensuring that nobody takes the law into their own hands and that the public are not put to any difficulty.

"Let them protest, we are not opposed to it. But the issue should not be politicised and used for political gains. It is not in the interest of the state," he added.



To a reported remark by JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy calling Karnataka Congress the 'B team' of the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu, Siddaramaiah asked what would he call the BJP (the new alliance partner of the JD-S), which was in alliance with the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu until recently.

One should not speak for the sake of politics, he said. "Former PM and JD(S) chief H D Deve Gowda has written a letter to the Prime Minister seeking intervention to resolve the Cauvery issue. I have welcomed it. But alleging that the state government has failed on the issue is politics."

The state government has never lagged behind in protecting the interests of the state, its people and farmers, he said. "For us, power is not important, the interests of the people is important. We believe strongly in it."

Pointing out that so far there has been no distress formula on sharing Cauvery during drought years, the CM said, "We have been seeking a distress formula. We have been pressuring the Supreme Court on this and before the

tribunal also.

"When there is a deficit of rain, there will be distress in both states. In such a situation we have to share the distress, for which a distress formula is needed," he said.

The other solution is building the Mekedatu balancing reservoir, which will have a storage capacity of 67 tmc (thousand million cubic feet) water, Siddaramaiah said. When there is excess rain, water can be stored there and utilised during distress years to release it to Tamil Nadu. It will help both states, he added.

Noting that his government has requested for a team of central experts to visit the state and give a report on the ground situation -- H D Deve Gowda too made such a request to the PM recently after the new alliance between BJP and JD(S) -- he said, "There has been no response to my letter so far...ask BJP which has 25 MPs to put pressure on the PM on this."

Karnataka has been advocating since the beginning that the issues should be resolved through discussion out of court, Siddaramaiah said, adding that "for this Prime Minister should intervene".

To a question on BJP and JD(S) alleging that the government has failed to put forward its argument effectively in court, the CM pointed out that it is the same legal team engaged during their tenure that has been engaged now.

"Despite effective arguments, the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee and Management Authority has ordered us to release 5,000 cusecs (cubic feet of water per second) for 15 days. We will place our argument effectively next when the matter comes up before them," he said. (PTI)

Rly employees union demands productivity linked bonus on the basis of 7th pay commission

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: Indian Railway Employees Federation (IREF) has written to the railways demanding an enhancement in the productivity-linked bonus (PLB) that the workers get every year ahead of the festive season.

The railways pay PLB, which is equivalent to 78 days' wages, to all non-gazetted employees (Group C and Group D) as an incentive to increase productivity and ensure safety. The PLB is calculated on the basis of the minimum salary paid to the lowest grade (Group D) employees. The IREF has argued that though the railways implemented the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission on January 1, 2016, yet the PLB has still been calculated and paid based on the minimum salary fixed by the 6th Pay Commission.

The minimum salary paid to Group D employees in the 6th Pay Commission was only ₹ 7000 while it was enhanced to ₹ 18,000 in the 7th Pay Commission.

According to the Feder-

ation, all employees of Group C and Group D get only ₹ 17,951 which is calculated on the basis of ₹ 7000 as the minimum monthly salary.

They have demanded that it should be raised to ₹ 46,159 considering the minimum salary under the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission.

"During Covid-19, when a countrywide lockdown was imposed and people were scared to come out of their houses, railway employees risked their lives and kept the train operations on even if they had to face extremely unfavourable circumstances," the Federation said in its letter.

"They set new records in train operations which resulted in an increase in railways' income and this fact has been acknowledged in the quarterly bulletin of the Railways," it added.

The Federation said that this issue has caused a lot of discontent among employees and the Railway Board should address it as soon as possible. (PTI)

SC raises issue of pendency of 70 Collegium recommendations with Centre

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: With 70 collegium recommendations still stuck with the government, the Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed its dismay over the "delay" in the appointment of judges and asked the attorney general to use his office to resolve the issue. After a bench of justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Sudhanshu Dhulia raised the matter, attorney general R Venkataramani sought a week's time to come back with instructions on the pending recommendations for judges' appointment to the high court.

"Today, I am quiet because the attorney general has sought a very short time, next time I will not be quiet. Use your good office to see these issues are resolved," Justice Kaul told Venkataramani during the hearing.

The bench said, "There were 80 recommendations pending until last week when 10 names were cleared. Now, the figure is 70, of which 26 recommendations are of transfer of judges, seven are reiterations, nine are pending without being returned to the collegium and one case is of appointment of the Chief Justice to a sensitive high court."

All these recommendations are pending since November last year, it said.

Justice Kaul said there is a seven-month hiatus since something substantial was done on the recommendations which are pending and these needed basic processing only.

"We have endeavoured to push things and monitor closely. I have told the attorney general that every 10-12 days this matter will be taken up, so that before I demit office (December 25), substantial work is done," said Justice Kaul, who is part of the apex court collegium which looks after the appointment of judges in the top court and the high courts.

The appointment of judges through the collegium system has in the past become a major flashpoint between the Supreme Court and the Centre with the mechanism drawing criticism from different quarters.

The top court was hearing a petition filed by Advocates Association of Bengaluru seeking contempt action against the Union Ministry of Law and Justice for not allegedly adhering to the timeline set by the court in a 2021 judgement.

During the hearing, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for another petitioner NGO Common Cause, submitted a chart related to pending recommendations with the government.

He said what is more worrisome is that even after a batch of names is recommended by the collegium at one time, the government segregates it and makes selective appointments.

"This affects the morale of lawyers and as per my information, several of them have withdrawn their consents," he said.

Justice Kaul, while agreeing with the views of Bhushan, said there are nine such names, where the government has kept the names pending without reverting them back.

"I agree that the way good candidates withdraw their consent to be a judge is really worrisome. We try to get the best talents but due to pendency, lawyers whose names have been recommended for judgeship have withdrawn their names," Justice Kaul said as he posted the matter for further hearing on October 9.

Senior advocate Arvind Dattar, appearing for the petitioner 'The Advocates Association of Bengaluru' and Bhushan said a "hard push" is needed to ensure that the Centre adheres to the timeline.

Justice Kaul said some of the candidates have lost interest and withdrawn their names due to the delay in appointment, which also affects their seniority.

"I know about one or two such great candidates due to the position I am holding. With the assurance from AG, I'll take this matter up every 10 days. I thought of saying a lot, but since the attorney general is only seeking seven days' time, I'm holding myself," he said.

Bhushan urged the bench that direction needs to be issued for compliance with its verdict in which a timeline has been fixed for clearing the recommendation of the collegium. (PTI)

GalaxEye, ideaForge join hands to build foliage penetration radar for armed forces

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: Bengaluru-based space start-up GalaxEye has joined hands with ideaForge, a drone manufacturing company, to develop a customised radar for the armed forces that can enable them to see through dense foliage and fog. The UAV FOPEN (Foliage Penetration) Radar will help the armed forces address the unique demands of the operations that involve penetrating dense foliage, ensuring seamless monitoring while overcoming obstructions.

"Under this collaboration, ideaForge will contribute its expertise in Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) technology, skillfully blending it with GalaxEye's state-of-the-art Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) technology," a statement from GalaxEye said on Tuesday.

This has been one of the requirements of the security forces to see under foliage and through fog, it said.

"We are excited to partner with GalaxEye to develop cutting-edge solutions in aerial surveillance and mapping, which will greatly enhance the capabilities of our security forces and aid them in their endeavours to guard the nation against existing and future threats," Ankit Mehta, CEO of ideaForge, said.

This technology will greatly enhance the ability to detect illegal activities, monitor the movement of any unauthorized individuals, enable counterinsurgency operations and track various illicit operations, the statement said.

This Foliage Penetrating UAV Radar system will overcome obstructions like clouds, fog, smoke, mist, camouflage nets, and dense tree-canopy foliage, which often hinder surveillance operations, it said.

The MoU also includes the development of a high-resolution 3D imaging foliage-penetrating radar.

When mounted on a UAV, this radar will function as an all-weather surveillance payload that can identify objects obscured by foliage or camouflage by providing tactical real-time ground photography, the statement said.

"Today, technology is limited to monitoring technologies only. Adding this new dimension to our SAR technology, in partnership combined with ideaForge's expertise, will empower security agencies with unparalleled advantages in challenging operational scenarios with minimal operations effort," Suyash Singh, Co-founder and CEO at GalaxEye, said. (PTI)

Waheeda Rehman to receive Dadasaheb Phalke Award

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: Waheeda Rehman, who made her debut 68 years ago and went on to act in cult classics such as "Pyasa" and "Guide", was on Tuesday named recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the government's highest recognition in the field of cinema.

"I'm doubly happy because it is Dev Anand's birthday. I think 'taufa unko milna tha, mujhe mil gaya'," Rehman told PTI on the birth centenary of her frequent collaborator.

Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur made the announcement on X.

