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● A fire at a wedding hall in northern Iraq has killed around 100 people

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● India will soon emerge as global economic powerhouse: PM Modi

● 'K'taka to move SC challenging Cauvery panel's direction to release water to TN'

## AFSPA extended in Manipur hills for 6 months

**IMPHAL, Sept 27:** The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or AFSPA was extended by another six months in Manipur on Wednesday barring 19 police stations falling under the Imphal valley and an area that shares its boundary with neighbouring Assam.

An official notification said the state government is of the opinion after analyzing the prevailing law-and-order situation that it is not expedient to have detailed assessment on the ground as security agencies are preoccupied in maintenance of law and order.

"Now, therefore in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act... the Governor of Manipur hereby declare the entire state of Manipur excluding the areas falling

under the jurisdiction of 19 police stations... as disturbed Area for a period of six months with effect from October 1, 2023," the notification said. The police station areas where the Disturbed Areas Act has not been imposed are Imphal, Lamphel,

City, Singjamei, Sekmai, Lamsang, Pastol, Wangoi, Porompat, Heingagang, Lamlai, Iribung, Leimakhong, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Nambol, Moirang, Kakchin and Jirbam.

Significantly, the areas that have been kept out of the purview of AFSPA are dominated by the majority Meitei community which includes Jirbam, adjacent to Silchar valley of Assam. With the extension of AFSPA, the army and Assam Rifles cannot operate inside the areas under the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



## Fresh clash along Assam-Meghalaya border, 1 injured

### Situation tense in Lapangap, Tapat along inter-state border

**SHILLONG/DIPHU, Sept 27:** One person was injured in a clash at a disputed area along the Assam-Meghalaya interstate border as locals from both sides used bows and arrows and catapults to attack each other, officials said on Wednesday.

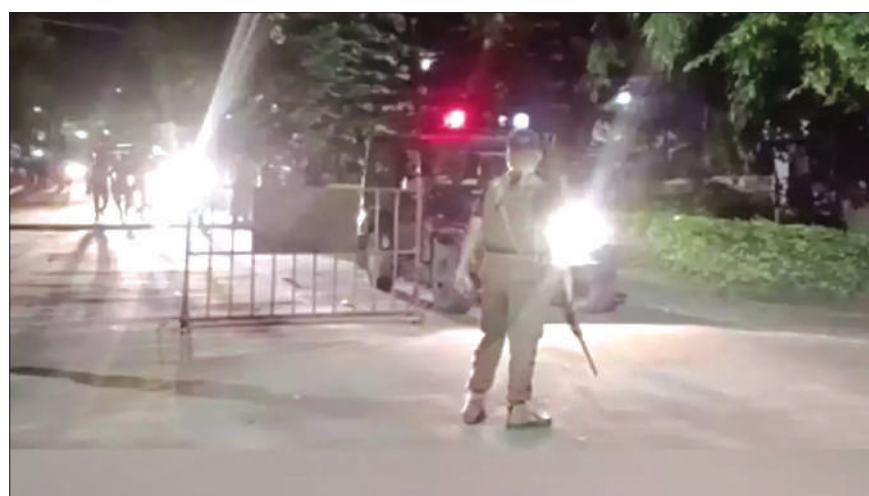
The incident occurred on Tuesday in the disputed place along the boundary between the Lapangap village in Meghalaya's West Jaintia Hills district and the Tapat area under the Hamren subdivision of West Karbi Anglong district of Assam.

A person from Karbi Anglong district was injured, while no one from the Meghalaya side was seriously hurt in the incident, officials said.

The situation was brought under control after police teams from both states visited the spot and placated the locals.

The situation remained calm, but tense on Wednesday morning as a fresh clash between the villagers from both sides was reported, an official from Meghalaya said.

Some huts belonging to Khasi farmers in Lapangap were also burnt down, escalating



tension in the area, a senior official of West Jaintia Hills district told PTI.

Police forces from both states prevented villagers from congregating at the spot where the clashes occurred, he said. "We are

coordinating with our counterparts in Assam's West Karbi Anglong district to keep the situation under control," the official said. Lapangap village elder (Waheh Shnong) Deimonmi Lyngdoh claimed that farmers

tending to their paddy fields were attacked with catapults, bows and arrows by people from Assam who were hiding near the fields. "Learning about the attack, around 250-300 people from our village went to the spot and retaliated with bows and arrows and catapults, with the tension lasting the entire day yesterday," he said.

Elders of the Lapangap village urged the district administration to provide protection to them. Locals in the Tapat area of Karbi Anglong alleged that they were attacked by around 200 people from the neighbouring Meghalaya with catapults, sticks and daggers while they were working in their fields on Tuesday.

"A youth was hit by stones and was taken to a hospital," a police officer said.

The residents of the Tapat village claimed that two houses were set on fire in the area on August 24 by people from the neighbouring state. Videos of clashes went viral on social media and purportedly showed that hundreds of people from both sides were fighting with each (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Longsing Ronghang crowned new Karbi traditional chief

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Sept 27:** Longsing Ronghang was crowned the new Karbi traditional chief (king). He was installed as the new king during a coronation ceremony held at his own residence at Rongchingdon in Hamren on Wednesday.

The crowning of the 52 year old Longsing Ronghang as the new Karbi traditional chief was necessitated after the demise of the previous king Ramsing Ronghang on May 10 this year. Longsing will be the 36th Karbi traditional king. His father is Lindok Ronghang, former member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and mother is Kakrung Teronpi. He was born at Rongchingdon, Hamren. He is married to Ruplin Teronpi.



The coronation procedure was done by the Pinpomar (courtiers) like Dili, Senot, Miji and Pator who came down from Ronghang Rongbong, the seat of Karbi traditional chief. The Dili, Senot, Miji and

Pator are the representatives of the four houses of Lindokpos i.e. Ronghang Linkok, Rongchaicho Linkok, Rongpi Linkok and Killing Linkok.

The crowning of the new king was witnessed by important dignitaries like chief executive member of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang, MP Horensing Bey, MLAs, executive members and member of the autonomous councils and customary heads. The tradition of preserving the traditional chief (king) is still prevalent in the Karbi society. According to the customs followed at Ronghang Rongbong, when a king is being dethroned due to various reasons or passes away then the Pinpomar goes to find a new candidate from amongst the Ronghang Hempi - a sub-clan (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Heroin worth ₹ 7 crore seized, 3 arrested

**GUWAHATI, Sept 27:** The police on Wednesday seized heroin worth over ₹ 7 crore and arrested three persons in Sonai of Assam's Cachar district.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team intercepted a vehicle at Kabuganj in Sonai town. They conducted a search of the vehicle and seized 1.15 kg of heroin hidden in 88 soap boxes, a police officer said.

The three occupants of the vehicle were arrested, he said. The police are investigating the matter and a case may soon be filed against the accused under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

## Assam party seeks separate Barak Valley state, alleges linguistic insecurity

**KOLKATA/GUWAHATI, Sept 27:** A political party of Assam on Wednesday demanded separation of Bengali-speaking people majority Barak Valley region, alleging that they are deprived of linguistic and cultural security and development.

The outfit, Barak Democratic Front (BDF), sought a new 'Purbachal' state, home to around 42 lakh people who live in Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj districts.

"Our demand for separation of Barak Valley is not a demand for establishing a Bengali state. Although Bengalis are the majority in the valley, there are many other communities such as tea tribes, Dimas, Manipuri,

Bishnupriya, Khasi and Kuki and all of them are victims of socio-economic deprivation," BDF chief convener Pradip Dutta Roy told a press conference in Kolkata.

The BDF's demand came weeks after Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said though he wants to live together, his government is ready to discuss the proposal for a separate Barak Valley state if the people of the valley wanted it. The BDF claimed all 15 MLAs of the region, including those of the ruling BJP, are in favour of a separate state. The Congress, however, condemned the demand saying that Assam has already faced several divisions resulting (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## UPSC, APSC aspirants to get financial aid

**HT Correspondent**

**DONGKAMUKAM, Sept 27:** Chief executive member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang on Wednesday assured to provide ₹ 5 lakhs each to aspirants clearing prelims and ₹ 10 lacs each to those clearing mains and viva voce in the UPSC and APSC examinations.

He announced this while inaugurating the first batch of free coaching classes of UPSC and APSC 2023-24 aspirants at Dongkamukam Multi Utility Indoor Stadium Complex in Dongkamukam in West Karbi Anglong on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, Ronghang said that the West Karbi Anglong district should also not lag behind as compared with the rest of the country.

"Our district is said to be educationally backward and an ethnic strife torn area in the past. This notion can (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Assam govt provides flood relief to Himachal Pradesh



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 27:** Forest minister Chandra Mohan Patowary on Wednesday handed over a cheque of Rs 10 crore to Himachal Pradesh chief minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu as contribution towards flood relief fund. Following

the devastating floods that caused massive loss of life, property & infrastructure in Himachal Pradesh this year, government of Assam led by chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma had decided to contribute an amount ₹10 crore towards (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Army Chief: Embrace 'unity of effort' for peace, stability in Indo-Pacific

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande on Wednesday called for embracing the concept of 'unity of effort' as the guiding principle by like-minded nations to confront multifaceted challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region. In an address at the closing session of the Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs' Conference (IPACC), he said the solutions to the challenges demand creativity, innovation, flexibility and inclusive collaboration.

The Indian Army hosted the two-day conclave to evolve a common strategy to ensure peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. Delegates from over 30 countries, which included chiefs of around 15 armies, attended it. "The common understanding achieved by us on various issues must now steer our aggregated course of action in the future. It is in this spirit of cohesion, that I urge each one of us to embrace the concept of 'unity of effort', as our guiding principle," Gen Pande said. He said (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



Kohua Bon in full bloom ahead of the festive season of Durga Puja at Tezpur in Sonitpur district. UB Photos

## House gutted in fire in Karbi Anglong

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Sept 27:** A house was gutted in a fire early in the morning at the Anthony Rongphar village in Rongkharbong in Diphu.

Village women, who were eye witnesses, said that the fire broke out in the house of John Kro at about 9 am.

Meanwhile, John Kro said he had gone to drop his children to school and his wife was also not at home when the fire broke out at his residence. More than ₹ 2 lakhs worth of properties including schools books of the children and other belongings were completely turned to ashes during the fire, causing immense loss to the family.

Kro said the fire might have been triggered by a short circuit, though the exact cause is yet to be ascertained. Kro and his wife have now appealed for immediate help from the authority concerned of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

## Assamese Jaapi crafted from recycled plastic, Muga silk steals the show

### Assamese designers earn accolades at NYFW

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 27:** It is a proud moment for aspiring designers from Assam as they showcased the Assamese Japi and Muga silk in their unique creations at the New York Fashion Week held at New York in USA.

The New York Fashion Week was held at New York from September 7 to 13. Designers from all across the globe showcased the latest international fashion trends in this event. The premier fashion event is held in February and September every year.

A few students from the Guwahati based Inter National Institute of Fashion Design (INIFD) got the chance to participate at the coveted fashion events. Participants from INIFD and The London School of Trends presented the 'Indian Fashion Trunk' at the New York Fashion Week. The aspiring designers are Aparajeta Hasam, Dristi Agarwal, Gazal Patni, Himanshi Gour, Nandini Lahoty, Nidhi Patni, Rimpa Mandal, Sanjana Rathii and Sejal Dalmia, who were mentored by Niharika Kakoti.

Their unique design, which mesmerized audiences was the Assamese Jaapi intricately

crafted from recycled plastic that formed the sleeves of a dress. The dress itself was made of the rich Muga silk from the state.

The design infused a touch of Assamese craftsmanship. Moreover, the sustainable muga silk in a dress represented a harmonious convergence of tradition and eco-consciousness.

This fusion of traditional artistry and premium fabric resulted in a garment that not only celebrated Assam's rich cultural heritage, but also showcased the timeless beauty of Muga silk, making it a true work of art and style. It also celebrates the state's cultural heritage while emphasizing the significance of environmentally responsible and sustainable fashion trends.

Chinki Agarwal, centre director of INIFD said, "It is a matter of pride for our state as our designer students who worked so hard to showcase their creations at the premier fashion week 'NYFW'. Have brought laurels to the country. Our designers worked on design innovation while demonstrating an awareness of commercial considerations when designing and producing an outfit."



## World Tourism Day celebrated in Karbi Anglong

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Sept 27:** The Tourism Department of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) celebrated the World Tourism Day on Wednesday by organizing various activities in Karbi Anglong.

A cycle rally was organized at Karbi People's Hall, Taralango in the morning to promote tourism in Karbi Anglong. The cycle rally was flag off at Nothengpi - Karbi heritage museum by MP Horensing Bey in presence of executive member (EM) of KAAC 's tourism and water resource department. More than 30 cyclists from Diphu Drong Cycling Club and cyclists from Dimapur, including a foreigner participated in the cycle rally.

While flagging off the rally the MP Horensing Bey said, "On the World Tourism Day let's celebrate the day and promote the rich tourism potential of the region. Karbi Anglong is endowed with natural beauty with green hills and



valleys that can be transformed into tourist hotspots. The great tourism potential that is lying hidden can be explored so that people from outside know the place."

"Developing the tourism sector will also open up employment avenues for local youths," he said.

