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8 NATION

UK to ban Russia's Wagner mercenary group as terrorist organisation

Blinken visits Kyiv in show of support for Ukraine's efforts

Poll panel ready to work as per legal provisions: CEC

Bengal Gov appoints officiating VC of another varsity amid row

COMMISSION OF INDIA

MoU on Assam-Arunachal border issue implemented in right earnest: Khandu

ITANAGAR, Sept 6: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday said the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh on the border dispute is being implemented in the right earnest.

In a written reply to a question by Congress member Wanglin Lowandong, Khandu said in areas where issues are fully clear, a pilot survey would be carried out shortly.

Kamengbari and Bhalukpong in West Kameng district have been chosen for the pilot survey after a detailed discussion with the Survey of India and his Assam counterpart, Khandu said.

He added that areas and districts where certain matters are still to be resolved are being looked into by the respective regional committees.

Out of the 123 villages recom-



mended by the local commission, as on date 115 villages would remain with Arunachal Pradesh and the remaining eight in Assam.

"Three villages under Lower Siang and one village each in Lower Dibang Valley and Pakke Kessang districts have been added to Arunachal Pradesh in lieu of an equal amount of land to be ceded to Assam," Khandu informed.

The chief minister said the government had not surrendered the forest areas claimed by Assam particularly in the eastern part of the state.

Khandu said appropriate steps have been taken to adjust areas and villages in consonance with the recommendations of the local commission and as mutually agreed upon by regional committees in their respective districts.

Regarding the stand of the government on the 1951 recommendations by the one man Bordoloi Commission, wherein over 3,000 square kilometres of land of erstwhile NEFA was transferred to Assam, the chief minister said since inception, the stand of the state government has been against the unilateral notification of 1951.

On April 20 this year, Assam and the Arunachal Pradesh governments signed an agreement in New Delhi in (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Bhumi Pujan of PepsiCo plant at Nalbari performed State has been transformed into business hub: Himanta

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 6: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said that setting up of a new PepsiCo India plant at Nalbari forges a new partnership between the Assam government and the premier beverage company.

Sarma said this while performing the Bhumi Pujan of the sixth PepsiCo India food manufacturing plant in Nalbari on Wednesday.

The proposed plant at AIDC Industrial Park, Banekuchi, Bonbhag Solmari in Nalbari district will be built on an area of 44.20 acre of land at an estimated project cost of ₹ 778 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma said, "The setting up of the



sixth plant of PepsiCo India in Nalbari is an important event in the history of industrialization in the

state. The investment of the PepsiCo is one of the largest investments in the state."

Sarma said that the state has positively approached the proposal from PepsiCo and provided various incentives to facilitate establishment of this ambitious industrial investment in the state, including quality infrastructure support of roads, power supply, financial incentives, etc.

"The PepsiCo India's plant in Nalbari is expected to be operational by 2025. The plant is designed to generate employment for over 500 individuals, with a focus on achieving a 100 percent diverse workforce, of at least 75 per cent women," Sarma said.

The plant is also expected to generate significant opportunities for (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

MANIPUR VIOLENCE

Protesters defy curfew, over 40 injured in police crackdown

IMPHAL, Sept 6: More than 40 people, mostly women, were injured after security forces fired several rounds of teargas shells to disperse thousands of protesters who tried to breach security barricades at Phougakchao Ikhai in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Wednesday, officials said.

The injured have been rushed to Bishnupur district hospital and Moirang public health centre for treatment, they said.

Defying curfew, hundreds of locals came out of their houses at Onim in Bishnupur district and squatted in the middle of a road around 2.30pm to block the movement of police and other central forces' personnel who were on their way to Phougakchao Ikhai from Imphal, officials said.

Around 11.40 am, protesters on way to Phougakchao Ikhai were

stopped by state police forces which had put a barricade at Kwakta, around 2km away. Though police fired a few rounds of teargas shells, the protesters overran the barricade and proceeded towards Phougakchao Ikhai. No one was injured in the commotion, officials said.

Responding to the call of the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) to storm army barricades at Phougakchao Ikhai, people had gathered in Bishnupur district demanding that those be pushed towards Churachandpur side.

Apunba Manipur Kanba Ima Lup (AMKIL) president Lourebam Ngambi told reporters, "Hundreds of Meiteis, who fled their homes at Torbung after violence broke out on May 3, are unable to visit their homes (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Assam govt weighing power cuts, buying from open source to meet high demand

GUWAHATI, Sept 6: With the state recording unanticipated high power demand, the Assam government on Wednesday said it was weighing the options of going for power cuts or buying additional power from open source, which will eventually lead to an upward revision of the tariff.

Addressing a press conference, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the state witnessed a steep increase in peak hour-power demand this year.

From being at 1,800 mw till last year, it touched 2,500 mw this year, he said.

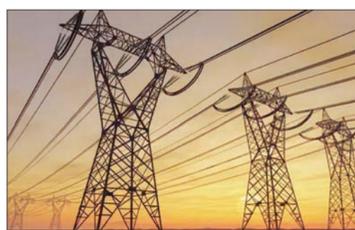
"We have power availability of 1,650 MW from our own sources and tied-up arrangements. A shortage of 100-200 mw can be adjusted by procuring from the open source at ₹ 10 per unit.

"But, if we have to meet the shortfall that we are facing for three-four months by buying from open source, we will be forced to increase the power tariff by ₹ 1 per unit," he said.

Sarma said the other option to meet the shortage is by going for power cuts to reduce consumption.

"Whether we opt for power cuts or buy power from open source, the decision will be taken at the Cabinet meeting on September 8," he said.

The CM said the sustained, steep increase in demand for power was unanticipated and the govern-



ment will analyse the reasons for it.

Among some reasons are additional supply to railways due to electrification of tracks and more industrial activities, he added.

With the state's own generation limited to 250 MW, it is heavily dependent on power bought at ₹ 5 per unit.

Sarma said though the state has signed agreements for power supply from different sources, the gestation period of projects is long and it will take time to meet the requirements from tied-up sources.

"We are expecting that the situation will start easing from next year," he said. (PTI)

India in Reserve Bank's name should be replaced with Bharat: Assam CM

GUWAHATI, Sept 6: Pitching for the name 'Bharat' once again, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday maintained that institutions like the Reserve Bank of India should be renamed.

He claimed that the word 'India' and practices associated with the British era are 'colonial hangovers' and the country is entering a 'phase of renaissance' during which these will be done away with.

"The name of the central bank should be 'Reserve Bank of Bharat'. This is a phase of renaissance. Assam has changed several old legacies and many changes have been made in the Centre also," Sarma said while addressing a press conference here.

He maintained that many practices introduced by the British rulers have been continuing in the country and those need to be changed.

"People have waited for 75 years for one Modi to come and root out this colonial hangover," he said.

"How can Modi ji be blamed for something done by (Jawaharlal) Nehru?" he added, in an apparent reference to the use of the name 'India' and continuing with 'colonial practices'.

Pointing that the Supreme Court had earlier ruled that the names India and Bharat can be used interchangeably, Sarma said, "Whether it is India or Bharat, I don't think this is debatable. When Amit Shah placed the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita bills in Parliament, no one had made any objection."

"Manmohan Singh had taken oath as the prime minister of Bharat, while HD Deve Gowda took as PM of India," he added.

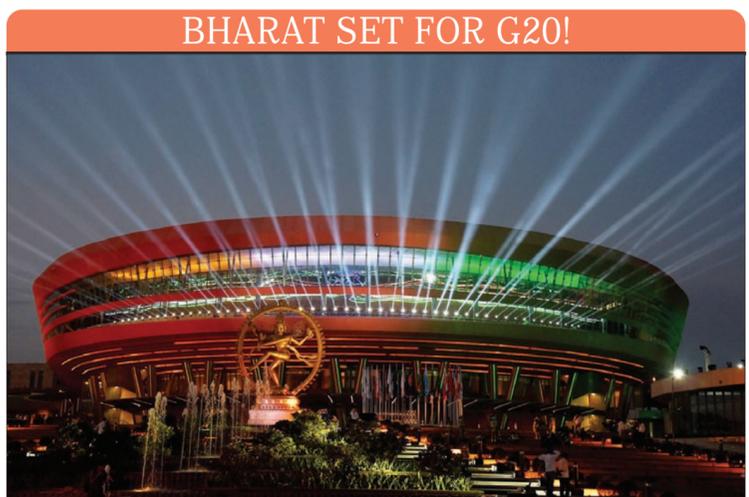
Sarma also dismissed Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's remark that it was (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Road accident claims seven in Tinsukia

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 6: A tragic road accident in Assam's Tinsukia district has left seven individuals dead and a dozen more severely injured. The accident occurred on Tuesday evening near Bordirak Tiniali, close to Kakopathar, when their vehicle collided head-on with a speeding truck, according to the police.

Preliminary reports suggest that the passengers were returning from Doomdooma's weekly market when their vehicle collided with the mini goods truck. The injured victims have been promptly admitted to a nearby hospital for medical attention.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the driver of the truck was in an inebriated state at the time of the accident, contributing to the tragic collision. The vehicles involved (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



Glimpse of the mesmerising lightwork at Bharat Mandapam in Pragati Maidan ahead of the upcoming G20 Summit in New Delhi. PIB

SC seeks report on recovery of illegal arms made from sources in Manipur

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Manipur government and the law enforcement agencies to file a status report on the recovery of arms made from "all sources" in the ethnic-violence hit state.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra also took note of the affidavit of the Manipur chief secretary that there was no short supply of basic commodities like food and medicines for people facing economic blockade.

The top state officer said there was no outbreak of chicken pox and measles in relief camps as alleged by lawyers representing petitioners.

"The chief secretary of Manipur has filed an affidavit dealing with availability of rations and essential commodities, including in Moreh, and the alleged outbreak of measles and chickenpox in Moreh.

"The chief secretary has furnished steps taken to distribute rations in nine camps. If any further grievance exists in regards to spe-

cific instances, this should be brought to notice of district administration. Any such grievance should be dealt with expeditiously," the bench said.

On the issue of recovery of arms, it said, "Let a status report be furnished to this court by the government. The report shall be made available only to this court."

Issuing a slew of fresh directions, the bench directed the Union home secretary to communicate with Justice (ret'd) Gita Mittal, the chairperson of the apex court-appointed three member panel to oversee relief and rehabilitation work in Manipur, for finalizing names of the experts for helping the committee in its functioning.

It also directed the state government to nominate an officer with whom the committee can interact for carrying out its work.

It also directed the Manipur government to file a status report giving details about the steps taken to upgrade the state victims' compensation scheme to bring it at par with the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) scheme. On the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Illegal areca nut shipment seized in Karbi Anglong

HT Correspondent
BOKAJAN, Sept 6: In a significant operation, the police in Karbi Anglong successfully intercepted and seized an illegal shipment of dry areca nuts, commonly known as Burmese Supari, from Myanmar. This operation took place on NH 39, under the jurisdiction of the Khatkhathi police station.

The police were conducting routine checks on NH 39 when they intercepted a truck at approximately 10 AM. The truck, bearing registration number AS 26 AC 1080, was traveling from Manipur and headed towards Guwahati. Upon inspection, the authorities discovered a substantial quantity of illegal dry areca nuts, totaling 2700.11 kilograms, which were packed in bags and estimated to be worth ₹ 8 lakh.

Two individuals, Akbar Ali (26) and Md. Monowar Hussain (27), both residents of Barpeta, were apprehended in connection with this illegal shipment. The police are taking legal action against the suspects as part of their efforts to combat illegal activities and uphold the law.

My wife is Indian and being a proud Hindu means I will always have a connection to India: Rishi Sunak

British PM 'hugely' proud of his Indian roots

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: What does the British Prime Minister discuss at the dinner table with his Indian parents-in-law? Is it Indian politics or the challenges of running Britain?

Neither. It's cricket. "The most political we tend to get is in our discussion of cricket. I've agreed that my daughters can support India when it comes to cricket, as long as they support England when it comes to football!" Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said.

Sunak's parents, both of Indian origin, came to the UK from east Africa. His wife Akshata Murthy is the daughter of India's billionaire tech czar Narayana Murthy and philanthropist and educator Sudha Murthy.

In an interview via email days ahead of his visit to New Delhi to attend the G20 summit on Septem-



ber 9 and 10, Sunak said on Wednesday the response from the Indian people to his appointment as the Prime Minister was "overwhelming and humbling."

"I am hugely proud of my Indian roots and my connections to India. As you know, my wife is Indian and being a proud Hindu means I will always have a connection to India and the people of India," he

said. The 43-year-old leader of the Conservative Party was first elected as an MP in 2015. He was made finance minister or chancellor of exchequer in February 2020 by then Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In October last year, he became the first Indian-origin British Prime Minister, scripting history. "One of the first things I did

after becoming Prime Minister was to hold a reception for Diwali in Downing Street. Having the opportunity to welcome many British Indians into Number 10 and seeing the building decorated from top to bottom with lights and flowers was an incredibly proud and emotional moment for me," Sunak said.

"Because my story is the story of so many people in Britain with deep and enduring links to India. The strength of our country lies in its diversity, and that's something I have seen first-hand many times since becoming Prime Minister," he said.

Asked whether he discusses Indian politics, technology or problems he faces in running Great Britain when he sits with his in-laws, Sunak said it is important to keep politics separate from family. "It's very important to keep politics separate (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Governor reviews government schemes and implementation in Majuli



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 6: Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria embarked on his maiden visit to Majuli district, where he made several significant stops, including Auniati Satra, Kamalabari Satra, Garmur Satra, and Dakhinpat Satra, to pay his respects. During his

visit, he participated in a prayer meeting organised by female devotees to celebrate Krishna Janmashtami and immersed himself in the spiritual atmosphere of the Satras. Additionally, he explored the museums within the Satras, where he admired their antique collections and pledged financial support from his end to aid in preserving the state's heritage.

The Governor also conducted a review meeting with the district commissioner, superintendent of police, and other department heads, where he conducted a comprehensive assessment of various Central and state government projects underway in Majuli. Notably, he commended the district's exemplary implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) and expressed his satisfaction with the successful execution of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). He encouraged officials to accelerate the progress of SBM Phase II in (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Tea exports fall 0.81 pc in first half of 2023 at 96.49 mln kg



KOLKATA, Sept 6: Tea exports during January to June declined 0.81 per cent to 96.49 million kg as against 97.28 million kg in the corresponding period a year ago, according to Tea Board data.

Exports from North India, comprising mainly Assam and North Bengal, marginally increased to 59.16 million kg compared with 59.09 million kg in the year-ago period, it said.

However, shipments from South India declined to 37.33 million kg in the reporting period as against 38.19 million kg in January-June 2022.

In the last calendar year, overall tea exports from the country stood at 231.08 million kg, registering a rise of 17.57 per cent over 2021, which was at 196.54 million kg.

Secretary-general of Indian Tea Association (ITA) A Raha said it is unlikely that exports during 2023 will surpass the figures of 2022.

The main cause for this is a slump in demand in the export markets and drop in shipments to Iran, due to payment issues with that country.

Iran has traditionally been a major importer of Indian tea after the CIS bloc. (PTI)

India will have to shell out more and the prospect of returning to market-driven petrol and diesel prices diminished

Oil nears \$90 for first time in 2023, reduces chances of a petrol, diesel price change in India

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Oil prices hit a 10-month high of nearly USD 90 per barrel as Saudi Arabia and Russia extended their voluntary production and export cuts until the end of the year.

For a nation that is more than 85 per cent dependent on imports for its oil needs, the surge in prices means India will have to shell out more and the prospect of returning to market-driven petrol and diesel prices in the near future diminished further.

Brent crude prices surged around 6.5 per cent over the past week after Saudi Arabia, which leads the expanded OPEC+ cartel with Russia, decided to keep its one million barrels a day reduction in supplies to the global market until the end of December.

Russia has added its own voluntary export cuts in recent months. The move has led to Brent rising above USD 90 a barrel for the first time this year on Tuesday. On Wednesday, it was trading at USD

89.67 per barrel. The basket of crude oil that India imports has averaged USD 89.81 per barrel this month, up from USD 86.43 in August, according to oil ministry data.

The Indian basket was hovering in the range of USD 73-75 per barrel in May and June, rekindling hopes for a return to market-based pricing and a reduction in petrol and diesel prices.

But rates spurt to USD 80.37 per barrel in July and now to near USD 90. "Public sector oil companies had been recouping losses they incurred for holding rates when crude oil prices shot through the roof last year. In May, international oil prices and retail pump rates had come at par.

"But now with the prices rising, the difference between cost and retail prices will reappear," an industry official said.

India imports 85 per cent of its oil needs and its fuel pricing is in-



dexed to international rates.

Petrol and diesel prices have been on a freeze for a record 17 months in a row. Petrol costs ₹ 96.72 per litre in the national capital and diesel comes for ₹ 89.62 a litre.

State-owned fuel retailers are supposed to revise petrol and diesel prices daily based on a 15-

day rolling average of benchmark international fuel prices but they haven't done that since April 6, 2022.

Prices were last changed on May 22 when the government cut excise duty to give relief to consumers from a spike in retail rates that followed a surge in international oil prices.

Sources said if international oil prices had stayed around USD 73-74 a barrel range, oil companies would have re-started daily price revision.

Higher prices would mean domestic producers like the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) get a higher price. However, the incremental revenues are likely to be ploughed by the government in the form of a windfall profit tax.

The tax, levied in the form of Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED), on domestically produced crude oil was reduced to ₹ 6,700 per tonne starting September 2, from ₹ 7,100 a tonne previously.

A windfall tax is levied on domestic crude oil if rates of the global benchmark rise above USD 75 per barrel.

Crude oil pumped out of the ground and from below the seabed is refined and converted into fuels like petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel. (PTI)

Markets log 4th day of rally on buying in HDFC Bank



MUMBAI, Sept 6: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended in the positive territory on Wednesday on buying in HDFC Bank and a largely firm trend in Asian markets.

Fag-end buying helped the BSE Sensex climb 100.26 points or 0.15 per cent to settle at 65,880.52. During the day, it had declined 292.23 points or 0.44 per cent to 65,488.03.

The Nifty advanced 36.15 points or 0.18 per cent to end at 19,611.05.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, HDFC Bank, Titan, ITC, UltraTech Cement, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the major gainers.

Tata Steel, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank, NTPC and ICICI Bank were the major laggards.

"Markets traded volatile and ended marginally higher, in continuation to the prevailing recovery phase. After the flat start, Nifty inched gradually lower in the first half, however a strong rebound in select heavyweights pared all the loss," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare

Broking Ltd, said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed marginally by 0.13 per cent while smallcap index skidded 0.04 per cent.

Among the sectoral indices, telecommunication jumped 1.69 per cent, FMCG climbed 1.05 per cent, consumer durables (0.89 per cent), healthcare (0.69 per cent) and energy (0.67 per cent).

Commodities, financial services, industrials, IT, bankex, capital goods metal and realty were the laggards.

"A spike in crude oil reverberated across the globe, reviving concerns about inflation and sparking fears of a Fed rate hike. This led to a surge in US bond yields, causing investors to shift towards the safety of bonds and reversing the buying trend of foreign investors in the domestic market. Nevertheless, the resilience of the domestic markets shone through as investors placed their bets on an improved outlook, ultimately helping the market recover from the initial shock," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

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

European equity markets were trading lower. The US markets ended in the negative territory on Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.70 per cent to USD 89.41 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,245.86 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark had climbed 152.12 points or 0.23 per cent to settle at 65,780.26 on Tuesday. The Nifty advanced 46.10 points or 0.24 per cent to end at 19,574.90. (PTI)

Gold declines ₹ 100; silver plunges ₹ 700

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Gold price declined by ₹ 100 to ₹ 60,200 per 10 gram in the national capital on Wednesday amid weak cues in overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the yellow metal had ended at ₹ 60,300 per 10 gram.

"Gold extended its fall on Wednesday, with spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets trading at ₹ 60,200/10 gram, down by ₹ 100, in response to bearish cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. Silver also plunged ₹ 700 to ₹ 74,800 per kilogram.

In global markets, gold and silver were trading lower at USD 1,924 per ounce and USD 23.35 per ounce, respectively. "Gold slipped to one-week lows, as US treasury yields and the dollar index advanced on expectations that interest rates are likely to remain high.

"The US dollar rose to a near six-month high...in the last session, while benchmark 10-year bond yields reached their highest level in over a week, dampening appetite for bullion," said Navneet Damani, senior vice-president of commodity research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services. (PTI)

RBI Governor urges fintech players to set up self regulatory organisation

MUMBAI, Sept 6: Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday urged fintech players to set up a Self Regulatory Organisation (SRO) at the earliest for an orderly growth of the industry.

"Fintech players need to evolve industry best practices, privacy and data protection norms in sync with the law of the land," he said, adding that they can also set standards on issues like mis-selling, promoting ethical business practices and transparency in pricing. Speaking at the Global Fintech Fest here, Das said that good governance will be key to durable and long term success of any company, and in particular, the fintech players. (PTI)

Rupee falls 10 paise to close at all-time low of 83.14 against US dollar

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: The rupee depreciated by 10 paise and settled for the day at an all-time low of 83.14 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, weighed down by a surge in crude oil prices and strong American currency. Forex traders said the Indian rupee depreciated on Wednesday as the US dollar rose to the highest levels in six months. Moreover, elevated crude oil prices also weighed on rupee.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.08 against the US dollar and moved in a range of 83.02 to 83.18 in the day trade.