"I feel an immense sense of happiness and honour in announcing that Waheeda Rehman ji is being bestowed with the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Lifetime Achievement Award this year for her stellar contribution to Indian Cinema,"

Thakur wrote on the microblogging site. The award for the year 2021 will be presented during the 69th National Film awards ceremony.

The five-member jury comprised Rehman's close friend and last year's Dadasaheb award winner Asha Parekh, actors Chiranjeevi, Paresh Rawal and Prosenjit Chatterjee as well as filmmaker Shekhar Kapur.

Regarded as one of the finest actors of the country, Rehman, also an accomplished Bharatanatyam dancer, made her debut in Hindi cinema with Guru Dutt's "CID" opposite Dev Anand.

After that dazzling beginning came a string of arthouse and mainstream films, the actor comfortably straddling the twin worlds of "Kaagaz ke Phool" and "Ram aur Shyam".

The remarkable career spanning more than six decades and 90 films in differ-



ent languages saw her segue from black and white to colour, and from lead roles to character cameos.

Some of her most memorable performances were with Guru Dutt --

"Pyasa", "Kaagaz Ke Phool", "Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam" and "Chaudhvin Ka Chand". With Dev Anand came the much loved "Guide" and "Prem Pujari". The filmography includes

"Khamoshi", "Kabhi Kabhie", "Reshma Aur Shera", which got her the National Award, and "Trishul".

Remembering Dev Anand, Rehman, who has earlier won the Padma Shri and the Padma Bhushan, said it is a double celebration.

"It is very wonderful that his celebration is going on and I get this honour. I'm really happy and grateful to the government that they chose me to give this honour. So, it is a combination and celebration of this and Dev sahab's 100th birth anniversary," she added.

Born in Chennai, Rehman made her acting debut with the 1955 Telugu films "Rojulu Marayyi" and "Jayasimha".

"At a time when the historic Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam has been passed by Parliament, her being awarded with this lifetime achievement award is a fitting tribute to one of the

leading ladies of Indian Cinema and one who has dedicated her life after films to philanthropy and the greater good of society. I congratulate her and humbly pay my regards to her rich body of work that is an intrinsic part of our film history," Thakur said in his post on X.

Rehman, who now lives in Bengaluru, has become selective in her film choices.

In the 1990s and 2000s, she starred in character roles in "Lamhe", "Chandni", "Rang De Basanti" and "Delhi-6".

Rehman is also associated with bringing to life some of Hindi films most popular songs -- "Kahin pe nigha, kahin pe nishana" ("CID"), "Aaj phir jeena ki tamanna hai" and "Pyka tose naina lage re" ("Guide"), "Luka chhuppi" ("Rang De Basanti") and "Genda phool" ("Delhi-6"). (PTI)

Ram temple ground floor to be completed by December end, 'pran pratishtha' on Jan 22: Nripendra Mishra

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: The construction of the ground floor of the three-storey Ram temple in Ayodhya will be completed by December-end, and the consecration ceremony is expected to take place on January 22, temple Construction Committee Chairperson Nripendra Mishra has said.

In an interview to PTI, he also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to take part in an event related to the 'pran pratishtha' on any day during January 20-24. The final date is yet to be communicated by the Prime Minister's Office, he said.

Mishra also said work is underway to design an apparatus that will be installed on the 'shikhar' of the temple, which will make sun rays fall momentarily on the forehead of the deity in the sanctum sanctorum on the day of Ram Navami every year. It is being built in Bengaluru and its design is being overseen by scientists, he added. The Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee, and an institute in Pune have jointly created a computerised programme for this, Mishra said.

The Supreme Court in a 2019 verdict had paved the way for the construction of a Ram temple by a trust at the disputed site in Ayodhya, and directed the Centre to allot an alternative five-acre plot to the Sunni Waqf Board for building a new mosque at a "prominent" place in the holy town of Uttar Pradesh.

The court had ruled that the 2.77 acres of the disputed land where the demolished 16th century-era Babri Masjid once stood will remain with a Central government receiver and be handed over to the trust within three months of the



ruling for the construction of the temple.

The Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust will formally invite Prime Minister Modi for the consecration ceremony during which the idol of Ram Lalla will be installed in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple.

The temple trust has decided to start the process of the consecration of Ram Lalla after Makar Sankranti on January 14, and observe a 10-day ritual of Ram Lalla's 'pran pratishtha' (consecration).

The Ram temple in Ayodhya is likely to open for devotees on January 24 after the consecration of Ram Lalla idol, Mishra, a member of the trust, had said in June.

In response to a query during the interview, Mishra did not reject the suggestion that the ceremony taking place ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls shall have political implications.

"It was planned to complete the construction of the ground floor of the temple by December 2023 and

this work will definitely be completed within the stipulated time," he said.

He said the temple is being constructed with a vision that its structure will last at least 1,000 years.

The 'pran pratishtha' will be started in consultation with knowledgeable saints and sages, Mishra added.

He said a committee under the trust's general secretary Champat Rai has been set up which is working the details of this planned ceremony.

"When the ceremony takes place on January 22 next year, then there is a huge rush expected. The trust has urged people to see it from their homes, villages (via television broadcast)," the chairman of the temple's construction committee said.

The Prime Minister's Office is yet to inform as to on what date he will attend the 'pran pratishtha'-related ceremony, Mishra said, adding the trust will announce it when the final programme comes.

But it is expected to be during

January 20-24 as after that the PM will be very busy with Republic Day and other programmes, Mishra said.

When asked about the plan for devotees who will come after the consecration ceremony, he said, they will get 15-20 seconds time to for a 'darshan', but they will be satisfied with the overall experience at the temple complex.

On the temple architecture and construction material, Mishra said, iron has not been used in its construction, and copper has been used to link stone blocks. The built-up area of the temple is 2.5 acres and if one includes the 'parikrama path' the total area of the complex is about eight acres, he said. Ninety bronze panels will depict the life and duties performed by Lord Ram, he added.

He also said about ₹ 900 crore has been spent so far on the temple's construction, and it is estimated that about ₹ 1,700 crore to 1,800 crore will be spent on the overall construction of the complex.

Mishra said some artefacts were unearthed during excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and some objects were found during the temple's ground-breaking and construction work.

Some of these items have been placed safely under the custody of the trust, Mishra said. "After taking permission from the ASI, we will display these in a proposed museum."

Asked about the invitees for the consecration ceremony, he said, a preliminary list of 10,000 people is being prepared, which will include saints, seers, people associated with Ram temple movement etc, he added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Manipur government asks public

against the killing of these two youths The students brought out protest rallies hours after photos of the bodies of the two youths went viral on social media.

The protesters clashed with the police when security forces tried to stop them from advancing towards the Chief Minister's secretariat here, police said.

The injured protesters were treated at various hospitals.

Manipur has been witnessing ethnic violence since early May.

More than 175 people have been killed and several hundreds injured since ethnic clashes broke out in the northeastern state on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organized in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts. (PTI)

CM inaugurates Assam Bhawan

Street in Kolkata," Sarma said. The construction of Assam Bhawan is going on in full swing in Bengaluru, which will be inaugurated during the current financial year. Assam Bhawans will also come up at Ahmedabad in Gujarat and Pune in Maharashtra.

"More than one Assam Bhawan is being built in New Delhi, which will have a convention centre as well as a Namghar to reflect Assam's cultural heritage at the national level. I want to express my gratitude to the Tamil Nadu government and the people of Vellore for extending all help in the construction of Assam Bhawan," the Chief Minister further said. State GAD minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, housing and urban affairs minister Ashok Singhal, chief executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Tuliram Ronghang, chancellor of the Vellore Institute of Technology, G. Viswanathan and host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Govt introducing talent enriching

through Leader's Declaration, bringing in the African Union into the fold at India's behest, exemplifying the true meaning of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,' - One World, One Family, One Future - built its reputation as a 'leader of global south'.

"Gone are those days when youths of the country had to fight the evil of corruption in the government job selection under Congress misrule. This evil has been systematically weeded out. Since 2014 our government has provided our youth with an honest option to become part of nation building through government jobs, based on merit. As you join the government and further the role of Karmayogis through your work on nation building, India aims to become a Vikashit Bharat by 2047."

UNC appeals warring communities for

to ensure the rule of law". The UNC Peace Committee had also urged both the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities to refrain from further engaging in "hostile acts and to hold an immediate ceasefire from intermittent firing".

The UNC Peace Committee had also stated earlier that "it has been at a loss and short of words" to make any comment on the ongoing conflict. It, however, "strongly believes" that to any conflict, there should be a solution anywhere and everywhere. The Committee then said the "violent conflict between the Meiteis and the Kuki-Zo communities we witness today is unprecedented". It is a matter of deep anguish and grave concern for the establishment and the people of the state in general, the UNC Peace Committee also said. Several lives and properties worth thousands of crores of rupees have been lost and damaged on both sides.