EM Enghi said, "We are privileged to welcome a contingent of

cyclists from not only within the country, but abroad, who joined us for this exciting event. Their participation exemplifies the spirit of global friendship in promoting tourism and fostering connections among diverse cultures." "As we celebrate this World Tourism Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to showcase (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



# Under Urjit Patel, RBI had a habit of making complete about-turns: Former fin sec Garg

*'Though RBI is acting upon some of the recommendations made, India still has not institutionalized a good experimental regulatory sandbox'*

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Under Urjit Patel, the then RBI Governor, the central bank had a habit of making complete about-turns on various issues, including electoral bonds and digital payments, former finance secretary Subash Chandra Garg said in his book titled 'We Also Make Policy: An Insider's Account of How the Finance Ministry Functions.'

Citing some instances of about-turns by the then RBI Governor Patel, Garg in his book said, RBI had done so on the electoral bond issue and it had so in case of setting up of Payments Regulatory Board (PRB).

RBI also made unilateral decisions like ordering complete data localization for participation in the payment system, Garg wrote in the book which will hit the stands on October 1.

"We humbly pointed out to RBI that the report (on PRB) was unanimous. If there was any dissent, it should have been made before the report was finalized. We would have gladly included the dissent note as part of the report and provided a rejoinder to the points raised by RBI," the book read.

However, claiming inaccurately that its representative had submitted a dissent note on certain recommendations of the committee, RBI posted a dissent note on its website by way of a press release on 19 October 2018, it said.

The 2007 PSS law remains unamended. The government has still not notified the PRB as cre-

ated by the Finance Act 2017.

"The government did not take any action on the recommendations of the inter-ministerial group that I headed. These recommendations had the potential to transform the payment architecture, infrastructure and institutional arrangements in the country. Though RBI is acting upon some of the recommendations made, India still has not institutionalized a good experimental regulatory sandbox," it said.

Recently, in a paper issued by RBI, it said, it proposed opening up the payment space to NBFCs and other private entities.

Patel's reluctance to part ways with reserves of the central bank for transferring it to the government of India prompted the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to compare him with a 'snake who sits over a hoard of money'.

Garg, who served as economic affairs secretary between June 21, 2017 and July 25, 2019, also served as the finance secretary to the government of India, dealt with the politics of deciding the minimum support price (MSP) to farmers, introducing electoral bonds, recapitalizing banks and monetizing six airports, among others.

However, the most contentious and talked about issue during his tenure was relationship between the Mint Street and North Block which houses the finance Ministry.

According to the book, the Prime Minister had



convened a meeting to review the state of the economy amid a difficult economic situation in September 2018.

During the meeting, a considerable strain between the government and the Reserve Bank of India was witnessed and Prime Minister Narendra Modi lost his cool on Patel and compared him to a "snake who sits over a hoard of money", as per the book.

"I saw him in such an angry mood for the first time. He was scathing in his attack on RBI's stance on the resolution of non-performing assets (NPAs) and its intransigent, impractical and inflexible at-

titude to finding solutions. He criticized Governor Patel for proposing the withdrawal of the LTCG tax, which had since stabilized with hardly anyone objecting to it, and asking for fiscal deficits to be cut down further in the middle of the financial year," Garg said in his memoir.

He (Modi) compared Patel to the snake who sits over a hoard of money, for being unresponsive to putting RBI's accumulated reserves to any use, it said, adding, Prime Minister Modi had also been briefed about the reluctance of Governor Urjit Patel to convene a special meeting of the Central Board despite agreeing to do so in the last meeting of the board held on August 8, 2018.

The governor had agreed to convene this special meeting on 30 or 31 August subject to 'all directors attending it', the memoir published by Harper Collins said.

"RBI had also sought the convenience of the directors by writing letters the following week. However, Governor Patel had developed second thoughts and had not convened the meeting. The PM was critical of the governor for not calling this special meeting to discuss burning issues and take decisions.

"When we were leaving after the meeting, I asked Urjit Patel, tongue-in-cheek, whether he would convene the special meeting of the Central Board. Sticking to his intransigent stance, he responded without batting an eyelid: I will not,"

it said.

Pointing out that the unexpected happened on December 10, 2018, Garg narrated "I was chairing a meeting in the committee room close to my chamber in North Block from 5 pm onwards. Around 6 pm as I entered my room, I saw the news flashing on the television channels: RBI Governor Urjit Patel had resigned."

Urjit Patel resigned in a most unusual manner as he put his resignation letter on RBI website.

He did not send in his resignation to the government as required under the rules and established procedure.

"After posting his resignation letter on RBI website, he simply went home. He referred to 'personal reasons' for his decision to step down. He recalled his association with RBI in various capacities over the years and attributed the considerable accomplishments of the bank to its staff, officers and management," it said.

He also expressed his gratitude to his colleagues and directors of RBI, it said, adding, there was something very conspicuous by its absence — there was no reference to the government, PM and finance minister in the resignation letter.

"I called Arun Jaitley who confirmed that he had no prior knowledge of the resignation. However, he said he intended to accept his resignation forthwith and not ask for any reconsideration," he said. (PTI)

## Jeep Enhances its Compass AT Lineup to Meet Evolving Market Demands

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 27:** In response to the ever-evolving needs of the Indian market, Jeep has unveiled an upgraded variant lineup for its award-winning Compass AT. These enhancements, introduced at the prestigious Mahesh Motors dealership in Guwahati, include the introduction of aspirational features such as Automatic Transmission, Panoramic Sunroof, and advanced Connectivity options, now available from mid-range trims.

The grand unveiling of the all-new Jeep Compass range took place at the RG Baruah Road showroom in Guwahati, with the event hosted by Mohit Agarwal and attended by notable dignitaries including Sahil Agarwal, Yaman Agarwal, and Dhruv Agarwal. During the event, Agarwal expressed his pride in the long-standing partnership with Jeep, a brand renowned

worldwide for its iconic status. He emphasized Jeep's role in pioneering and leading the Compact SUV (CSUV) segment in Guwahati for seven years, consistently offering industry-leading features on the Compass. The latest iteration of the Compass, equipped with 4X2 9AT capabilities, caters to the aspirations of Guwahati customers who have long desired a Jeep vehicle. The new Compass not only fulfills their dreams but also presents them with a range of best-in-class features, all at a more accessible price point. The expanded variant lineup aims to provide a compelling choice of SUVs for the discerning Guwahati clientele. Highlighting the significance of Assam and Northeast India as crucial markets for Jeep India, Agarwal noted that Guwahati continues to be a pivotal market, contributing significantly to the brand's nationwide sales.

## Rupee snaps two-day fall, recovers 6 paise against US dollar

**MUMBAI, Sept 27:** The rupee on Wednesday staged a recovery after two days of steep losses to end 6 paise higher at 83.22 (provisional) against the US dollar on positive cues from domestic equity markets.

However, selling pressure from foreign equity investors amid elevated levels of American currency and surging crude oil prices weighed on the local unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 83.23 and traded in a narrow range of 83.18 to 83.24 against the greenback. It finally settled at 83.22 (provisional), registering a gain of 6 paise from its previous close.

The rupee lost 34 paise in the past two sessions. It closed 15 paise lower at 83.28 against the dollar on Tuesday, a day after registering a decline of 19 paise.

The downward movement of the rupee was attributed to a strengthening dollar amid a record rise in US Treasury yields. Also, the US dollar surged to a ten-month high level after a Federal Reserve policymaker hinted at a prolonged interest rate hike cycle. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.05 per cent to 106.28. (PTI)

## Bajaj Auto Unveils the All-New Pulsar N150

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 27:** Bajaj Auto, the world's premier two-wheeler and three-wheeler company, has unleashed the eagerly awaited Pulsar N150 in India.

This new entrant to the ever-expanding Pulsar portfolio signifies a significant milestone in the iconic brand's journey. Over the past 18 months, we witnessed the grand debuts of the mighty Pulsar N250 and the immensely popular Pulsar N160. Now, with the Pulsar N150, the nation's best-selling sports bike family gains a remarkable addition.

The Pulsar N150 exudes a design language characterised by dynamic and energetic lines, sleek proportions, and contemporary aerodynamic features. Its robust tank seamlessly merges with a stylish waist section, extending to a contoured step seat, creating a visually striking profile. Additionally, a sportier underbelly exhaust system emits a thrilling growl at higher RPMs. Floating body panels like the belly pan, front fairing, and front fender enhance its imposing presence.

Sarang Kanade, President - Motorcycles at Bajaj Auto, commented, "Twenty years ago, we introduced the first Pulsar 150 cc motorcycle, revolutionizing the entry-level sport biking segment. Since then, it has remained India's best-selling 150cc bike. With the



N150, Pulsar returns to dominate the road in its boldest avatar yet. Its aggressive styling, leading-edge features, outstanding on-road performance, and an attractive price point make it a splendid addition to the Pulsar family. Our aim is to make the joy of riding accessible to everyone, and this new bike exemplifies that mission."

The new Bajaj Pulsar N150 is a powerhouse on two wheels, boasting an impressive 14.5 PS peak power and 13.5 Nm torque. Its wide torque band truly sets it apart, delivering abundant torque across the entire RPM range, from low to high. This motorcycle offers thrilling performance and effortless maneuverability in all riding scenarios. In terms of safety, the Pulsar N150 excels, thanks to its single-channel ABS, providing superior braking control and traction for confident navigation on any terrain. A harmonious blend of power, precision, and safety elevates the riding experience to new heights.

## Bharti Foundation named as 'India's Best Workplace for Women 2023'

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 27:** Bharti Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Bharti Enterprises, continues its unwavering commitment to empower women through education and employment opportunities in rural India.

In a significant recognition, Bharti Foundation has been named 'India's Best Workplace for Women 2023' by Great Place To Work®, a globally respected authority on workplace culture and employee engagement.

As a frontrunner in the education sector, Bharti Foundation has consistently strived to create a diverse workplace where women are not only empowered but also encouraged to make significant contributions to the organisation's growth while excelling in their careers. Currently, an impressive 76% of the teaching staff in Foundation's Satya Bharti Schools is females, with an impressive 61% holding leadership roles within the organisation.

The accolade of 'India's Best Workplace for Women 2023' comes as a testament to Bharti Foundation's commitment to excellence. Among the rigorous evaluation of 100 organisations across India, Bharti Foundation stands out for its exemplary people practices and proactive efforts in nurturing a high-trust culture.

## Adani Ports to buy back another USD 195 mn of bonds

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone will prepay USD 195 million of debt due in 2024 as the conglomerate helmed by Gautam Adani looks to boost investors' confidence post being targeted by a US short-seller.

In a stock exchange filing, APSEZ said it will buy back USD 195 million of bonds due in 2024 using its cash reserves.

Out of the USD 520 million principal outstanding, USD 325 million will be left after the buyback, it said.

The company board "has approved tranche II of the tender offer to purchase for cash up to USD 195 million in aggregate principal amount of the outstanding 3.375 per cent senior notes due 2024 which represents 30 per cent of the principal amount of the notes," it said.

In May, the company had bought back its July 2024 bonds for cash USD 130 million in aggregate of the principal amount and stated that it would buy back 20 per cent of the principal amount of the bonds in each of the next four quarters.

In the second tranche of this, the company is now

proposing to purchase up to USD 195 million of bonds. This represents 30 per cent of the principal amount of the bonds (USD 650 million). After USD 130 million buyback in May, USD 520 million remained outstanding.

The buyback tender is open till October 26, the filing said.

Adani Group has been attempting to rebuild investors' confidence since Hindenburg Research in a January 24 report accused it of accounting fraud and improper use of offshore tax havens for stock manipulation.

The group has denied all allegations.

The company has engaged Barclays Bank, DBS Bank, Emirates NBD Bank PJSC, First Abu Dhabi Bank PJSC, Mizuho Securities (Singapore) Pte Ltd, MUFG Securities Asia Singapore Branch, SMBC Nikko Securities (Hong Kong) and Standard Chartered Bank to serve as deal managers for the offer.

The company will pay accrued interest, in respect of any notes purchased in the tender offer. (PTI)

## Sensex rebounds 173 pts on buying in RIL and L&T



**MUMBAI, Sept 27:** Benchmark Sensex rebounded from early lows to settle higher by 173 points on Wednesday following buying in Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro and ITC and positive trends in Asian and European markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 173.22 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 66,118.69 with 20 of its components ending in the green and 10 closing lower.

The index opened lower and fell further to a low of 65,549.96 in morning trade. However, buying in Reliance, L&T, Infosys and Maruti helped it recover losses. Later, it jumped 226.8 points or 0.34 per cent to a high of 66,172.27.

The Nifty gained 51.75 points or 0.26 per cent to end at 19,716.45. It moved between a low of 19,554 and a high of 19,730.70 in day trading. Among the Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, ITC, Sun Pharma, Maruti, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank and Hindustan Unilever were among the gainers. Titan, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Tata Steel and Nestle were the major laggards.

"The market inched higher in the second half, driven by positive openings in European markets. Concerns about global interest rates and elevated oil prices are being balanced by several domestic factors, such as promising economic growth prospects and the potential for strong earnings, which validate the premium valuation," said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services.

Persistent outflows of foreign funds and rising US bond yields are expected to keep the broader indices in bleak terrain, in the near term, Nair added.