The rupee finally settled at 83.14 (provisional) against the US dollar, down 10 paise from its previous close. The India currency earlier hit the lowest level of 83.13 on August 21 this year.

On Tuesday, the rupee plunged by 33 paise to close at 83.04 against the US dollar.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell marginally by 0.07 per cent to 104.73.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.67 per cent to USD 89.44 per barrel.

"Brent crude breached the USD 90/barrel mark. US dollar gained on safe-haven demand amid concerns over global economic slowdown after China's Caixin Services PMI fell to an 8-month low at 51.8 in August vs forecast of 53.6," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Choudhary further said that "we expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and a strong US dollar.

"FII outflows and rising crude oil prices may further pressure rupee. However, any intervention by the RBI and expectations of a no rate hike by Fed in its September FOMC may support rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from ISM services PMI data from the US." On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 100.26 points or 0.15 per cent higher at 65,880.52. The broader NSE Nifty advanced 36.15 points or 0.18 per cent to 19,611.05. (PTI)

Infinix launches Zero 30 5G smartphone

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Sept 6: Infinix, a leading innovator in mobile technology, on Wednesday launched the highly anticipated Infinix Zero 30 5G smartphone.

Designed for creators, the Zero 30 5G provides users with an exceptional camera quality, superior performance as well as options for ample storage to meet their needs.

Available in 256GB+12GB (Up to 21GB) or 256GB+8GB (Up to 16GB) variants, the Zero 30 5G is priced at ₹ 22,999 and ₹ 21,999* respectively. With revolutionary 50MP Front Camera, it captures detailed photos and records 4K videos at 60FPS. The phone features a flagship 10-bit curved AMOLED display protected by Corning Gorilla Glass 5. The device features a 108MP OIS triple camera system for stunning photos, backed by a robust Dimensity 8020 processor for smooth multitasking and pro-level content creation. Boasting premium design and luxury feel, the Zero 30 5G is available in two color variants - Rome Green in vegan leather back finish and Golden Hour with glass back. Running on Android™ 13 with the XOS 13 interface, the device offers an intuitive user experience with a seamless interface, efficient multitasking, and enhanced customization options.

Commenting on the launch, Anish Kapoor, CEO, Infinix said, "Featuring

India's first 50 MP 4K 60 fps video recording, Infinix Zero 30 5G is primed to redefine smartphone imaging capabilities, setting a new standard for the creators and vlogging enthusiasts. The integration of the MediaTek Dimensity 8020 6nm Processor empowers the Zero 30 5G to deliver seamless multitasking, outstanding photography and videography, and impressive device performance.

The display and design of the device represent a leap forward in smartphone technology. We have paired the visually striking canvas of the 6.78" FHD+ 3D Curved 10-bit AMOLED display with a remarkable camera video system, revolutionizing smartphone photography. The 108MP Primary Camera, equipped with Optical Image Stabilization and EIS, ensures enhanced stability and clarity even in challenging conditions. In addition to this, the 50MP Front Camera with Eye-Tracking Auto Focus technology sets new standards for selfies and video content creation. As Infinix Zero 30 5G hits the shelves, we are positive that our customers will find this new offering as exhilarating as we do, further empowering creators to capture their story like never before."

Stylish Premium Design: A statement of innovation that exudes style and elegance, Infinix Zero 30 5G is the slimmest 144Hz 3D curved AMOLED smartphone in the price segment with big 5000mAh of bat-



tery. Crafted glass back panel and premium leather panel gives a touch of luxury

and feels great in hands.

Capture Every Detail with India's 1st 50MP Front Camera with 4K @60FPS Video Recording

The Infinix Zero 30 5G boasts of an exceptional camera system that sets new standards for smartphone photography. The 50MP Front Camera (Samsung ISOCELL JN1) is equipped with Dual LED flash that takes selfies to the next level, with the ability to record videos in 4K at 60FPS. The innovative Eye-Tracking Auto Focus technology ensures that every selfie remains crisp and focused, capturing your best angles effortlessly. With the impressive 108MP Primary Camera (Samsung ISOCELL HM6 Sensor) with Optical Image Stabilization (OIS) and Quad LED flash, users can capture stunning, highly detailed images with remarkable stability, even in challenging conditions. The smartphone also features a 13MP ultra-wide camera, with a 120-degree field of view, allowing users to capture sweeping landscapes and group shots effortlessly.

This advanced camera technology allows users to enjoy unparalleled clarity and vividness in their photos and videos. The camera supports 10+ modes including film and other several filters in the front and 15+ modes in the back.

It also comes with dual view video that lets users capture twice the perspective.

With the Film Mode feature, the Infinix Zero 30 5G enables users to become instant storytellers and content creators, allowing them to record videos with dynamic music, apply artistic filters, and seamlessly incorporate transitions in just one tap. Creators can also claim their creation with its unique water mark feature.

Immersive Visual Experience and cinematic sound: The Infinix Zero 30 5G offers a captivating visual experience with its 6.78" inch FHD+ 10 bit 3D Curved AMOLED display and 950nits peak brightness. With a resolution of 1080*2400, this display brings content to life with vibrant colors and sharp details. Users have the freedom to choose from three refresh rates - 60Hz, 120Hz, or 144Hz - to match your preferences for smooth scrolling and responsiveness. With 7.9 mm thickness, the display is protected by Corning® Gorilla® Glass 5 on both side, which enhances durability and safeguards against everyday wear and tear, ensuring your device remains pristine.

The device is equipped with dual speakers and DTS Sound technology, which offers an expanded audio experience which means you can enjoy louder and richer sound quality while listening to music, watching videos, or playing games. The dual speakers provide a stereo effect, delivering immersive and balanced audio output.

Carmakers are failing the privacy test Owners have little or no control of the data they hand over

BOSTON, Sept 6: Cars are getting an "F" in data privacy. Most major manufacturers admit they may be selling your personal information, a new study finds, with half also saying they would share it with the government or law enforcement without a court order.

The proliferation of sensors in automobiles — from telematics to fully digitized control consoles — has made them prodigious data-collection hubs.

But drivers are given little or no control over the personal data their vehicles collect, researchers for the nonprofit Mozilla Foundation said Wednesday in their latest "Privacy Not Included" survey. Security standards are also vague, a big concern given automakers' track record of susceptibility to hacking. "Cars seem to have really flown under the privacy radar and I'm really hoping that we can help remedy that because they are truly awful," said Jen Caltrider, the study's research lead. "Cars have microphones and people have all kinds of sensitive conversations in them. Cars have cameras that face inward and outward."

Unless they opt for a used, pre-digital model, car buyers "just don't have a lot of options," Caltrider said.

Cars scored worst for privacy among more than a dozen product categories — including fitness trackers, reproductive-health apps, smart speakers and other connected home appliances — that Mozilla has studied since 2017.

Not one of the 25 car brands whose privacy notices were reviewed — chosen for their popularity in Europe and North America — met the minimum privacy standards of Mozilla, which promotes open-source, public interest technologies and maintains the Firefox browser. By contrast, 37% of the mental health apps the non-profit reviewed this year did.

Nineteen automakers say they can sell your personal data, their notices reveal. Half will share your information with government or law enforcement in response to a

"request" — as opposed to requiring a court order. Only two — Renault and Dacia, which are not sold in North America — offer drivers the option to have their data deleted.

"Increasingly, most cars are wiretaps on wheels," said Albert Fox Cahn, a technology and human rights fellow at Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy. "The electronics that drivers pay more and more money to install are collecting more and more data on them and their passengers."

"There is something uniquely invasive about transforming the privacy of one's car into a corporate surveillance space," he added. A trade group representing the makers of most cars and light trucks sold in the U.S., the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, took issue with that characterization. In a letter sent Tuesday to U.S. House and Senate leadership, it said it shares "the goal of protecting the privacy of consumers."

It called for a federal privacy law, saying a "patchwork of state privacy laws creates confusion among consumers about their privacy rights and makes compliance unnecessarily difficult." The absence of such a law lets connected devices and smartphones amass data for tailored ad targeting and other marketing — while also raising the odds of massive information theft through cybersecurity breaches.

The Associated Press asked the Alliance, which has resisted efforts to provide car owners and independent repair shops with access to onboard data, if it supports allowing car buyers to automatically opt out of data collection — and granting them the option of having collected data deleted. Spokesman Brian Weiss said that for safety reasons the group "has concerns" about letting consumers completely opt out — but does endorse giving them greater control over how the data is used in marketing and by third parties.

In a 2020 Pew Research survey,

52% of Americans said they had opted against using a product or service because they were worried about the amount of personal information it would collect about them.

On security, Mozilla's minimum standards include encrypting all personal information on a car. The researchers said most car brands ignored their emailed questions on the matter, those that did offering partial, unsatisfactory responses.

Japan-based Nissan astounded researchers with the level of honesty and detailed breakdowns of data collection its privacy notice provides, a stark contrast with Big Tech companies such as Facebook or Google. "Sensitive personal information" collected includes driver's license numbers, immigration status, race, sexual orientation and health diagnoses.

Further, Nissan says it can share "inferences" drawn from the data to create profiles "reflecting the consumer's preferences, characteristics, psychological trends, predispositions, behavior, attitudes, intelligence, abilities, and aptitudes."

It was among six car companies that said they could collect "genetic information" or "genetic characteristics," the researchers found.

Nissan also said it collected information on "sexual activity." It didn't explain how.

The all-electric Tesla brand scored high on Mozilla's "creepiness" index. If an owner opts out of data collection, Tesla's privacy notice says the company may not be able to notify drivers "in real time" of issues that could result in "reduced functionality, serious damage, or inoperability."

Neither Nissan nor Tesla immediately responded to questions about their practices.

Mozilla's Caltrider credited laws like the 27-nation European Union's General Data Protection Regulation and California's Consumer Privacy Act for compelling carmakers to provide existing data collection information. (AP)

Govt approves ₹ 3,760 cr viability gap fund to promote battery energy storage system



NEW DELHI, Sept 6: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a ₹ 3,760 crore viability gap funding for setting up battery energy storage system in the country, said Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur.

The entire ₹ 3,760 crore viability gap funding will be borne by the central government, the minister said while briefing media about the Cabinet decisions.

The fund will be released in five tranches till 2030-31 and help in creation of 4,000 MW hours storage.

The viability gap funding, Thakur said, will lead to an investment of ₹ 9,500 crore.

India aims to meet its 50 per cent of energy requirements through renewable energy and non-fossil energy sources. (PTI)

Himanta holds positive talks on Assam's future with Law & Justice minister Arjun Ram Meghwal

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 6: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma met Union minister for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal at his official residence here on Tuesday. During his 30-minute meeting with the Union minister, CM Sarma discussed a range of issues, including the modernisation of Assam's judicial system.

"CM Himanta Biswa Sarma has paid a courtesy call as Union Minister for Law & Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal. There was a detailed discussion on the modernisation of the judicial system of Assam," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) posted on X (formerly Twitter).

Union minister Meghwal also tweeted, "Assam's popular Chief Minister Shri @himantabiswa ji paid a courtesy visit to my Delhi residence today. Positive discussions were held with him on many important issues like preservation of cultural heritage of the state, development of North East Region and strengthening of judicial system."

Meghwal presented books to



Sarma, and the latter reciprocated the gesture by thanking him profusely, saying that he learned a lot during his visit.

Earlier, chief minister Sarma met Union minister of State for Electronics and Technology, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, at his office. Regarding the meeting, the CMO wrote: "They deliberated on various issues, including Assam's new policy on semiconductor manufacturing."

Taking to the microblogging site X (formerly Twitter), Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar wrote:

"Happy to receive Hon. CM of #Assam Shri. Himanta Biswa Sarma @himantabiswa at @GoI_MeitiY today. We discussed the future of #Skilling & #Innovation in #Assam. I assured full support of the Government of India for his vision."

Sarma was quick to respond: "It was truly enlightening to discover the tremendous efforts of @GoI_MeitiY in making our nation a global innovation hub. Assam is eager to play its part in this incredible journey!"

It should be noted that with the

aim of attracting semiconductor units to Assam, the state government has approved the Assam Electronics (Semiconductor, etc.) Policy 2023. The Assam cabinet has also approved productivity-linked incentives for the industry.

The chief minister visited Dwarika in the afternoon to oversee the construction work of the new Assam House, the third state guesthouse in the national capital. Sarma laid the foundation stone of the state-of-the-art new Assam House on April 22 of this year.

On Monday, the chief minister met Union Home minister Amit Shah at his official residence and discussed the complete withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from Assam. Based on the suggestions put forth by Shah for the complete withdrawal of AFSPA, the chief minister told media personnel here that the state government will convene a cabinet meeting either on September 7 or 8 and convey its decision to the Ministry of Home Affairs by September 30, whether to withdraw completely or continue with the Act.

Two classrooms and toilet block inaugurated at Serdihun English School, Dillai

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 6: In a significant development, two classrooms and a toilet block were inaugurated at Serdihun English School, located in Dillai, Zero Point, approximately 22 kilometers from Diphu. These new facilities were constructed under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project of CONCOR (Container Corporation of India Ltd.), an entity under the Railway Board and the Ministry of Railways, government of India.

The inauguration ceremony commenced with senior pastor Rev Dr Solomon Rongpi offering a prayer before formally cutting the ribbon to mark the opening of the new classrooms. Subsequently, a brief meeting was held in one of the new classrooms, during which the independent director (ID) of CONCOR, Chesong Bikramrang Terang, provided an explanation of CSR and its significance.

The construction project, sponsored by CONCOR, includes two classrooms, a toilet block, and a water facility, particularly a deep tube well. The overall cost of this project amounted to ₹ 24.27 lakhs.



However, the deep tube well is still under construction due to three previous unsuccessful attempts to strike water. The ID of CONCOR, Terang, urged the implementing agency, Amar Prayas Gosthi (APG), an NGO, to expedite the digging of another deep tube well as soon as possible.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by several individuals, in-

cluding Rev Hilson Senar, director of Serdihun English School Society; Gobind Tisso; Evangelist Robinson Engti; Deacon of Diphu Baptist Church, Stephen Engti; principal of the school Rajesh Kro; and the representative of the implementing agency, Anuwah Husain. Additionally, teaching staff and students from the school participated in the event.

Wizard Coaching Centre inaugurated in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 6: A new coaching institute, Wizard Coaching Centre, dedicated to preparing students for various competitive exams conducted by both state and union governments, including APSC, UPSC, LIC, IBPS, Railway, and SSC, was inaugurated near Nagaon Circle office on BM Road in Nagaon. The centre is jointly supervised by Chitu Sarkar and Atikul Islam.

In a press release, Chitu Sarkar, the proprietor of the institute, announced that the centre would provide coaching from experts within and outside the state to help students excel in competitive exams. Additionally, meritorious students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds will receive free training at the coaching centre.

The inaugural program was attended by Girish Chandra Das, advisor to the Economics department of the government of Assam, retired DSP Khairul Basar Ahmed, retired Professor Dilip Kumar Bora from Nagaon Commerce College, retired headmaster Nurul Islam of Rupahi High School, and Devashree Borthakur, ward commissioner of Ward no 10 in Nagaon Municipal Board.

Cancellation and diversion of trains for infrastructure development

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 6: To facilitate critical infrastructure development efforts, a series of train cancellations and diversions will take place within the North Eastern Railway (NER) region. This adjustment is imperative due to the ongoing Non-Interlocking works at the Gorakhpur Cantt. Yard, aimed at the remodelling and commissioning of the 3rd line connecting Gorakhpur Cantt. and Kumbhari stations under the North Eastern Railway.

Numerous train services will undergo temporary cancellations: Train no. 15621 (Kamakhya - Anand Vihar Terminal) scheduled for departure on September 7, 2023, along with train no 15622 (Anand Vihar Terminal - Kamakhya) Express on September 8, 2023, will remain canceled.

Train no 15705 (Katihar - Delhi) Express, scheduled for journeys on September 7 & 11, 2023, and train no 15706 (Delhi - Katihar) Express on September 8 & 12, 2023, will also face cancellations.

Train no 15654 (Jammu Tawi - Guwahati) Express and train no 04653 (New Jalpaiguri - Amritsar Jn.) Special, both set for departure on September 8, 2023, will remain canceled.

Train no 15707 (Katihar - Amritsar) Express and train no 15708 (Amritsar - Katihar) Express, starting journeys on September 9 & 10, 2023, will be canceled.

Train no 05734 (Katihar - Amritsar Jn.) Special, departing on September 9, 2023, and train no 05733 (Amritsar Jn. - Katihar) Special, scheduled for departure on September 11, will be canceled.

Train no 15655 (Kamakhya - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra) Express and train no 05616 (Guwahati - Udaipur City) Special, both slated for departure



on September 10, will remain canceled.

Train no 15078 (Gomti Nagar - Kamakhya) Express, departing on September 11, 2023; train no 15077 (Kamakhya - Gomti Nagar) Express on September 12, 2023, and train no 05615 (Udaipur City - Guwahati) Special on September 13, 2023, will also face cancellations.

In order to minimise disruptions to passenger services, the following diversion routes have been arranged: Train no 15707 (Katihar Jn. - Amritsar Jn.) Express, operating from September 6 to 8, 2023, will be rerouted through Chhapra Jn., Ghazipur City, Varanasi Jn., Banaras, Prayagraj Jn., and Kanpur Central. Train no 15708 (Amritsar Jn. - Katihar Jn.) Express, running from September 6 to 8, 2023, will be diverted via Kanpur Central, Prayagraj Jn., Banaras, Varanasi Jn., Ghazipur City, and Chhapra Jn.

Travelers are advised to consult railway authorities for the most up-to-date information and alternative travel options during this period of essential infrastructure development work. The North Eastern Railway regrets any inconvenience caused and appreciates passengers' cooperation during this crucial maintenance phase.

Swarna Sakha Sahitya Sabha honours retired college teachers

HT Correspondent

MORIGAOON, Sept 6: On the occasion of Teachers' Day, the Morigaon Swarna Sakha Sahitya Sabha formally felicitated retired professor Mahendra Nath Hazarika of Kamrup College. Nur Mohammad, president of Morigaon Swarna Sakha Sahitya Sabha, along with other dignitaries, presented Hazarika with a gamosa, a cheleng, a book, and a certificate. During the event, Hazarika shared his teaching journey and expressed his gratitude to the Sabha's office bearers. The event was attended by several prominent personalities from the literary and educational fields.



medical and health awareness program.

Several members of the club, including Monika Saha (secretary), Biswajit Mahanta, Gursha-

ran Singh, Pralay Saha, Dr Jonali Sarma Hazarika, Maharshi Bordoloi, Binod Hazarika, Haradharan Singh, and Ajoy Mittal, were also present at the health camp.

Nagaon Lions Club hosts free medical and health awareness camp

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 6: The Nagaon Lions Club, in collaboration with Life Care Medical, organised a day-long free medical and health awareness camp at the Nagaon Lions Club's auditorium. The program was inaugurated by Rup Ranjan Das, the president of Nagaon Lions Club, in the presence of special guest Aarati Chakraborty, the proprietor of Life Care Medical, and other club members.

During the event, physicians Dr Praveen Boruah and Dr Nishigandha Katoky, along with medical assistants Sikkhamoni Devi and Sudip Das, conducted various medical tests for the patients. More than 50 patients from the district participated in the free

medical and health awareness program.

Several members of the club, including Monika Saha (secretary), Biswajit Mahanta, Gursha-

Teachers' Day celebrated with meeting and felicitation prog

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Sept 6: On the auspicious occasion of Teachers' Day, an educational meeting and felicitation program were organised by the Tirap committee of the Samonboi Samaj Kalyan Yuva Santha, along with the people of Tirap and Tipong.

The event took place in the meeting hall of the Tipong Colliery ME School in Margherita sub-division of Tinsukia district. The program commenced with the lighting of an earthen lamp before a portrait of India's former President, Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, in whose honour Teachers' Day is celebrated annually. Students from the school presented Diha Naam geet and chorus songs, captivating the audience.

Following this, educational meetings and felicitation programs were conducted in the local market. The event was moderated by Prabhat Konwar and Binod Duarah, the president and general secretary of the Samonboi Samaj Kalyan Yuva Santha Tirap Committee.

An open session was conducted by Tarun Chandra Bhagwati, the headmaster of Tipong Colliery ME School. Several distinguished individuals from the Margherita sub-division participated in the event, including Lakhi Borah (president of Samonboi Samaj Kalyan Yuva Santha), Biju Kalita (vice president), Hirokijyoti Neog (general secretary of Samonboi Samaj Kalyan Yuva Santha Central Committee), Pappu Dutta (working president of Satra Mukti Sangram Samity Central Committee), and Mithun Baruah (treasurer of Margherita Journalists Association).

Teachers from various schools, including Tipong Colliery ME School, Tipong High School, Tipong Central Academy, Tipong Bengali Primary School, and others, were felicitated during the event. Each teacher was honoured with a traditional cheleng chadar and a token of appreciation.

Pramod Chandra Brahma Literary Award presented to Gobinda Basumatary and Dr Arupa Patangia Kalita



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 6: The prestigious Pramod Chandra Brahma Literary Award for 2022-23 was conferred upon eminent authors Gobinda Basumatary and Dr. Arupa Patangia Kalita. These authors were recognised for their

outstanding contributions to Bodo literature and literature beyond Bodo, respectively, across the state of Assam.

The Pramod Chandra Brahma Literary Award is instituted by the department of Education, government of Bodoland Territorial

Region (BTR) and is presented annually to authors and social thinkers who have made significant contributions to the advancement and development of Bodo and non-Bodo literature at both the state and national levels.

Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), and Assam Cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma presented the awards to Gobinda Basumatary and Dr Arupa Patangia Kalita during the 62nd Teachers' Day celebration held at Salbari College in Baksa. The awards, consisting of a cash prize of ₹ 2 lakh, a memento, and a citation, were presented to the renowned authors amidst a large audience.

Gobinda Basumatary hails from Kajalgon in Chirang, while Dr Arupa Patangia Kalita is from Udalguri. CEM Boro congratulated the recipients of the Pramod Chandra Brahma Literary Award and appreciated their significant contributions to literature and education. He said that the Bodoland Territorial Region government is committed to honouring distinguished authors who contribute to the welfare and development of literature, particularly in the field of Bodo literature.

TRIBUTE

Niru Sarma Parajuli

Niru Sarma Parajuli, a multifaceted luminary whose life encompassed the realms of literature, translation, literary organisation, and poetry, and who also pursued a distinguished legal career at the Gauhati High Court, peacefully departed from this world on August 27. Born to the late Nandalal Mishra and the late Budhimaya Mishra, Niru first graced the world with her presence on April 15, 1967, in the village of Majgaon, located in what is now the Biswanath district. Her educational journey began in Majgaon and culminated with her graduation from Biswanath College. She went on to earn her master's degree in Assamese from Gauhati University, as well as a degree in law (LLB).

Professionally, Niru Sarma Parajuli excelled as an advocate at the Gauhati High Court. Beyond her legal career, she bloomed as a prolific writer, offering a diverse collection of literary works. Her bibliography includes titles such as 'Swarna Evi Mukta Akasar', 'Kabaiti Mur Buvukhya', 'Vokma Koriyeika Sabdararu', 'Matho Premor Babe Amuthi Anubhav', 'Bogi Bormar Bari', 'Tirkhayekomon Kehi Pol', among others. In her role as a translator, she bridged cultural boundaries by translating Padmashri Eli Ahmed's Assamese poetry into Nepali as 'Spandan' and Hari Gajurel's Nepali poetry into Assamese as 'Sabda Butoli'.

Niru Sarma Parajuli was deeply involved with various



socio-cultural organisations in the state, including the All Assam Lekhika Santha, Assam Gorkha Sammelan, and Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha, where she held esteemed positions. Her advocacy for gender equality and women's empowerment resonated throughout her life's work.

Her legacy was marked by her ability to connect Assamese and Nepali literature, serving as a vital bridge between the two. As a challenging and esteemed poetess, she represented the state on the national stage of poetry numerous times. Unfortunately, her life's journey took a sudden turn when she was admitted to a private hospital in Mumbai due to a brief illness. On August 27, at the age of 56, Niru Sarma Parajuli departed from this mortal realm.

On the occasion of Adyashradha, we join in offering our heartfelt prayers for the eternal peace of her departed soul. We extend our deepest condolences to the grieving family members as we remember and honour the indelible mark Niru left on the worlds of literature, law, and social progress.

By - Anjan Baskota

Golden jubilee celebration at Dupani High School

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Sept 6: Dupani High School, established in 1972, celebrated its remarkable journey with a grand Golden Jubilee celebration on Tuesday. The event, graced by retired teachers, former students, and well-wishers, showcased the school's enduring legacy.

The day's program commenced with a cleanliness drive, followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Jagat Chandra Gogoi, the founding headmaster of Dupani High School. Padmashree Jadab Payeng, renowned as the 'Forest Man', led a sapling plantation initiative. Robin Borgohain, working president of the Golden Jubilee Organising Committee, proudly hoisted the Golden Jubilee flag, with 50 flags fluttering in unison.

The solemn Smiti Tarpan ritual was performed by Kamal Jyoti Saikia, secretary of the Organising Committee, and Lakhya Gogoi, retired headmaster of Dupani High School. Rajani Kanta Dutta, former padhadhikar of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha, presided over the open session.

LOST

I have lost my HS Pass Certificate bearing Roll:- 0353 No:- 10148 of Year- 2022 of Assam Higher Secondary Education Council.

Sweetie Deb Barma
D/o: Shyamal Deb Barma
Village:- Dakhin Bidiyanagar,
P.O: Singarbasti,
P.S: Hojai, Assam.

LOST

I lost my original Registration Certificate bearing Registration No. 162912 with Code No.213204 of 2017-18 of Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC), while traveling between Hamren and Tika. Any finder may kindly contact the address and mobile numbers mentioned below.

Serlota Timungpi,
D/o Harsing Timung,
Langchingbar, West Karbi Anglong district.
PO.- Tika, PS- Baithalangso.
Pin Code: 782450
Contact No. 60039-01672/9678-808568.

The underappreciated benefits of wild bees

By: **Ula Chrobak**

When ecologist Rachael Winfree first began studying bees 25 years ago, she happened upon a surprise: a species of plasterer bee in the New Jersey Pine Barrens, not seen in 50 years and suspected to have gone extinct. But when she called state wildlife officials to report the discovery, she was told they weren't interested — they didn't have the resources to monitor bees and other insects.

This is a familiar scenario to scientists who study native bees. These insects are facing multiple threats, and though official monitoring has improved, their declines have not been well documented. At the same time, a growing body of research is revealing just how crucial native bees are as pollinators for many plants. "They both pollinate our natural systems and — what people don't realise — they are also really important for many of our agricultural crops," says Scott Black, executive director of the Xerces Society, a nonprofit focused on invertebrate conservation.

Domestic honeybees are pretty much synonymous with pollination in the public's mind, particularly when it comes to crops, and the plight of wild bees has largely been overshadowed by concern about threats to the domestic variety. Many people don't know the difference between wild and domestic bees, further obscuring both the troubles faced by many wild species and their value, says Hollis Woodard, an entomologist at the University of California, Riverside.

While individual domestic honeybee colonies are vulnerable to collapse due to a combination of poor nutrition, pesticides and pathogens, the insects are not at risk of dying out. "We manage honeybees all across the world," Black says. "There are more honeybees on the planet now, we think, than ever in the past."

For some wild bees, however, the threats may be existential. And this isn't bad news just for the bees. Researchers argue that relying solely on honeybees for pollination is a risky

strategy akin to a poor retirement strategy of buying stocks in only one company. And studies have shown that native bees are in many cases essential to flourishing ecosystems and farms, even where honeybees are abundant.

Growing awareness of the issue is prompting both scientists and policymakers to pay greater attention to declines among these indispensable insects. And new findings point to how farmers and land managers can better support a diverse and booming bee community.

Benefits of bees

Unlike hive-forming honeybees, most wild species are solitary (bumblebees, which form colonies, are one well-known exception), nesting in cavities in rocks and wood or on the ground in leaves and woody debris. There are about 20,000 wild bee species globally and 3,600 in the United States and Canada.

More than 80% of flowering plants depend on insect pollinators to reproduce. When pollinators visit flowers — which act as the plants' reproductive organs — to eat their nutritious pollen and nectar, the insects inadvertently transport the pollen between plants, which fertilizes the blooms, leading to fruit and seed formation. "If you want resilient meadows in Colorado's mountains, if you want beautiful tall grass prairie in the east, or flowering ecosystems in California, you can thank a native bee," Black says.

In agricultural fields around the world, native bees help to pollinate the three-quarters of crop species that rely on pollinators, which amounts to one-third of global crop production by volume. (Many staples like wheat and corn are wind-pollinated.) In a 2013 study covering 27 types of crops — such as almonds, coffee and blueberries — across 600 fields around the world, researchers found that wild insects increased the rate at which flowers turn to fruit. Fields with fewer wild pollinators had less fruit, leading the authors to conclude that honeybee pollination alone may not be able to sustain maximum yields on farms.

Recent work has also highlighted



the huge economic impact of wild bees. Research published in 2020 found that for seven crops, including apples and pumpkins, wild bees were responsible for over \$1.5 billion in annual production. Wild and managed bees have similar contributions to the value of produce sold, according to a 2015 analysis of 20 crops across almost 1,400 fields.

For some crops, wild bees are more effective pollinators than honeybees. For example, in tomatoes, blueberries and cranberries, bumblebees are paramount. These crops' flowers need to be shaken with a precise frequency to release pollen. "That frequency is provided by the bees' buzz," says entomologist Sydney Cameron of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, coauthor of a 2020 overview of trends in bumblebee health in the Annual Review of Entomology. The fuzzy insects land on flowers and isolate their flight muscles from their wings, allowing the muscles to vibrate their thorax as their wings stay still, making them by far the most effective pollinators for these plants.

Even uncommon pollinators can play a surprisingly critical role. In a 2022 study of 72 wildflower and agricultural sites in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, rare and declining bee species provided up to 86% of pollination at some locations. Rare pollinators serve as insurance, filling in when

common species are absent, says Winfree, now a pollination ecologist at Rutgers University and co-author of the research. "In some places or some times, you may not have that dominant bumblebee or that honeybee," Winfree says. "You may need these other species." For example, when high winds in California almond orchards drove honeybees to stay in their hives, wild bees continued to visit the trees.

But all of the benefits provided by native bees may be at risk, says Claire Kremen, a conservation biologist at the University of British Columbia. In an assessment of nearly half of all bumblebee species, scientists estimated that a third of those studied were in decline. The number of bee species documented in a yearly survey from 2006 to 2015 had dropped by a fourth compared to similar tallies before 1990. Some crops — including apples, blueberries and cherries in the US — are already being affected by the declines, producing less fruit than they would be expected to with more pollinators.

Stemming the losses

The causes of decline in native bees are numerous. Habitat loss, disease and pesticides are among the top issues, with climate change and invasive plant growth also adding pressure, Black says. Managed honeybees and bumblebees can also cause

problems for wild species by spreading disease and competing for food.

But this doesn't necessarily mean we should quit using managed bees, Kremen says. She advises actions that support all pollinators. "We've also found in specific crop studies that the combination of honeybees and wild bees can be more effective," she says. "In general, it's a good strategy to have both."

In large fields concentrated with one fruit or vegetable, natural habitat tends to be minimal, and pesticide use maximal, leaving less food for insects while degrading their health. This is particularly hard on wild bees, which don't fare as well without a range of different plants to forage on. Domestic honeybees can persist in these monocultures because beekeepers supplement their diets with sugar water and transport them between crops. Interventions such as including a variety of flowering plants can help all pollinators.

Even small changes can boost native bees and facilitate greater pollination. In a February 2023 study funded by the Xerces Society, researchers estimated that farms in California's Central Valley could add more than 1 million acres of pollinator habitat by planting lines of native plants along the edges of fields and in drainage ditches. In other research, better nutrition provided by planting wildflowers between fields has shown promise in helping some bees weather the effects of pesticide exposure.

Public land management can also impact bees, says ecologist Will Glenny of the Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research and the German Center for Integrative Biodiversity Research in Leipzig, Germany. Dense herds of cattle can graze away food for native bees. Meanwhile, fire and even logging can stimulate a pulse of flowering plants that support insect pollinators. Understanding these complex interactions can help land managers to better support diverse bees and the services they provide in nature, Glenny says.

Researchers also stress the need to monitor native bees. Scientists lack

data on species abundance, especially for solitary bees, which can be hard to find because they nest in places like leaf piles and can have small ranges. Woodard leads the National Native Bee Monitoring Network with the hope of fixing that by gathering and standardizing data on native bees across the US.

The data could show which bees are doing well. "Truly, I think there are going to be some bees that are doing just fine," Woodard says. "And it would be really inspiring and hopeful for people to see that."

Better data will also reveal which bees are declining. This information could help support endangered species listings and highlight the need for regulations on stressors like pesticides, Woodard adds. Some legal and regulatory changes benefiting bees are already underway.

In 2022, California courts ruled that insects are eligible for listing under the state's endangered species act, which could lead to greater protections for at-risk bees including four bumblebee species. The \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passed in 2022 includes funding for planting pollinator habitat along roadways. And the Xerces Society is working with the US Department of Agriculture to help farmers provide pollinator habitat.

While legislative changes will be fundamental to revamping our relationship with insect pollinators, anyone with a yard, or even just a balcony, can give native bees a boost. After moving into a new home, Black ripped out most of the existing landscaping and replaced it with pollinator-friendly plants, and within a couple of years it was "swarming with native bees and butterflies," he says. The Xerces Society has compiled lists of pollinator-attracting plants for various regions.

Compared to less tangible acts like donating money to conservation, "when you can actually get your hands dirty, and see the change, see these animals show up in your yard — I think it's really meaningful." (Courtesy: *The Wire*)

Habitat and food loss, changing ecosystems see 60% of India's bird population decline

By: **Simrin Sirur**

A majority of bird species in India are on the decline — an alarming indication of biodiversity loss and anthropogenic pressures on the environment, a new report assessing bird diversity and population stability in the country has found.

Birds perform a number of important ecosystem services, aiding in seed dispersal and pollination, as well as acting as predators and scavengers. But around 60% of birds assessed in the report have declined over the long term of 30 years, which conservationists have termed a matter of deep concern. Around 40% were found to be declining currently, over the last eight years.

"It's a two way link. The number of declines could be because of declining ecosystem functioning, or resource availability, or habitat decline itself. But one can also imagine consequences in the other direction. The decline in raptors, for example, could result in changes in populations of rodent communities, which may see a boom," said Ashwin Viswanathan, Research Associate at the Nature Conservation Foundation, one of the organisations that contributed to the assessment. "A lot of this is speculation. We need to find out how ecosystems are adapting to changing bird numbers," he added.

The findings were captured in the State of India's Birds 2023 report, which was released August 25 by a consortium of 13 government and non-profit conservation organizations, and based on 30 million bird sightings. The report identifies 178 birds of high conservation priority which need urgent action plans for their conservation and deeper research to understand the factors leading to their decline. Some of these species include the sarus crane, the Indian courser, the Andaman serpent eagle, and the Nilgiri laughingthrush.

Habitat "specialists" are especially vulnerable, while "generalists", or birds that have adapted to a variety of landscapes, have been stable in comparison. Some species, like the ashey prinia, rock pigeon, Asian koel, and Indian peafowl "have increased dramatically," over the years the report finds. Overall, however, the results are grim and call for a re-classification of 14 species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, or IUCN, to its Red List of threatened species.

Open habitats

The report released last week is the second edition of the State of India's Birds report, the first of which was released in 2020. The latest report assesses 942 bird species,

up from 867 in 2020, and was based on 30 million sightings recorded on the eBird portal by 30,000 citizen birdwatchers. Such citizen science "which may be less or more coordinated, is the only way in which information can be generated for biodiversity assessments at the required scale," the report says.

"We were surprised to see that, even with a more robust statistical analysis, more data, and more observations than last time, bird populations are declining. This indicates it's a more serious problem than we previously realised," said Rajah Jayapal, a senior scientist with the Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, which also contributed to the report. The declining trajectory of bird populations in India follows global trends, where 48% of birds have declined, according to the 2022 State of World's Birds report. India hosts around 1,350 of the world's bird species, of which 78 are found only within India.

Birds inhabit all kinds of ecosystems, from coasts and wetlands to high altitudes and tropical rainforests. But birds that occupy open natural ecosystems, particularly grasslands and semi-arid landscapes, are especially vulnerable, with such species declining by 50%, the report says. A well known example is the great Indian bustard, which is on the brink of extinction because of land use changes and habitat loss. But there are other species that are seeing steep declines too. "Of particular note is great grey shrike, because it has suffered a particularly worrisome long-term decline of more than 80%. This species and other grassland specialists like chestnut-bellied sandgrouse have done better in regions rich in ONEs [open natural ecosystems] compared to the country as a whole, indicating the importance of conserving ONEs," the report says.

Birds that live in wetlands as well as in wooded areas, such as forests and plantations, have also declined more than generalist species, "indicating a need to conserve natural forest habitats so that they provide habitat to specialists."

Birds feed on a variety of sources, such as meat (vultures and other raptors), fruits and nectar (barbets and sunbirds), seeds (sparrows and doves), and invertebrates (warblers and flycatchers). Bird populations could also be influenced by limited or contaminated food resources.

The peafowl is among the birds doing exceptionally well with its population and range expanding over the past 20 or more years. Credit: Ashishmahaur, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

"In India, birds that feed on verte-

brates and carrion have declined the most, suggesting that this food resource either contains harmful pollutants or is declining in availability, or both. Strong evidence from other countries shows that agrochemicals lower survival rates in some raptors," the report says, adding, "We find that birds that feed on invertebrates (including insects) are declining rapidly. This needs to be taken together with recent findings that insect populations worldwide have reduced, and that pesticides are thought to be a main contributor to massive declines in European insectivorous birds." Over 40% of the world's insect population has been on the decline and is likely to go extinct in the coming years. Scientists in India suspect similar trends are playing out here, but data is limited. Fruit and nectar feeding birds are doing well, "maybe because these resources are readily available even in heavy-modified rural and urban landscapes," the study says.

The report also notes the widespread decline of both resident and migratory ducks, but says there is little understanding of why this otherwise flocking species is reducing in number. "One of the main recommendations is to support research as much as possible, because the data leaves us with so many unanswered questions. We know certain birds and groups of birds are declining, and we now have information to focus research into why," said Viswanathan.

Threats and recommendations

Even though India has Protected Areas and laws like the Wildlife Protection Act, which awards special protection for certain species, these measures are not sufficient to stop the declining populations of birds in India, whose ranges span from hundreds to thousands of kilometers.

The report locates declining bird populations within eight broad threats, such as environmental pollutants, forest degradation, urbanisation, avian disease, illegal hunting and trade and climate change. The spread of monocultures through commercial plantations or afforestation programmes have reduced biodiversity. "Plantations lack vertical and horizontal vegetation complexity because they maintain even-aged stands of a single tree species for ease of harvest. This usually leads to loss of large-sized trees and reduction in canopy shade and shrubbery," says the report. The result is fewer bird species occupying these areas compared to rainforest habitats.

Another threat is the expansion of renewable energy infrastructure, such as wind mills. Rotating wind turbines can result in fatal collisions, displacement, or barriers to migra-

tion for birds. According to the report, 60 species from 33 families of birds are affected by collisions and electrocution at power lines in India.

"Open habitats are the ones which are immediately available for infrastructure, developmental, and renewable energy projects," said Jayapal. The report comes at a time when India is rapidly expanding renewable energy and changing its forest policies to accommodate more plantations, while granting more exceptions for the diversion of virgin forests.

"In the face of diverse developmental pressures, maintaining the size and integrity of natural habitats is crucial. Beyond this, where habitats have degraded over time, restoration efforts will be vital: not planting trees in monocultures, but rather ecological restoration of multiple habitats including non-forest habitats like grasslands," says the report, adding, "One particular challenge will be to mitigate the considerable negative effects of even small-scale infrastructure such as wind energy, often thought of as 'green energy'."

Some of the recommendations made by the report include conducting "targeted, systematic, periodic monitoring of bird populations, using consistent methods, over long periods of time. Moreover, monitoring changes in other factors such as disturbance, climate, and land-use is also crucial to building a deeper understanding."

In 2020, the Indian government announced a 10-year Visionary Protection Plan for the conservation of avian diversity, ecosystems, habitats and landscapes. The Plan outlined steps to be taken in the near, middle, and long term to effectively monitor and raise awareness about bird conservation. The Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History is one of the focal institutes supporting the Visionary Protection Plan.

According to Jayapal, 17 states and union territories have initiated work on their own Visionary Protection Plan, while five — Uttarakhand, Delhi, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Meghalaya — have completed the process. "By 2030, we expect states to pay more attention to bird conservation issues and work to mitigate priority areas," he said. Says Viswanathan, "The amended Wildlife Protection Act took into consideration some of the findings from the SoIB 2020 report, and so we're hopeful that some policy interventions will follow this one. We're hopeful that a simple intervention, like recognising open landscapes as open and not allowing plantation and afforestation activities there will be done." (Courtesy: *Scroll.in*)

Every country can make a difference - but carbon reductions need to be realistic & fair

By **Sven Teske**

When we talk about limiting climate change, we're really talking about the global carbon budget set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Basically, we have a two-thirds chance of holding global heating to 1.5 if we keep future emissions under 400 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide. At current emission rates, we've got just under five years left before we blow through that limit. As our new research shows, getting to net zero isn't going to be the same in each country. There are commonalities — halting new fossil fuel projects and funding renewables, storage and energy efficiency. But there will be significant differences in how manufacturing giants like China zero out emissions compared to India or Australia.

And then there's the question of fairness. Some countries have emitted vastly more than others. If we divide up the remaining carbon budget while taking historic emissions into account, we find countries like America, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Australia have already gone past their fair carbon budgets. Meanwhile, countries which have industrialised later like Mexico, China, Argentina, Turkey, India and Indonesia are sitting below their fair carbon budgets.

What's new about this?

The G20 account for 80% of the world's emissions. If each of these countries ended their reliance on fossil fuels and other emissions sources, we'd be most of the way to tackling the climate crisis. We took into account how much each country has emitted historically, from industrialisation to 2019, and population size. Then we devised a per capita carbon index, which gives developing countries with little historic responsibility for climate change a fair distribution of carbon from 2020 to 2050. We did this to show how every country can make this energy transition in a timeframe realistic to their circumstances.

India: minimal historic impact but rising fast

The world's most populous country has historically been a very low emitter, producing just 25% of China's emissions from 1750–2019. But in recent decades, it has begun to emit more and its future emissions might rise substantially. India has relied heavily on coal power, but its renewable sector is growing exceptionally fast. It's now the fourth largest market for solar, biomass and wind power.