"More than four months have passed now, but the situation remains tense. Notwithstanding the causes behind and the bitterness of the results, we surely need a pause and find time to re-think because life must go on and lives must be saved at any cost from further loss and casualties," the UNC Peace Committee added.

In this given situation, therefore, the UNC Peace Committee urged both the communities to refrain from further engaging in hostile acts and to hold an "immediate ceasefire from intermittent firing".

The UNC Peace Committee then expressed its unequivocal stand for peace. The Committee also said it is ready to render its services towards that goal. "Mahatma Gandhi said, 'There is no way to peace, peace is the only way'" the UNC quoted, while adding, "And truly, we can only wish and pray that the 'sun of peace will rise once again with healing in its rays' upon both the communities". (NNN)

India puts spotlight on complex

at an exhibition that has been organized as part of the two-day conference. In his address at the opening session of the conclave, defence minister Singh emphasized that the Indo-Pacific is no more a maritime construct, but a full-fledged geo-strategic issue, and that the region is facing "a complex web" of security challenges, including boundary disputes and piracy.

"Our efforts to build robust military partnerships with friendly countries underscore our commitment to safeguard national interests & address global challenges," he said, asserting that India stands for a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Army Chief Gen Pande said India's commitment towards "positively engaging" all stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific has been "unwavering and enduring" over the years.

"India's strategic location, astride the vital sea lanes of communication, in the Indo-Pacific, propels us as a key player in the region's discourse," he said.

"Our outlook emphasizes respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations in the region, equality of all, peaceful resolution of disputes, avoidance of use of force and adherence to international laws, rules and regulations," he said.

Gen Pande said the "challenges we face are significant, but so is our collective wisdom and strength."

"The challenges we face transcend across borders, and our response to them must factor this. The Indo-Pacific region is not merely a collection of nations -- it is a web of interdependencies," he said.

"We are bound by geography, and our destinies are intertwined. The security and prosperity of one nation is intrinsically linked to the security and prosperity of its neighbours, and much beyond. Therefore, each one of us has an important and a pivotal role to play," he said.

Highlighting the geo-political significance and geo-economic weight of the Indo-Pacific nations, Gen Pande said it is evident from the fact that, the region accounts for 65 per cent of the world's population, 63 per cent of the global GDP and 50 per cent of the world's maritime trade. "Hence, the impact of geographic and economic indispensability of the region to the world, naturally accords it the role of the pivotal theatre, in the contemporary geo-strategic canvas," he said.

Gen Pande pitched for greater cooperation in the spheres of security, connectivity and economy among the littoral states in the Indo-Pacific region. "From a definitional perspective, the construct of 'Indo-Pacific' largely hints at primacy of navies, in the security stakeholdership of the region," he noted.

"While there is no denying this, the role of other components of armed forces, remains profoundly relevant. Apart from challenges exclusively in the maritime domain, a wide range of security and humanitarian concerns exist on land, too," he said.

"These range from territorial disputes over land masses, or in some cases even over artificially expanded islands to acquire real estate and establish military bases, transnational threats of terrorism, consequences of climate change impacting the inhabited islands or coastal areas of rim nations and natural calamities," he added.

Gen Pande observed that these challenges are manifesting as "threats, singularly or plurally, impacting one or more nations amongst us." In his address, the defence minister explained his vision for the region through a theoretical model by American author Stephen R Covey, which is based on two circles -- 'Circle of Concern' and 'Circle of Influence'.

"There may be instances when the 'circles of concern' of different nations overlap with each other. International maritime trade routes passing through high seas, beyond the exclusive economic zones of any country, are relevant examples," he said.

"This can either result in conflict between nations or they can decide to coexist by mutually deciding the rules of engagement. The concept of these circles underscores the importance of strategic thinking and prioritization," he added. Singh pointed out that states must recognize that global issues involve multiple stakeholders and no one country can address these challenges in isolation. He stressed the need to engage with the broader international community and work collaboratively through diplomacy, international organizations and treaties to tackle common concerns within the overlapping 'Circles of Concern'.

Singh termed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982 as a good example of such an international agreement that establishes the legal framework for maritime activities and addresses the issues arising from overlapping 'circles of concern' of different nations.

Singh was of the view that states, at the same time, must identify and seek to expand their 'Circle of Influence' to promote national interests on the global stage. This, he said, may involve building partnerships, participating in regional organizations and employing diplomatic, economic or military tools strategically.

"This conference is an exercise where we all are trying to expand our 'Circles of Influence' while harmonizing the overlaps of our 'circles of concern'," he added. (PTI)

3 children missing in Dhansiri

till 9 pm. She had even lit mosquito repellent coils in the room where they had been sleeping. It was the next morning that they learned that the three kids had gone missing. They searched the whole locality, but could not find them. One of the parents of the three missing children lamented, "I was intimated about the disappearance of my child on the evening of September 16. I have been trying in vain to locate him."

Governor reviews development activities

education institutions. Speaking on cyber crime, the Governor asked the officials to create and empower a robust ecosystem with trained local youths to address the menace. He also met a few beneficiaries of various government schemes and interacted with them after the meeting.

China, India have 'ability' to find way

other," she said. "We need to jointly oppose zero-sum games and keep our region away from geopolitical calculations. China and India have the ability and wisdom to find a way for friendly coexistence between neighbouring major countries and jointly create the 'Asian Century'," she added.

The Chinese diplomat said bilateral trade has "performed strongly, and the trade volume reached USD 77.6 billion in the first seven months of this year".

"China's second centenary goal and India's 'Amrit Kaal' development goal are the biggest strategic objectives for the two countries respectively," she said. (PTI)

IIT-Guwahati develops fabric

that the coated cotton fabric absorbed oil, while the uncoated sample adsorbed both oil and water. The developed superhydrophobic fabric has shown a remarkable 98 per cent efficiency, and retained its functionality even after repeated use and exposure to harsh environments," he claimed. The paper has been published in the international journal, Biomass & Bioenergy. (PTI)

BJP stages protest over dengue outbreak in Bengal

KOLKATA, Sept 26: The West Bengal BJP unit on Tuesday staged a protest rally outside the Swasthya Bhawan - the health department office - over the menace of dengue outbreak in the state and alleged that the steps taken by the TMC government are just "eyewash" to hide its "failures".

Led by the Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari and 22 BJP MLAs on Tuesday afternoon went to Swasthya Bhawan to submit a deputation regarding the dengue outbreak.

But as Adhikari and BJP MLAs were about to enter the state health department office they were stopped by the police, citing security concerns.

A heated argument broke out between the two followed, and BJP MLAs resorted to shouting slogans against the state government over its "failure" to control the dengue outbreak.

"We just wanted to submit a deputation. The police are saying they will only allow me into the building. Why are other BJP MLAs not allowed? The state government is busy stopping us but has failed to control the dengue situation," Adhikari told reporters.

Speaking on the steps the state government took to control the situation, the BJP leader dubbed it "eyewash".

"The state government is in denial mode and dubs it an unknown fever. The state government is trying to hide the real situation, and the steps taken are just eyewash," Adhikari said. Reacting to the allegations, the TMC asked the BJP to refrain from politicising the issue. (PTI)

Partial response to bandh in Bengaluru against Cauvery water release to TN

BENGALURU, Sept 26: The Bengaluru bandh called by various organisations over the Cauvery river water dispute evoked partial response on Tuesday, as most of the public services functioned normally but fewer people than usual ventured out.

"Karnataka Jala Samrakshana Samiti", an umbrella outfit of farmers' associations and other organisations led by Kuruburu Shanthakumar, had given the call for today's dawn to dusk (6am to 6pm) shutdown.

Earlier in the day, Shanthakumar and other leaders of the Samiti were detained by the police at the Mysuru Bank circle, as they were trying to lead a protest march towards Town Hall.

Several activists of pro-Kannada organisations were also whisked away by the police at Town Hall, as they gathered there to stage a protest.

Farmers' leaders and pro-Kannada activists hit out at the government for allegedly using police force to curtail the protests and the bandh.

Farmers and pro-Kannada organisations with their leaders, including Shanthakumar and others, later staged protests at Freedom Park, which is the only designated place for such demonstrations.

Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy met protesters at Freedom Park and received a memorandum from them.

"I have received the memorandum on behalf of the government. I will bring them to the notice of the chief minister," he said.

The five-point memorandum includes demands that water is not released from Cauvery to Tamil Nadu, an election commission-like body be put together to assess things during distress years, Mekedatu project be implemented, and cases

against farmers and pro-Kannada activists be withdrawn, he said.

The government is on the side of the farmers and is committed to protecting the interests of the state and its people, Reddy added.

Shanthakumar claimed that the bandh has been successful. The samiti has set a three-day deadline for the government to announce its decision, failing which the outfit will intensify their protest.

City police have taken all adequate security measures to respond to any violent situations that may happen during the protests. About 100 platoons have been deployed.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda said that prohibitory orders under section 144 will be in place across the city from midnight on Monday to midnight on Tuesday.