Ajit Mishra, SVP - technical research, Religare Broking Ltd said that markets remained volatile but ended higher due to recovery in select heavyweights.

"The impending rebound in select heavyweights like Reliance and ITC largely contributed to the recovery," Mishra said, adding that the scheduled monthly expiry of derivative contracts would keep the volatility high.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.76 per

cent and smallcap index jumped 0.68 per cent.

Among the indices, capital goods jumped 1.14 per cent, healthcare climbed 1.13 per cent, industrials (0.97 per cent), FMCG (0.77 per cent), realty (0.70 per cent), IT (0.48 per cent) and tech (0.43 per cent).

Bankex, consumer durables and oil & gas were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the green. European markets were trading mostly in positive territory. The US markets ended lower on Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.98 per cent to USD 94.88 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 693.47 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

## Onus with private sector to lead country on sustainable growth path: NITI Aayog VC

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** The government is facilitating holistic development but the onus lies on the private sector to lead the country on a sustainable growth trajectory, NITI Aayog vice-chairman Suman Bery said on Wednesday.

The private sector contributes 40 per cent of Research and Development (R&D) in the country, while its share in developed countries is 70 per cent, Bery said, while addressing an event organised by the Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI).

"If we are to transit from the middle income trap, the private sector needs to enhance its contribution to R&D through its own investments and under corporate social responsibility," the NITI Aayog VC said.

The onus is on the private sector to lead us on a sustainable growth trajectory, Bery said.

He said the relationship between the public and private sectors needs to be redefined in the Amrit Kaal, to lead the country to a path of sustainable growth.

Bery further said that India's take-off moment has arrived, backed by the advantage of having the world's largest working population and resilient physical and digital institutions. (PTI)

## Apollo Hospitals acquire partially built medical facility in Kolkata region for ₹ 102cr

**KOLKATA, Sept 27:** Apollo Hospitals on Wednesday said it has acquired a partially built hospital at Sonarpur in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas with a total capacity of 325 beds in a bid to ramp up its healthcare capacity in the Eastern region. Future Oncology Hospital and Research Center was acquired in an all cash deal of ₹ 102 crore by Apollo Multispecialty Hospitals Ltd, a wholly owned unlisted subsidiary of Apollo Hospitals Enterprises. The acquisition is being fully funded through its own internal accruals, the company informed the bourses. This will be the second Apollo Hospital in the Kolkata region and fifth in the eastern region.

The announcement comes close on the heels of Manipal Hospitals acquiring an 84 per cent stake in AMRI Hospitals Ltd having a total of 1,200 beds in three hospitals at an enterprise valuation of ₹ 2,500 crore.

"The addition of this new facility is part of our planned capacity expansion across the country and will allow us to serve even more people in the region," Apollo Hospital's managing director Suneeta Reddy said.

The first phase of 225 beds of the partially built 325-bed hospital will be commissioned in the next 12 months, company officials said.

Apollo said it will augment its capacity in the East by an addition of another 700 beds over the next three years, taking the total bed count in the eastern region to 2,500 from 1,800. Apollo has hospitals in Bhubaneswar and Guwahati in the Eastern region.

Apollo is India's largest integrated healthcare platform with over 10,000 beds across 71 hospitals. (PTI)



## AMNS India's Hazira project to be commissioned by 2026: Laxmi Mittal

*ArcelorMittal's arm AMNS India had stated that it will invest ₹ 60,000 crore to scale up capacity of its steel plant at Hazira to 15 million tonnes*

**AHMEDABAD, Sept 27:** ArcelorMittal executive chairman Lakshmi N Mittal on Wednesday expressed confidence that AMNS India's Hazira project, which is under expansion, will be commissioned by 2026.

In October last year, ArcelorMittal's arm AMNS India had stated that it will invest ₹ 60,000 crore to scale up capacity of its steel plant at Hazira to 15 million tonnes (MT).

"We have full confidence that with the cooperation of the Centre and Gujarat government, we will be able to commission the project by 2026, Mittal said here while speaking at the celebrations of 20 years of 'Vibrant Gujarat' summit.

Hazira expansion project is moving at a fast pace and over 20,000 people are involved in the project construction, he said.

"It is our target to double our production capacity in the first phase and then triple...we will also make advance products for technology," he said, adding it would help India reduce imports



and become self-reliant.

The company is also committed for sustainability, he said.

He also said that because of the 'Vibrant Gujarat' summit, different states are organising investor summits and this is helping India attract foreign investments.

Today India is termed as the fastest growing economy in the world and global firms are keen

to invest in the country.

He added that the successful G20 Summit has further enhanced the image of India.

The summit not only reflected India's diplomatic and organisational success, but also showed India's image as a global consensus builder.

Talking about the state, Mittal said that Gujarat is a leading industry state as it has presence of industries from varied sectors such as petrochemicals, automobile, pharma, port, textiles, electric vehicles, green hydrogen and semiconductors.

The state, he said, provides reliable infrastructure, stable policy environment, and professional administration.

In January 2022, he said the company signed an agreement with the state to invest over ₹ 1 lakh crore. Further, he said that at a time when India is attracting the eyes of the world, there is a need to focus on talented manpower and industry 4.0. (PTI)

**CORRIGENDUM NO. 01/2023/ LMG/DMV AGAINST TENDER NOTICE No. S&T. CON. 2023. 16**

Corrigendum No. 01/2023/LMG/DMV against Tender Notice No. S&T. CON. 2023. 16, dtd. 14-09-2023 has been published. Now Clause 10.4.4 read as - At the time of submission of bid, Authorization with OEM of CCTV cameras/ storage, software, covering supply, installation, configuration, testing and commissioning of above equipment by the OEM including after sales support required during the warranty period shall be submitted. Server of make Dell, HP or similar should be supplied. All other terms & conditions shall remain unchanged.

**Dr. CSTE/CON/Lumding, Maitagon**  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
 Construction Organization  
 Serving Customers With A Smile



## World Tourism Day celebrated with enthusiasm in Sivasagar



**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, Sept 27:** The World Tourism Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Sivasagar. Tourism minister Jayanta Malla Baruah, along with Arjun Bhogswar Barua and veteran athlete Toyabin Nissa, flagged off the "Run for Heritage," a mini-marathon organised for the occasion. More than 300 participants from various places took part in the 9 km run, which started near the Tourist office on the bank of the Sivasagar tank and ended at Rangghar via Chipahi gaon.

In the male category, Bijay Deka secured the first position, followed by Sanibul Islam in second place, and Bipin Munda of Jorhat in third place. Among the females, Pahi Keot from Nagaon secured the first position, Kasturi Neog from Sivasagar got second place, and Fulmoni Urang was adjudged third.

Sivasagar SP Subhrajyoti Bora also participated in the marathon. Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah revealed that a UNESCO team is set to arrive at Charadeo, Sivasagar, to make a final assessment of the site before its nomination as a World Heritage Site. He expressed optimism that the UNESCO designation would significantly

cantly boost tourism prospects in the district.

In line with this year's World Tourism Day theme, Assam Tourism organised photo and video competitions and other activities emphasizing a green environment. Minister Baruah noted the positive involvement of the private sector in supporting government initiatives to develop tourism in Assam. He instructed the DC of Sivasagar to provide assistance to investors interested in tourism projects.

Baruah emphasised the historical significance of monuments and relics like the Sivadoul, Rangghar, and Jamuna and stressed the importance of consulting with the local community when planning infrastructure development in the town. Regarding the proposal to connect the Rangghar Beautification Project with the royal capital complex Talatalghar, the minister mentioned that people occupying the area have already acquired permanent land patts. If the government seeks to acquire their land, they will receive adequate compensation.

The concluding function was held at Bhatipar Junsakya Resort, bringing a successful and enthusiastic celebration of World Tourism Day to a close.

## Dima Hasao aims 'cleanest district of India' tag to woo tourists

**HAFLONG, Sept 27:** Dima Hasao, nicknamed Switzerland of the Northeast, is now looking to capitalise its scenic beauty to attract tourists and develop it as the 'cleanest district' of India.

This hill district of Assam, which was once known for its dreaded militancy, is trying to place itself as one of the most peaceful and exotic tourist locations of the region, officials of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) told PTI on Wednesday.

As part of its endeavour, the council, which governs Dima Hasao, published a draft tourism policy, which plans to develop five different circuits for travellers, on the occasion of World Tourism Day.

"One of our weaknesses was not having proper tourism infrastructure. Non-peaceful conditions were also to be blamed for this. This policy reflects what people of Dima Hasao, especially from the rural areas, want in the tourism sector apart from basic needs," NCHAC chief executive member (in-charge) Hen Samuel Changsan said.

The district, which has a high number of unemployed youths, have started to realise they can capitalise on natural infrastructure, he added.

"For that, we have streamlined the tourism policy. This is a draft policy and we have to pass it in the council session. We will have our own mini circuits. We will also integrate with the greater Assam tourism circuit," Changsan said. Dima Hasao's headquarters Haflong, about 330 km from Guwahati, is the only hill station of the state.

Asked if decades of militancy and its aftereffects are stopping explorers from venturing into Dima Hasao, Changsan said peace is the foundation for any development and the district is peaceful now.

"We were lagging behind in basic infrastructure like roads, water and telecommu-



nication. However, these areas have improved considerably in recent years," he added.

Changsan said the education sector has improved with the literacy rate rising every year.

"Students from Dima Hasao perform exceedingly well in the Class 10 board exam of Assam every year. Having a well-educated workforce is essential for developing the tourism sector," he added.

Talking further about Dima Hasao, tourism advisor Zed Nunisa said the council's vision is to develop the sector as totally plastic-free by making the district clean and green.

"If our district is clean, then people will come here. We are not just trying to make one village or a particular place as the cleanest, but we are trying to make Dima Hasao as the cleanest district in India.

"I believe that not only the government, but all organisations and every stakeholder will support us, and we will make Dima Hasao as the cleanest district in India. I am

hopeful that it will be successful very soon," he added.

Nunisa said NCHAC plans to make five tourism circuits right now -- adventure, eco and rural, agriculture, cultural and festival.

"India is known for destination weddings. So, we have developed Umrangso as a destination wedding tourism spot, where there is a golf course too. It is a beautiful place," he added.

NCHAC member (tourism in-charge) Monjit Naiding said the draft policy aims to streamline the home stays, lodges and hotels.

"We want to maintain a standard of these facilities in Dima Hasao and the policy highlights those areas. This will give a comfortable stay to tourists coming to our district," he added.

Dima Hasao is well-connected with the rest of Assam and the country by road and railway network.

A railway division was established at Haflong in 1895 and in February 1904, the construction of the 184.16 km track was

completed between Lumding and Badarpur with 37 tunnels, of which 35 were in present day Dima Hasao, earlier called North Cachar Hills district.

Until October 2014, tourists preferred to journey in the century-old metre gauge rail, which traversed through the picturesque Dima Hasao in a zig-zag track through a number of tunnels and dozens of vintage bridges along the course of beautiful hilly rivers.

The new Lumding-Silchar broad gauge line through Dima Hasao has 17 tunnels, 79 major bridges and 28 stations, while the 'Mahasarak' with a long road tunnel near Maibang definitely has boosted all-round interest of the people of the hill district.

After the Vistadome Tourist Special Train Services started between Guwahati and Haflong in August 2021, the district got the much needed impetus, especially in the tourism sector.

The British made Haflong their home because of its fabulous weather and scenic beauty. The town was decorated in colonial style with systematic tree plantations, well-planned footpaths, motorable roads, residential houses and bungalows, golf course, motels, educational institutions, playgrounds and parks.

The world famous Jatinga is located just nine kilometres away from Haflong. It is widely visited by ornithologists, environmentalist, biologist, scientists and tourists from India and across the globe for the unusual birds phenomenon, occurring in September-November.

Other places of Dima Hasao like Hajong lake, Laiong, Maibang and Umrangso also have lots of avenue for mountaineering, tracking, rafting, water sports and eco-tourism, while the entire district can be explored as botanical and zoological hub for various study and educational purposes. (PTI)

## 'Aditi Samman - 2023' award presented to DCs of Nagaon and Hojai

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 27:** The newspaper group responsible for publishing the Assamese weekly newsletter 'Amar Aditi' in Central Assam presented the 'Aditi Samman - 2023' award to Nagaon district commissioner Narendra Kumar Shah and Hojai district commissioner Lachit Kumar Das at their respective offices last Tuesday.

The award was presented by the editor and managing editor of the newspaper, along with its sub-editors and other senior journalists.

Upon receiving the award, Nagaon district commissioner Narendra Kumar Shah expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve in the birthplace of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva as an administrative officer. He praised Assam for its rich and colorful culture, music, songs, colorful costumes, and beautiful natural environment. Shah stated that he is proud to serve as a government officer in such a beautiful state.

The same award was also presented to Hojai district commissioner Lachit Kumar Das. Upon receiving it, Lachit Das highlighted the convenience of internet services, noting that in the past, people had to wait until morning, but now information is readily available even at midnight.

## Neglected Assam-Changlang road raises concerns for commuters and trade



**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, Sept 27:** The Assam-Changlang road, a vital lifeline connecting the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, has fallen into a state of disrepair, making it nearly impassable. This critical artery plays a pivotal role in trade, transportation, education, and access to medical facilities for the people of the bordering states.