Steelmaking is rapidly growing. If this industry relies on old coal technology, it will add to emissions and eat away at the global carbon budget. New build steel plants should turn to hydrogen or other green steelmaking techniques.

Power sector: not yet on track but positive trend

Industry: not on track.

China: giant of emissions, manufacturing — and renewables

China produces over 30% of the world's emissions with 18% of its population, making it the world's biggest. The North Asian nation's cement, steel, chemical and alu-

minium industries rely heavily on coal, producing 60% of the global energy-related emissions from each of these sectors — vastly more than America's 10%. Cleaning up its enormous industrial sector through green steelmaking and other new techniques will be actually harder than getting off coal power. On the positive side, China has emerged as the world's leading nation in solar and wind energy deployment and manufacturing. It's surging forward on electric cars and long-distance rail.

Power sector: decarbonising slowly, not yet on track

Industrial sector: well off track

America: gas, inefficient cars and a clean energy boom

The United States is the world's largest single emitter of carbon emissions in the power sector, both historically as well as per capita. Fossil gas plays a major role for power and heat generation, while America's cars and trucks are the most inefficient in the world. The nation has just 4% of global population but its vehicles emit almost 25% of the world's emissions from road transport. The nation's building sector accounts for 15% of all global emissions from buildings, due to large, inefficiently built houses and heating systems. These sectors — power, transport and buildings — still need urgent attention. But, thankfully, America's much-vaunted Inflation Reduction Act has triggered an enormous investment boom in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Power sector: well on track to be largely decarbonised by 2040

Transport and building sectors: not yet on track

Australia: rich in renewables — and gas and coal

Australia is one of the top five per capita emitters in the G20, both historically and today. Our relatively small population means we're not one of the largest overall emitters. Huge coal and gas reserves mean Australia has long profited from fossil fuel income. We're the second largest coal exporter and one of the top liquefied natural gas exporters. On the upside, Australia has some of the world's best and largest solar and wind resources. We could play a leading role in the transition towards green steel and green hydrogen. At the rate things are going, we could decarbonise domestic energy supply in just over a decade.

Power sector: broadly on track

Transport sector: not yet on track

Fair is possible — and necessary

This weekend's G20 summit gives an opportunity to build political momentum and formulate plans for concrete action among high-emitting countries.

An agreement to fairly split up the remaining carbon budget is unlikely, however, given debate over whether cutting carbon will damage economic development in developing countries at the recent G20 meeting of foreign ministers. It might be hard. But it is possible. Many rich countries have already broken the link between GDP growth and energy demand. Developing countries can decarbonise while continuing to grow. (Courtesy: *Down To Earth*)

The British home secy will make the mercenary group a 'proscribed' organisation under anti-terror laws

UK to ban Russia's Wagner mercenary group as terrorist organisation

LONDON, Sept 6: The UK government will table a draft proscription order in the House of Commons on Wednesday which will impose a ban on Russia's mercenary Wagner Group as a terrorist organisation.

The proscription order will make it illegal to be a member of or support the Russian group in the UK, the Home Office said.

Certain offences related to banned terrorist organisations can result in 14 years imprisonment in the country.

As part of the Home Office draft order, Wagner's assets can also be categorised as terrorist property and seized.

"Wagner is a violent and destructive organisation which has acted as a military tool of [President] Vladimir Putin's Russia overseas," said UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman.

"While Putin's regime decides what to do with the monster it created, Wagner's continuing destabilising activities only continue to serve the Kremlin's political goals. They are terrorists, plain and simple — and this proscription order makes that clear in UK law," she said.

The Indian-origin Home Secretary claimed that Wagner has been involved in "looting, torture and barbarous murders".



"Its operations in Ukraine, the Middle East and Africa are a threat to global security. That is why we are proscribing this terrorist organisation and continuing to aid Ukraine wherever we can in its fight against Russia," she added.

In July, the UK announced sanctions against 13 individuals and businesses it said had links to Wagner in Africa, accusing it of committing crimes, including killings and torture.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has previously called for the Wagner Group to be treated as a terrorist organisation.

The mercenary group, which was led by Yevgeny Prigozhin until he was killed in a plane crash last month, has played a prominent role in the Russian conflict with Ukraine. It is also known to be active in conflicts in other war-torn regions of Syria and Africa.

The crash that killed Prigozhin occurred just months after he mounted an attempted coup against Russia's military leadership, ultimately calling into question Putin's authority as Russian President.

There have been conspiracy theories floating around the suspect explosion that caused the Wagner leader and his inner circle's death in the crash.

A preliminary U.S. intelligence assessment concluded the plane was downed by an intentional explosion. The government of Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied involvement.

Several other allies of Ukraine have sanctioned Wagner's leaders, and earlier this year, the Lithuanian and Estonian legislatures passed resolutions declaring it a terrorist organization. The United States has designated the Wagner Group as a transnational criminal organization.

The UK Home Office said it considered the nature and scale of the organisation's activities as well as the threat they pose to British nationals abroad in deciding on the proscription order.

It will bring the group in line with other banned terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State (ISIS) and Al Qaeda. (PTI)

Blinken visits Kyiv in show of support for Ukraine's efforts to push out Russia's forces



KYIV, Sept 6: US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken arrived in Kyiv on an unannounced visit on Wednesday; hours after Russia launched its first missile attack in a week against the Ukrainian capital.

Blinken's trip aimed to assess Ukraine's 3-month-old counter-offensive and signal continued US support for Kyiv's efforts to drive out the Kremlin's forces after 19 months of war amid concerns among some Western allies over the pace of progress, according to US officials.

Those Washington officials said possible alternative export routes for Ukrainian grain will also be discussed following Russia's exit from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and its frequent bombardment of port facilities in the Odessa region from where most grain is transported abroad.

Those alternatives may include ships hugging coastlines to keep out of international waters where they could be targeted by Russia's navy. Other possible overland routes are also being examined.

Blinken's visit is expected to include the announcement of new military aid of between USD 175 million to USD 200 million. Another larger military assistance package is expected later this week.

Other issues, including support for Ukraine's war-torn economy will be discussed, building on Blinken's June announcement in London of USD 1.3 billion in aid to help Kyiv rebuild, with a focus

on modernizing its energy network that was bombed by Russia last winter. Overnight, Russia fired cruise missiles at Kyiv in the first aerial attack on the capital since Aug. 30, according to Serhii Popko, the head of Kyiv's regional military administration.

Debris from a downed missile struck the premises of a business in Kyiv, igniting a fire and causing damage to the company's equipment. No casualties were reported.

In the Odessa region, meanwhile, one person was killed in a Russian missile and drone attack that hit Izmail port. The attack damaged grain elevators, administrative buildings, and agricultural enterprises, local authorities said.

The trip to Ukraine is Blinken's fourth since the war began, including one very brief excursion over the Polish-Ukrainian border in March 2022, just a month after the Russian invasion.

However, it will mark the first time America's top diplomat has spent the night in Ukraine's capital since he visited Kyiv in January 2022, before the invasion. US officials said Blinken's decision to stay overnight in Kyiv is intended to send a symbolic signal of American support for Ukraine as the 18-month-old war drags on.

Shared priorities will be discussed with the state of Ukraine's counter-offensive high on the agenda, a senior U.S. State Department official briefed reporters ahead of the trip, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with protocols. (AP)

Security tight in Nigeria as appeals court is to rule on president's disputed election victory

ABUJA, Sept 6: An appeals court in Nigeria was to rule on Wednesday on whether President Bola Tinubu's election victory in February was legitimate - a highly anticipated decision that has put Africa's most populous country on edge.

The election results were challenged by the opposition, which claimed that Tinubu, who has now been in office for 100 days, was not qualified to run because he, among other things, allegedly did not have a required high school certificate or a college or university diploma.

Security was tight in the Nigerian capital of Abuja, where five judges at the Court of Appeal were to hand down their ruling. Under the law, the tribunal is empowered to either uphold Tinubu's election win, declare someone else the winner, annul the vote or order a new election.

Its decision can be appealed before Nigeria's Supreme Court. The opposition has hinted at possible protests if the court rules in favour of Tinubu. Analysts say on Wednesday's ruling will be significant for this country of more than 210 million people.

If the February presidential election is annulled, it would be a first in Nigeria's history.

If upheld, the ruling would boost the role of the election commission, which the opposition claims violated the law. It could also open a path for the body to decide on its own when and how election results are announced in the future.

Under the law, a presidential election can be annulled only on evidence that the national electoral body did not follow the law and acted in ways that could have changed the result.

On Tuesday, police in Abuja issued a statement warning citizens "to be cautious in their actions and statements," saying security forces would not "condone activities capable of inciting violence or causing a descent into anarchy." (AP)

Biden to focus on progress on climate, reshaping multilateral development banks at G20 Summit: White House

WASHINGTON, Sept 6: The key focus areas for President Joe Biden at the G20 Summit include delivering for developing nations, making progress on key issues like climate, technology and reshaping the multilateral development banks, the White House has said, expressing hope that the bloc will be able to make headway on those topics under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

On Thursday, President Biden will travel to New Delhi to attend the G20 Leaders' Summit. On Friday, President Biden will participate in a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Modi and on Saturday and Sunday; the President will participate in the official sessions of the G20 Summit.

As Biden heads to the G20, he is committed to working with emerging market partners to deliver big things together, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

"That's what we believe the world will see in New Delhi this weekend," he said. America's commitment to the G20 has not wavered, and it hopes the G20 Summit in New Delhi will show that the world's major economies can work together even in challenging times, Sullivan said.

"So, as we head into New Delhi, our focus is going to be on delivering for developing countries; making progress on key priorities for the American people, from climate to technology; and showing our commitment to the G20 as a forum that can actually, as I said before, deliver," he said.

"And thanks to the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and India's presidency, we hope we'll be able to do all of those things," Sullivan said.

On what the US is bringing to the table at the summit, Sullivan said one of America's main fo-

cus heading into the G20 is delivering on an agenda of fundamentally reshaping and scaling up the multilateral development banks, especially the World Bank and the IMF.

"We know that these institutions are some of the most effective tools that we have for mobilising transparent, high-quality investment into developing countries. And that's why the United States has championed the major effort that is currently underway to evolve these institutions so that they are up to the challenges of today and tomorrow," he said. (PTI)

China's premier is on a charm offensive as ASEAN summit protests Beijing's aggression at sea

JAKARTA, Sept 6: In talks with Southeast Asian leaders Wednesday in the Indonesian capital, Chinese Premier Li Qiang underscored his country's importance as the world's second-biggest economy and as the top trading partner of the region.

Countering renewed alarm over Beijing's aggression in the disputed South China Sea, Li cited China's long history of friendship with Southeast Asia, including joint efforts to confront the coronavirus pandemic and how both sides have settled differences through dialogue.

"As long as we keep to the right path, no matter what storm may come, China-ASEAN cooperation will be as firm as ever and press ahead against all odds," Li said. "We have preserved peace and tranquility in East Asia in a world fraught with turbulence and change."

But rival claimant states in the South China Sea, which belong to the 10-nation bloc of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, have protested China's aggressive moves to fortify its vast territorial claims in the strategic sea passage.

A new Chinese map set off a wave of protests from other countries' leaders, who say it shows Beijing's expansive claims encroaching into their coastal waters.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has expressed his alarm over recent combativeness in the

disputed waters. In early August, a Chinese coast guard ship used a water cannon to try to block a Philippine navy-operated boat that was bringing supplies to Filipino forces in the disputed Second Thomas Shoal.

"We do not seek conflict, but it is our duty as citizens and as leaders to always rise to meet any challenge to our sovereignty, to our sovereign rights, and our maritime jurisdictions in the South China Sea," Marcos told fellow leaders in an ASEAN-only meeting Tuesday.

A copy of Marcos' remarks during ASEAN's hourlong meeting with Qiang on Wednesday issued to journalists showed the Philippine president fired a veiled critique but did not raise any specific aggressions in the disputed sea. The Philippines "continues to uphold the primacy of the 1982 U.N.

Convention on the Law of the Sea as the framework within which all activities in the seas and oceans are

conducted," Marcos said in the meeting. "We once again reaffirm our commitment to the rule of law and peaceful settlement of disputes."

In 2016, an arbitration tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands, set up under that United Nations convention, ruled that China's vast territorial claims in the South China Sea based on historical grounds have no legal basis. China, a full dialogue partner of ASEAN, did not participate in the arbitration sought in 2013 by the Philippines, rejected the 2016 ruling, and continues to defy it. China, Taiwan and some ASEAN member states — Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam — have been locked for decades in an increasingly tense territorial standoff in the South China Sea, where a bulk of global trade transits.

It's also become a delicate frontline in the U.S.-China rivalry. Washington does not lay any claim to the offshore region but has deployed its warships and fighters to undertake what it says are freedom of navigation and overflight patrols. China has warned the U.S. not to meddle in what it says is a purely Asian dispute.

The South China Sea conflicts do not directly include the rest of the ASEAN — Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Myanmar. (AP)

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Fighting between rival US-backed groups in Syria could undermine war against the Islamic State group

BEIRUT, Sept 6: The weeklong clashes between rival US-backed militias in eastern Syria, where hundreds of American troops are deployed, point to dangerous seams in the coalition that has kept a lid on the defeated Islamic State group for years. That could be an opportunity for the radical group to reemerge.

The violence also points to rising tensions between Kurds who dominate the region and the mainly Arab population, opening the door for Syrian President Bashar Assad and his allies, Russia and Iran, to try to make inroads in an oil-rich territory where they seek to drive out US troops and restore Damascus' rule. Eastern Syria has largely been off the world's radar, particularly in the United States. But the US has had some 900 troops stationed there alongside an unknown number of contractors ever since the defeat of the Islamic State group in 2019.

The troops, who first arrived eight years ago, work alongside the Syrian Democratic Forces, an umbrella group of militias dominated by Kurdish fighters. At the same time, a US-supported Kurdish-led administration has governed parts of northern Syria and most of Syria east of the Euphrates River, including key oil fields, with government forces and Iranian-backed militias positioned just across the river on the western bank. The region's Arabs have roles in both the SDF and the administration but have long resented the Kurdish control.

The clashes involve the Syrian Democratic Forces and an allied faction, the Arab-led Deir el-Zour Military Council. The trigger was the August 27 arrest by the SDF of the council's commander Ahmad Khebel, better known as Abu Khawla.

The SDF accused Khebel of criminal activity, corruption and of opening up contacts with the rest of the government and Iranian-backed militias. Fighting broke out between the SDF and Khebel's loyalists, who were then joined by hundreds of Arab tribesmen in battles that

spread and left tribesmen in control of several villages outside the city of Deir el-Zour. At least 90 people have been killed and dozens wounded.

Kurdish leaders accuse Iranian-backed militias and the Syrian government of fomenting the violence. Speaking to The Associated Press, SDF spokesman Farhad Shami denied local Arab fighters joined the clashes, saying it was fighters loyal to Damascus who crossed the river.

Iran and Assad regime want to depict this unrest as a result of an ethnic conflict between Arabs and Kurds, Elham Ahmad, the leader of the Syrian Democratic Council, the political wing of the SDF, wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. Their ultimate aim, she said, was to force US troops to leave.

But some warn the violence reflects local Arab resentment of Kurdish domination. Opposition activists said contacts were underway with tribal leaders to reach a cease-fire. This is an unprecedented escalation between SDF and Deir el-Zour residents, says Omar Abu Layla, a Europe-based activist who heads the Deir Ezzor 24 media outlet, which covers news in the region.

This is an indication of the bad policy implemented by the SDF and wrong calculations by the Americans, said Abu Layla. He said the solution could be to name a replacement for Khebel and give Arabs more influence in local councils.

If the fighting endures, it could deepen Kurdish-Arab rifts. That could open the door for IS remnants to attempt a comeback. The US military has called for an end to the fighting, warning that distractions (from opposing IS) create instability and increase the risk of Daesh resurgence, using the Arab acronym for the Islamic State group.

Over the weekend, a meeting was held among SDF figures, tribal leaders and US officials, including Maj. Gen. Joel Vowell, the commander of Operation Inherent Resolve, which oversees US military operations against IS, the US Embassy announced. (AP)

Israel's SC delays pivotal judicial overhaul hearing after attorney general opposes plan

JERUSALEM, Sept 6: Israel's Supreme Court on Tuesday delayed the first of three pivotal hearings on the legality of the judicial overhaul, spearheaded by the far-right government of Benjamin Netanyahu, after the country's attorney general expressed staunch opposition to the plan.

For the eight months since the coalition took power, Justice Minister Yariv Levin, a Netanyahu ally, has refused to convene the committee that selects the nation's judges, leaving numerous judgeships open across the country. Lawyers for Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara will now argue against the justice minister's counsel in court, a situation which experts said is highly exceptional. Levin, a key architect of the overhaul, seeks to change the makeup of the selection committee to give Netanyahu's far-right ruling coalition the final say over the appointment of judges, part of a broader judicial overhaul proposed by Netanyahu's government.

Before the Court delayed the hearing for 12 days, petitions challenging Levin's refusal were set to be heard on Thursday. Under normal circumstances, experts said, Levin's position would have been represented by the attorney general.

But after Baharav-Miara made clear she opposed the overhaul and Levin's position, he re-

quested the hearing be delayed so he had time to seek independent counsel.

This is all highly exceptional, said Amichai Cohen, a constitutional law professor and senior fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank. Until the current government took office, he said, the attorney general and government rarely took separate positions. "Usually there is a dialogue in which a unified position is adopted, he said.

The Supreme Court delayed the hearing until September 19. In a filing to the court on Monday, Baharav-Miara said Levin's actions had led to numerous vacancies. If the selection committee is not convened by the end of the year, according to the filing, there will be over 53 vacant judgeships across the country over 5 per cent of the national bench.

Levin has until Sunday to secure independent counsel and submit his position to the Court. The hearing is one of three pivotal cases Israel's Supreme Court will hear this month over the legality of the judicial overhaul. The judiciary's rulings could set the stage for a constitutional crisis if Netanyahu's government chooses not to obey the decisions.

The highest-profile case is set for September 12, in which the court will hear challenges to the coalition's move in July to eliminate the reasonableness standard. (AP)

The world's oceans - more than 70% of the Earth's surface - were the hottest ever recorded, nearly 21 degrees Celsius

It's official. Meteorologists say this summer's swelter was a global record breaker for high heat

GENEVA, Sept 6: Earth has sweltered through its hottest Northern Hemisphere summer ever measured, with a record warm August capping a season of brutal and deadly temperatures, according to the World Meteorological Organisation.

Last month was not only the hottest August scientists ever recorded by far with modern equipment, it was also the second hottest month measured, behind only July 2023, WMO and the European climate service Copernicus announced on Wednesday.

August was about 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial averages, which is the warming threshold that the world is trying not to pass. But the 1.5 C threshold is over decades — not just one month — so scientists do not con-

sider that brief passage that significant.

The world's oceans — more than 70% of the Earth's surface — were the hottest ever recorded, nearly 21 degrees Celsius (69.8 degrees Fahrenheit), and have set high temperature marks for three consecutive months, the WMO and Copernicus said.

"The dog days of summer are not just barking, they are biting," United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a statement. "Climate breakdown has begun."

So far, 2023 is the second hottest year on record, behind 2016, according to Copernicus.

Scientists blame ever-warming human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas with an extra push from a natural El



Nino, which is a temporary warming of parts of the Pacific Ocean that changes weather worldwide. Usually an El Nino, which started earlier this year, adds extra heat to global temperatures but more so in its second year.

"What we are observing, not only new extremes but the persistence of these record-breaking conditions, and the impacts these have on both

people and planet, are a clear consequence of the warming of the climate system," Copernicus Climate Change Service Director Carlo Buontempo said.

Copernicus, a division of the European Union's space program, has records going back to 1940, but in the United Kingdom and the United States, global records go back to the mid 1800s and those

weather and science agencies are expected to soon report that the summer was a record-breaker.

Scientists have used tree rings, ice cores and other proxies to estimate that temperatures are now warmer than they have been in about 120,000 years. The world has been warmer before, but that was prior to human civilization, seas were much higher and the poles were not icy.

So far, daily September temperatures are higher than what has been recorded before for this time of year, according to the University of Maine's Climate Reanalyzer.

While the world's air and oceans were setting records for heat, Antarctica continued to set records for low amounts of sea ice, the WMO said. (AP)

China's mega power project on Siang River to have cascading effect on India, B'desh: Arunachal CM

'China has proposed a 60,000 MW hydro-power plant on the river, called Tsangpo in Tibet, in its 14th five-year plan'

ITANAGAR, Sept 6: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday expressed concern over China's proposed mega hydropower project on the upstream of Siang River in Tibet, stating it will have a cascading effect on India and Bangladesh in the near future.

During a zero-hour discussion in the state assembly, initiated by Congress MLA Lombo Tayeng seeking a declaration of recurring annual floods in Siang Valley as a natural calamity, Khandu said China has proposed a 60,000 MW hydro-power plant on the river, called Tsangpo in Tibet, in its 14th five-year plan.

"We are worried about the project's impact in the future. Accordingly, a high-level meeting of the Brahmaputra Board was convened recently. The Centre has proposed a barrage on Siang River so that Chinese activities do not affect the river," he said.

Khandu said a survey for the pro-



posed barrage will be carried out, and once it is completed, the Centre will decide on the next step.