There were reports of some miscreants allegedly trying to shut hotels that were open in Jayanagara area and trying to damage property. Police have registered a case and efforts are on to nab the culprits.

Meanwhile, 'Kannada Okkuta', an umbrella organisation for pro-Kannada organisations -- led by Kannada activist Vatal Nagaraj, which has called for a statewide bandh on September 29, is not supporting today's bandh.

Yet, Nagaraj and other Kannada Okkuta leaders today tried to lay siege to Raj Bhavan, but were stopped midway by the police, who detained them and whisked them away.

All schools and colleges in the city were shut today. Though cab services, autos, and hotels/restaurants were seen operating, drivers and hotel operators said that not many people patronised the services. (PTI)

Parting ways with BJP is AIADMK's internal affair, says DMK leader

CHENNAI, Sept 26: Whether to remain in the BJP alliance or not is purely an internal affair of the AIADMK and his party did not wish to interfere in it, DMK general secretary and Tamil Nadu minister Duraimurugan said on Tuesday.

When media persons sought his comments on the recent political development in the state, especially the AIADMK, which walked out of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance on Monday, he said, "we don't wish to interfere and express our views."

The Dravidian major called off its ties with the BJP and announced that it will lead a separate alliance for the 2024 Lok Sabha poll.

"It's the internal affair of the AIADMK. Whether to join an alliance or not is the party's stand. That party leaders realised this and took the stance. So, this is AIADMK's personal matter and we don't wish to interfere and express our views," the Minister said. Asked if there would be realignment of political forces, he replied, "you can speculate."

Following a high-level meeting chaired by the party's general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami at party headquarters here on Monday, the AIADMK made official its decision to walk out of the saffron party's alliance. (PTI)

95 pc components used in rockets in India domestically sourced: ISRO chief



NEW DELHI, Sept 26: About 95 per cent of components used in rockets in the country have been sourced from India, ISRO Chairperson S Somnath said on Tuesday. Speaking at the 82nd Foundation Day of CSIR, Somanath highlighted that ISRO's expertise spans the entire space domain, with all technical work, including rocket and satellite development and space applications, being carried out in-house.

He said approximately 95 per cent of the materials, devices and systems used in Indian Space Research Organisation's rockets are domestically sourced, with only 5 per cent coming from abroad, primarily high-end electronic components.

"This achievement is a result of collaborations with various Indian laboratories, including national labs, defence labs, and CSIR labs, focusing on material indigenisation, technology capabilities, and research," he said. Somanath also highlighted significant achievements in electronics indigenisation, including the design and manufacture of critical components such as processors for rockets and main computer chips, both made in India.

"Additionally, ISRO has developed essential components, such as electromechanical actuators, DC power supply systems, battery systems, and solar cells within the country," he said. At the Foundation Day

of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar awards were also distributed to 12 young scientists.

Immunologist Dipyaman Ganguli of CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata; microbiologist Ashwani Kumar of CSIR-Institute of Microbial Technology, Chandigarh; biologist Maddika Subba Reddy of the Hyderabad-based Centre for DNA Fingerprinting Diagnostics; Akkattu T Biju of Indian Institute of Science Bengaluru; and Debabrata Maiti of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay are among the awardees. While Ganguli has been awarded in the field of medical sciences, Kumar and Reddy have received the award for their contribution to biological sciences. At the event, Principal Scientific Advisor Ajay Sood said there is a rationalisation of the awards to truly make it national and to make the selection process transparent.

"From the next year, there will be Vigyan Yuva Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar awards and these awards will not be seven as it is now but will number 25 and these again are meant for yuva scientists, technologists and of course the innovators in almost 12 fields and there is another one which we call others to see any other field that has not been listed," he said. (PTI)

WAHEEDA REHMAN AND GURU DUTT: A LIFELONG RELATIONSHIP THAT STARTED WITH A BUFFALO

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: It all started in 1955 with an errant buffalo and Guru Dutt's car. The animal got in the way and totalled the car, forcing Dutt and his friends to stay on in Hyderabad for a few days. It was then that he spotted a young woman from across the street and made inquiries. She was, of course, Waheeda Rehman. And the rest, as they say, is cinematic history. On Tuesday, Rehman was named recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke award, occasion for cinephiles to dig into her remarkable filmography.

The Dutt-Rehman story -- which starred gems such as "Pyaasa" (1957), "Kaagaz Ke Phool" (1959) and "Sahib Bibi aur Ghulam" (1962) -- was recalled by film writer Abrar Alvi in "Ten Years With Guru Dutt" by Sathya Saran. "Waheeda has a buffalo to thank for the fact that we signed her on," Alvi recalls in the book, flipping back to the time when Rehman, then a budding dancer, had just started out in the south and Dutt was impatiently looking to add another hit to the list of "Aar Paar" (1954) and "Mr and Mrs 55" (1955).

Looking to remake Tamil hit "Missamma" (1955) in Hindi, Dutt along with Alvi and their production controller Guruswamy had decided to travel to Hyderabad in a car. A tired Alvi drove the car into a startled buffalo on the road and the trio had to extend their stay in Hyderabad by a couple of days due to the smashed up car. On one of those days, sitting at the office of a distributor in Secunderabad, Dutt's attention was grabbed by a young woman who got down from a car and entered the building opposite. The distributor then informed, "She is a dancer in a Telugu film 'Rojulu Marayi', which is a super hit thanks to her dance number."

Dutt showed interest in meeting her and Rehman was called into the office, "very plainly dressed, without even lipstick to relieve the monotony of her face" and "spoke softly in near monosyllables in response" to the queries. Waheeda Rehman had been discovered! She had appeared in two Telugu films "Rojulu Marayi" and "Jayasimha" that year. The following year, Dutt introduced her to Hindi audiences through the blockbuster "CID" (1956), produced by him and directed by Raj Khosla. That was also the first time Rehman and Dev Anand appeared together on screen. Rehman also recalled that first meeting in Hyderabad in Nasreen Munni Kabir's book "Guru Dutt: A Life in Cinema".

"When I first met him, I didn't think he was a famous and great director because he spoke very little. He asked me a few questions, and I assumed that all he wanted to know was whether I spoke Urdu correctly. The meeting lasted for about half an hour, and then I returned with my family to Madras," Rehman said. While the meeting was forgettable, the face and the dance Dutt had seen on a reel of "Rojulu Marayi" remained with him for the months to come as he toyed with the idea of "CID".

Shakila was roped in to play the lead actress and it was while casting for the vamp, who would have to sing and seduce the hero, that Dutt remembered the young woman he had met briefly in Hyderabad. Rehman remembered being asked to come to Bombay for a screen test some three months after the meeting. "I was delighted because I had always wanted to work in Hindi films. I met Guru Dutt in

his office in Famous Cine Building in June 1955. He gave me a screen test and said: 'You'll have a three-year contract'," she said. While the shooting was only half completed, Dutt started working on "Pyaasa", again featuring Rehman in the immortal role of Gulab. The complexity of the character, a sex worker, was brought out by Dutt, Rehman recalled in a conversation with Kabir. "I didn't know much about acting before 'Pyaasa'. I knew about expression because I had learnt dance. All the credit goes to Guru Dutt in the way he built the character of Gulab. He had everything in his mind. I was a newcomer so it was difficult for me to follow the evolution of the character," she said.

With Dutt in the lead role, Rehman went to perform one of her most memorable roles in "Pyaasa". The duo went on to work in "12 O'Clock" (1958), "Chaudhvin Ka Chand" (1960), and "Kala Bazar" (1960). The partnership is remembered not just for their movies but for the many songs that live on in nostalgia and also modern-day playlists. And here's a sampler - "Waqt ne kiya kya haseen sitam" ("Kaagaz Ke Phool"), "Aaj sajan mohe rang laga do" and "Jaane kya tune kahi" ("Pyaasa"), the title track of "Chaudhvin ka Chand", "Bhanwra bada nadaan hai" ("Sahib Bibi Aur Ghulam"). (PTI)

SWARA BHASKER, FAHAD AHMAD WELCOME BABY GIRL

MUMBAI, Sept 26: Actor Swara Bhasker and politician-husband Fahad Ahmad have become parents to a baby girl. The baby was born on Saturday and the couple has named her Raabiya. Bhasker, known for films such as "Nil Battey Sannata" and "Veere Di Wedding", shared the news on her official Instagram page.

"A prayer heard, a blessing granted, a song whispered, a mystic truth... Our baby girl Raabiya was born on 23rd September 2023. With grateful and happy hearts, thank you for your love! It's a whole new world," the actor wrote alongside a photograph featuring her, Ahmad and the new born. Ahmad, who is the state president of Samajwadi Party's youth wing -- Samajwadi Yuvjan Sabha, also shared the same post.