Local youth, Binai Toppo, expressed deep concern over the road's deteriorating condition, which includes massive potholes, craters, and eroded sections. These issues have turned the once-vital road into a perilous journey for commuters, resulting in extended travel times and vehicle damage.

Despite its significance, the Assam-Changlang road has suffered from neglect, impacting economic activities and endangering public safety. Urgent intervention is needed to prevent further deterioration and ensure the well-being of the people who depend on this route, emphasized Toppo.

The state government has repeatedly promised to address the road's condition, but progress has been sluggish. Initiatives by the BJP-led Assam government to initiate repairs have sometimes exacerbated the road's problems, leading to growing impatience among locals.

The poor state of the Assam-Changlang road has wide-ranging consequences. It affects school and college students who struggle to reach educational institutions and exacerbates delays in responding to medical emergencies, potentially putting lives at risk.

The road's deplorable condition extends beyond transportation issues; it poses a serious threat to the well-being and livelihoods of the people who rely on it. Urgent action is required to repair and maintain this vital artery, ensuring the safety and prosperity of the region, concluded Binai Toppo, a local youth from the Margherita Constituency of Tinsukia district, where the Assam-Changlang road is situated.

## Swrbang Bihuram Boro remembered

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, Sept 27:** On Wednesday, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) and the Bodo community came together to commemorate the 33rd death anniversary of Swrbang Bihuram Boro, the former general secretary of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. The day was marked with day-long programs held in various parts of the state, with Kokrajhar, the heart of Bodoland Territorial Region, being a focal point of the observance.

In Kokrajhar, the Kokrajhar district committee of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha conducted the commemoration at its office premises, featuring a range of activities.

Swrbang Bihuram Boro, a distinguished writer and intellectual, served as the general secretary of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha for three consecutive terms until his passing on September 27, 1990. His contribution to the Bodo language and culture is immeasurable.

The event in Kokrajhar began with Bijel Kumar Basumatary, the president of Kokrajhar District Bodo Sahitya Sabha, half-hoisting the Sabha's flag in the presence of writers and Sabha members. Floral tributes were paid at the portrait of the eminent litterateur Swrbang Bihuram Boro.

Hundreds of members from the district and primary Bodo Sahitya Sabha, as well as ABSU (All Bodo Students' Union), participated in the event, expressing their respect with floral tributes.

## Preparatory meeting held for peaceful celebration of Durga Puja, Kali Puja in Nagaon

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 27:** A preparatory meeting was convened at the Conference hall of the District Commissioner's Office in Nagaon to ensure a harmonious and eco-friendly celebration of the forthcoming Durga Puja and Kali Puja festivals in the district.

Additional district commissioner Lakshya Jyoti Das presided over the meeting, which aimed to foster cooperation and coordination among stakeholders for the smooth conduct of these religious festivals. The key issues addressed during the meeting included puja committees to submit applications for permission, along with necessary no-objection certificates from relevant departments. It was stressed that the pandals must comply with pollution control guidelines and ensure the fitness of electricity connections. Furthermore, rules governing the immersion of idols were discussed in detail to maintain order and safety during the ceremonies.

The meeting also focused on the installation of CCTV cameras in puja pandal sites to enhance security. Additionally, the importance of displaying anti-drug messages at the puja sites and implementing night guarding in pandals was discussed.

Lastly, officials from the pollution control board stressed the significance of environmentally friendly celebrations. This includes using biodegradable and natural materials in idol creation and avoiding the use of single-use plastic items.

The meeting brought together officials from various government departments, including Sub Divisional Officer (Civil) of Kaliabari Liza Talukdar, Additional Superintendent of Police Pranab Jyoti Kalita, and representatives from puja committees in Nagaon. The objective is to ensure that the upcoming Durga Puja and Kali Puja celebrations are both peaceful and environmentally responsible.

This initiative reflects a growing awareness of environmental concerns during religious festivals, contributing to the broader effort to promote sustainability and reduce ecological impact.

## Two-day national seminar explores technical terminology in Assamese language and culture

**HT Correspondent**

**TEOK, Sept 27:** The Department of Political Science at C.K.B. College, Teok, in collaboration with the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT), Ministry of Education, Govt. of India, hosted a significant event -- the Two-Day National Seminar on "Technical Terminology in Assamese Language and Culture" on September 22nd and 23rd, 2023. This seminar, inaugurated online by Prof. Girish Nath Jha, Chairman of CSTT, on September 22nd, marked a crucial initiative in the realm of scientific language within the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020.

In his inaugural address, Prof. Jha underscored the vital role of scientific terminology in higher education, particularly in alignment with the NEP-2020's emphasis on vernacular languages. This focus on regional languages has spurred the need for developing technical terminology for textbooks and academic pursuits. Prof. Jha also lauded CSTT's significant achievements in disseminating glossaries of technical terms in various regional languages across India. The CSTT, established in 1961 under a Presidential Order pursuant to Article 344 of the Indian Constitution, stands as a pioneering institution dedicated to technical terminology.

The inaugural session, presided over by Dr. Bijoy Krishna Pachani, Principal of C.K.B. College, Teok, witnessed the participation of over 114 attendees representing various colleges and Higher Secondary Schools from Jorhat, Golaghat, and Sivasagar Districts. Dr. Shahzad Ahmed Ansari, Assistant Director of CSTT, and Prof. Naved Jamal of Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour and Keynote Speaker, respectively.

The seminar, as reported by Dr. Dipak Kumar Sarma, the Coordinator of the National Seminar, featured resource persons from diverse disciplines who engaged in extensive discussions on nuances of technical terminology across various fields. The seminar comprised a total of four Technical Sessions conducted over both days.

On the first day, Dr. Anushabda, Assistant Professor of Hindi Department, and Dr. Bipasha Patgiri, Assistant Professor of Linguistics, both from Tezpur University, served as resource persons in Technical Session I and Technical Session II.

The second day witnessed the participation of distinguished resource persons, including Dr. Sudeshna Bhattacharjya, Professor and Head of Sanskrit Department at Gauhati University, Dr. Shreya Barbara of Milestone Education and Research Centre in Guwahati, Dr. Binoy Broto Rajkhowa, Associate Professor of Economics at C.K.B. College, Teok, and Dr. Upal Saikia, Assistant Professor of Assamese at Kolabari College in Biswanath District, Assam.

This seminar has opened new avenues for pioneering work in the domain of technical terminology within the Assamese language, encompassing all fields of Social Science and humanities. Faculty participants expressed their satisfaction with the insightful technical sessions, recognizing the seminar's value in enhancing their knowledge.

Dr. Dipak Kumar Sarma, Assistant Professor of Political Science at C.K.B. College, Teok, effectively coordinated the seminar, ensuring its success and fruitful outcomes.

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## IMFL wine shop's license temporarily suspended for violating dry day

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, Sept 27:** In a decisive move, the license of an IMFL (Indian Made Foreign Liquor) wine shop, located within the premises of the Jorhat Development Authority office, has been temporarily suspended by the Jorhat district commissioner. This action was taken following allegations that the shop had illegally sold liquor on September 24, a day declared as a dry day by the district administration in honor of Mahapurush Srimanta Shankardev's birth anniversary.

An official from the Excise department revealed that this action followed a report submitted by the department to the district commissioner, which detailed an incident where an Excise team had seized numerous liquor bottles in a room adjacent to the wine shop. These bottles were reportedly taken out from the shop for sale on a Sunday, which had been designated as a dry day.

The sale of liquor on a dry day is a clear violation of the Assam Excise Act 2000, prompting the immediate suspension of the shop's license. The owner, Rituraj Borah, has been questioned in connection with this violation, and an ongoing investigation is underway to ascertain further details.

This incident serves as a reminder of the strict enforcement of liquor sale regulations, particularly on designated dry days, underscoring the commitment to upholding the law by the local authorities.

## Kohora river's sustainable management focused on World Rivers Day

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 27:** Sustainable management of Kohora River which is like the lifeline for the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape, was the focus of celebration of this year's World Rivers Day organised by the local community and local institutions of Kohora River Basin in Assam namely, Kaziranga Chitralala Vidyalaya, Hatipathor Madir Parichalona Samiti and Department of Soil Conservation, Kohora.

The day was celebrated at Hatipathor, Kohora, Karbi Anglong which featured an art contest for school students. The World Rivers Day is celebrated on every fourth Sunday of September to raise public awareness and encourage sustainable management of rivers.

The event was organised with an objective to facilitate the local people residing by the Kohora River to share their memories with Kohora River and discuss its future and sustainable management where 35 persons from different communities participated.

The celebration started with a cleanliness drive of Kohora River at Hatipathor area in the early morning. All the participants then gathered at Soil Conservation Inspection Bungalow for a memory sharing and discussion event chaired by Protik Borah. Swapan Nath, local conservationist, briefly explained the primary objective and scheduled activities of the event.

Based on long-term monitoring of water quality and discharge from 2018 to 2023, regions leading biodiversity conservation organisation, Aaranyak shared



its findings and discussed the importance of the Kohora River and its watershed.

In continuation with the discussion all the concerned persons shared their memories on Kohora River which includes historic water volume, change in water quality, diversity of fish species and different other benefits/services received from Kohora River were highlighted during the discussion.

Dhrubo Jyoti Saha, sharing his view, suggested writing to the concerned SDO Civil and appraising the official about the present condition of the Kohora River and developing a sustainable management plan of the river. Ranjan Rajkhowa, Head Teacher of Sankardev Sishu Niketan, Kohora shared his views on river and people highlighting socio-economic and cultural linkage of a society and their dependence on the river. He also shared the importance of awareness activities among young students to understand the importance of rivers.

Looking into the need for sustainable management of the Kohora River, an eleven member committee has been formed by the participants which will be chaired by Dairy Prasad Upadhaya, which has vowed to create awareness and ensure that the Kohora River continues to flow with its natural quality and quantity of water.

Swapan Nath also described the importance of hill streams flowing from Karbi Anglong hills and their contribution to the Kohora River and the people living by it.

To celebrate the River Day with the students, an art competition on the Kohora River was organised for the students of the Kaziranga Chitralala Vidyalaya and prizes were distributed to the winners of the competition.

The event was conducted by Swapan Nath and Rehan Ali from Kohora with support from the Aaranyak team based at Kohora.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

The young man knows the rules, but the old man knows the exceptions. - Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

## SC's review of ED's powers

In a significant turn of events, the Supreme Court of India has taken a crucial step towards reevaluating the contentious powers wielded by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in its pursuit of political adversaries. A three-judge special bench has been formed to reconsider a controversial judgment from the previous year, which had upheld the agency's sweeping authority to apprehend alleged money-launderers and confiscate their assets without adequate safeguards. The controversial judgment had faced widespread criticism and triggered a series of petitions challenging it. Responding to the mounting concerns, a bench led by the former Chief Justice N V Ramana, in August last year, agreed to hear a review petition filed by Karti Chidambaram, son of former minister P Chidambaram, both of whom had experienced the ED's investigative might firsthand. Encouragingly, the bench decided to conduct the proceedings in an open court—a practice rarely observed in review petitions. The petition is now scheduled for a hearing on October 18, before a new bench composed of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, and Bela M Trivedi. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has not been reticent in voicing its concerns regarding the ED's methods. Two months ago, the court restrained the central agency from pursuing a case related to an alleged liquor syndicate racket in Chhattisgarh.

It is evident that the upcoming review petition will bring to light disturbing details concerning the use and potential abuse of the ED, with the scales tipping heavily towards the latter. Even according to the ED's own statistics, out of nearly 6,000 cases filed against alleged offenders since 2005, it has managed to successfully close only 25 cases. While it proudly asserts a near-perfect success rate, claiming only one case ended in favor of the accused, the larger picture reveals that the legitimate use of the agency stands at less than one percent, while a staggering 99 percent seems to constitute abuse. Furthermore, it is disconcerting to note that nearly 85 percent of the cases registered by the ED target individuals affiliated with various opposition parties. This pattern is especially pronounced in states where it aligns with the interests of the ruling party at the Centre, particularly when political adversaries find themselves on the receiving end. It becomes evident that the primary utility of the ED and similar central agencies is as tools for the ruling party to curb criticism and loom menacingly over its adversaries. Earlier this year, a coalition of 14 opposition parties, including the Congress, approached the Supreme Court to highlight the arbitrary use of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the ED against their leaders.

Nevertheless, the Supreme Court declined to entertain the plea, citing the need for specific cases and asserting that it could not establish abstract guidelines. The court emphasized that political parties themselves had to address these concerns in the political arena. Consequently, the petitioners had to withdraw their plea. Now, all these pressing issues are slated to receive fresh scrutiny from the newly constituted bench tasked with hearing the review petition. Most significantly, there appears to be a discernible shift in the courts' stance regarding the arbitrary use of central agencies, offering a ray of hope to those who have long challenged this practice.

## Ganesh festival and Lokmanya



By: Er. Rajesh Pathak

During the last phase of 19th century in Maharashtra an organisation came up to work for woman-empowerment. Later it came into prominence as 'Sharda-sadan'. The lady that founded the organisation earned the reputation as Pandita Ramabai. Fulfilling her mission she reached Bengal, and even married a man of her own choice there.