Tayeng, while initiating the dis-

ussion, pointed out that the Siang River is frequently changing its course causing massive land erosion of a few lakh hectares of cultivated

land, and reducing the area of the D Ering wildlife sanctuary.

"Since there is a possible involvement of China in blocking and di-

verting of water, dumping of construction material in the river and unwarranted releasing of water in the upstream in their territory, if the phenomenon of recurring floods in Siang Valley is not declared a national calamity and adequate measures taken, it may be disastrous in near future," Tayeng said.

Khandu, in response, informed the assembly that there is no provision, executive or legal, to declare a recurring natural calamity as a national calamity.

The existing guidelines of the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) do not contemplate declaring a disaster as a national calamity.

"There is also no mention of national calamity in Disaster Management Act 2005," the chief minister added.

He said in case of any major disaster, an inter-ministerial central team visits the affected areas and on the basis of their recommendation

and report, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) allocates additional funds to the state from the NDRF.

At least three districts of the state – Siang, Upper Siang and East Siang – through which the river passes before entering Assam, where the river is known as Brahmaputra, experiences annual floods during the monsoon.

He said a proposal for erosion control and flood management in the left bank of the Siang River in the Mebo sub-division of East Siang district was submitted by the Arunachal Pradesh government to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry.

The ministry asked the state administration in May this year to re-submit the proposal in an integrated manner by adopting a basin or sub-basin approach covering the major length of the rivers and their tributaries instead of proposing separate works in selected or arbitrary reaches, he added. (PTI)

10 Manipur Kuki MLAs, civil society groups meet Mizoram CM

AIZAWL, Sept 6: Ten Kuki MLAs of Manipur, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Suspension of Operations (SoO) groups from the hill areas of Manipur met Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga here on Wednesday, officials said.

Zoramthanga said he was deeply hurt with the sufferings of people due to the violence in Manipur, they said.

Zoramthanga said people of Mizoram were ready to help their fellow brothers and sisters and that the future course of action should be carried out in consultation with various organisations and the public, they added.

Ministers, MLAs, representatives of Mizo People's Convention, Kuki Students' Organisation, Hmar Inpu, Committee on Tribal Unity, Zomi Council Student Organisation and other organisations were present at the meeting, officials said.

Kuki legislators from the hill districts of Manipur along with the SoO groups and Kuki CSOs have been demanding a separate administration since ethnic violence broke out in the northeastern state on May 3. Manipur had plunged into a vortex of violence in May over a high court order directing the state government to consider including the non-tribal Meitei community in the list of Scheduled Tribes. This order led to rampant ethnic clashes. More than 160 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence first broke out in the state on May 3. (PTI)

M'laya health minister hints of action against MBBS students

SHILLONG, Sept 5: Meghalaya health minister Ampareen Lyngdoh said the Meghalaya state government will take a call on the complaints lodged against some candidates, who have been allotted MBBS seats under the Meghalaya quota. "The chief minister is now out of station and likely we will regroup by next Monday and take a call on this matter," Lyngdoh told reporters. She was reacting to a query related to a complaint submitted by the Khasi Students' Union (KSU) demanding immediate disqualification of 10 MBBS candidates from the open category after they failed to submit relevant documents including a permanent residential certificate (PRC) as per directives of the DHS.

"We will not be able to comment on this as we are not the competent authority to disqualify on the basis of submission of documents of the DC of a district. The CM has been appraised on this matter and in all probability it will all be addressed at the earliest," Lyngdoh said. (NNN)

NSCN-K (Khango) cadre surrenders

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Sept 6: An active cadre of NSCN-K (Khango) surrendered with one .32 mm pistol and a live round, Assam Rifles said in a release on Wednesday. The cadre surrendered in Nagaland's Mokokchung district. The release said the cadre had been active since 2015 and was involved in extortion-related activities.

M'laya minister questions Centre's 'one nation, one election' move

SHILLONG, Sept 5: Meghalaya cabinet minister and UDP working president Paul Lyngdoh questioned the Centre's move to implement 'one nation, one election' when the country in fact needs more than one time zone.

Lyngdoh told reporters that he is yet to fully study the impact of such a plan on the part of the government.

"But I do feel that in the context of a very diverse country like India, for instance, the country is so diverse that in fact, we need more than one-time zone so how can you talk in terms of 'one nation, one election', the rest of the country starts working very late compared to us because



the sun rises much earlier here. So the United States is a single nation but it has four different time zones, so I think that answers a lot," he said.

Lyngdoh then said, "It is absolutely very difficult. In fact, we have been saying that we believe in unity in diversity so let us practice that." (NNN)

Nagaland's school education dept most corrupted, alleges RPP

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Sept 6: The Rising People's Party (RPP) alleged that Nagaland's school education department is the worst managed and most corrupted department in the state. It opined that the proposed overhauling of the department is in the right direction.

The party said the recent admission of adviser to school education department and SCERT Dr Kekhrielhoulie Yhome that the department is in a "total mess" is laudable.

"Unlike many of our leaders who have made a habit of shoving bills under the rug, our adviser has set a noteworthy precedent which

hopefully will inspire other politicians to follow suit," the RPP said in a release.

It added that while various ministers and advisers have come and gone unmindful of the health of the school education department, the present adviser's health report of the department is a severe "indictment" of his predecessors. The RPP reiterated that the department set up Teachers' Recruitment Board (TRB), as was first mooted by the party in 2022, since the adviser has also asserted that teacher recruitment cannot be done through Nagaland Public Service Commission or Nagaland Staff Selection Board.

It also stressed that all interviews of potential teachers should be carried out by empanelled university professors.

"Under no circumstances should teachers' recruitment be conducted like any other departmental recruitment," it demanded. The RPP also appealed to Yhome to remove the post of principal director of the department, arguing that it serves no exceptional purpose other than to render the office of the directorate redundant. The post of the principal director has only made domain experts like the director of the department a rubber stamp, it added.

Naga Hoho opposes Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023

DIMAPUR, Sept 6: The Naga Hoho asserted on Wednesday that it "strongly" opposed the recent passage of the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 by the Parliament. The Naga body said this "regressive legislation threatens" to infringe upon the constitutional protections guaranteed to Nagaland under Article 371 (A) and poses a dire threat to the rights and heritage of the Scheduled Tribes (ST).

The Naga Hoho also said that Article 371 (A) of the Indian Constitution acknowledges the distinct cultural identity and historical legacy of Nagaland, safeguarding its autonomy and traditional practices. Additionally, relevant acts and regulations exist to protect the rights and well-being of the Scheduled Tribes across the country, it added. The Naga Hoho then said, "However, the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 has set off alarm bells across our tribal communities". It also said that under the guise of protection, this bill expands the state's reach into the heart of the traditional way of life. (NNN)

Need of survey based on historical background of disputed areas: JNC

SHILLONG, Sept 6: The Jaintia National Council (JNC) on Wednesday asserted that there is a need for the regional committees of Assam and Meghalaya to conduct a survey which should be based on the historical background of the disputed areas.

"The Council is of a view that the regional committee of both the States must conduct a historical background survey through the help of experts from various departments to look into the various aspects of these areas and of the tribal community, who are living in these areas," JNC president Sambormi Lyngdoh said in a memorandum handed over to Meghalaya deputy chief minister in-charge urban Affairs, Sniawhalang Dhar, who is also the chairman of the regional committee for West Jaintia Hills.

He said that the state of Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as an autonomous state in 1972. The creation of the new State was based on the Assam Reorganization (Meghalaya) Act of 1969.



However, the Meghalaya government refused to accept this Act as areas of the present-day Jaintia Hills, Ri-Bhoi and West Khasi Hills districts of Meghalaya were transferred to the Karbi Anglong, Kamrup (metro) and Kamrup districts of Assam, the JNC added.

He said Meghalaya contested these transfers after statehood, claiming that they belonged to its tribal chieftains. Assam said the Government of Meghalaya could neither provide documents nor archival materials to prove its claim over these areas. After claims and counter-claims, the dispute was narrowed down to 12 sectors on the basis of an official claim by Meghalaya in 2011.

Lyngdoh said that the regional

committees of the two States are still in the process of settling the dispute.

"However, the council would like to bring to your notice that the regional committees of both the states lack experts from various departments to look into the historical background of both the states and (they) has ignored to settle these disputed areas according to their historical background concerning the tribal people living in these disputed areas and as per their customary practices and so on," he said.

He said there are Elaka and villages in Jaintia Hills which have fallen under the jurisdiction of the Assam Government.

"Nongphyllut Elaka headed by its Dalloi since time immemorial, was under the rule of the King/Chieftain of Jaintia known as Syiem Sutnga. And now in this present day, this Elaka has fallen on the hand of the Assam government without ascertaining the fact and historical background of the Nongphyllut Elaka," Lyngdoh said. (NNN)

Liangmai Naga man assaulted in Manipur



IMPHAL, Sept 6: A Liangmai Naga was assaulted by Kuki militants recently in Kangpokpi district, according to Liangmai organisations.

They accused the Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), which is under Suspension of Operation (SoO) with the government, for beating the Liangmai Naga man. The incident reportedly occurred at 7:30 am on Tuesday at Chalwa along I T Road under Kangpokpi district.

The victim has been identified as one Z Hotngambou of Rianglong village, Tamei subdivision, Tamenglong district.

In a joint condemnation statement, Liangmai Naga Council of Eastern Zone, Liangmai Naga Council of Northern Zone, Liangmai Naga Council of Southern Zone and Liangmai Naga Council of Western Zone said, "In a very shocking incident, a group of Kuki militants who identified themselves as KRA (one of the SoO groups) beat a Liangmai Naga at Chalwa, I T Road, who was on the way to Imphal from Rianglong village". The Liangmai bodies said the Kuki militants stopped the vehicle and asked for tax. "When the driver (the victim) said he didn't have money, they started punching him. The victim was profusely bleeding as the Kuki militants beat him", the Liangmai organizations added. The Kuki militants also asked the identity of the victim before he was beaten up, according to the Liangmai bodies. The Liangmai bodies, while strongly condemning it, said such incidents, perpetrated by Kuki militants, have been happening frequently along the I T Road. (NNN)

Training for Nagaland teachers under Adolescence Education Programme

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Sept 6: The Nagaland Board of School Education and Nagaland State AIDS Control Society (NSACS) will jointly conduct a one-day training programme, under the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP), for teachers of the state aiming to equip every adolescent between 10 to 19 years with scientific information, knowledge and life-skills to protect themselves from HIV infection and manage their concerns pertaining to reproductive and sexual health.

The AEP, a joint initiative by the Union education ministry, school education and literacy department and National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), covers all the secondary and higher secondary schools of the

country. While for Kohima and Tsemnyu teachers the training will be held at Red Cross Society conference hall in Kohima on September 12, it will be conducted through online mode for teachers under Mokokchung, Tuensang, Mon, Phek, Wokha, Zunheboto, Dimapur, Chümoukedima, Nuland, Kiphire, Longleng, Peren, Noklak and Shamator districts on September 15.

In Nagaland, the NSACS has been

conducting training programmes for teachers under AEP since 2010 with the objective to provide accurate age-appropriate life skills-based adolescence education in a sustained manner in schools and provide structured education to enhance knowledge and skills of adolescents to deal with challenges of life.

Some of the areas to be discussed under this training are HIV/AIDS and STI, HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control), Act 2017, growing up and adolescence reproductive sexual health, mental health and substance

abuse. The organisers have directed all the heads of registered institutions under Kohima and Tsemnyu districts to depute one teacher to attend the meeting positively.

They also informed all the heads of registered institutions under Mokokchung, Tuensang, Mon, Phek, Wokha, Zunheboto, Dimapur, Chümoukedima, Nuland, Kiphire, Longleng, Peren, Noklak and Shamator districts to depute one teacher to attend the online meeting.

The registration link for the training programme will be shared later in the district WhatsApp groups and email IDs of the schools. The attendance of teachers from all the registered schools is compulsory and will be monitored.

Government of India Ministry of Minority Affairs Public Notice

The Ministry of Minority Affairs in collaboration with CSC e-Governance Services Limited is organizing a special drive to re-validate the applications and verification of State Nodal Officers/District Nodal Officers/Head of Institutes/Institute Nodal Officers and applicants through Aadhaar based Biometric authentication for the scholarships of Ministry of Minority Affairs for the year 2022-23.

2. The process has been started with effect from 01.08.2023 and will be completed by 8th September, 2023. All concerned are hereby informed to ensure their bio-metric Aadhaar authentication by visiting special camps being organized at district and institute level by concerned District Level Nodal Officer and Head of Institutes respectively as per schedule provided. For further details please log on to [www.https://scholarships.gov.in](https://scholarships.gov.in) and alternatively may call to Helpline at 011-24364311

Sd/
(Under Secretary, Scholarships)
SS-15/8/2022-Scholarship-MoMA

CBC 27101/11/0007/2324

Poll panel ready to work as per legal provisions: CEC on 'one nation, one election'

BHOPAL, Sept 6: The Election Commission of India is ready to act as per constitutional provisions and the Representative of the People (RP) Act, said Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday in the context of 'one nation, one election'.

Kumar and other top ECI officials were on a visit to Bhopal to hold meetings with political parties and the administration and enforcement agencies over election preparedness in BJP-governed Madhya Pradesh, where polls are due by November.

The final voters' list will be published on October 5, he said. The state has nearly 5.5 crore voters, he said.

Responding to a question on the concept of 'one nation, one election', the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) said that the poll commission is required to "deliver elections before the time" as per constitutional provisions and the RP Act.

This time, according to legal provisions, is five years from the date of the first sitting of Parliament after a new government is formed. The ECI can announce the general elections six months before the end of this time, Kumar said. The norms are similar for assembly elections.

The ECI is mandated and ready to deliver elections as per legal provisions, he said.

The Centre last week formed a

Netaji's grandnephew resigns from BJP

KOLKATA, Sept 6: Chandra Bose, the grandnephew of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, resigned from BJP on Wednesday saying that the promises of propagating the nationalist leader's vision was not fulfilled by the saffron camp.

Chandra Bose had joined BJP in 2016 and had twice contested on BJP ticket - in the 2016 assembly and the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

"When I joined BJP I was promised that I would be allowed to propagate the inclusive ideology of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Sarat Chandra Bose. But nothing of that sort happened," he said.

Bose, who was appointed the West Bengal BJP vice-president in 2016, was dropped from it during the 2020 organisational rejig.

"My discussions (with BJP) then centered on the inclusive ideology of the Bose Brothers (Netaji and his elder brother Sarat Chandra Bose, also a freedom fighter). My understanding, both then and later, had been that I would propagate this ideology across the country on the BJP Platform. It was also decided to form an Azad Hind Morcha within the framework of BJP with the primary objective to propagate Netaji's ideology of uniting all communities as Bharatiyas, irrespective of religion, caste and creed," he said in his resignation letter to BJP national president J P Nadda. This was essential to keep the country united, he said.

"My ardent promotional efforts to achieve these laudable objectives have not received any support from the BJP, either at the Centre or at the state level in West Bengal. I had put forward a detailed proposal suggesting a Bengal Strategy to reach out to the people of the state. My proposals were ignored," he added. Bose had time and again hit out at the state leadership over several issues and also opposed the CAA in 2019, going against the party line. (PTI)



COMMISSION OF INDIA

high-level committee under former president Ram Nath Kovind to explore the feasibility of holding simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies, bringing 'one nation, one election' under the spotlight.

To a question about e-voting, CEC said it will take time as the process is vulnerable to hacking and also has trust issues.

Technology is not an issue and the current process is not connected to a network but "discussion on this (e-voting) is going on and it will take time to evolve", he said.

The final voters' list for MP polls will be published on October 5, said Kumar and urged new eligible voters to get enrolled and apply for correction if they find any discrepancies in their data.

Asked about the possibility of "misuse of online transactions" in the run-up to polls, the CEC said financial institutions are told to keep a watch on suspicious and bulk transactions and alert authorities concerned.

Madhya Pradesh has 5.52 crore voters, including 2.85 crore male and 2.67 female electors. The state also has 1,336 transgender persons, 4.85 lakh people with disabilities, 7.12 lakh voters aged above 80 years, 6,180 people who are more than 100 years old, 18.86 lakh new voters and 75,426 service voters.

Kumar said ECI is putting in place a system to enable senior citizens and persons with disabilities to vote from their homes in the upcoming polls if they apply for the same.

Some of the ministers are expected to be ministers in waiting for the world leaders who have started arriving for the summit.

Union minister of State for Health S P S Singh Baghel received President of Nigeria Bola Ahmed Tinubu on his arrival in Delhi on Tuesday.

During an informal interaction before the meeting of the Union Cabinet which lasted for nearly one hour, the ministers were informed how important the summit was for India and its global image. (PTI)

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Such voters can request through an online form to vote from home, he said. Election officials will visit the homes of such voters and ensure voting with confidentiality and also videograph the process in the presence of political parties' representatives, he said.

The poll commission is also making efforts to increase voting percentage and ensure the participation of women, new voters and other vulnerable tribal groups, he said.

Asked about the current expenses of candidates whose names have already been announced by their parties, Kumar said as per legal provisions, a candidate is needed to keep a tab of their expenditure from the date of nomination till the polling day.

BJP has already announced 39 candidates in Madhya Pradesh, which has 230 assembly seats.

About freebies, the CEC said political parties have the right to inform voters about what they are offering to the electors but they also need to spell out the timeline of fulfilling the promise, the expenditure to be incurred on it and the arrangement of funds.

ECI has made a detailed report in this regard but the issue of freebies in polls is sub-judice with the matter reaching the Supreme Court, he said.

In reply to another question, he said jail inmates are not allowed to vote as per the law. (PTI)

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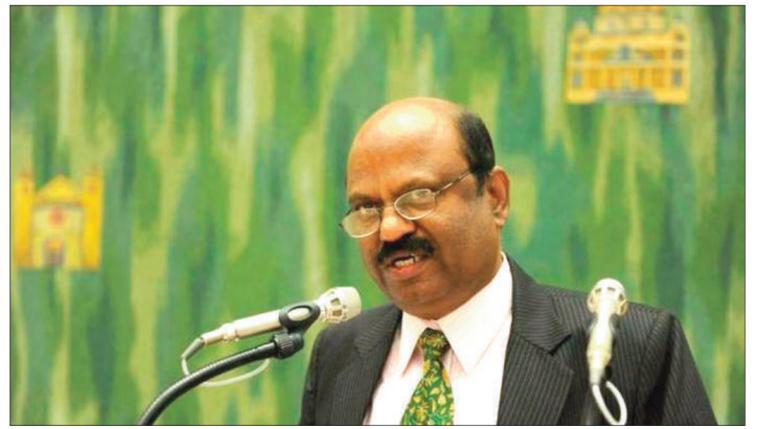
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Bengal Guv appoints officiating VC of another varsity amid row



KOLKATA, Sept 6: West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose has appointed the interim VC of another state-run university amid a row over his move to appoint such officials in varsities that have remained headless for months.

Bose had earlier appointed the officiating VCs of seven universities, including Presidency University, MAKAUT and Burdwan University. The governor on Tuesday night announced the name of Professor Kajal De as the officiating VC of the newly established Kanyashree University.

His announcement came just hours after chief minister Mamata Banerjee's blistering attack against him during a Teachers' Day programme, where she accused him of interfering in the state's education system, and threatened to sit on a dharna outside Raj Bhavan if the governor continued to function in this manner.

"Hon'ble Chancellor today appointed Prof Kajal De Vice Chancellor (officiating) of Kanyashree University, West Bengal," the Raj Bhavan said in a statement.

De was discharging her duties as the interim VC of Diamond Harbour Women's University since March after being appointed by Bose. She was a professor of mathematics at Netaji Subhas Open University.

Sources said that interim vice-chancellors of eight other univer-

sities have also been finalised and appointment letters "will be issued soon". TMC Rajya Sabha MP and party spokesperson Santanu Sen alleged that Bose was "running a parallel administration by bypassing an elected government to please BJP leaders in Delhi".

"He is following the footsteps of his predecessor (Jagdeep Dhankhar). By doing these things, he feels he will be rewarded the same way as Dhankhar. Bose is running a parallel administration and challenging the state, which is highly condemnable," Sen said.

Dhankhar was elected as the Vice President of the country after his contentious tenure as the governor of West Bengal, during which he had frequent run-ins with the Mamata Banerjee government over several issues.

Stating that Bose is transgressing all norms while appointing interim VCs, Sen said, "People with less than 10 years of experience as university professors, and those not from academic backgrounds are being appointed as interim VCs by ignoring rules and bypassing eligible people. Such acts are deplorable and go beyond his jurisdiction."

Attacking Bose over the appointments, Banerjee had on Tuesday alleged that the governor was appointing interim VCs according to his whims by ignoring the state-appointed search committee.

Noting that VCs must be picked from the names suggested by the five-member search committee, she alleged that Bose was appointing people at his will with no regard to the suggestions of the panel.

She had promised a 'tit-for-tat' action, and threatened to block funding to all universities that followed the governor's directions.

"I will see how you give salaries to these vice-chancellors," she had said.

"We will not allow this to continue. If the governor thinks he is bigger than the chief minister, we will fight him back. He should not forget that he is nominated to that post," she said.

"If federalism is interfered with by taking away rights (of the state governments), I will be forced to sit on a dharna outside Raj Bhavan. We will not allow injustice. Bengal knows how to fight back. Wait and watch," Banerjee added. BJP state spokesperson Samik Bhat-tacharya said the TMC has politicised campuses and put its own people at the helm everywhere.