The actor, who tied the knot with the politician in February, announced her pregnancy in June. (PTI)



Alia Bhatt to star in Vasan Bala's 'Jigra', film to release in 2024

MUMBAI, Sept 26: National Award winner Alia Bhatt is set to star in and produce "Jigra", a film directed by Vasan Bala, the makers said Tuesday. Backed by Dharma Productions and Eternal Sunshine Productions, the movie will hit the screens on September 27, 2024. Karan Johar's Dharma Productions shared the film announcement on its official X page. "@alia08 is back to put up a courageous fight like no other for her #Jigra! JIGRA, directed by Vasan Bala - releasing in cinemas on 27th September 2024," the banner said in the post. "Jigra" marks Bhatt's second production venture via Eternal Sunshine Productions after 2022's "Darlings", which was released on Netflix. She was last seen in the streamer's "Heart of Stone", her Hollywood debut. From debuting in Dharma Productions' 2012 film "Student of the Year" to now producing a film with the studio, Bhatt said life has come full circle for her.

"Every day is a different day! Exciting, challenging (and a little scary) but not just as an actor but also as a producer as we bring this film to life, and I CANNOT wait to share more as we move forward. JIGRA - in cinemas on 27th September 2024," she wrote on social media. Bala, known for "Monica, O My Darling" and "Mard Ko Dard Nahin Hota", penned a description of the film on his official Instagram account. "She made a promise and she will fulfill it... whatever the obstacle... whatever the cost... #Jigra," the filmmaker wrote. Johar, Apoorva Mehta, Bhatt and Somen Mishra are credited as producers on the upcoming project. (PTI)

It was as if his soul had entered my body: Dev Anand 'junior' remembers his idol

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: (PTI) He was 11 when a schoolmate told him he resembled Dev Anand. That stray comment set the tone for his career and much of his life, says Kishore Bhanushali who went on to mimic the screen idol's loose limbed walk, floppy hair, affectations and over the years came to be known as Dev Anand junior.

Bhanushali, who has worked in over 100 films across Hindi, Bhojpuri and Gujarati cinema, sometimes regrets he could not establish his separate identity but memories of his few meetings and conversations with Dev Anand have kept him going.

On Tuesday, the 100th birth anniversary of the superstar, who died in 2011 at the age of 88, the actor, singer, host and stand-up comic said impassioned that it was as if Dev Anand's soul had entered him. "I may have started my journey in cinema by mimicking Dev sahab

but I always wanted to become Kishore Bhanushali. Ironically, that is exactly why no one would give me work in the beginning," the 61-year-old told PTI. "I may not

have been able to get work but people slowly started recognising me. I didn't realise when I started behaving, sitting, standing and moving like Dev sahab. It was as if his soul had entered my body and I became Dev Anand," said the actor, who currently stars in the TV show "Bhabhi Ji Ghar Par Hai".

Bhanushali recalls in vivid detail his meeting with Dev Anand after his impersonation of the star in the 1990 blockbuster "Dil".

"I still remember his one leg was on the table, the sweater was tied, and there were four-five people standing behind him. When I

wished him good morning, he said 'Good morning, Kishore' in his inimitable style. 'That's your name, right?'

"I said, yes sir. He said 'I saw your film 'Dil' and had a good time. You were looking more like Dev Anand than me! How many films are you doing right now?'

I said 'Sir, around 10-12.'

"Oh baap re! You're so busy!" he said. The Mumbai-based actor said seeing Dev



Anand in person left him spellbound and he even asked if they could work together in a film. (PTI)

Dev Anand @100: A look at popular songs from evergreen star's many movies

NEW DELHI, Sept 26: Dev Anand spent more than five decades playing the leading man in over 100 films, showcasing a range of personas, from being a lovestruck hero to a dotting brother.

On his 100th birth anniversary, here is a look at some of his popular songs: 1. "Hai Apna Dil To Awara" -- "Solva Saal" (1958)

The song is picturised on Dev Anand, who is trying to woo Waheeda Rehman during a train ride. The evergreen romantic track is sung by Hemant Kumar with music by S D Burman.

2. "Khoya Khoya Chand" -- "Kala Bazar" (1960)

The timeless song by Mohammed Rafi has an incredible recall value among the die hard fans of Dev Anand. The beautifully crafted song is remembered for its melodious tune and romantic lyrics that capture the essence of yearning and romanticism.

3. "Main Zindagi Ka Saath Nibhata Chala Gaya" -- "Hum Dono" (1961) Another gem from Mohammed Rafi, the song was written by legendary poet Sahir Ludhianvi. The song evokes a sense of optimism, reflecting a carefree attitude towards life without worrying too much.

4. "Abhi Na Jao Chhod Kar" -- "Hum Dono" (1961) The duet by Mohammed Rafi and

Asha Bhosle sees Dev Anand and Sadhana running around trees in a quintessential Bollywood style. 5. "Tere Ghar Ke Samne" -- "Tere Ghar Ke Samne" (1963)

The titular song from the romance drama is sung by Mohammed Rafi and Lata Mangeshkar. The film was directed by Dev Anand's actor-filmmaker brother Vijay Anand. The track shows Dev Anand ruminating about his love for Nutan's character over a drink.

6. "Din Dhal Jaye" -- "Guide" (1965)

The song from the cult classic film, directed by Vijay Anand, was also sung by Mohammed Rafi. The melan-



cholic track conveys a sense of longing, heartbreak and pain of separation. 7. "Yeh Dil Na Hota Bechara" -- "Jewel Thief" (1967)

The Kishore Kumar song is picturised on Dev Anand's titular character. It has music by RD Burman with lyrics by Majrooh Sultanpuri. It captures carefree attitude towards life and love.

8. "Pal Bhar Ke Liye Koi Humein Pyaar Karle" -- "Johnny Mera Naam" (1970)

The playful romantic track from another classic is sung by Kishore Kumar and Usha Khanna. It shows Dev Anand serenading Hema Malini.

9. "Phoolan Ka Taron Ka" -- "Hare

Rama Hare Krishna" (1971)

The track, which has a heartwarming melody, celebrates the bond between a brother and a sister. It is picturised on Dev Anand's character who is trying to reconcile with his estranged sister, played by Zeenat Aman in the movie. The song is sung by Kishore Kumar.

10. "Dil Aaj Shayar Hai" -- "Gambler" (1971)

The song shows Dev Anand's character expressing his romantic feelings for the film's leading lady, played by Zaheeda. Sung by Kishore Kumar with music by S D Burman, the song captures the essence of falling in love. (PTI)

Strong Indian golf team eyes Asian Games medals

HANGZHOU, Sept 26: The seven-member Indian golf team, comprising the likes of Anirban Lahiri and Aditi Ashok, will be hoping to carry forward its recent superb form when the event commences at the Asian Games here on Thursday.

Lahiri will be leading an experienced set of Indian golfers including Shubhankar Sharma, Khalin Joshi and SSP Chawrasia, while the women's team has the likes of Olympian Aditi, Pranavi Urs and Avani Prashanth.

While Lahiri and Sharma have been given automatic berths in the men's section, Aditi has been given the same honour among

women.

Joshi and Chawrasia among men and Pranavi and Avani in women came through the qualifiers conducted for amateurs and pros by the Indian Golf Union (IGU).

Lahiri, the only one in this group to have won a medal at the Asian Games, did so way back in 2006 when he clinched a team silver as an amateur.

"That was an amazing feeling," he recalled.

He said, "For me, it is very exciting; obviously to have the opportunity to play again in the Asian Games. It's a great honour to represent the country. It is ob-



viously something I cherish and look forward to.

"This doesn't come around very often. So it's always a very, very

important event for me personally. I am looking forward to spending time with the team. I don't really know some of them very well.

"As for my colleagues in the men's team, SSP (Chawrasia) is a very dear friend. We've done Olympics (2016) together. Shubhankar and I are very, very close and we have played a lot together. I think it will be a new experience for Khalin (Joshi).

"So, yes, all of us are looking forward to it and nothing will be better for golf in India than if we can bring back some medals."

The senior-most player in the golf contingent, who has played two Olympic Games -- 2016 Rio and 2020 Tokyo --, added, "All of us, both the girls and the boys, are a strong team. We have some people who are in good form. And I

think that's important heading into events like this.

Lahiri has a string of top-3 performances on the LIV Tour and also the International Series on the Asian Tour, while Sharma notched a top-10 finish at the 2023 British Open, which is the best ever at the event by an Indian.

"Yeah, I think we can bring back a few medals. I say a few because I think we have a very good chance in all four events, the individuals and team, in both men and women. That's what we will be looking at," said Lahiri.

Chawrasia, who has six titles as a pro from the Asian and European Tours, was Lahiri's team-

mate at the Rio Olympics, but this will be his first Asian Games.

Sharma, who missed out on making the team to the 2010 Asian Games, turned professional a couple of years later. He will be representing India for the first time in a multi-discipline event.

His friend from his junior days, Khalin Joshi, will also be making his Asian Games debut.