But the destiny had too short a married life for her, and consequently she got to be widow. Then even a time came in her life when she came into the contact of Christian missionaries, and inspired by them she set out for the journey to England, and thereafter to America. And when she came back to India she was no longer a Hindu, but a devout Christian. Now her sole mission had become to take the deprived and miserable women on the 'sacred' path of Christianity. She gave the name to it of 'Human-service', obviously in order to hide the true goal of her 'mission' from the eyes of the world. And ignorant of the deception that from their own money a foul play of undermining their Dharma was going on, a section of rich and generous Hindus knew no limit in offering the money to Sharda-sadan. But the first to draw the attention of such elements and every other else to this fraud was none other than Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, one who had the credit of giving the slogan of 'Self-rule is our birth right' against the British regime. But, like today, it was not so easy to convince the people then also.

One had to provide educa-

tion in modern atmosphere to her own two daughters, Lokmanya Tilak was strong proponent of woman-empowerment. But any kind of activity meant to harm the Hindu-community behind the façade of this was unacceptable to him. And to prove his claim he gathered some evidences; and when he brought them before the people, those having sympathy with Christian missionaries were ultimately made to withdraw themselves from their previous stand.

Lokmanya Tilak had the reputation of being liberal in thinking, unwavering in upholding religious tolerance and, more notably, he had been one of the key functionaries of that Congress party which was composed of people of all kinds of faiths. Despite all that he was of firm belief that any kind of ill-designed effort of religious conversion is the one to weaken secularism. Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893-94 of Mumbai and Pune is recorded in the annals of the history.

Numerically in majority but badly divided into castes-creeds-sects, Hindus had to bear colossal loss of lives and property. In future people might not subject to such consequences yet again, Tilak initiated the tradition of celebrating Ganesh and Shivaji festivals throughout the Maharashtra.

Gradually people began to assemble in their forgetting all their differences. Owing to which the sense of organisation began to strengthen among them. Thus together with the fervid expression of thought he also worked upon their execution on the ground level. And Tilak would always be remembered for this.

## Not just Khalistanis, Canada refuses to deport assassin of Sheikh Mujib of Bangladesh

A recent diplomatic rift between Canada and India over Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian-Indian and leader of an outlawed Khalistan killed by unknown assailants at a Sikh temple in Surrey in the province of British Columbia in mid-June has dominated news headlines.

After four months, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau suddenly stood up the House of Commons at Parliament Hill and told lawmakers in Ottawa that his government possessed "credible" allegations which pointed fingers toward Indian intelligence potential link to the assassination. As political historian Mohiuddin Ahmad says, Canada came out in the public domain regarding the allegations against India. But on the other hand, Canada has never made public the Chinese interference and their covert activities.

Canada allows hate speech by radical Sikhs in the name of freedom of speech and expression, which is not only a double standard but a hypocritical government, remarked Ahmed.

Canada's allies are still quiet! Trudeau expects condemnation from the West while asking India to cooperate on the murder of confessed extremists for an independent Khalistan. The anti-Indian terror campaign for a separate territory for the Sikhs has been aided and abetted by the dreaded Pakistan spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Well, his government has yet to share evidence blaming India behind Nijjar's death, who was chief of Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and is unlikely to get 'cooperation' from New Delhi. Ottawa has refused to extradite a couple of "most-wanted" Sikhs for crimes committed in India and elsewhere.

In a tit-for-tat expelling spy agency officials under diplomatic cover from each other country.

An Indian born Ashok Swain @ashoswain, Professor at Uppsala University, Sweden tweets: "Modi has made Canada, India's new Pakistan!"

Pierre Trudeau (father of Justin Trudeau) turned down India's request to hand over a Sikh militant named Talwinder Singh Parmar, the head of the terrorist organisation.

The 'person of interest' has been blamed for placing a bomb on an Air India flight in 1985. The bomb exploded midair, killing 329 people, 268 of them Canadian citizens.

Millions of immigrants, who adopted Canada as their new home, do not know that Canada is a haven for Nazi war criminals and other wanted criminals living with impunity.

The politicians and former officials of their home countries [list of countries withheld for obvious reason] have been laundering money accumulated from loot, corruption and illegal cartels with a "no question asked policy" of Canada for new arrivals.

Nearly a thousand suspects indicted for war crimes, according to the Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals by Justice Jules Deschênes (1985-1986) are believed to be living in Canada.

The Royal Commission was able to establish that identified Nazi war criminals,

for crimes committed in Germany and marauding Nazi occupation forces during World War II were given permanent residency. The Nazi war criminals brought huge wealth looted from Europe and especially from Jews.

The book 'Unauthorized Entry: The Truth about Nazi War Criminals in Canada, 1946-1956' by Howard Margolian published in 2000 brings fresh waves among Canadians what the war crimes advocacy groups, the media, and even a royal commission have suggested that Canada has given refuge to such criminals.

On the recommendation of the Commission, Canada enacted the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act, 2000. Under the new legislation, one Rwandan immigrant was found guilty of committing genocide and sentenced to life in prison in May 2009.

The Canadian Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Programme investigated 200 perpetrators currently residing in Canada.

Notwithstanding India's repeated requests over the years to extradite the "most wanted" extremists, who have harmed India, Canada decided not to comply and gave any explanation.

On the other hand, Bangladesh had also made requests over 20 years to deport the 'most wanted' army officer S.H.M.B. Nur Chowdhury, held responsible for the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the independence hero of Bangladesh in a military putsch on 15 August 1975. The 73-year-old fugitive has been living in Canada since 1996.

"That's why he is safe in Canada," writes Charlie Gillis, a Canadian journalist, "The assassin among us."

Nur told a state broadcaster Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) denying the allegation of taking part in the murder of Bangabandhu and said as a junior military officer he obeyed orders of his superiors. Sheikh Mujib's daughter, present Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina pleaded with her counterpart Justin Trudeau at several meetings on the sidelines at global events to deport her father's assassin. Her appeal fell on deaf ears though.

A new Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Heather Cruden in September 2011 in an explosive statement said that "Canada will not expel any suspected criminal to face a possible execution abroad."

"Our government has a clear policy that we cannot extradite people to a country where there is [a] death sentence," she told reporters in Dhaka.

The diplomat has rekindled a long-running dispute between Canada and Bangladesh, during which Bangladeshi officials have at times accused Canada of giving refuge to the most wanted fugitive for 27 years.

Canadian Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and Ministry of Foreign Affairs sings the same tune. A policy statement says something like this: "Bangladesh judiciary is not independent and deportation or extradition of a certain person will jeopardise his safety and his security would be compromised by a po-



litically motivated justice system."

"There are possibilities of being harmed when the person is forced to return to his country of origin."

Canada provided a typical argumentative argument on the request for the deportation of Chowdhury, who was indicted in absentia for the murder of Sheikh Mujib and has been sentenced to the death penalty by a special tribunal in Dhaka in 1998 and declared him a fugitive. His name appears in the red list of Interpol.

Canadian media have intermittently kept the issue alive. This possibly has impacted the rejection of Chowdhury's asylum case and demand for extradition by the Bangladesh government.

All his hope to live in Canada has been dashed after all the gates of the refugee court, appeal court and higher court shut down on his face. Chowdhury's asylum case has been denied again and again.

Shahidul Islam Mintu, founder and CEO of the first 24/7 NRB Television for the Bangladeshi diaspora in Canada has been following the case of Chowdhury.

He said the fugitive rarely ventures outside his apartment except to buy groceries. He once faced angry Bangladeshis who condemned him for killing Mujib and demanding punishment. He lives in seclusion in Etobicoke, Toronto.

In a brazen move, Ottawa wanted to negotiate with Washington DC to send rogue military officer AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, to a third country (preferably Canada), who swears that he didn't play a role in the assassination of Sheikh Mujib.

Ahmed's asylum case in Los Angeles, USA has been rejected multiple times in appeal courts. US authorities decided to deport him, which was indeed a surprise for Bangladesh.

The fugitive was deported to Bangladesh and the verdict was executed by hanging for the crime.

On 29 May 2007, Irwin Cotler, Minister of Justice addressing the Speaker of Parliament urged Diane Finley, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that a "former Bangladesh diplomat with a Canadian connection is facing imminent deportation from the U.S. to Bangladesh where he will be executed after a political trial was held in absentia," as documented in the Parliament Hill online archive.

"Given this humanitarian issue and that Mohiuddin Ahmed has immediate family in Canada, would the minister be prepared to review this case, to provide Ahmed with the protection this case would warrant and

help secure the suspension of his deportation until this case can be reviewed?"

However, Finley assured the members at Parliament Hill that Canada has "one of the most welcoming and fair immigration systems in the world."

Commonly most people know that hundreds of international victims of torture have found safety in Canada including dissidents, opposition, journalists, writers and academicians.

Nevertheless, this statement has been contradicted by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International. A damning joint report blames Canada to have incarcerated thousands of people (between the ages of 15 and 83), including those with disabilities, on immigration-related grounds every year in often abusive conditions.

"Canada's abusive immigration detention system is in stark contrast to the rich diversity and the values of equality and justice that Canada is known for globally," said Ketty Niyabandi, secretary general of Amnesty International Canada.

Of course, Canada had forced several immigrants to their country of origin, who fled the country after they were brutalised and tortured.

In the case of Maher Arar, a Syrian-born Canadian citizen was a victim of rendition and tortured in Syria after the United States turned him over as an Al-Qaeda suspect in 2002.

Arar, a telecommunication engineer was boarding a flight back home to Canada from Tunisia at JFK Airport in New York. He was detained for 12 days in New York and was secretly transferred to Syria.

US authorities alleged he was a member of the international terror network Al Qaeda and said they acted on data supplied by Canadian police.

Amnesty says in Syria, he was held in degrading and inhumane conditions, interrogated, and tortured for a year.

After media and rights groups outcry, Canada was forced to bring him back and had to pay a compensation of \$10.5 million.

Similar incidents occurred with dissident Noura Al-Jizawi, a Syrian born immigrant in Canada who was flagged as a security risk when she applied for a Permanent Resident (PR) card. Also, an Egyptian-born Joseph Attar, a Canadian citizen returned home serving 15 years imprisonment in Egypt on spying charges.

In February 2007, Ottawa formally apologised for the role officials may have played in the torture and abuse of three Canadians Abdullah Almaliki, Ahmad Abou-Elmaati and Muayyed Nureddin in Syria in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. A commission of inquiry found that Canadian officials were indirectly responsible for what happened to the three men.

Possibly for now, Nur Chowdhury's prayer to Allah has kept him away from being guillotined for his crime. The diplomatic engagement to bring the rogue military officer back to Dhaka to face the music of justice remains frustrating for the coming years will be in deep freeze. (The author is an award-winning independent journalist based in Bangladesh. Views expressed are personal. He can be reached at saleemssamad@hotmail.com)

## India's G20 transformation: Beyond the national capital

By: Dipak Kurmi

Excluding the meticulous fault-finders who tirelessly seek out flaws and imperfections, the prevailing sentiment across India resounds with unanimous acclaim for the flawlessly orchestrated two-day G20 Summit in Delhi. While a smattering of inconspicuous glitches may have played out discreetly behind the scenes, they were as trivial as a whisper in the grand symphony of the occasion, vanishing into insignificance. For the citizens of India, this monumental convergence of global leaders marks a pinnacle in the annals of post-Independence history, a resounding testament to the artistry of execution.

Considering that, much like audiences worldwide, the majority of India's domestic viewers exhibit limited enthusiasm for the weighty and harmonious proclamations of global leaders, it's probable that the extensive toil of the G20 sherpas in crafting an acceptable document will remain unnoticed. The intricate intricacies of the seemingly interminable conflict between Russia and Ukraine might captivate what is often dubbed the "strategic community," those jet-setting globetrotters of international seminars, but within India, it registers as a drab and tiresome affair. Curiously, even the rare hours allocated to deliberating the Ukrainian imbroglio within the hallowed halls of the Indian Parliament seldom revolved around the rights and wrongs of Vladimir Putin. If any interest bubbled among the parliamentarians, it stemmed primarily from the plight of the countless Indian students who had embarked on a quest for affordable European medical degrees amidst the Ukrainian tumult. Once the suc-

cessful and well-orchestrated rescue of these stranded students had concluded, the nation's collective intrigue in the conflict abruptly waned. At best, a bipartisan consensus materialized, bolstering the Narendra Modi government's unwavering resolve to resist Western entreaties to forgo the procurement of Russian oil and gas.

When viewed through a domestic lens, the G20 Summit piqued interest on two distinct fronts.

In the domestic realm, the first point of intrigue centered around the meticulous preparations undertaken by India's hosts to accommodate the colossal entourage of approximately 30 world leaders, not to mention the extensive media contingents that invariably accompany such eminent figures. The last time India assumed the role of host for a grand international gathering on this scale was back in October 2010, during the tenure of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, when the Commonwealth Games descended upon Delhi.

Regrettably, that event became ensnared in a web of controversy and scandal, teetering on the brink of calamity. Were it not for the eleventh-hour and resolute intervention of the Prime Minister's Office, which, naturally, entailed substantial cost overruns, the Games would have unraveled into a colossal disaster. The fact that it has taken a staggering 13 years to summon the courage to host another monumental international affair speaks volumes about the lingering shadows cast by the traumatic legacy of the Commonwealth Games.