"The hon'ble governor is working in the interest of students to end the chaos which has plagued various state universities. Instead of supporting him for the overall improvement of the situation, the TMC is targeting him," he added. (PTI)

PM spells out dos and don'ts for ministers during G20 meet

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Ahead of the G20 Summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday spelled out a set of dos and don'ts to be observed by ministers during the two-day event to ensure that the visiting dignitaries are not put to any inconvenience, sources said. The ministers have been asked to ditch their official vehicles and use the shuttle service to reach the Bharat Mandapam and other venues of various meetings.

At a meeting of the Union Council of Ministers, the prime minister also asked them to down-

load the G20 India mobile app and make best use of its translation and other features while conversing with foreign dignitaries, officials said. The G20 mobile app has an instant translation feature incorporating all Indian languages and that of G20 nations.

With nearly 40 world leaders, including those from international organisations, set to attend the summit on September 9-10, foreign secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra briefed the ministers in detail about the protocol and related matters.

Some of the ministers are expected to be ministers in waiting for the world leaders who have started arriving for the summit.

Union minister of State for Health S P S Singh Baghel received President of Nigeria Bola Ahmed Tinubu on his arrival in Delhi on Tuesday.

During an informal interaction before the meeting of the Union Cabinet which lasted for nearly one hour, the ministers were informed how important the summit was for India and its global image. (PTI)

INDIA-BHARAT ROW

Oppn bloc calling itself BHARAT might stop govt's 'fatuous game of changing names': Tharoor

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Wednesday took a swipe at the government over the India-Bharat naming row, saying the opposition bloc could call itself the "Alliance for Betterment, Harmony And Responsible Advancement for Tomorrow (BHARAT)" and then perhaps the ruling party might stop the "fatuous game of changing names".

His remarks came after invitations for a G20 dinner sent out by President Droupadi Murmu, describing her position as 'President of Bharat' instead of the customary 'President of India', triggered a massive furore on Tuesday with the opposition alleging that the Modi government is planning to drop India and stay with just Bharat as the country's name.

In a post on X, Tharoor said, "We could of course call ourselves the Alliance for Betterment, Harmony And Responsible Advancement for Tomorrow (BHARAT). Then perhaps the ruling party might stop this fatuous game of changing names."

The Congress is a constituent of the opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

On Tuesday, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh had on X said, "Mr. Modi can continue to distort his-



tory and divide India, that is Bharat, that is a Union of States. But we will not be deterred. After all, what is the objective of INDIA (alliance) parties? It is BHARAT—Bring Harmony, Amity, Reconciliation And Trust. Judega BHARAT. Jeetega INDIA!"

Tharoor on Tuesday had said while there is no constitutional objection to calling India 'Bharat', he hopes the government will not be so "foolish" to completely dispense with "India" which has "incalculable brand value".

The Congress MP had also claimed it was Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah who had objected to the name 'India' since it implied that "our country was the successor state to the British Raj and Pakistan a seceding state". (PTI)

No agenda for Parl session, discuss nine issues raised by oppn: Sonia to PM

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Congress leader Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to point out that no agenda was listed for the special Parliament session and to raise nine issues, including violence in Manipur and price rise, for discussion during it. The issues listed by Gandhi include Centre-state relations, rise in cases of communal tension, border transgressions by China and the demand for a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) to investigate the transactions of the Adani business group in light of several revelations.

"I must point out that this special session has been convened without any consultation with other political parties. None of us have any idea of its agenda. All we have been communicated is that all five days have been allocated for government business," Gandhi said in her letter.

"We most certainly want to participate in the Special Session because it will give us an opportunity to raise matters of public concern and importance. I earnestly hope that time will be allocated under the appropriate Rules for a discussion and debate on these issues," she said. According to her party colleague Jairam Ramesh, this is the first time no agenda has been discussed or listed in the business of the House. Seeking time to hold a discussion on the nine issues raised, Gandhi wrote of the "continued agony faced by people of Manipur and breakdown of Constitutional machinery and social harmony in the State". She also brought up the rise in communal tension in different states such as Haryana.

Raising the China issue, she listed the con-



tinued occupation of Indian territory by China and "challenges to our sovereignty on our borders in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh".

Gandhi also raised the "urgent need for a caste census", a demand which the Congress and some other parties have been raising for quite some time. She listed for discussion the issues of damages inflicted on Centre-State relations and the impact of natural disasters caused by extreme floods in some states and drought in others. Besides, the chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party pointed to the current economic situation with focus on increasing price rise of essential commodities, growing unemployment, rise in inequalities and distress of MSMEs also to be discussed during the upcoming session.

Gandhi also said the commitment made by the Government of India to farmers and farmer organizations in regard to MSP and other demands raised by them also need to be

discussed in Parliament.

"I earnestly hope that in a spirit of constructive cooperation, these issues will be taken up in the forthcoming special session," she said.

Listing the contents of Gandhi's letter to the prime minister, Congress general secretary Ramesh said at a press conference that the prime minister is in panic and is "fatigued". He also alleged that there "autocracy" was prevailing in the country. Attacking the prime minister, Ramesh claimed, "All his actions -- his revival of a dead NDA when our Bengaluru meeting was going on, his response to the formation of the INDIA group, his unilateral decision to call this five day session... These are all symbols of a panic-stricken administration. After nine years, it is a case of maximum fatigue, maximum panic."

Addressing the media at the AICC headquarters, Ramesh said, "We want that the upcoming session is constructive and this was decided at the meeting of the strategy group and during the meeting of INDIA parties."

He said the Congress and INDIA parties had discussions at the strategy group meeting presided over by Sonia Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge.

"We decided that we will not boycott the session and we will raise the issues of the people," he noted.

"If there is no 'shenai' of democracy in the mother of democracy, then what kind of democracy is this," Ramesh asked. He said the rules under which the discussion can take place can be discussed mutually. The special session of Parliament will be held from September 18 to 22. (PTI)

Centre seeks SC direction to 13 Himalayan states for assessing their carrying capacity

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: The Centre has urged the Supreme Court to direct 13 Himalayan states of the country to assess their 'carrying capacity' and proposed setting up of an expert panel to evaluate the action plans submitted by each of them.

Carrying capacity is the maximum population size that an ecosystem can sustain without getting degraded.

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change filed the affidavit in a PIL by Ashok Kumar Raghav after the top court had on August 21 asked the Centre and the petitioner to discuss and suggest a way forward to enable the court to pass directions on the carrying capacity of Himalayan states and towns.

Raghav's plea sought an assessment of the carrying capacity and master plans for the Indian Himalayan Region spanning 13 states and union territories.

The ministry told the apex court that it has in the past circulated guidelines for assessing carrying capacity of hill stations including cities and eco-sensitive zones to all 13 Himalayan states by its

letter of January 30, 2020 and has also sent reminder letter on May 19, 2023 to request the states that if such study has not been undertaken then they may submit the action plan, for the purpose.

"In the light of the above-stated steps taken by the respondent ministry, where comprehensive exercise has been undertaken by experts in the field, it will be imperative that factual aspects of each hill-station are specifically identified and collected with the help of the local authorities cutting across multiple disciplines," the ministry said.

The Centre's affidavit holds importance in view of wide-scale damage caused by monsoon last month in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The ministry said that for achieving the final goal of assessing accurate carrying capacity of each hill station, some steps ought to be taken.

"Direct all 13 Himalayan states to submit an action taken report and an action plan, in a time-bound manner, for taking steps to carry out the carrying capacity assessment as per guidelines prepared by



GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment," the Centre said.

It also sought direction to all these states and Union territories for constitution of a committee, in a time-bound manner, headed by the chief secretary of

the respective state, for carrying out a multi-disciplinary study as per guidelines prepared by GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment.

The government said the institute situated in Almora of Uttarakhand is in-

involved in conducting a specific carrying capacity study for Mussoorie in the state and for Manali and Mcleodganj in Himachal Pradesh in matters pending before the National Green Tribunal.

"GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment which is an institute of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has also prepared the Guidelines for carrying capacity of Hill Stations including cities and Eco-Sensitive Zones..." it said.

The government said, therefore, considering the experience of the institute in preparing the guidelines for carrying out carrying capacity studies, it is suggested that the carrying capacity studies thus prepared by the 13 Himalayan states may be examined/evaluated by a technical committee headed by the director of GB Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment.

"Direct the Committee so constituted to submit its report with complete suggestions to the respective states for execution and implementation in a time bound manner, which should be periodically reviewed," the Centre sought direction from the court.

On August 21, the top court had mooted constituting an expert panel for conducting a "complete and comprehensive" study on the carrying capacity of the Himalayan region in the country, where unplanned development has caused devastation in recent times, terming it a "very important issue".

The plea of Raghav said, "Due to non-existent carrying/bearing capacity studies, grave geological hazards in the form of landslides, land subsidence, land cracking and sinking issues such as that in Joshimath are being witnessed and serious ecological and environmental depredation are taking place in the hills."

"Almost all hill stations, pilgrimage places and other tourism destinations spread over the Dhauladhar Circuit, Satluj Circuit, Beas Circuit and Tribal Circuit in Himachal Pradesh also remain hugely burdened and are almost on the brink of collapse with no carrying capacities assessed for any of the places in the state," it said. (PTI)

No form of extremism acceptable in the UK: British PM on Khalistani issue

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Allaying India's concerns over activities of pro-Khalistani elements in the UK, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak asserted on Wednesday that no form of extremism is acceptable, adding that the right to hold lawful protest does not extend to violent or threatening behaviour.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, Sunak said he takes the duty of the government to disrupt and counter violent, divisive ideologies, whatever they may be, very seriously.

He said the UK is working closely with its partners in the Indian government to tackle the threat from pro-Khalistani extremism.

There have been increasing concerns in India about activities of pro-Khalistani elements in the UK, especially after an attack on the Indian High Commission in London in March.

Sunak's comments came days before he visits India to attend the G20 summit on September 9-10.

The prime minister's responses to PTI's questions were sent by email.

"No form of extremism is acceptable in the UK, and I take the



duty of the government to disrupt and counter violent, divisive ideologies, whatever they may be, very seriously," he said.

"We are working closely with our partners in the Indian government to tackle the threat from pro-Khalistani extremism and the British police are fully empowered to deal with violent acts," he said, replying to a question on the issue.

There is a view in Delhi that the Khalistani issue is a stumbling block in deeper India-UK ties.

Sunak also referred to a meeting

between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and UK's Security Minister Tom Tugendhat last month that was focused on addressing the threat of extremism and corruption.

"In August, the UK's Security Minister met Minister Jaishankar in New Delhi to develop our shared work addressing the threat of extremism and corruption," Sunak said.

"During that visit he announced new funding to enhance the UK's capability to tackle pro-Khalistani

extremism. The Rs 1 crore investment will strengthen our understanding of the threat posed by pro-Khalistani extremism and complement the joint work already underway between the UK and India," he said.

"UK citizens enjoy the right to gather lawfully and demonstrate a point of view, but rights to lawful protest do not extend to violent or threatening behaviour," the British prime minister said.

In March, India reacted angrily after pro-Khalistani elements attacked the Indian High Commission in London and pulled down the national flag from a pole at the front of the building.

The India-UK relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the India-UK virtual summit held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his then British counterpart Boris Johnson in May 2021.

At the summit, the two sides adopted a 10-year roadmap to expand ties in the key areas of trade and economy, defence and security, climate change and people-to-people connections among others. (PTI)

One biscuit less in pack, consumer forum in TN directs ITC to pay ₹ 1 lakh as compensation

TIRUVALLUR (TN), Sept 6: The district consumer forum here has directed ITC Ltd Food Division to pay a sum of ₹ one lakh to a consumer for alleged unfair trade practice after he complained that packets of the corporate's biscuit brand Sunfeast Marie Light had one biscuit less than that advertised on the wrapper.

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum, in a recent order, also directed the company to "discontinue the selling of the disputed biscuits 'Sunfeast Marie Light' in Batch No.0502C36 with the specific endorsement."

"It is argued by the learned counsel for the 1st opposite party (the company) that the product was

sold only based on the weight and not on number of biscuits. Such arguments could not be accepted as the wrapper clearly provides the information to the buyers/consumers to purchase the product only based on the number of biscuits. "Thus we answer the point accordingly holding that the 1st opposite party being the manufacturer and marketer had committed unfair trade practice and deficiency in service in misleading the consumers and that the complainant had successfully proved the same by sufficient admissible evidence," it said.

While Dillibabu sought imposing ₹ 100 crore fine on the company and the store that sold it and

₹ 10 crore as compensation for the alleged act of unfair trade practice and deficiency in service, it said the reliefs sought for by the complainant was exorbitant.

The 2nd opposite party being the shop keeper had no role to play with respect to reduction in the number of biscuits. "Hence, complaint dismissed against him," it said. The consumer forum subsequently directed that Rs one lakh be given as compensation to Dillibabu by the company and another ₹ 10,000 towards litigation expenses to be paid by it to him.

As per the rules, a package that has a declared weight of 76 g was permitted to weigh between 71.5 g to 80.5 g, it said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

MoU on Assam-Arunachal border

presence of Union home minister Amit Shah to resolve their decades-old border disputes.

Assam and Arunachal Pradesh share an 804.1-km-long border.

Arunachal Pradesh, which was made a Union territory in 1972, has been maintaining that several forested tracts in the plains traditionally belonged to hill tribal chiefs and communities and these were "unilaterally" transferred to Assam earlier.

After Arunachal Pradesh achieved statehood in 1987, a tripartite committee was appointed, which recommended that certain territories be transferred from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh. Assam contested this and the matter was in the Supreme Court for a long time. (PTI)

State has been transformed

businesses representing the micro, small and medium enterprises industry including packaging products like laminates, carton; scrap and other local ancillary industry, positively impacting the local families.

The chief minister also said that the state's business-friendly policies have transformed it into an attractive investment hub, drawing the attention of numerous investors. Several investors have come forward to invest in the state's industrial sector. On May 9, the state government signed eight memorandum of understanding (MoUs) worth ₹ 8,201 crore, for employment generation of 6,115 jobs. The Cabinet has also approved the incentives for the next set of industrial investors numbering six, who are investing approximately ₹ 3,113 crores with employment creation of 5,100 direct and indirect jobs.

Meanwhile, Sarma also appealed to the public to extend all possible support to the new industries that are investing in the state. State environment and forest minister Chandra Mohan Patowary also highlighted the conducive industrial climate of Nalbari for hosting new projects in the district. The setting up of the PepsiCo plant would boost the state's economy. CEO PepsiCo for Africa, Middle East, South Asia Eugene Willemsen, president PepsiCo India Ahmed ElSheikh and host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Protesters defy curfew, over 40

because of the barricades. We are just demanding that those be shifted so that people can visit their homes." COCOMI had called upon the people to storm the barricades as their repeated requests to the government to remove those by August 30 had fallen on deaf ears. On Tuesday, the state government hurriedly clamped full curfew in five valley districts till further orders in apprehension of law and order violations. (PTI)

India in Reserve Bank's name should

Pakistan's founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah who had objected to the name 'India' since it implied that 'our country was the successor state to British Raj and Pakistan a seceding state'.

"What Tharoor said was half-truth. What Jinnah said is not important. What is important for us is which name of sages and saints used, and it was not India but Bharat," the BJP leader said.

On Karnataka home minister G Parameshwara's question on the origin of Sanatan Dharma, Sarma said, "The word Sanatan itself has the answer. It means something which has no beginning and no end. It was in existence from eternity and will continue till infinitely."

"The home minister of such a big state like Karnataka cannot understand such a simple thing, whereas someone like me from a small state can get it," he quipped. (PTI)

Road accident claims seven in Tinsukia

in the accident bear the registration numbers AS23-CC 8930 and AR 20A1093. In response to this devastating incident, Tinsukia district commissioner Swapnil Pal has announced a magisterial inquiry to determine the circumstances surrounding the accident. (With inputs from PTI)

SC seeks report on recovery of illegal

reference made by the chief secretary in the affidavit about the lawyers appearing in the case, the bench said, "Any reference made to counsel in affidavit shall not be construed as any comment on the counsel. We make it clear that counsel appearing before the court do so as officers of the court and are responsible to this court."

It also directed the state government to submit a status report regarding the setting up of the portal for the committee.

On being told that a large number of bodies are lying in morgues and needed to be disposed of in a dignified manner, the bench said the government will have to take a call so the unclaimed bodies don't spread diseases.

"The bodies cannot be forever in the morgue as it can trigger an outbreak," the bench said.

On September 1, the top court had asked the Centre and the state government to ensure uninterrupted supply of basic commodities like food and medicines to people facing economic blockade in certain areas of the border state.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and the Manipur government, had said nodal officers were appointed by the Union of India and the state pursuant to its earlier orders to facilitate the functioning of the court-appointed all-women committee of judges to oversee relief and rehabilitation in the strife-torn state.

The panel headed by Justice (retired) Mittal, a former chief justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, also comprises Justices (retd) Shalini P Joshi and Asha Menon.

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

This order led to rampant ethnic clashes.

More than 160 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence first broke out in the state on May 3 when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organized in hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. (PTI)

Governor reviews government schemes

Majuli. Addressing the state of education, the Governor urged district officials to promote Vidyanjali 2.0 among the masses. He emphasised that many individuals with philanthropic inclinations could step forward to support education and students. To this end, he requested the district commissioner and education department officials to involve such individuals in Vidyanjali 2.0.

He also stressed the need to enhance public participation by encouraging people to adopt schools and contribute to the infrastructural development of educational institutions. While acknowledging the district's lower dropout rates and favorable student-teacher ratios, he encouraged further improvements.

Regarding the fishery department in the district, the Governor highlighted the importance of boosting economic development through increased fish production.

As Majuli is the only island district, he emphasized the need to revamp the fisheries sector to meet local demands as well as those of neighboring districts.

The Governor also sought updates on various projects, including AROHAN, TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, among others, and evaluated the district's performance. MLA Majuli Shri Bhuvan Gham, DC Cauvery B Sharma, SP Bibekananda Das, and other senior government officials attended the meeting.

British PM 'hugely' proud of his

from family, but of course my wife and two daughters very much guide my values, as do my parents and parents-in-law."

"I am, though, incredibly proud of my parents-in-law and what they have achieved -- going from nothing to building one of the world's largest and most respected companies, which employs thousands of people in both India and in the UK," he said.

"I want to create and lead a country where anyone can emulate the kind of success that they have had," Sunak said.

"It is wonderful to be able to travel to India for the G20 with Akshata, and hopefully we will get a chance to visit some of the places we went to when we were younger we'll both be very busy the whole trip though!"

Sunak said he is looking forward to meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and deliberate on how collaboration between India and the UK helps in dealing with various global challenges.

"My ministerial colleagues who have visited India in the past year have all returned with a renewed enthusiasm for the UK-India partnership," he said.

"Beyond the work of the G20 itself, it has been fantastic for so many people to see the breadth and depth of India by travelling all over the country for meetings and discovering the unique cultures on display all over India," he added.

"When I meet Prime Minister Modi again this week it will be an opportunity to speak about some of the global challenges we face, and the huge role that the UK and India have to play in addressing them," Sunak said. (PTI)

Sanatan Dharma made Murmu the first tribal woman Prez. TN BJP No alliance: AAP, Congress leaders not keen on INDIA tie-up in Punjab

MADURAI (TN), Sept 6: Droupadi Murmu, belonging to a tribal community was made the President and first citizen of the country and that is Sanatan Dharma, the Tamil Nadu BJP said on Wednesday.

Seeking to rebut DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Youth Welfare Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin's accusation that Murmu had not been invited to the new Parliament building's recent inauguration and that showed Sanatan's "discriminatory" practice, State BJP President K Annamalai wondered why the DMK did not vote for her.

"Why the DMK did not vote in support of her in the Presidential election?" he sought to know. Asserting that all castes are equal, he said, to counter the DMK and for the sake of argument, he was asking the Tamil Nadu's ruling party about the candidate it supported. "You (DMK) voted for Yashwant Sinha (against Murmu); to which community does he belong?" Annamalai asked during his interaction with reporters at Srivilliputhur near here.

"We the people of the country made her the President and that is Sanatan Dharma; why did not you vote in favour of her?"

The BJP leader also demanded to know if the DMK voted in favour of Ram Nath Kovind from the Scheduled Castes community.

"We, the believers of Sanatan Dharma voted for him as we believe that all are equal. Learn about Sanatan Dharma from us and Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

On Tuesday night, Udhayanidhi, when asked by reporters to give an "example" to Sanatan's discriminatory practices that he opposed, the minister told reporters the "best example is Murmu not being invited to the inauguration of the new Parliament building, that is the best current example."

Even if Udhayanidhi had spoken about "eradicating" any other religion, his party's would have been the first voice against it.

Similarly, he was opposing Udhayanidhi's comment against Sanatan Dharma, Annamalai said.

The BJP leader said for the past many decades the DMK has been levelling the very same allegations and making foolish accusations. (PTI)

CHANDIGARH, Sept 6: Days after the Mumbai meeting of opposition INDIA bloc, leaders from the AAP and the Congress in Punjab opposed any possible tie-up between them for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Punjab minister Anmol Gagan Mann on Wednesday said her Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will fight on all 13 parliamentary seats in the state. She said this is the "direction" of chief minister Bhagwant Mann.

Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring too said the party is gearing up to fight on all seats in the state.

Both the parties are part of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) that is preparing to take on the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in 2024. But in Punjab, the Congress is the main rival to the AAP.

Warring said the state Congress unit is confident that the party's national leadership will not take any decision on Punjab "without our consent".