Aditi Ashok has been in great form on the Ladies European Tour, where she won the Kenya Ladies Open and is right now fourth on the Order of Merit. She has also been very consistent on the world's strongest Tour, the Ladies PGA (LPGA) Tour. (PTI)

INDIA ARE THE TOP-RANKED TEAM IN THE COMPETITION

Indian women's hockey team eyes second Asian Games Gold

HANGZHOU, Sept 26: Top-ranked India will look to assert their continental supremacy with a second women's hockey gold in the Asian Games when they open their campaign against lowly Singapore here on Wednesday.

Placed seventh in the world, India are the top-ranked team in the competition ahead of defending champions and world No.10 Japan.

The Savita Punia-led side would look for redemption when it opens its campaign against Singapore in the Pool A match.

Going by form and rankings, the Indians are considered title favourites but in Japan, world No.11 China, and world No.12 Korea, some tough opponents await them on their way to ultimate glory.

But since their historic fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics, the Indian women are on a high under chief coach Janneke Schopman and would be gunning for gold, which will give them a direct ticket to Paris in the ongoing Games.

Under Schopman and Savita's leadership, India have only upped their game in the recent past but it



won't be easy and they will have to take the pressure aspect in their stride to emerge triumphant here.

"The team is in great shape heading into our first match against Singapore, we had identified areas of improvement and worked on it in the build-up to the Asian Games. The plan is to start strong and take charge of our games from the start whistle and

finish as table toppers," coach Schopman said. The road to semi-finals would be a bit easier for the Indian women as they are grouped with relatively weaker opponents in Pool A consisting of Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Korea.

Going by world stature, India and Korea are expected to qualify for the semifinal from Pool A, but it won't be smooth sailing beyond

that.

Pool B consists of China, Japan, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Thailand.

The team selection was on expected lines with chief coach Schopman relying on her tried and tested players.

While the Indian goal will be under the watchful eyes of skipper Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam,

the defence will be manned by vice-captain Deep Grace Ekka, Sushila Chanu and Nikki Pradhan among others.

India boast of a strong forward-line in Lalremsiami, Navneet Kaur, Vandana Katariya, Udita and Sangita Kumari while the midfield will be controlled by Neha, Nisha, Salima Tete and Ishika Chaudhary among others.

While India's recent results against strong teams like Australia, England and Germany were not up to the mark, the Savita-led side would look to apply the lessons learnt from those outings in the Asian Games.

After Singapore, the Indian women will take on Malaysia on September 29, Korea (October 1) and Hong Kong (October 3).

While the Indians are expected to have it easy in the pool stage, they are expected to run into either Japan or China in the semifinals, which will definitely test their character and fitness.

The Indian women have so far won six medals in the Asian Games (one gold, two silver and three bronze) and would be hoping to better their yellow metal count. (PTI)

Nagal, Raina progress to quarterfinals; Ramkumar, Bhosale exit from singles



HANGZHOU, Sept 26: Counter-puncher Sumit Nagal blunted the challenge of big-serving Beibit Zhukayev with his perseverance while Ankita Raina outgunned Adithya P

Karunaratne without fuss as the two Indians inched closer to singles medals by reaching the quarterfinals at the Asian Games here on Tuesday.

Kazakhstan's Zhukayev served big but Nagal controlled the points better for a 7-6 (9) 6-4 in a riveting men's singles third round while Raina cruised to a 6-1 6-2 win over her Hong Kong's opponent in the third round of the women's singles event.

The semifinalists are assured of bronze medals in the tennis event at the Games.

However, the singles challenge of Ramkumar Ramanathan and Rutuja Bhosale came to a halt at the Asian Games.

Nagal's movement on the court and the immense retrieving ability was a delight to watch as several times Zhukayev went for drop shots but Nagal reached the ball to fire winners.

Zhukayev was sending down powerful serves and his ground strokes too packed a lot of power but Nagal is not someone who would feel threatened rather he kept the ball in play since he always had an advantage if the points were long.

After saving two set points,

Nagal pocketed the opening set by sending down a wideish backhand which Zhukayev failed to return, making a volley error while going for a winner.

A break in the fourth game of the second set handed Nagal an early advantage as he led 4-1.

In the long-drawn seventh game, Nagal saved two break-points but the Kazakh finally got the break with a forehand winner down the line.

The 26-year-old shut the door on the Kazakh with another break in game 10 when Zhukayev buried a backhand on net on the second match point.

Raina, the top Indian woman singles player at 198, converted all three breakpoints she got in the one hour 34-minute contest and saved two of the three breakpoints she faced against her 354th-ranked rival.

She will now fight it out with Japan's Haruka Kaji (ranked 213) for a place in the semifinals. Ranked 336, Bhosale was up against higher-ranked Alexandra Eala (190) from Philippines and went down fighting 6-7 (5) 2-6 in one hour and 51 minutes.

In the men's singles, Ramkumar took the court against world number 78 Yosuke Watanuki and it was always going to be a tough contest for the Indian, who has been terribly out of form this season. (PTI)

Asian Games squash: Indians have it easy against Pakistan and Singapore

HANGZHOU, Sept 26: The Indian squash contingent began its Asian Games campaign with comfortable victories over Singapore and Pakistan, in the men's and women's team competitions respectively here on Tuesday.

The women's team comprising 15-year-old Anahat Singh, veteran Joshna Chinappa and Tanvi Khanna blanked Pakistan 3-0 in its opening Pool B match.

The first singles saw Asian Games debutant Anahat getting past Sadia Gul 11-6, 11-6, 11-3 in 16 minutes. Joshna, playing the first match of her sixth Asian Games, took 13 minutes to beat Noor Ul Huda Sadiq 11-2, 11-5, 11-7. India, silver medalists in the previous edition, completed their dominance when Tanvi thrashed Noor Ul Ain Ijaz 11-3, 11-6, 11-2.

Top two teams in Pool A and Pool B progress to the semifinals.

Third seeds India are paired in Pool B alongside Malaysia, Macau, China, Pakistan and Nepal. In the men's event, top seeds India outplayed Singapore 3-0.

Harinder Pal Sandhu, back to playing singles after a long injury lay-off, had to fight hard for a 11-4, 13-11, 8-11, 7-11 win over Jerome Clement in the opening singles. India's highest ranked player Saurav Ghosal, who like Joshna is competing in his sixth Asian Games, was tested in the first game by Samuel Kang before prevailing 11-9, 11-1, 11-4 in 37 minutes. Abhay Singh took care of Marcus Phua in straight games 11-7, 11-7, 11-7 to ensure a comfortable win for India, who face Qatar later on Tuesday.

The others in India's group include Pakistan, Kuwait and Nepal. Ghosal led team had finished with a bronze in the previous edition. Having won the gold back in 2014, the team is targeting the top of the podium here.

On Wednesday, the men will face Pakistan in a Pool A game. The clash should be more competitive than the one-side contest in the women's competition. (PTI)

Goal-fest continues for India in men's hockey, maul Singapore 16-1

HANGZHOU, Sept 26: Skipper Harmanpreet Singh and Mandeep Singh slammed a hat-trick each as favourites India mauled lowly Singapore 16-1 to register their second consecutive win in the men's hockey competition at the Asian Games here on Tuesday.

The Indians continued their goal-scoring spree after the 16-0 rout of Uzbekistan in their tournament opener as they found the net at will against world No.49 Singapore.

Harmanpreet (24th, 39th, 40th, 42nd minutes) and Mandeep (12th, 30th, 51st), Abhishek (51st, 52nd), Varun Kumar (55th, 55th), Lalit Kumar Upadhyay (16th), Gurjant Singh (22nd), Vivek Sagar Prasad (23rd), Manpreet Singh (37th), Shamsher Singh (38th) were the goal scorers for India.



India will next face defending champions Japan on Thursday.

Unexpectedly, the Indians started on a rather sedate note but completely enjoyed the ball possession.

The play was totally in Singa-

pore's half as India dominated the proceedings from the start.

India's first chance came in the sixth minute but Sukhjeet Singh's shot was saved by Singapore goalkeeper Sandran Gagan.

India secured their first penalty corner in the next minute but skipper Harmanpreet Singh's flick was defended stoutly by the Singaporeans.

Two minutes later, Mandeep Singh earned India's second penalty corner but again Singapore goalkeeper Gagan made a terrific save with his stretched right leg to deny Harmanpreet.

India continued to attack and finally broke the deadlock in the 12th minute when Mandeep directed into the goal an inch-perfect pass from Gurjant Singh.

In the last two minutes of the first quarter, India secured as many as three more penalty corners but wasted all.

In all, India secured five penalty corners in the first quarter but failed to convert a single one. (PTI)

Tasteless supplements, yoga behind teenager Ramika Jindal's success at Asian Games

HANGZHOU, Sept 26: Eating 'tasteless' supplements, undergoing breathing exercises and yoga is not something a teenager would love to do daily but that is the routine of shooter Ramika Jindal who has emerged as a star for India in the Asian Games here.