The Modi government has unequivocally aced the readiness exam, showcasing its adeptness in orchestrating the G20 Summit with resounding success. The

conception and construction of the majestic Bharat Mandapam, the summit's distinguished venue nestled within the former Pragati Maidan grounds, did initially stir a tempest among critics, chiefly from the Congress and the Left-leaning connoisseurs of aesthetics. Their objections seemed to belong to the same league as the orchestrated outrage previously witnessed during discussions surrounding the Central Vista project and the erection of the new Parliament edifice.

While the final judgment on the new Parliament shall await the days when the special session shifts to its novel abode, the metamorphosis and enhancement of the precinct stretching from the freshly-inaugurated statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to the base of Raisina Hill has already garnered widespread acclaim. Those who had once drawn parallels between Modi's vision and the fantastical realms envisioned by Hitler in Berlin have since fallen into a conspicuous silence.

Perhaps the critics might have raised a clamor far louder had the transformation of Delhi, including the purpose-built infrastructure for the G20 Summit, carried even the faintest scent of corruption. The Modi government deserves commendation for executing projects of such grandeur and scale with impeccable timing, devoid of even the slightest hint of impropriety. This accomplishment signifies a significant shift in the prevailing work ethos entrenched within the government's ranks. Moreover, it signals the potential for a substantial and positive transformation in the political culture itself, underlining the prospect of a new era taking root.

The second facet of domestic intrigue surrounding an event like the G20 revolves around the art

of celebrity observation. Be it within the borders of India or beyond, common folks perpetually derive a vicarious thrill from glimpsing global celebrities amidst familiar surroundings they themselves inhabit.

Consider, for instance, the profound impact of a British Prime Minister of Indian heritage, confidently and unabashedly embracing his Hindu identity as he partakes in morning devotions at the Swaminarayan temple in Delhi. The repercussions of such a display are immeasurable. Beyond reshaping India's perception of Britain, Rishi Sunak has transmitted a potent message to a segment of contemporary India - a message that unequivocally asserts the absence of any discord between modernity and the timeless traditions of Hinduism. This message aligns with Modi's endeavors, albeit presented in a different aesthetic, and is poised to gain added momentum through the imagery of Sunak and his authentically Indian spouse within a temple setting. Equally noteworthy are the scenes of ISRO scientists offering prayers at Hindu temples, following the triumphant culmination of Chandrayaan-3, further reinforcing the harmony between scientific achievement and cultural heritage.

A distinctive facet of Indian hospitality during the G20 extravaganza was the artful fusion of traditional and contemporary Indian symbolism. Gone are the days when Indian states people draped themselves in the ubiquitous suit and tie, whether on home soil or foreign shores. Weather permitting, they now prefer to grace international gatherings donning the quintessential waistcoat, alternately known as the Nehru jacket or the Modi jacket, while the womenfolk ele-

gantly adorn themselves in sarees. Within the opulent banquets of the G20, the hosts mercifully broke free from the shackles of the age-old, government-sanctioned banquet menu, a relic unchanged since the 1960s. Instead, they entrusted the culinary extravaganza to renowned Indian chefs, heralding a delightful transformation. The result was a splendid exhibition of Indian cuisine infused with a contemporary flair, captivating the global palate. The ramifications of this gastronomic diplomacy are poised to unleash a ripple effect domestically, amplifying India's culinary heritage and its embrace of the modern era.

A striking facet of the extensive series of G20 gatherings that have unfolded over the past half-year lies in their deliberate departure from confinement within the national capital's boundaries. The rest of India has, on numerous occasions, voiced its discontent over Delhi's penchant for monopolizing the limelight, which rightfully belongs to the entire nation. Prime Minister Modi, in a conscious departure from this tradition, endeavored to disperse these events across India, turning the G20 into a prime exemplar of inclusivity. In this unprecedented arrangement, every state, including the erstwhile region of Jammu and Kashmir, was afforded the privilege of hosting various meetings. Beyond the incidental upswing in local infrastructure, the pivotal gain lay in the prevailing sense of active participation and engagement. This profound involvement is destined to yield substantial political dividends come 2024, as it forms the bedrock upon which future narratives of governance shall be constructed. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)



# Coal scarred lives of millions. Will a green future mean returning mining land to original owners?

By: Ramesh Sharma

When discussing the move from fossil fuels to renewable energy, government documents and reports increasingly talk about a "just transition" — one that shares the cost and the benefit equitably with communities. However, such transitions take place on a continuum, and as a country, we already have a bad track record. In fact, when it comes to coal, dams, and power projects, we have many examples of precisely what an unjust transition looks like.

Thousands, if not millions, have been displaced by development projects and hundreds of villages have been wiped out. In the 1950s, one generation of indigenous people was displaced by the public sector units. Captive mines of private companies have since hit the second generation too. There are inadequate records of the rehabilitation, resettlement, and relocation of those affected, especially in Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Jharkhand.

For a just transition to renewable energy, we should start by addressing these historical wrongs. First, we owe reparations for them. We can shift into the first gear for climate crisis adaptation and mitigation only by correcting what we have done wrong in the past and then ensuring we don't repeat these mistakes.

## Whose land is it anyway

The Land Acquisition Act, 2013, states that for land acquired by private entities for development projects, the purpose of the takeover must be clearly defined and remain unaltered. It also mandates that a piece of land be returned to its original owner if it is unused for more than five years. However, these rules are frequently flouted as we use the outdated Coal Bearing Areas (Acquisition and Development) Act, 1957. This has created a trust deficit among local communities in the area.

The Coal Bearing Areas Act should be realigned with the Land Acquisition Act.

A just transition from mining should focus on giving the land back to the communities it was originally taken from. The refill of such land is part of the legal lease agreement. It may be depleted, but land is generational wealth. The government is planning to start public-private infrastructure projects in mined-out areas. Repurposing can't take place between government and industry or industry and industry; it renders the meaning of the term redundant. Ideally, this land should be given back to the local municipal bodies or gram sabhas that can create alternative livelihoods on these patches.

## Share profit with the affected community

Whenever a development project is taken up, locals are promised that it will change their lives and provide them a better livelihood. This is significant if you consider that the top mining districts — Korba, Koria, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Jharkhand — are also the poorest or most vulnerable. These regions are strewn with unfulfilled and broken promises.

The District Mineral Foundation, set up under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 2015, was supposed to help share the profits of mining with the communities. It was to provide services such as drinking water supply, healthcare, and education in mining-affected areas. But it has been characterised by rampant corruption. In many cases, the money is lying unused. In others, it is being spent on building roads and other infrastructure elsewhere that don't benefit the affected communities.

Most mining districts in India score abysmally on development parameters and environmental and health markers, despite the presence of environmental impact evaluation measures and laws designed to protect these communities.



## Enable dignified employment

A just transition cannot be a transformation only from grey to green. Livelihoods and life should also get transformed in the process. The reality is that the locals are hardly fairly compensated for the projects that displace them and take away their generational wealth. In most cases, they do not get their promised employment. Their incomes plummet and eventually they are pushed away from their homes. Once displaced, they also fall off the development radar. I recently surveyed the mining areas in Chhattisgarh's Raigarh district and found that barely 10%-15% of the people employed were original residents of the place.

Even when people do get employed, it is in exchange for their dignity. I have met people who owned 20 acres of land in their village and were hired as watchmen to stop others from entering the very land that was taken away from them. Bringing them livelihood is not just about implementing government programmes.

## Measuring environmental impact

Environment Impact Assessment is used to measure the economic and environmental costs and benefits of setting up a de-

velopment project in an area. However, non-compliance with the benchmarks of the assessment barely ever results in a project being cancelled. On the contrary, multiple amendments have been made to the Environment Impact Assessment rules to facilitate easy approval of power projects such as building of dams.

Further, the experts who perform the evaluation often represent the project rather than the affected community. In an ideal situation, the government should ensure that communities are involved in making decisions about their immediate environment and thus be made a part of any form of impact measurement that affects them.

## Give gram sabhas power

The Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas, or PESA, Act, 1996, mandates that the gram sabha's permission be taken before setting up coal mines in and around villages. However, there have been several instances where mines were built in these villages despite resistance expressed by the villagers at these sabhas. In some cases, using the loophole that the PESA Act has not been implemented in various states, the government didn't even consider the discussions held at the sabhas before decid-

ing the fate of the land and its people.

To ensure that community voices are taken into consideration during the energy transition process, it is important to value existing structures of local governance.

## Environmental norms

The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority, or CAMPA, was set up in 2002 to collect and divert funds for compensatory afforestation on non-forest land whenever a forest area is taken up for mining purpose. However, the fund remains poorly utilised and managed on the ground. The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016, which now dictates the CAMPA fund is being used to capture community lands and provide even more power to the forest department to oppress forest-dwelling communities.

Ecologically fragile areas should be part of the no-go category so that all projects in these areas are non-starters. However, these benchmarks keep getting diluted and we are losing a lot of green cover to new mines.

As a land rights activist, I am now concerned about whose land will be used for transitions to renewable energy. Even after the conversation about just transitions began, people have been alienated by solar projects that took over acres and acres of their land, giving them paltry returns.

We must, at some point, ask what the benchmarks are against which the justness of energy transition will be measured. There are 120 districts in the country that have sizeable fossil-fuel industries or fossil-fuel-dependent industries, and they house one-fourth of the country's population. If India truly wants to ensure a just transition, it will have to start by addressing what it did wrong in the past. Can community members trust the state to suddenly do justice by them when there's a history of unkept promises and pro-people legislatures being rendered toothless? (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

# As Antarctic sea ice continues its dramatic decline, we need more measurements and much better models to predict its future



By: Inga Smith, Andrew Pauling, Greg Leonard, Maren Elisabeth Richter, Max Thomas, Pat Langhorne, and Wolfgang Rack

After two seasons of record-breaking lows, Antarctica's sea ice remains in dramatic decline, tracking well below any winter maximum levels observed since satellite monitoring began during the late 1970s.

A layer of frozen seawater that surrounds the Antarctic continent, sea ice cycles from maximum coverage in September to a minimum in February. The summer minimum has also continued to diminish, with three record low summers in the past seven years.

Some scientists have suggested this year could mark a regime shift for Antarctic sea ice. The consequences could be far-reaching for Earth's climate, because sea ice keeps the planet cooler by reflecting solar energy back into the atmosphere and insulating the ocean. Its formation also generates cold, salty water masses that drive global ocean currents.

The annual freeze-thaw cycle of Antarctic sea ice is one of Earth's largest seasonal changes, but is a major challenge for climate models to predict accurately.

Since the 1970s, satellites have been tracking a quantity known as "sea ice extent", which is the total surface area where at least 15 per cent is covered by sea ice.

This September, it reached a satellite-era record low for this time of year. The previous year, after tracking much lower than the median all winter, Antarctic sea ice extent made a late rally and was 18.3 million square kilometres at its maximum by September 2022, around 2 per cent below the 1981-2010 median.

Although 2 per cent might not sound like much, the following summer biologists reported devastating effects on Emperor penguins. No chicks survived in four out of five breeding sites in one region of sea ice loss.

In 2023, Antarctic sea ice extent started the winter even lower than in 2022, and by the end of July was almost 13 per cent below the 1981-2010 median for that time of year. It reached its maximum extent on September 7, at just under 17 million square kilometres, which is nearly 9 per cent below the 1981-2010 median.

Antarctica has bucked the trend of vanishing sea ice observed in the Arctic for decades. Satellite records show a small increasing trend in Antarctic sea ice extent from 2007 to 2016, but this was followed by a decrease since then.

A recent study shows that almost all models in the current collection of simulations used for the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) failed to reproduce the trend in Antarctic sea ice area observed between 1979 and 2018.

Global climate models predicted that Antarctic sea ice extent should have been diminishing for all of that period, which is at odds with the observations.

These models remain our best tools for forecasting future climate. They have been developed since the 1960s to represent the wide range of physical processes of importance to the climate system as realistically as possible.

They are made up of individual component models for the circulation of the atmosphere and oceans, the transfer of solar energy through the atmosphere, land surface properties and the evolution of sea ice.

While these models have generally done well at forecasting ocean and land surface warming over the past few decades, they have struggled to simulate Antarctic sea ice.

Many research groups around the world have investigated the reasons why models have failed to accurately simulate Antarctic sea ice. Changes in wind and wave patterns, natural variability, stratospheric ozone and melt water from the Antarctic ice sheet entering the Southern Ocean have all been proposed as potential explanations.

So far, none of these have proved to be the definitive answer.

The thickness, or depth, of sea ice cannot be measured directly by satellites because it is thin, salty and hidden below a layer of snow of unknown thickness.

Unlike the Arctic, where we have extensive data from submarines and other sources, information about Antarctic sea ice thickness is very sparse. The data we have mainly come from holes drilled in the sea ice, sea ice monitoring stations, and electromagnetic induction measurements from sleds, helicopters or planes.

The data are mostly from land-fast sea ice, which is the sea ice attached to land or ice shelves.

We have only a few airborne thickness measurements over freely moving pack ice, which makes up most of Antarctic sea ice. We need both sea ice area and thickness to determine sea ice volume, which is important for knowing the overall impact of climate change on sea ice.