The state unit has not been told by the party high command about any tie-up or seat sharing in Punjab, he told reporters here. "We have been asked (by the party high command) to prepare for the 13 Lok Sabha seats," Warring said.

AAP leader Gagan Mann made it clear that there will be no alliance with the Congress in Punjab.

At the national level, many political parties have joined hands against the BJP to save democracy, she said but added that "in Punjab, we have the responsibility of the state in Punjab; there will not be any kind of compromise. We will fight elections independently."

"We will not have any alliance with the Congress. The people of Punjab love Bhagwant Mann. Any kind of alliance with the Congress will not be tolerated. Several leaders (of the Congress) are facing (corruption) cases," the AAP leader told reporters here.

It is the direction of chief minister Mann that the AAP will not have any alliance with the Congress in the state, she said.

On September 1, the INDIA bloc in its Mumbai meeting resolved to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha polls together "as far as possible", asserting seat-sharing arrangements in states will be concluded at the earliest in a "collaborative spirit of give-and-take".

The coalition's leaders have also set up a 14-member coordination committee that will act as



the highest decision-making body of the alliance and initiate work on seat sharing. They also excluded confidence that the new front would easily defeat the BJP.

Asked if the Congress high command decides to have an alliance in Punjab, Warring said, "The high command is the supreme authority. What the party high command says will happen."

"But we have full confidence that the party high command will not take any decision without our consent," asserted the Punjab Congress chief.

Asked whether the AAP's Punjab unit has conveyed its views to the party leadership, Gagan Mann said that "many parties, including the Congress, are part of the (INDIA) alliance. But in Punjab, politics is different. Here, we (AAP) can win 13 seats".

The AAP had won 92 of the 117 assembly seats in Punjab last year and people will again bless the party in the next elections, she said.

Gagan Mann's remarks are the first by an AAP leader in Punjab that makes it clear that the party does not want any electoral tie up with the Congress for the 2024 elections.

Congress leader Warring asserted that the Congress, which is the main opposition party in Punjab, has been forcefully raising issues concerning the people of the state.

Punjab Congress leaders even on Tuesday voiced strong reservations against any alliance with the AAP in the state for the next general elections. (PTI)

'Nataraja to stand testament to India's age-old traditions'

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday that the Nataraja statue installed at Bharat Mandapam, the convention centre which will host key G20 summit meetings, will stand as a testament to India's age-old artistry and traditions.

He was responding on X to the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts's post about the statue which, it said, is made of Ashtadhatu.

"The 27 feet tall, 18-ton-weight statue is the tallest statue made of Ashtadhatu and is sculpted by the renowned sculptor Radhakrishnan Sthapaty of Swami Malai in Tamil Nadu and his team in a record 7 months. 34 generations of Radhakrishnan have been making idols since the Chola Empire period. This statue of Nataraja, an important symbol of cosmic energy, creativity, and power, is going to be an attraction at the G20 summit," it said.

Modi posted, "The magnificent Nataraja statue at Bharat Mandapam brings to life aspects of our rich history and culture. As the world gathers for the G20 summit, it will stand as a testament to India's age-old artistry and traditions." (PTI)

DCGI issues advisory as US-based Abbott recalls batches of Digene gel

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: The DCGI has cautioned against the consumption of Abbott's antacid Digene gel citing safety concerns, even as the US-based drugmaker recalled several batches of the medicine manufactured at its Goa facility.

According to a letter by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), it was reported on August 9 that a bottle of Digene Gel (mint flavour), batch no 51030307, used by customers was of regular taste (sweet) and light pink in colour whereas another bottle of the same batch was of white colour with bitter taste and pungent odour as per a complaint.

"Accordingly, M/s Abbott India Limited, Verna Industrial Estate, Salcette, Goa- vide letter dated August 11, 2023, informed DCGI office for voluntary recall of impugned product Digene Mint flavour batch no 51030307 and Digene Gel orange having batch no 50035107, 50035207, 50035307, 50035407 and voluntary stopped production of all variants of Digene Gel manufactured at their Goa facility," the DCGI letter stated. Further, Abbott India Limited, through a letter dated August 18, intimated to DCGI regarding voluntary product recall of all batches of Digene Gel of all



flavours (mint, orange, mix fruits flavour) which are within the shelf life and manufactured at Goa facility.

"The impugned product may be unsafe and its use may result in adverse reaction," the DCGI letter dated August 31 said.

Meanwhile, the drug regulatory body has advised doctors and healthcare professionals to carefully prescribe and educate their patients to discontinue the medicine's use and for reporting of any ADRs (adverse drug reactions) arising due to consumption of the said product. Healthcare professionals should promptly report any suspicious cases of adverse events linked to this product, it said.

To the consumers and patients,

the DCGI has asked them to discontinue the use of Digene Gel which are manufactured at the Goa facility. As for wholesalers and distributors, the drugs body said the impacted product with all batch numbers manufactured at the Goa facility with active shelf life to be removed from the distribution.

Further the DCGI has instructed all regulatory authorities (states/UTs' drugs controllers, zonal and sub-zonal offices of CDSCO) to keep strict vigil on the movement, sale, distribution, and stock of the said drug products in the market, draw samples if the product still lying in market and initiate necessary action as per provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and Rules. (PTI)

'JAWAN' COULD SURPASS 'PATHAAN' OPENING DAY FIGURES EYES ₹ 65-70 CR EXPERTS



NEW DELHI, Sept 6:

With a 5 am show in Kolkata, a 6 am one in Jaipur and tickets flying off the proverbial shelf, Shah Rukh Khan's latest "Jawan" is set to break the opening day figures of his own film "Pathaan" with insiders pegging day one earnings at Rs 65-70 crore.

"Jawan", a pan-India thriller that releases on Thursday, is off to a great start with 7.5 lakh tickets already being booked, on-line ticket booking platform BookMyShow said.

"Out of the 10 lakh capacity on opening day, we've sold about 25 per cent of the tickets, which is like 2.5 lakh tickets sold for Thursday across PVR

INOX (screens). It is a very big number and early estimates suggest that it can be bigger than 'Pathaan'," PVR-INOX Ltd Executive Director Sanjeev Kumar Bijli told PTI.

"People are saying that this will be an opening day of Rs 65 to 70 crore, which is bigger than 'Pathaan'. The opening day figure for 'Pathaan' was Rs 55 crore. So hopefully it will be bigger than 'Pathaan,'" he added.

"Pathaan" was a blockbuster, with reported earnings of Rs 1,050 crore. "Jawan", described by makers as a high-octane thriller outlining "the emotional journey of a man who is set to rectify the wrongs in the society", could outdo that.

Also starring Vijay Sethupathi and Nayanthara, the film, releasing in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, premieres at a time Bollywood

theatrical releases -- most recent being "Gadar 2" and "OMG 2" -- are raking it in.

Mumbai-based trade expert Komal Nahta agreed with Bijli's estimate.

"The situation is crazy across single-screen theatres and multiplexes both. It is difficult to predict the business. It will at least do Rs 70 crore on day one (in India)," Nahta told PTI.

In Delhi, the film releases ahead of the G20 Summit on September 9-10 with several heads of state, including US President Joe Biden, set to attend the event. While the city will remain open during the weekend, restrictions will be imposed on a small part of the NDMC area.

Bijli said he is not worried about the theatrical business taking a hit in central Delhi because of G20 restrictions. It would mean four PVR theatres -- PVR Plaza, Rivoli, Odeon and ECX Chanakyapuri -- shut during the summit.

"They are single screen theatres with a total capacity of about 2,000 seats so that really wouldn't have much of an impact because the loss for that will be compensated by the fact that Delhi has a four-day weekend," he said.

About 30-35 per cent of the film's business will come from the South, which again is bigger than the numbers made by "Pathaan", added Bijli.

The buzz around "Jawan" is also high in south India as a majority of the cast and crew hail from the region, said Chennai-based trade analyst Ramesh Bala. (PTI)

Ayushmann- starrer 'Dream Girl 2' earns ₹ 116 crore at box office



MUMBAI, Sept 6: Ayushmann Khurrana-starrer "Dream Girl 2" has minted ₹ 116 crore at the domestic box office in 12 days, the makers have announced.

The film had raised ₹ 40.71 crore net in the first weekend after its release on August 25.

Directed by Raaj Shaandilyaa, the comedy drama is a sequel to Khurrana's 2019 hit of the same name. Also starring Ananya Panday, "Dream Girl 2" is produced by Ektaa R Kapoor's Balaji Motion Pictures.

Balaji Motion Pictures shared the box office update of the film on its official X page.

"This is nothing but Dream Girl ke 116,00,00,000 aashiqon ka pyaar!" the banner said in the post.

The film also stars Paresh Rawal, Annu Kapoor, Rajpal Yadav, Vijay Raaz, Asrani, Abhishek Banerjee, Manjot Singh and Seema Pahwa. (PTI)

'Will keep trying different things, know people will come back to Poo & Geet types of roles'

MUMBAI, Sept 6: Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan on Tuesday said she will continue to bring something new with every character, despite being remembered for her popular roles like Poo from "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham" and Geet from "Jab We Met". The two characters from the blockbuster movies -- released in 2001 and 2007 -- form a pivotal part of her filmography and the actor said she still finds it difficult to step outside the box. "As an actor, you want to try and do something different every time. For me, it is difficult because I've been known for playing Poo and Geet..."

This thing has been fixed in people's minds. So, that has been a conscious effort that now I want to do different things... "They don't think of the films that I've done in the past such as 'Dev', 'Chameli', and others. But I'm going to keep trying to do different things. I know that they will keep coming back to Poo and Geet," Kareena told reporters here at the trailer launch of "Jaane Jaan". Citing the example of Vishal Bhardwaj's 2006 critically-acclaimed film, "Omkaara", the 42-year-old actor said she has played intense roles in the past.

"I've done quite a few intense roles but you all remember only Poo and Geet. I feel very angry about it.



Like, 'Omkaara' was also intense," she recalled about starring in Bhardwaj's acclaimed adaptation of the Shakespearean tragedy "Othello". Kareena is set to make her OTT debut with "Jaane Jaan", filmmaker Sujoy Ghosh's Hindi language adaptation of popular Japanese novel "Devotion of Suspect X". The actor said one of the reasons she boarded the Netflix film was that she didn't want to be left behind in exploring the streaming space. "I am more nervous than I was 20 years ago for the first time. Watching the promo so closely on TV screens, people would be watching me so

closely on their phones. We have all worked very hard. Every actor says that but Sujoy has made a fantastic film. We have been trying to work together for over a decade," she said.

Kareena said she was first approached with the project when she was in Dharamshala with husband Saif Ali Khan, who was at the time shooting for his movie "Bhoot Police".

"We were shooting in Dharamshala and I was pregnant with Jeh. Everything just came together. He (producer Jay Shewekramani) said Sujoy is very excited and he has been with the script for so long. "I said 'Why don't we do it for Netflix?' Everyone is doing so much work there and I don't want to be left behind," she added.

"Jaane Jaan" also stars Jaideep Ahlawat and Vijay Varma, whom Kareena described as "natural actors". "I wanted to work with really amazing actors, someone I can add freshness with and learn from... I can't thank them enough. Like sometime in the middle of the shot, I would look at them and forget my lines. I have never done it, they are so natural. It was meant to be," she said. (PTI)

Red Chillies Entertainment appeals viewers to 'say no to piracy, spoilers' ahead of 'Jawaan' release



MUMBAI, Sept 6: Red Chillies Entertainment, the production house behind "Jawan", on Wednesday urged audiences to shun piracy and watch the new Shah Rukh Khan film in theatres.

The banner, founded by Shah Rukh and his wife Gauri Khan, shared the appeal on its official X page a day before the release of the pan-India film directed by Atlee.

"Say No to Piracy. Say No to Spoilers. Watching 'JAWAN' in cinemas. If you find any links, please report to copyright@redchillies.com. Book your tickets now," Red Chillies Entertainment said in the post. Also starring Nayanthara and Vijay Sethupathi, "Jawan" is expected to break the opening day figures of Shah Rukh's last film "Pathaan" with experts pegging day one earnings at ₹ 65-70 crore. The film is described by makers as a high-octane thriller outlining "the emotional journey of a man who is set to rectify the wrongs in the society".

Deepika Padukone, Sanya Malhotra, Priyamani, Girija Oak, Sanjeeta Bhattacharya, Lehar Khan, Aaliyah Qureshi, Ridhi Dogra, Sunil Grover and Mukesh Chhabra also round out the cast of "Jawan". (PTI)

Better to do music that resonates with you than chase trends, feels 'Ho Tayyar' song composer Pranaay

BENGALURU, Sept 6: Composing music is not new to Pranaay. His latest composition, 'Ho Tayyar' for the movie 'OMG 2', has already crossed seven million views in YouTube alone since the release of the song three weeks ago.

In the last 15 years, apart from a slew of films like 'Raaz 2', 'Ragini MMS 2', 'Munna Michael', 'Baaghi 1', 'Baaghi 2', 'Baaghi 3' besides his latest film, the Mumbai-based composer has also scored for several web series and almost 100 advertisements.

But cutting an album of his own is his first time. "Music is music. That said, I think the difficulty of releasing it independently is far more, you know. Because you are not only the composer, you practically have to look after the marketing, the reach and the collaborations and all that," said Pranaay.

Be it film music or jingles or his album now, the one thing that Pranaay said he learnt over the years is the fact that nothing in music can be forced. "If it fits, it fits. Personally, I

don't think about trends because, for one, if it's trending then it's already done right? It's better to do music that resonates with you and as long as your directors and your producers are also supporting you in that, I think that's the way to go," he said.

As it happens, although he doesn't know the language, his album will have two Tamil songs. And the lyrics are by Madhan Karky, veteran Tamil film lyricist Vairamuthu's son.

"Normally, when we make a song, we put some dummy words. If I'm making a Hindi song, then I will put some Hindi words. But, somehow, the dummy words that I put in for these two songs phonetically sounded like Tamil. I mean, I don't speak Tamil or any of the southern languages, but it sounded like that. So, I reached out to Karky," said Pranaay.

According to him, Karky loved the tune and agreed to write. "I am happy because it felt like it couldn't be, you know, a Hindi song or even a Telugu or a Malayalam song. Only Tamil," added Pranaay.

Unlike the regular trajectory, Pranaay said his foray into the film world was not via advertisement jingles.

"It was the other way round. I actually started my career with films, with 'Raaz 2'. And then I realised that for films, the turnaround time was very slow. It sometimes takes about six months to a year for the songs to come out." Pranaay said as he was in his early 20s and coming from a family that has no clue how music composing as a career works, he decided to give advertising a shot where the source of income is constant. "I had to prove to my family, especially my dad, that my choice of career was not a bad decision," he said.

Interestingly, according to Pranaay, breaking into the film world was far easier for him than the ad space. "I was 19 years old when I approached (director) Mahesh Bhatt and said 'I made a couple of songs that I'd love to play to you'. And he said, 'Fine, come, come over to the office'. And 'Raaz 2' happened. That's how simple it was," said Pranaay.

With advertisements, the music composer said he was often told, "Oh, you are a film guy, you don't understand how to create jingles in 30 seconds".

Pranaay said the ad world is where he understood that he has to get to the "hook" immediately. "Nobody wants to watch an ad, right? I mean you are just waiting for that 'skip ad' button for the first five seconds. So, our job as music composers is to give something that catches your ear in the first five seconds," said Pranaay.

Pranaay also feels that constant experimentation in South Indian film music has led to a soundscape that is far ahead of the north Indian scene.

"I think the south guys ace in the arrangements. In terms of melody, I think, whether it's Bollywood or south, we are on par. You listen to 'Brahmastra', which is a spectacular album, or any of the Hindi movies, you will find beautiful melodies. But when it comes to arrangement, yes, the south has a definite advantage." (PTI)

ASIA CUP

Pakistan pace trio too hot to handle as Bangladesh bowled out for 193

LAHORE, Sept 6: Haris Rauf proved to be too quick for the Bangladeshi batters, who were also troubled relentlessly by Naseem Shah as the Shakib Al Hasan-led side was bundled out for a paltry 193, well inside 40 overs in an Asia Cup Super 4 match against Pakistan here on Wednesday.

Despite a 100-run stand and twin half-centuries by skipper Shakib (53 off 57 balls) and former captain Mushfiqur Rahim (64 off 87 balls), Bangladesh suffered twin batting collapse on either side of the fifth wicket partnership.

They were reduced to 47 for 4 during the first Powerplay and again lost six wickets for 47 runs between overs 30 to 39.

Rauf (4/19 in 6 overs) terrorised the batters with sheer pace while Naseem (3/34 in 5.4 overs) also added seam and swing with it.

The trouble started in the second over as last match's centurion Mehidy Hasan Miraj (0) flicked the first delivery he faced off Naseem into the hands of mid-wicket.

Mohammed Naim (20) and Litton Das (16) hit a flurry of boundaries between them, taking the score to 31 before Shaheen



Shah Afridi (1/42 in 7 overs) got one to climb on the latter, who could only fend it awkwardly allowing Mohammed Rizwan to complete the formalities.

After that Rauf, coming in at one change, started hitting the bat faster than the opposition willow wielders could have envisaged.

Rauf, who hits the hard lengths, had Naim cramped for room while trying a pull-shot but all he could do was offer a simple return catch.

Towhid Hridoy (2) didn't measure up as Rauf went slightly wider off the crease and angled one it at 140 kmph plus speed. Hridoy couldn't get his bat down and was castled.

Shakib and Mushfiqur, the seasoned campaigners of many-a-battle for Bangladesh over last decade-and-a-half, then steadied the ship but the top-order failure left them with too much to do.

With no Mohammed Nawaz in the line-up, Pakistan had four pacers operating and the duo had to carry out the rescue act.

Once Shakib was holed out in the deep off Faheem Ashraf (1/27 in 7 overs), Bangladesh's innings fell off tracks.

The last five wickets for 19 runs. (PTI)

Shubman Gill, Ishan Kishan attain career-best ICC ODI Rankings

DUBAI, Sept 6: Riding on their exploits at the ongoing Asia Cup, young India opener Shubman Gill and wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan have achieved career-best ratings in the latest ICC ODI Rankings released on Wednesday.

Gill has broken into the top three among batters, attaining the third spot with 750 rating points, thanks to his unbeaten 67 against Nepal on Monday. He is trailing second-placed Rassie van der Dussen of South Africa by 27 points.

Kishan, on the other hand, has risen 12 places to the 24th spot with 624 rating points, thanks to his brilliant knock of 82 in the tournament's opening meet against arch-rival Pakistan in Pallekele.

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam continues to lead the chart with 882 rating points following his vibrant knock of 151 versus Nepal during the competition opener in Multan.

Among the bowlers, pacer Mohammed Siraj is the highest-ranked Indian in eighth place with 652 rating points, followed by left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav (614) at 12th and returning pacer Jasprit Bumrah at 35th.

Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood dominated the bowling list with 705 rating points. (PTI)

Tennis ball wasteland? Game grapples with a fuzzy yellow recycling problem

NEW YORK, Sept 6: Tennis has a fuzzy yellow problem most players don't think about when they open can after can of fresh balls, or when umpires at U.S. Open matches make their frequent requests for "new balls please."

Because tennis balls are extremely hard to recycle and the industry has yet to develop a ball to make that easier, nearly all of the 330 million balls made worldwide each year eventually get chucked in the garbage, with most ending up in landfills, where they can take more than 400 years to decompose. It's a situation highlighted by Grand Slam events like Flushing Meadows, which will go through nearly 100,000 balls over the course of the tournament.

That harsh reality in an age of heightened environmental awareness has sent ball makers, recyclers and the game's worldwide governing body scrambling for solutions, and spurred sustainability activists to sound the alarm in online posts that pose the question: Are tennis balls a disaster for the planet?

"Tennis balls, like a lot of objects, are made to be indestructible, which means they're very resistant to mechanical processing," said Nickolas J. Themelis, director of Columbia University's Earth Engineering Center. "But do you take a useful object that lasts forever and say people shouldn't use it because it lasts forever? That's nonsense."

Themelis and other experts note that tennis balls make up a tiny frac-

tion of the hundreds of millions of tons of garbage produced every year, and the keys with all difficult-to-recycle materials are finding ways to extend their useful life through other purposes and taking care in their ultimate disposal to keep them out of the environment.

"Anyone who would say you shouldn't play tennis because of the tennis balls is misinformed," said Jason Quinn, director of Colorado State University's Sustainability Research Laboratory. "In terms of the impact, it's a blip on the radar. ... And there are things you can do to reuse and repurpose tennis balls to lessen the impact."

Among them are efforts by non-profits and others to go beyond just using old balls for dog toys and the bottom of chairs. That includes collecting balls in bulk and grinding them down into material that is used to make products including the footing for horse arenas and — in a bit of perfect symmetry — tennis courts. But experts and environmentalists question whether those initiatives are viable enough to make a dent, and they say such efforts don't address the underlying problem of a lack of a fully recyclable tennis ball, or the factors that make balls particularly troublesome. At the top of the list is the tennis ball design — substantially unchanged since the advent of pressurized balls in the 1920s — consisting of a felt covering glued to a hollow, air-filled rubber core.

The biggest barrier to recycling

the rubber in the ball is the difficulty of removing the felt from the rubber core because of the tight glue designed to hold that cover on when it's thwacked by a racket. And the felt is also a problem: a blended combination of wool and nylon that cannot be recycled.