On Sunday, Ramita was a part of the silver-winning Indian women's 10m air rifle team and clinched an individual bronze in the same event on Tuesday.

She and Divyansh Singh Panwar missed a bronze by a whisker on Tuesday when they lost the third-place match 18-20 after taking a big lead initially.

The two medals were her first on the international senior circuit.

The 19-year-old hailing from Ladwa town in Haryana's Kurukshetra district is not complaining for missing out things which a normal teenager does.

"I worked with a psychologist -- Gayatri Vartak. She helps me with all the techniques. I do all the breathing exercises and

yoga in the morning. It helps me in keeping myself relaxed and calm," Ramita said after her match on Tuesday.

"Diet is also very important and I have a nutritionist also. She helps me with the supplements. I have to do blood tests also. Since I am a vegetarian, I have to use all those supplements. The supplements taste really really bad, but can't help. I have to do it to keep standing for long hours."

It was Ramita's father Arvind, an advocate by profession, who took her to a shooting range near their home in 2017 to explore what the sport was all about. Ramita immediately was in love with the sport. She was just 13 then and was studying in class VIII.

"I started shooting at the Karan Shooting Academy. I liked the sport and took it up as a career," said Ramita who won gold in the ISSF Junior World Championships in Cairo last year.

Ramita's father is also an in-

come tax advisor in Kurukshetra and as such she did not face the financial difficulties many of the Indian athletes endure in their journey to the top.

"My father does not say 'no' for anything I want. You want a rifle, get that. You want a new kit, get that. He never made me face any hardships, even though he will not buy his stuff," she said.

Ramita, a student of B.Com Honours in Delhi's Hansraj College, has the option of not attending classes as the institution exempts her from studies during training and competitions.

"When I am competing I don't do any studies. Now, I am in the Asian Games, I did not bring my books. But in the off-season and during break from shooting, I do my studies.

"Otherwise, I study before examinations, it's last minute preparation. I don't attend college, the college supports me. I do get the notes from friends and books so that I can study on my own. Youtube also helped a

lot in my studies."

Ramita has even inspired her younger brother Pranav, who is 15 years, old to become a shooter.

"I have a younger brother Pranav. He started shooting after seeing me. He is 15 and he is training with me in GFG (Gun for Glory) Chennai now."

Ramita said no Indian woman has won a shooting medal in the Olympics and she would want to do just that next year in Paris.

"Abhinav sir is the inspiration of every shooter. There is no woman shooter in India who has won an Olympic medal, I want to become one.

"Paris Olympics is too close for me, I just got into the senior team. But I will try to be a part of the Indian team in the Paris Olympics and try to win a medal there."

"When I came to shooting I saw only Anjum di, Ela di. And after knowing them, I came to know about Abhinav sir. My whole family is not from a sports background." (PTI)

AYAN BOWS OUT IN LAST 16, MAYANK EXITS IN LAST 32

HANGZHOU, Sept 26: Indian ESports contestants Ayan Biswas and Mayank Prajapati were eliminated in the street fighter knockout rounds of the Asian Games here on Tuesday.

Ayan (AYAN01) clinched the top-16 place before suffering tough defeat against Yeh Man Ho of Hong Kong, while Prajapati (MiKeYROG) exited in the round of 32.

Ayan clinched a sensational victory by a 2-0 margin against Nguyen Khanh Hung Chau of Vietnam to start his campaign on a winning note before going down 1-2 to Alrayfal Abdulrahman Saleem A of Saudi Arabia in the winners bracket round 1.

He then beat Vietnam's Nguyen, again by a 2-0 margin, in the losers bracket round 2.

However, he fell short against Yeh Man Ho of Hong Kong in the losers bracket round 3 and bowed out of the tournament.

Mayank began his tournament against Rajikhan Talal Fuad T of Saudi Arabia and fought valiantly in a fiercely contested 1-2 defeat. He then endured another loss, against Al-Mannai Abdulla of Qatar, by a 0-2 margin and exited the tournament.

India's DOTA 2 will gear up to recreate its stunning success at the Commonwealth Esports Championships as they take on Kyrgyzstan

and the Philippines in their opening group stage matches on Wednesday.

Led by skipper Darshan Bata (A35), the skilled DOTA 2 unit comprising Krish Gupta (Krish-), Abhishek Yadav (Abhi-), Ketan Goyal (Evil-Ash), and Shubham Goli (Madness) has been drawn into Group A, where they are scheduled to compete against Kyrgyzstan and the Philippines in best-of-one single round-robin format matches.

The top-ranked team from this group will advance to face Nepal in the quarter-finals on Saturday.

All matches in the elimination stage for DOTA 2 will be contested in the head-to-head, best-of-three single elimination format. There will be a total of 14 notable teams participating in the title. "As the captain of the team, I feel an immense sense of responsibility and pride in leading the country's first-ever DOTA 2 team at the Asian Games. "The entire team has been practicing constantly in the build-up to the tournament as all of us understand the honour of representing India at such a prestigious competition," said Darshan Bata, captain of the Indian DOTA 2 team. The squad sealed their qualification for the Asian Games by prevailing in the finals of the National Esports Championships (NESC) last year. (PTI)

Indian dressage team wins first Asian Games Gold, first equestrian yellow metal in 41 years

HANGZHOU, Sept 26: India's dressage team cantered to its first ever Asian Games gold and only second in this discipline in the history of the sport with the quartet of Sudipti Hajela, Divyakriti Singh, Vipul Hriday Chheda and Anush Agarwalla living up to expectations, here on Tuesday.

The Indian quartet was performing well in the selection trials as their scores either matched or were better than the Asian Games medal winners from the previous editions.

It was more about the colour of medal they would win and they grabbed the top place on the podium by aggregating 209.205 percentage points, leaving behind China (204.882 %) and Hong Kong (204.852%).

The last time the sport of equestrian contributed to India's Asian Games tally was in 1986 when the country won a dressage bronze.

In the 1982 edition in New Delhi, the Indian team had grabbed three gold medals in Eventing and Tent Pegging competitions.

Raghubir Singh had won a gold in individual Eventing in 1982 and then added another yellow metal in Team Eventing alongside Ghu-



lam Mohammed Khan, Bishal Singh and Milkha Singh. Rupinder Singh Brar won the third gold medal in individual tent pegging.

In dressage, the horse and rider are judged on how they perform a series of movements. Each movement is marked out of 10 (from 0 to 10). Each rider gets an overall score and from there, a percentage is worked out. The rider with the

highest percentage is the winner of his class.

Top three scorers in a team are counted to determine the winner.

The Indian team is an interesting mixture of riders. The 21-year-old Sudipti, the youngest of the quartet, was born in Indore and currently trains at Pamfou in France. She began horse riding at the age of six as a hobby but later

took it seriously as a sport on the insistence of her father. The name of her horse is Chinski.

The 23-year-old Divyakriti, hailing from Jaipur, took to horse riding when she was in the seventh grade at the famous Mayo College Girls School in Ajmer. She was the equestrian captain of her school. She did her graduation in Delhi's Jesus and Mary College.

Rampant India eye rare ODI clean sweep against struggling Australia

RAJKOT, Sept 26: Skipper Rohit Sharma would fancy a perfect culmination to Indian team's World Cup preparations as hosts eye a rare clean sweep of Australia in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday.

Never before in the history have India whitewashed Australia in the ODI format. In fact, neither of them have achieved such a result, home or away, irrespective of the number of matches played in a series. Given how perfectly everything has panned out for the World Cup hosts in the lead up to the mega tournament, it would only be fitting that India finish with a deserving 3-0 score-line.

Dominant Indian team, despite the absence of its front-line players and still tinkering with playing combinations to make sure every member has had game-time under their belt, are in pole position to record a fourth consecutive ODI win before the quadrennial event begins.

If they manage to clinch a 3-0 win, India would also have taken a massive upper-hand over the five-time world champions Australia before the two teams meet again in Chennai on October 8 for their World Cup opener.

It will be no exaggeration in saying India have battered Australia in the first two ODIs despite both the rivals making plenty of changes to keep their top guns fresh, while also putting miles in the legs of those who would not usually feature in first-choice XIs.

There could, however, be some respite for the Australian bowlers as India have rested their young gun Shubman Gill for the final ODI after his 74 and 104 in the first two games, alongside Shardul Thakur. In the 50-overs World Cup year, Gill is the only batter in the format with a thousand runs and counting — 1,230 runs to be precise at a staggering average of 72.35 — and his absence from the final game would certainly be felt.

But India's batting mainstays Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are expected to return and so are the in-form Kuldeep Yadav and Hardik Pandya from a brief resting period during which KL Rahul has

led admirably.

Facing some tough questions over squad composition, players' form, fitness and availability, India have turned the tide and how.

That India would end up with a problem of plenty was something not envisaged when the team embarked on the Asia Cup campaign just a few weeks ago. But the likes of Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav, Mohammed Shami and even Mohammed Siraj have transformed this Indian outfit into as formidable a unit can get.