## Antarctic storms

McMurdo Sound is a region of the Antarctic coastline in the Ross Sea where both New Zealand (Scott Base) and the USA (McMurdo Station) have Antarctic bases. The sea ice in McMurdo Sound was dramatically thinner than usual in 2022, but not in 2023.

In 2022, multiple storms kept blowing out McMurdo Sound sea ice during winter. Sea ice that would normally be about two metres thick was around 1-1.3 m thick because it was not able to stay in place and grow thicker over the winter season.

Snow was thicker than usual in places, which slowed down the growth of sea ice by insulating it from the cold air above. The weather was not warmer, and the ice had not melted; it had been blown out by strong winds.

This thinner-than-usual sea ice caused major disruptions in Antarctic operations for New Zealand and other countries in 2022. The University of Otago's automated sea ice monitoring system is installed each year to measure sea ice thickness, temperature and snow depth.

In 2022, Scott Base staff had to take the equipment onto the sea ice on foot for the first time because the sea ice was deemed unsafe to drive vehicles on.

Seeing open water in front of McMurdo Station in the middle of winter in 2022 was shocking for us. However, despite the extremely low winter sea ice extent around most of Antarctica in 2023, sea ice in McMurdo Sound formed in a similar way to most years.

It is not yet clear how much climate change has driven the huge anomalies in Antarctic sea ice extent or thickness, but events like these could be a harbinger of things to come.

To have a chance of predicting these changes, we will need dramatically improved modelling capabilities, more measurements of crucial factors driving sea ice change, and new ways of making those measurements. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

# Climate action plan and Indian cities



By: Ramanath Jha

Amongst the stand-out challenges confronting Indian cities, climate change has become the most critical concern. Over time, climate change will have severe outcomes around the world. The worrying part for urban local bodies (ULBs) is that the consequences of climate change will manifest themselves heavily in cities. Already, Indian cities are witnessing urban floods, cyclones, harsh winters, and oppressive heat waves with increasing frequency and intensity. Apart from the loss of human lives and its impact on urban health, these events take a heavy toll on municipal infrastructure, livelihood, and the general economic well-being of municipalities. Since cities are now home to more than half of the global population and are destined to get demographically even bigger, what happens in cities will largely determine the future of worldwide efforts at addressing challenges related to climate change.

Cities have an added responsibility since they consume three-fourths of energy and generate about 75 per cent of the worldwide global CO2 emissions. They have undoubtedly emerged as the

key contributors to climate change. For cities to play a major role in the fight against climate change, ULBs must prioritise action on building resilience against climate change and consider it a key municipal responsibility. Unfortunately, the words mandating the 'preparation and implementation of Climate Action Plan' do not appear in most Indian municipal statute books. States would do well to include post-haste the preparation, implementation and monitoring of climate action plans as an obligatory municipal function.

Since cities are now home to more than half of the global population and are destined to get demographically even bigger, what happens in cities will largely determine the future of worldwide efforts at addressing challenges related to climate change.

Many countries have local climate plans (LCP) mandated by law. In Europe, for instance, Denmark, France, Slovakia and the United Kingdom (UK) have made the adoption of LCPs compulsory. In the UK, LCPs have been in existence since 2008, where local planning authorities have a statutory responsibility to include in their local planning documents "policies designed to secure that the development

and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change". Advice in many countries is also forthcoming about how city governments can integrate climate change-related issues into other local policy processes. There is also evidence to suggest that the existence of national regulation has a substantial impact on leading cities to the task of local climate planning.

As cities prepare to brace themselves for the consequences of climate change, they must do their homework thoroughly. They would be required to develop a comprehensive city action plan (CAP) for measuring, planning, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The cities would have to come up with a CAP for mitigation as well as adaptation. The former involves plans for reducing the flow of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere in a given time frame.

Such reduction would be achieved by reducing the sources of these gases—burning fossil fuels for electricity or transport, and conducting economic activities in a sustainable manner. The latter involves adjusting to actual or expected future climate and requires-

requires reducing the risk of the harmful effects of climate change that comprise extreme weather events. The mitigation and adaptation strategies must be broken down into specific implementation projects backed by financial resources. In Maharashtra, cities are already mandated to prepare an annual Environmental Status Report (ESR) that updates data on transport, air pollution, noise pollution, solid waste, open spaces, water, sewerage, etc. The ESR could as well be expanded to include data that would allow informed decisions on climate change.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is the first Indian city to prepare a climate action plan. The MCAP (Mumbai Climate Action Plan) 2022 aims at intensifying BMC's focus on tackling climate change and increasing Mumbai's climate resilience. MCAP is framed as a policy document, leveraging scientific knowledge backed by data and an evidence-based planning approach.

It identifies urban flooding, coastal risks, urban heat, landslides, and air pollution as the major vulnerability areas of the city and outlines ways of mobilising resources to move from action planning to strategic projects. The MCAP also

spells out an institutional mechanism in the form of a 'Climate Cell' to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of all activities related to climate change.

The MCAP highlights that while the BMC would be at the forefront of the mitigation efforts and attempts towards building city resilience, the state, all city institutions and all citizens are vital stakeholders and each has significant roles to play. Apart from the BMC, the industry, academia, non-government organisations, community-based organisations, residential societies, and individual citizens would have to join the monumental task of mitigation and adaptation. The Government of India and state governments are expected to give clear policy directions and financially support the local governments. Additionally, they have to demonstrate their serious intent by doing all that is necessary for subjects and areas that fall within their domain.

Since climate change will impact cities worldwide, though, with varying intensity in different areas, cities need not work in silos but share their experiences and learn from the experiences of others. Such sharing of best practices is already happening. For instance, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) links about a hundred big cities and brings them on a single platform to address climate change and share urban initiatives to reduce GHG emissions.

Similarly, the Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) has launched a global network of more than 1,500 cities in 86 countries committed to building a sustainable and low-carbon future. Within the country, the National Institute of Urban Affairs

(NIUA) and the World Resources Institute (WRI) have crafted India's first national coalition platform to mainstream eco-based services and nature-based solutions to build urban climate resilience. At the state level, cities could have a common platform of chief executives sharing best practices and inputs regarding climate change planning-related knowledge. Updating, sharing, and disseminating climate-related experiences would require institutional support for the capacity-building of all stakeholders. This will have to be an ongoing effort, as the impacts of climate change would be dynamic, requiring periodic revisions in the targeted action and corresponding capacities. Since all city stakeholders need to get involved in the effort, and since many aspects of current urban living run contrary to the requirements of sustainability, lifestyles would need to be modified or eschewed to bring living in line with the protection and conservation of the environment and environmentally responsible behaviour (ERB).

Conscious efforts towards conserving water, generating less waste, greater use of public transport, increased use of green energy and promoting greenery and urban agriculture in homes are some of the climate-friendly practices that individual citizens would have to be encouraged to adopt. Climate action plans will have greater applicability if they comprise annual emission reduction targets and establish a multi-stakeholder action plan regarding strategies for heat, cyclones, and landslides. Indeed, the colossal task facing humanity would not brook absences. (Courtesy: ORF)



The blaze was seemingly caused by fireworks set off to celebrate at the event in Nineveh province

# A fire at a wedding hall in northern Iraq has killed around 100 people and injured 150

**MOSUL, Sept 27:** A raging fire seemingly caused by fireworks set off to celebrate a Christian wedding consumed a hall packed with guests in northern Iraq, killing around 100 people and injuring 150 others as authorities warned on Wednesday the death toll could still rise.

Authorities said that flammable building materials also contributed to the latest disaster to hit Iraq's dwindling Christian minority.

In the fire's chaotic aftermath, officials offered conflicting death tolls and security officials said they detained staff at the wedding hall as part of their investigation. The fire happened in the Hamdaniya area of Iraq's Nineveh province, authorities said.

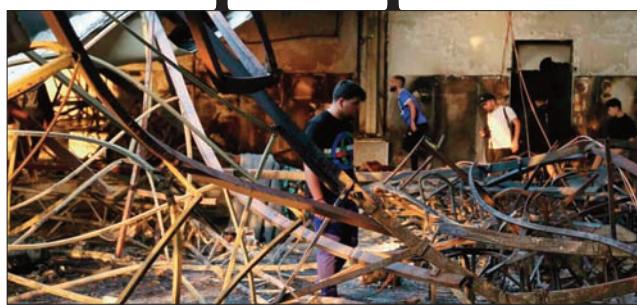
That's a predominantly Christian area just outside of the city of Mosul, some 335 kilometres (205 miles) northwest of Baghdad. There was no official word on the cause of the blaze, but the Kurdish television news channel

Rudaw aired footage showing pyrotechnics shooting flames up from the floor of the event and setting a chandelier aflame.

After the blaze, charred metal and debris could be seen as people walked through the scene of the fire, the only light coming from television cameras and the lights of onlookers' mobile phones.

Survivors arrived at local hospitals in bandages, receiving oxygen, as their families milled through hallways and outside as workers organised more oxygen cylinders. Some of those burned included children. Ambulance sirens wailed for hours after the fire as paramedics brought out the injured.

Other footage shown on other local television networks appeared to show the bride and groom on the dance floor when the fire began Tuesday night, stunned by the sight of the burning debris. It wasn't immediately clear if they were among those hurt.



"There were about to do a slow dance and then they lit up this thing for the dance which caught fire," one injured woman told Rudaw from a hospital gurney. Another man injured in the fire at the hospital similarly told Rudaw that the blaze started as the couple prepared for their slow dance.

"They lit up fireworks," he said. "It hit the ceiling, which caught fire."

He added: "The entire hall was on fire in seconds." Extravagant wedding ceremonies are common in Iraq, like many countries in the Middle East.

Families often invite hundreds of relatives and members of the broader community, spending heavily on spectacular ceremonies with elaborately decorated halls, music and entertainers, often including pyrotechnics.

Casualty figures fluctuated in the hours after the incident, which is common in Iraq. An initial Health Ministry statement, carried by the state-run Iraqi News Agency, said the blaze killed over 100 people and injured 150.

Health officials in Nineveh province put the death toll at

114. A Health Ministry official, speaking to The Associated Press at midday Wednesday on condition of anonymity as he did not have authorisation to talk to journalists, put the death toll at 92, with 101 people still receiving medical treatment.

"The death toll is expected to rise as some are in critical condition," he said. Ahmed Dubardani, a health official in the province, told Rudaw that many of those injured suffered serious burns.

"The majority of them were completely burned and some others had 50 to 60% of their bodies burned," Dubardani said. "This is not good at all. The majority of them were not in good condition."

Father Rudi Saffar Khoury, a priest at the wedding, said "It was a disaster in every sense of the word." The number of Christians in Iraq today is estimated at 150,000, compared to 1.5 million in 2003. Iraq's total population is more than 40 million.

Over the past two decades, Iraq's Christian minority has been violently targeted by extremists first from al-Qaida and then the Islamic State militant group.

Although the Nineveh Plains, their historic homeland, was wrested back from the Islamic State group six years ago, some towns are still mostly rubble and lack basic services, and many Christians have left for Europe, Australia or the United States.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani ordered an investigation into the fire and asked the country's Interior and Health officials to provide relief, his office said in a statement online.

Hamdaniya is on Iraq's Nineveh Plains and under the control of its central government, though it is close to and claimed by Iraq's semiautonomous Kurdish regional government. Masrour Barzani, the prime minister of the Kurdish region, ordered hospitals there to help those hurt in the blaze. (AP)

## India-Russia relations 'very, very steady': Jaishankar

**NEW YORK, Sept 27:** India-Russia relations have held "very, very steady" and "we take great care" to make sure that the relationship is working, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said. During a conversation at the Council on Foreign Relations here on Tuesday, Jaishankar said that Russia's relationship with Europe and the West has been "so severely disrupted" in the wake of the February 2022 Ukraine war that Moscow is actually turning to Asia and other parts of the world.

"The India-Russia relationship has actually held very, very steady," he said, adding that there has been the Soviet period and post-Soviet period. "Part of it is that I think there is an understanding in both countries that as big powers in the Asian continent, there is a kind of structural basis for having to get along, wanting to get along. And so we take great care to make sure the relationship is working," Jaishankar said hours after addressing the 78th UN General Assembly session.

Jaishankar said that Russia has historically seen itself as a European power, even though it's spread across both Europe and Asia.

"My expectation would be" that because its relationship with Europe and with the West has been so severely disrupted since 2022, he said, apparently referring to the US-led sanctions on Moscow for invading Ukraine.

"Russia is actually turning to Asia and to other parts of the world, but primarily to Asia because that's where a lot of economic activity is and it is also an Asian power even though it has not always seen itself primarily as that", Jaishankar said.

"I would actually predict that Russia would make very strenuous efforts to build alternative relationships, a lot of which would be in Asia. And this would reflect itself in economics and trade, possibly in other domains, as well." (PTI)

## Russia accuses Ukraine's Western allies of helping attack its Black Sea Fleet headquarters

**KYIV, Sept 27:** Russia on Wednesday accused Ukraine's Western allies of helping plan and conduct last week's missile strike on the Black Sea Fleet's headquarters in annexed Crimea.

"There is no doubt that the attack had been planned in advance using Western intelligence means, NATO satellite assets and reconnaissance planes and was implemented upon the advice of American and British security agencies and in close coordination with them," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said at a briefing.