What's more, the core of most top-level tennis balls — such as the Wilson U.S. Open extra-duty model in play at Flushing Meadows — is only made from newly created, virgin rubber, which activists say leads to deforestation of rubber trees in the Amazon.

"It is true that virgin rubber is used because of the performance specifications required for the best in the world," said Jason Collins, general manager of global racket sports for Wilson Sporting Goods. "Other tennis balls within our product line absolutely can and do include recycled rubber."

Another issue carbon-footprint-wise are the places most balls are made — Thailand and China — because those balls have to be shipped thousands of miles to reach North America and Europe, where most of the world's tennis is played.

Seeking to tackle these problems is the International Tennis Federation, which certifies tennis balls and sanctions competitions around the world. It launched a technical working group last year made up of manufacturers, officials from other tennis governing bodies and recyclers with an ambitious set of goals. (AP)

Brazilian soccer's rebuild mired in doubt amid a long wait for Ancelotti

SAO PAULO, Sept 6: Brazil is about to start its sixth attempt to add a sixth star to its famous soccer shirt. The vibe is very different from the start of its past five South American World Cup qualifying campaigns, though, because the Selecao is rebuilding with an interim coach, its star player not based in Europe and promising young players are either struggling for form or injured.

New coach Fernando Diniz, Al-Hilal striker Neymar and low scoring Richarlison represent the different faces of Brazil's uncertainty at the beginning of the road leading to the 2026 World Cup. And this time the Selecao will be under more pressure because its archrival, Argentina, is the World Cup champion.

Diniz, a coach without a lot of silverware but with a lot of attacking style, will start his interim tenure Friday in the Amazon city of Belem against Bolivia. He is not expected to keep the position for long. The Fluminense coach, who has not left his club, is regarded as a caretaker until Carlo Ancelotti's contract with Real Madrid expires at the end of the season.

Brazilian soccer executives in Rio de Janeiro have no doubt the 64-year-old Ancelotti will lead the Selecao into the next Copa America next July and are aiming to keep Diniz on as an assistant, but that is far from certain. (AP)

It's so hot that the US Open adopted a new policy to partially close arena roofs



NEW YORK, Sept 6: It got so hot and humid at the U.S. Open on Tuesday that the folks in charge adopted a new policy for the rest of this year's tournament: They will partially shut the Arthur Ashe Stadium roof in extreme conditions to offer some extra shade.

The temperature climbed above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 Celsius) and the humidity topped 50% on Tuesday, making it the steamiest day of the two-week Grand Slam tournament in Flushing Meadows.

The change to the roof policy was made during Coco Gauff's 6-0, 6-2 victory over Jelena Ostapenko, when the conditions crossed a threshold for protecting players in the heat, but that match was over too quickly to adjust the retractable cover, tournament referee Jake Garnier told The Associated Press.

The new policy is "in the best interest of fans and players," Garnier said. An Associated Press analysis showed the average high temperatures felt during the U.S. Open and the three other major tennis tournaments steadily have gotten higher and more dangerous in recent decades, reflecting the climate change that created record heat waves around the globe this summer. For athletes, it can keep them from playing their best and, worse, increases the likelihood of heat-related illness.

The forecast calls for even hotter temperatures in the coming days; the tournament ends Sunday. Ashe was partly closed before Novak Djokovic's 6-1, 6-4, 6-4

win against Taylor Fritz. It still was muggy enough in there that Djokovic poured water over his head during one changeover; Fritz removed his shirt and placed a rolled-up towel filled with ice around his neck during another.

"I'm drenched in sweat," Djokovic told the crowd in an on-court interview. "Just very humid conditions."

Fritz thought having less of an opening above the stadium increased how humid it seemed.

"It was definitely hot. I feel like we played some pretty physical, long points in the beginning of the match. After a couple, it hit me. I'd say it's more the humidity than anything," the ninth-seeded American said. "I don't feel like I'm ever bothered too much by the heat. I feel like (when) it's just really humid ... it just drains you."

The roof on Louis Armstrong Stadium was pulled shut some of the way after the first set of a women's doubles quarterfinal with Magda Linette and Bernarda Pera against Jennifer Brady and Luisa Stefani.

"What went into today was we're at a point in the tournament where all singles matches are on Ashe, so we felt we could comfortably put into a place a practice that was the same for all singles matches," Garnier said. "As the temperature and the forecast were continuing to rise, we convened and made the decision that for 2023, our policy will be when the heat rule ... comes in, we will partially close the roof at the next set break." (AP)

Suryakumar needs to find out how to rotate strike in middle overs: Sanjay Bangar

MUMBAI, Sept 6: Former Indian batting coach Sanjay Bangar has highlighted Suryakumar Yadav's batting woes in the middle overs in the ODIs and feels that he would need to learn to rotate the strike during the phase.

As India announced its 15-member squad for the upcoming ICC Cricket World Cup, set to be held in India next month, Suryakumar retained his place in the side despite having struggled to make a similar impact as T20s in the format.

Although Bangar praised his ability to churn out boundaries at any point in the innings, he asserted that the 32-year-old Mumbaier would need a clear mind on how to keep the runs coming in the middle overs.

"He (SKY) has already said that Rahul Dravid is there, and he has spoken to him. The biggest factor is that boundaries don't come that easily in the middle part of the innings. When three or four wickets go, then how do you find the boundaries is the big problem because the ball becomes old?" Bangar noted while talking to Star Sports.

"Suryakumar Yadav is a versatile player; he definitely targets boundaries and where to hit them. He has a very good idea of where to hit them, but if there is one thing he needs to do, it is to find out how to bat between the 25th and the 40th over."

"I don't think he is clear in his head and heart about how to score runs in this period. He can play like he does in the T20 format, but if wickets fall, he needs to find out how to rotate strike between the 25th and the 40th

over, and he needs to find his own method to score runs here, which he is obviously thinking about."

Surya's ODI numbers are not so encouraging, having managed just 511 runs in 24 innings at a mediocre average of 24.33 and a strike rate of 101.39, including just a couple of half-centuries, with his top score being 64.

He is not a guaranteed starter in the playing XI in ODIs, as has been the case in the ongoing Asia Cup, where he hasn't featured in the two matches that the Men in Blue have played so far.

While Bangar stated that SKY should be given a chance whenever there is an appropriate opportunity for him in the team, he warned that he should not be included just for the sake of giving him enough game time.

"According to me, if the team has an opening where he can play, he definitely should. But, to put him in the starting eleven only for him to get game time, I don't think the team needs to do all of that."

"And, the players which are in the starting eleven are very good players; whenever they get the chance they come and straight away have the ability to have an impact on the game. And, whatever preparation they have in the nets, there are a lot of resources which can help them."

"So, with that, they can prepare and train and continue the momentum, but now is not the stage to experiment and play a player only to get game time and change the combination just for that," he concluded. (PTI)

Just for sake of variation, you can't play three spinners on Indian tracks: Muralitharan

MUMBAI, Sept 6: Two spinners will be enough in India's playing XI during upcoming World Cup, feels former Sri Lankan spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan, who is firmly against the idea of forcibly fitting in a third specialist slow bowler just for the heck of it.

India have picked three left-arm slow bowlers — orthodox spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel along with wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

"Only for the sake of variation you cannot play three spinners in a team. You can play only two. Jadeja will play as an all-rounder and one more can play," Muralitharan told PTI during an exclusive interview on the sidelines of a promotional event on his biopic '800'.

The world record holder with 800 Test wickets feels that Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja provides an ideal combination. "You have to see what is the right combination is. If they play Jadeja and Kuldeep, it is okay, since you have also got an off-spinner and a wrist-spinner,"



Muralitharan added.

While there has been a lot of debate on exclusion of Yuzvendra Chahal, Muralitharan felt that it is the right call considering that both Kuldeep and reserve spinner Axar Patel have looked in better rhythm compared to the Haryana wrist spinner. "I don't know the current form of (Ravichandran) Ashwin and (Yuzvendra) Chahal. Do not judge (a player's) form on T20s — T20 is different and one-day is different," he added.

"You also need to highlight that Kuldeep and Axar have put in better performances than Chahal," the maestro said, adding that a bit of List A cricket could have helped Chahal.

The wiry leg-spinner was picked for both ODIs and T20s for the tour of West Indies where he played the shortest format. However he possibly couldn't have played any domestic one-dayers as the Deodhar Trophy coincided with the Caribbean tour.

"I do not mind having experience, but is Chahal playing domestic cricket? If no, then how can you pick him? He is out. In my mind, if he is not playing domestic one-day cricket, then how can you pick him?" he questioned. Chahal last played an ODI for India in January this year and Muralitharan said the selectors would have faced the flak had he failed to perform if selected. "In Chahal's case, if he has not played domestic and one-day cricket recently, then you cannot pick him. What happens if he does not perform? Everyone will ask the selectors as to why you picked up somebody who has not played (ODI in last 6 months)," he said.

He said the three spinners who have been picked were the first three choices.

"For me, they (the spinners) would have been Jadeja, Ashwin and Kuldeep. They have to play domestic one-day cricket and perform, then only they can get in. If they do not play domestic and only play IPL, it is wrong," Muralitharan added.

Injured Cummins, Smith, Starc and Maxwell in Australia's provisional squad, Abbott earns maiden World Cup call-up

MELBOURNE, Sept 6: Pat Cummins, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc and Glenn Maxwell were all included in Australia's 15-member provisional squad despite injuries while bowling all-rounder Sean Abbott earned his maiden World Cup call-up.

Cummins and Smith are nursing wrist injuries they picked up during the Ashes, while Starc and Maxwell are out with a groin problem and ankle issue respectively. Of the quartet, only Cummins is in the ODI squad to face South Africa, starting Thursday. However, his participation is also doubtful.

All four are in a race against time to get fit for the marquee event, starting in India on October 5.

"All are well placed to come back on-line in the coming weeks and potentially for selection in the upcoming series against India," selection chief George Bailey said.

"There are eight one-day matches still to play in South Africa and India before the final squad is due to be declared.

"They are followed by two World Cup practice games, which offers plenty of opportunity to continue the build for the tournament," he added.

The 31-year-old Abbott trumped fellow



quick Nathan Ellis for a spot in the squad, while Aaron Hardie and leg-spinner Tanveer Sangha also failed to make the cut. All-rounders are of huge importance in

limited-overs cricket and Australia have preferred to go with multi-talented players. Apart from Abbott, the five-time champions have also picked Mitchell Marsh, Cameron Green, Marcus Stoinis as the seam bowling all-rounders.

Adam Zampa and Ashton Agar are the two specialist spinners picked while Josh Inglis has been included as the back-up wicketkeeper.

Changes to the 15-player squad can be made until September 28.

Australia are scheduled to play a five-match ODI series against South Africa following which they will travel to India to play three ODIs, starting September 22.

Australia will then play the Netherlands and Pakistan in the World Cup warm-up matches on September 30 and October 3 respectively.

They will open their World Cup campaign against hosts India in Chennai on October 8.

Australia squad
Pat Cummins (c), Sean Abbott, Ashton Agar, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, David Warner, Adam Zampa. (PTI)

Pakistan treated us well, went out of the way to make us comfortable: BCCI President Binny



AMRITSAR, Sept 6: BCCI President Roger Binny could not stop gushing over the warm and friendly treatment they received in Pakistan on their short visit to the neighbouring nation while Board Vice President Rajeev Shukla asserted that cricket could be the bridge between the two countries that share a tense diplomatic relation.

Binny and Shukla returned to India via the Attari-Wagah border on Wednesday after watching Asia Cup matches on Pakistan Cricket Board's invitation.

It was first instance in 17 years that the two BCCI office bearers travelled to Pakistan. They had crossed the border on Monday.

"We had a very good meeting in Pakistan. We received very good hospitality. They took care of us very well. The main agenda was to watch cricket and to sit and discuss things with them. Overall, it was a very good trip," Binny told PTI after their arrival.

"Pakistan treated us very well, they went out of the way to make us comfortable."

The two countries compete against each other only in ICC or ACC events as bilateral cricket ties have been suspended due to diplomatic tension between the two nations.

The last time an Indian cricket team travelled to Pakistan was back in 2008 for the Asia Cup. Pakistan last hosted India for a bilateral series in 2006.

Pakistan last visited India in 2012 for a white-ball tour.

Asked about the possibility of resumption of bilateral cricket with Pakistan, Binny reiterated that they can't take a call on that.

"BCCI can't say. It is a government issue, and they will

have to take a call. We need to wait and see. And hopefully, it will happen because the (ODI) World Cup is coming up, Pakistan team will be in India to play."

India and Pakistan are currently engaged in the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka and will lock horns again in the much-anticipated World Cup clash on October 14 in Ahmedabad.

Although there were reservations about Pakistan travelling to India for the World Cup, the PCB eventually agreed.

Shukla also praised PCB for its hospitality.

"The meeting was very good. The Pakistan Cricket Board took very good care of us. The security was tremendous, all the arrangements were fabulous. It was a goodwill visit for cricket which went well."

"The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) President Mr Jay Shah is also BCCI secretary, so keeping in mind that, we had this visit. BCCI enjoys a good relationship with all the ACC members, that's why we also visited Sri Lanka."

On being asked if cricket can be a medium to restore peace between the two countries, he said, "Cricket has always been an important medium even before. Take the 2004 tour, for example; the atmosphere that was created resulted in a great friendship and trade delegations. The shopkeepers were not even taking money from people, that was a great atmosphere."

The first game between India and Pakistan in Asia Cup was washed out and the two teams will test each other again on Sunday in Colombo before a possible meeting in the final. (PTI)

IOA replaces all four deputy chefs de mission nominated by previous regime



NEW DELHI, Sept 6: Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has replaced all the four deputy chefs de mission for the Hangzhou Asian Games appointed by the previous dispensation led by Narinder Batra.

However, Wushu Association of India chief Bhupender Singh Bajwa, who was appointed chef de mission for the Games in January 2022 by Batra, has been retained.

Batra had appointed Ajay Kumar Singhania (secretary-general, Badminton Association of India), Swapna Banerjee (president, Bengal Olympic Association), Gurudatta Bhakta (secretary-general, Goa Olympic Association) and Hariom Kaushik (executive board member, Netball Federation of India) as deputy chefs de mission.

But the Hangzhou Asian Games, earlier scheduled in September 2022, got postponed by a year because of a surge in Covid-19 cases in China and the IOA too saw new office-bearers under legendary Indian sprinter PT Usha taking charge of the National Olympic Committee in December last year.

The new deputy chefs de mission appointed for the Games, scheduled to commence on September 23, are Ravinder Chaudhary (secretary-general, Athletics Federation of India), Commonwealth Games gold-medallist archer Dola Banerjee, MM Somaya (former hockey player) and Purokottam Ramachandran (former sprinter and member of the 4x400m relay team at the 2000 Sydney Olympics).

Batra told PTI on Wednesday that the new IOA dispensation has every right to make changes.

"They (the new IOA officials) are the people in position. They are the better people to decide, who needs to go and who need not go. They have every right to do that, there is no problem in that," said Batra, who is also the former international hockey federation (FIH) and Hockey India president.

The chef de mission and deputy chefs de mission are responsible for the planning, logistics and communication, among other things to ensure the coaches, managers and athletes can easily navigate the Games environment.

India is sending a huge 634 member contingent of athletes for the continental games. (PTI)

New Zealand ties T20 series with England 2-2 after winning final match by 6 wickets

NOTTINGHAM, Sept 6: New Zealand completed its comeback from 2-0 down to tie the Twenty20 series against England by winning the fourth and final match by six wickets on Tuesday.

Set a victory target of 176 at Trent Bridge, the New Zealanders had a 32-ball 48 from opener Tim Seifert before Glenn Phillips accelerated the middle part of the chase with 42 off 25 balls.

Mark Chapman (40 not out off 25) saw the tourists over the line with 16 balls left to cap a sharp turnaround in the series that England started so well with heavy wins in Durham and Manchester.

New Zealand hammered England by 74 runs in Birmingham on Sunday to stay alive in the series and dominated the fourth match after dismissing Jonny Bairstow (73 off 41 runs, including six sixes), who gave England a fast start.

From 105-1 early in the 11th over, England lost momentum following the removal of Bairstow



and sputtered to 175-8, which always felt too little on a ground known for producing big totals.

The teams now meet in a four-match one-day international series,

starting Friday, that serves as a warmup for the upcoming Cricket World Cup in India starting in October.

In a concern for England,

Bairstow didn't keep wicket in New Zealand's chase because of injury. Jos Buttler, who wasn't in the starting lineup to give himself a rest, took the gloves. (AP)

Bopanna-Ebden pair reaches US Open semifinals



NEW YORK, Sept 6: Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden saved seven set points in the opening set before downing Nathaniel Lammons and Jackson Withrow to move to the US Open men's dou-

bles semifinals, their second straight last-four appearance in Grand Slams this year.

The sixth seeded Indo-Australian pair beat the American combo 7-6 (10) 6-1 in the quarter-

finals of the hard court major. Bopanna and Ebden had reached the semifinals of the Wimbledon Championships where they had lost to Wesley Koolhof and Neal Skupski.

The 43-year-old Indian now has the opportunity to secure a place in a Grand Slam men's doubles final for the second time in his career.

Interestingly, it was in the US Open only when Bopanna competed in his maiden Major final way back in 2010.

Up against the sixth seeds is now the French pair of Pierre-Hugues Herbert and Nicolas Mahut, who beat American Robert Galloway and Albano Olivetti from France in the other quarterfinal.

Bopanna is already out of the mixed doubles contention with a second round defeat with Indonesian partner Aldila Sutjiadi. (PTI)

Indian challenge ends after Satwik-Chirag bow out in opening round of China Open



CHANGZHOU (CHINA), Sept 6: Commonwealth Games men's doubles champions Satwik Chikri and Chirag Shetty suffered an opening-round defeat in the China Open Super 1000 tournament, going down in three games to Indonesia's Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Maulana Bagas here on Wednesday. The Indian pair, ranked two, lost to the world number 13 duo 17-21, 21-11, 17-21 in one hour eight minutes.

The Indian mixed doubles pair of Sikki Reddy and

Rohan Kapoor also crashed out of the tournament, going down to the Malaysian duo of Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei 15-21, 16-21 in the first round.

With the defeats, the Indian challenge came to an end as no shuttler from the country could advance to the second round of the tournament.

The loss in the opening round just ahead of the Asian Games would be a huge disappointment for Satwik and Chirag after their success in the Swiss Open Super 300, Korea Open and the Indonesia Open Super 1000 earlier this year.

This is the second time the Indonesians have beaten the Satwik-Chirag pair this year. They had defeated the Indian duo in the pre-quarterfinals of the Thailand Open in June. On Tuesday, World Championship bronze medallist HS Prannoy too had made a shock opening-round exit after going down in three games to Malaysia's Ng Tze Yong.

Reigning Commonwealth Games champion Lakshya Sen had also crashed out of the tournament in the first round after losing to Anders Antonsen of Denmark in three games. (PTI)

Will Dravid seek renewal of contract if BCCI offers him one after World Cup?

NEW DELHI, Sept 6: His two-year contract will expire at the end of ODI World Cup but head coach Rahul Dravid's future will be followed keenly in case the Indian team lifts the coveted trophy.

It is a foregone conclusion that Dravid will be one of the fall guys if India cannot at least make it to the title clash as a mere semi-final appearance wouldn't be considered good enough.

BCCI may search for a coach again and it will be interesting to see if 'The Wall' will be keen on a renewal of contract -- partial or full -- in case Board supremo Jay Shah offers a fresh deal.

There is a school of thought that Dravid, in case he is keen, should continue as the red ball coach with South Africa (away) and England (home series) series scheduled very close to the World Cup.

There is no harm in having separate coaches for limited overs and Test format moving into the next cycle post World Cup, just like England have Brendon McCullum (red ball) and Matthew Mott (white ball).

Dravid has been given breaks from assignments to recuperate as living out of suitcase for someone, who is involved in a tremendously high-pressure job, could



be taxing.

Someone like Ashish Nehra (successful IPL coach) is an apt choice but sources close to the left-arm seamer of yesteryears have said that he is "not interested" as of now with his contract with Gujarat Titans running till the end of 2025 season.

"Suppose India wins the World Cup, Dravid himself might not want a renewal as he would like to end his stint on a high. But if you ask me, post World Cup, the

BCCI should seriously think of having separate coaches for separate formats. They should ask Rahul to continue as red ball coach," a former BCCI office-bearer told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

At this point, whether it is Dravid or the Board top brass, they would like the focus on the big event, which starts October 5.

While Dravid arrived amidst lot of fanfare after Ravi Shastri's departure but as a white ball coach, he hasn't really left an

impression which could compel anyone to consider him as a shrewd tactician.

Rather, he has been perceived as someone, who is a bit on the defensive when it comes to taking tough calls -- both in T20s and ODIs.

If in T20I World Cup, he allowed the top-three that had past its sell-by-date in shortest format to continue, the decision to drop Ravichandran Ashwin during the World Test Championship final didn't seem to be a very prudent call.

The lack of a right-arm spinner (finger or wrist) in the current World Cup squad or the bullishness to include KL Rahul, without him proving his match-fitness are decisions that might come back to haunt him.

Even though a lot will depend on team's World Cup performance but Dravid isn't a great white ball coach and someone with more hands-on approach could help the team in the next phase when some legends will be expected to walk into the sunset.

History is replete with incidents that if a team loses a major event, the coaches often become scapegoats.

Dravid himself had seen that when Greg Chappell had no option but to send his resignation after the 2007 debacle when he was the captain.