He took some time to get going and again struggled with his back-related troubles, but Shreyas Iyer utilised perfect batting conditions in Indore to record a century, which will also consolidate his position in the middle-order. Much to the delight of the Indian camp, Rahul has delivered the goods with the bat and behind the stumps at the most appropriate time.

Like Rahul, Jasprit Bumrah too has proven his fitness and form in a few matches after a long injury lay-off. After resting from the second ODI, India's premier bowler is available for selection. Even though the team management appears tilted in favour of injured Axar Patel, oldest member of the Indian squad Ravichandran Ashwin would like to make this opportunity count before the contingent is finalised for the World Cup. For Australia, it is not often that they flop both with the bat and the ball in India with the white ball as miserably as they have in the first two ODIs. The visitors need to gather themselves as the wheels seem to be coming off rapidly following five consecutive defeats in ODIs.

A few months ago, the same side beat India 2-1 with Mitchell Starc haunting the Indian right-handers with his perfect in-swingers.

With one last game left before the World Cup begins, Australia would be tempted to play their preferred bowling attack with Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc coming in, even though the batting lacks the firepower of Travis Head at the top and Steve Smith and Marcus Labuschagne not enjoying a successful year of cricket in India across formats. (PTI)

Smith's form not a concern but Australia must adapt well, feels Mitchell Starc

RAJKOT, Sept 26: Steve Smith might be taking a wee bit more time to adjust to sub-continental tracks but his poor returns in the first two ODIs against India is least of concern for the Australian team management, senior speedster Mitchell Starc said on Tuesday. Usually a prolific scorer against India, Smith has scores of 0 and 41 in the first two ODIs on batting-friendly tracks, having flopped earlier in the Test series in February-March when he could only manage 145 runs across four Tests. Starc, who himself is coming back from groin niggles, was speaking ahead of the third and final ODI scheduled on Wednesday. "No. His (Smith) numbers speak for himself," Starc replied to a query on Smith's current form.

"He (Smith) has been a high class player and has been a massive part of all formats for Australia, so no concern there. It is the adjustment factor, coming back to India after a series in South Africa, some guys are coming off a break," Starc told reporters here ahead of Australia's training session at the Saurashtra Cricket Stadium. Starc, who might make a comeback in the third game then underlined the reasons for Australia's back-to-back defeats in Mohali and Indore. "I think we have seen the wickets change throughout both the games, depending on who batted first and in different places. (PTI)

India shine in sailing: Neha bags Silver, Ali Bronze

NINGBO (China), Sept 26: Neha Thakur, 17, led the show with a silver while Eabab Ali claimed a bronze, as India bagged two medals in sailing at the Asian Games here on Tuesday. Neha powered India to the first medal of the day when she finished second in girl's dinghy ILCA-4 event.

India's second medal came in the men's windsurfer RS:X event where Ali with a net score of 52 points came third behind Natthaphong Phonopharat of Thailand and gold medallist Wonwoo Cho of Korea.

In a gruelling 14-race event, Ali's worst race was second and third where he did not finish as seven points were deducted from his total 59 points. In the end, there was a big 23-point gap between Ali and the silver medallist. A rising sailor from National Sailing School Bhopal, Neha finished with a total of 32 points but her net score of 27 helped her earn the second spot behind gold medallist Noppassorn Khunboonjan of Thailand.

Singapore's Kiera Marie Carlyle settled for a bronze with a net score of 28. In sailing, the competitor's worst score from all the races is subtracted from the total points to determine the net score. The one with the lowest net score is adjudged the winner. The girl's dinghy ILCA-4 category consists of 11 races and Neha finished with 32 total points. Neha's worst race was the fifth one where she got five points to end with a net score of 27. The ILCA-4 is defined as a one-design dinghy class in the laser series and is a one-design class of sailboat. (PTI)



Divyansh-Ramita miss 10m mixed air rifle Bronze after thrilling contest

HANGZHOU, Sept 26: India's Divyansh Panwar and Ramita Jindal buckled under pressure as they squandered a big lead to lose to Korea in an engrossing bronze medal match of the 10m air rifle mixed team event at the Asian Games here on Tuesday. Divyansh and Ramita were leading 8-0 initially but the Korean pair of Park Hajun and Lee Eunseo made a remarkable comeback to win the match 20-18. Ramita, who on Monday won the 10m air rifle team silver and individual bronze, was the more consistent of the two and had four shots of 10.8 while Divyansh had one. Divyansh also had two bad shots of 9.9 and 9.8. The 20-year-old Panwar, who was part of the 10m air rifle gold-winning team on Monday, shot 314.3, while the 19-year-old Ramita shot 313.9 to aggregate 628.2. Earlier, the Indian duo finished sixth in the qualification round and thus faced third placed team Korea in the bronze medal match.

Unlike the individual 10m air rifle event, where eight shooters qualify for the finals, in mixed team six pairs make the medal round. Here too, the top two placed teams compete for the gold, while the remaining four pairs are divided into two groups and compete for two bronze medals.

The other bronze was won by Kazakhstan who beat Iran 17-11. Hosts China, who had topped the qualification round, beat Uzbekistan 16-2 in the gold medal match. It was a medal-less day for the Indian shooters after winning five medals, including a gold, in the first two days of the competition. (PTI)



ing," he said.

Pakistan, who looked like the team to beat before the start of the Asia Cup, returned empty handed from the continental event won by India. Their star pacer Naseem Shah has been ruled out of the World Cup and they have issues both in bowling and batting department.

"We know we have lapsed in fielding and in our wicket-taking abilities in the middle overs but we are going to work on it and hopefully, will not be repeating them as we have made plans accordingly. The more you play cricket, the more you learn."

He stressed on the need to back struggling players referring to the likes of Fakhar Zaman and Shadab Khan who did not have the best of times in Asia Cup.

"When you are playing well and are in-form, you wish to keep playing. But when you are making mistakes, it is different. You assess that differently, you have to work on it especially if a key player is struggling. "You need to back your struggling player more because they are being criticised from the outside. Giving them confidence in the dressing room becomes

even more important because these are the same boys who have won you consistently."

"There has been a lot of criticism on the spinners (Shadab and Nawaz). They have had a few bad days but they are not ordinary players. It is not easy to play for the Pakistan team they have gotten here on the back of their performances. I have full faith in them." The India visas were delayed but is not something that gave additional stress to Babar.

"The visas are here, as far as I know, so we should be good to go. As far as the (player) contracts are concerned, they still being negotiated, but we are hopeful they will work out as the PCB always has our interests at heart," said the 28-year-old.

Babar said the team will be missing the services of injured pacer Naseem Shah. He also asserted that there is no bad blood in the dressing room following the Asia Cup disappointment.

"There is no ill will in the dressing room. There are discussions after every loss but they get twisted into something else entirely. The entire team is like a family and there is love and respect there."

Hasan Ali has been named Shah's replacement and Babar said he was picked because of his rich experience.

"Of course we will miss Naseem Shah as Shaheen [Afzidi] and Naseem bowling together gave us a different edge. It was not easy to pick his replacement, but we all sat together and got input from [chief selector] Inzamam ul Haq."

"We went with Hasan Ali because he has experience. He has played the World Cup before. I cannot comment who will bowl the new ball or the old ball, as we cannot reveal our strategies right now."

"But we have not made any concrete plans right now. It will become more clear to us when we travel to India and assess the conditions," Babar concluded. (PTI)

We have done our research: Babar ahead of maiden visit to India

LAHORE, Sept 26: Most of the Pakistan squad members have not played in India before but skipper Babar Azam on Tuesday exuded confidence, saying his team has done its homework for the ODI World Cup beginning on October 5. Pakistan team's visas were finally cleared on Monday night and the side will be reaching Hyderabad via Dubai on Wednesday.

Only Mohammad Nawaz and Agha Salman have played in India before. Babar could not travel to India for the T20 World Cup in 2016 due to an injury.

"Although we have not played in India before, we are not taking too much pressure. We have done our research and we have heard the conditions are similar to how they play out in other Asian countries," said Babar in the pre-departure media conference here.

"It is quite an honour for me to travel as the captain this time around, I hope we come back with a trophy this time," he added. Azam, one of the leading batters in the game, will be expected to score a bagful for runs for his team in the ICC showpiece. He is especially looking forward to the big game against India in Ahmedabad on October 14.

"I am excited to play in Ahmedabad as it will be jam-packed. I will try my best to perform up to my potential. I am not worried about my individual accolades, I want to make sure whatever I do helps the result for the team. "Whenever there is a tour coming up, I spend some time planning for it. I prepare according to [the teams I have to face] and make goals for myself. I try to set targets for myself and then I give my 100% in the ground."

"It is a chance to become a hero as every World Cup performance gives you a different kind of confidence. Everyone is at their best during the World Cup, so whenever you perform there, it is an altogether different feel-

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