Moscow has repeatedly claimed that the US and its NATO allies have effectively become involved in the conflict by supplying weapons to Ukraine and providing it with intelligence information and helping plan attacks on Russian facilities.

The accusation came the day after video appeared to show the fleet's commander, Adm. Viktor Sokolov, was still alive despite Ukraine's claims



— without providing supporting evidence — that he was among 34 officers killed in Friday's strike on the port city of Sevastopol.

The Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014, has been a frequent target since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine 20 months ago. Crimea has served as the key hub supporting the invasion and has increasingly come under fire by Ukraine.

Ukraine said the strike that

put a large hole in the main building of the headquarters had wounded 105 people, though those claims could not independently be verified.

Russia initially said one serviceman was killed but quickly retracted that statement and said the person was missing.

Moscow has provided no further updates and has not commented directly on Sokolov's status.

The Ministry of Defence, however, posted video Tuesday showing Sokolov among other senior officers attending a video

conference with Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Sokolov did not speak in the clip shown.

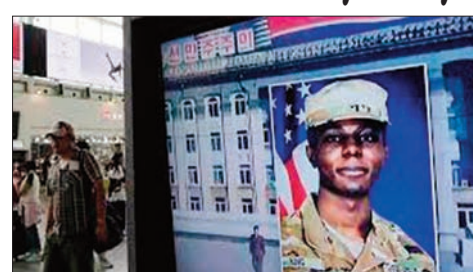
Ukraine's Special Operation Forces posted a statement Tuesday saying its sources claimed Sokolov was among the dead, many of whom had not yet been identified. It said it was trying to verify the claim after the video surfaced.

Sokolov was shown speaking to journalists about the Black Fleet's operations in a video posted on a news channel linked to the Russian Defence Ministry.

It wasn't clear when the video was recorded. The video didn't contain any mention of the Ukrainian attack on fleet headquarters.

Zakharova's statements followed comments made on Tuesday by Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council, who said the arrival of American-made Abrams tanks in Ukraine and a US promise to supply an unspecified number of long-range AT-ACMS missiles would push NATO closer to a direct conflict with Russia. (AP)

## NKorea will expel US soldier who crossed into the country in July



**SEOUL, Sept 27:** North Korea said on Wednesday that it will expel a US soldier who crossed into the country through the heavily armed border between the Koreas in July. The North's official Korean Central News Agency said that authorities have finished their questioning of Pvt Travis King. It said that he confessed to illegally entering the North because he harboured "ill feeling against inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination" within the US Army and was "disillusioned about the unequal US society". Verifying the authenticity of the comments attributed to King is impossible. The agency did not say when authorities plan to expel King or to where.

King, who had served in South Korea, sprinted into North Korea while on a civilian tour of a border village on July 18, becoming the first American confirmed to be detained in the North in nearly five years. At the time he joined the civilian tour and crossed the border, he was supposed to be heading to Fort Bliss, Texas, following his release from prison in South Korea on an assault conviction.

Following weeks of silence, North Korea confirmed in August that it had detained King and was questioning the circumstances surrounding his border crossing. (AP)

## Iran says it has successfully launched an imaging satellite into orbit amid tensions with the West

**DUBAI, Sept 27:** Iran claimed on Wednesday that it successfully launched an imaging satellite into space, a move that could further ratchet up tensions with Western nations that fear its space technology could be used to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran's Communication Minister Isa Zarepour said the Noor-3 satellite had been put in an orbit 450 kilometres (280 miles) above the Earth's surface, the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

It was not clear when exactly the launch took place. There was no immediate acknowledgment from Western officials of the launch or of the satellite being put into orbit.

The US military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Iran has had a series of failed launches in recent years.

Zarepour said the aerospace arm of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which has had success in launching satellites in the past, had carried out the most recent launch. Authorities did not immediately release images of the launch. The Guard operates its own space program and military infrastructure parallel to Iran's regular armed forces and answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It launched its first satellite into space in April 2020. But the head of the US Space Command later dismissed it as a "tumbling webcam in space" that would not provide vital intelligence. Western sanctions bar Iran from importing advanced spying technology.

The United States has alleged that Iran's satellite launches defy a UN Security Council resolution and has called on Tehran to undertake no activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

The US intelligence community's 2022 threat assessment

claims the development of satellite launch vehicles "shortens the timeline" for Iran to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile because it uses similar technology. Iran has always denied seeking nuclear weapons, and says its space program, like its nuclear activities, is for purely civilian purposes.

US intelligence agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency say Iran abandoned an organized military nuclear program in 2003. Over the past decade, Iran has sent several short-lived satellites into orbit and in 2013 launched a monkey into space. The program has seen recent troubles, however. There have been five failed launches in a row for the Simorgh program, another satellite-carrying rocket.

A fire at the Imam Khomeini

Spaceport in February 2019 killed three researchers, authorities said at the time. A launchpad rocket explosion later that year drew the attention of then-President Donald Trump.

Tensions are already high with Western nations over Iran's nuclear program, which has steadily advanced since Trump five years ago withdrew the US from the 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers and restored crippling sanctions on Iran.

Efforts to revive the agreement reached an impasse more than a year ago. Since then, the IAEA has said Iran has enough uranium enriched to near-weapons grade levels to build "several" nuclear weapons if it chooses to do so. Iran is also building a new underground nuclear facility that would likely be impervious to US airstrikes.

Iran has expressed willingness to return to the 2015 nuclear deal, but says the US should first ease the sanctions. (AP)

## 9 killed in explosion as children play with rocket shell in Pak's Sindh

**KARACHI, Sept 27:** At least nine people, including five children, of the same family were killed on Wednesday when a rocket launcher's shell exploded at a house when the kids were playing with the ammunition in Pakistan's Sindh province, police said.

Kashmore-Kandhot Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rohil Khosa said children found a rocket shell while playing on the ground and brought it home where it exploded, killing nine people, including five children, two women, and two men, of the same family. He said besides the casualties five others were injured in the explosion and rushed to hospital.

"This is an area on the riverine belt and the rocket shell must have been left there by dacoits who hide out deep into the riverine belt areas," Khosa said. The SSP said the police had

reached the site and further investigation was underway and an "emergency" had been declared at the Kandhot Civil Hospital.

Pakistan Peoples Party's Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said in a tweet that the riverine areas of Sindh and Punjab had become a safe haven to many criminal gangs and urged the government to clear the region from such elements.

Sindh Chief Minister Justice Maqbool Baqar has sought a report from the provincial inspector general on how a rocket launcher reached the Zangi Subzwai Goth village in Kashmore district's Kandhot tehsil of the province, Dawn News reported.

"Was any stock of weapons being smuggled to the Kutcha areas? Are there enablers of the dacoits present in the goth (village)?", he asked. (PTI)

## In landmark court case, 6 young activists take on 32 European nations over climate action

**STRASBOURG (FRANCE), Sept 27:** Six young people from Portugal will argue that governments across Europe aren't doing enough to protect people from the harms of climate change at the European Court of Human Rights on Wednesday in the latest and largest instance of activists taking governments to court to force climate action.

The lawyers representing the young adults and children will argue that the 32 European governments they're suing have failed to adequately address global warming and therefore violated some of their fundamental rights.

"This is truly a David and Goliath case," said Gearóid Ó Cuinn, the director of the non-profit organisation Global Legal Action Network that's been crowdfunding to support the group.

"It is unprecedented in its scale and its consequences," he said. "It also makes legal history. Never before have so many countries had to defend themselves in front of a court, anywhere in the world."

Although there have been successful climate cases at national and regional levels

— young environmentalists recently won a similar case in Montana — the activists' legal team said that because national jurisdictions did not go far enough to protect their rights the group felt compelled to take the matter to the Strasbourg-based court.

Arguing that their rights to life, to privacy and family life, and to be free from discrimination are being violated, they hope a favourable ruling will force the 27 EU member countries, as well as the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, Russia and Türkiye, to accelerate their climate efforts such as building renewable infrastructure and reducing their greenhouse gas emissions.

The court's rulings are legally binding on member countries, and failure to comply makes authorities liable for hefty fines decided by the court.

"This judgement would act like a binding treaty imposed by the court on the respondents, requiring them to rapidly accelerate their climate mitigation efforts," said lawyer Gerry Liston. "In legal terms, it would be a gamechanger."

But the plaintiffs — who are between 11

and 24 years of age and are not seeking financial compensation — will need to convince judges that they have been sufficiently affected to be considered as victims. The group will also need to prove to the courts that governments have a legal duty to make sure global warming is held to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times in line with the goals of the 2015 Paris climate agreement. Science is on the activists' side.

The world is way off track on limiting warming to 1.5 C, scientists say, with global average temperatures projected to rise by 2 to 4 degrees C (2.6 to 7.2 F) by 2100 at current trajectories of warming and emissions reductions plans. As the world warms, climate scientists predict more frequent and more extreme weather events, from heavier flooding and rainfall to prolonged droughts and heat waves and increasingly intense storms.

Speaking at a news conference ahead of the hearing, the activists said climate change affects their daily lives and their studies, and damages both their physical and psychological well-being. (AP)

Amazonas state declared an environmental emergency 2 weeks ago in response to the prolonged drought

## Brazil's Amazon rainforest faces a severe drought that may affect around 500,000 people

**RIO DE JANEIRO (BRAZIL), Sept 27:** The Amazon rainforest in Brazil is facing a severe drought that may affect around 500,000 people by the end of the year, authorities said on Tuesday.

Many are already struggling to access essential supplies such as food and water, because the principal means of transportation in the region is waterways, and river levels are historically low. Droughts also impact fishing, a means of subsistence for many riverside communities.

Amazonas state declared an environmental emergency two weeks ago in response to the pro-



longed drought and launched a response plan valued at USD 20 million. Authorities will also distribute food and water supplies as well as personal hygiene kits, the state's civil defence agency said in a statement.

Gov. Wilson Lima was in

Brazil's capital, Brasilia, on Tuesday to meet with representatives of the federal government. Lima spoke with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to discuss the drought.

The different levels of government will "coordinate measures in support of the people living in the affected municipalities", Lima said on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, on Sunday.

Fifteen municipalities were in a state of emergency on Tuesday, while 40 others were on a state of alert, the civil defence authority said.

According to the port of Manaus, which monitors water levels,

the river stood at 16.7 metres (55 feet) on Tuesday, around six metres (20 feet) below the same day last year. The lowest level of water was recorded on October 24, 2010, when the river dropped to 13.6 metres (about 45 feet).

The drought is forecast to last longer and be more intense because of El Nino climate phenomenon, which inhibits the formation of rain clouds, the civil defence authority said. Climate change exacerbates droughts by making them more frequent, longer and more severe. Warmer temperatures enhance evaporation, which reduces surface water and dries out soils and vegetation. (AP)

## Azerbaijan says 192 of its troops were killed in last week's offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh

**BAKU, Sept 27:** A total of 192 Azerbaijani troops were killed and 511 were wounded during Azerbaijan's offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh last week, the country's Health Ministry announced on Wednesday.

It also said that one Azeri civilian died in the hostilities. Nagorno-Karabakh officials said earlier that at least 200 people on their side, including 10 civilians, were killed and over 400 were wounded in the fighting.

The military operation allowed Azerbaijan to reclaim full control over the breakaway region that was run by separatists for about 30 years.

Tens of thousands of ethnic Armenians — more than a third of the region's population — have already left. More are likely to follow after separatist troops agreed to lay down arms and Azerbaijan lifted a 10-month

blockade of the road linking the territory to Armenia.

Azerbaijan and separatist officials have held two rounds of talks on the "reintegration" of Nagorno-Karabakh and its ethnic Armenian population into the mainly Muslim country, but how exactly it would happen remains unclear.

Nagorno-Karabakh is a region of Azerbaijan that came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces, backed by the Armenian military, in separatist fighting that ended in 1994.

During a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan took back parts of Nagorno-Karabakh along with surrounding territory that Armenian forces had claimed during the earlier conflict.

In December, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade of the only road connecting

Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia, alleging that the Armenian government was using the road for mineral extraction and illicit weapons shipments to the region's separatist forces.

Armenia charged that the closure denied basic food and fuel supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh's approximately 120,000 people. Azerbaijan rejected the accusation, arguing the region could receive supplies through the Azerbaijani city of Aghdam — a solution long resisted by Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, who called it a strategy for Azerbaijan to gain control of the region.

Some 42,500 people, or about 35 per cent of Nagorno-Karabakh's ethnic Armenian population, had left for neighbouring Armenia as of Wednesday morning, according to Armenian authorities. (AP)



## CBI team reaches Imphal to probe killing of 2 Manipur students



**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** A CBI team led by special director Ajay Bhatnagar reached Imphal Wednesday afternoon to investigate the "kidnapping and killing" of two students days after they went missing, sources said.

Photos of the bodies of the two students -- Phijam Hemjit (20) and Hijam Linthoingambi (17) -- who were missing since July 6, were shared widely on social media on Monday, sparking fresh rounds of protests in the state.

The focus of the agency will be identifying the scene of crime, retrieve the bodies besides and nail the perpetrators, the sources said.

The team will meet senior police and government officials and go through local intelligence about the tragic incident, they said. The state government in consultation with the home ministry referred the matter to the CBI which immediately dispatched a team of officials led by agency's second in command Bhatnagar to probe the crime.

Another senior officer, joint director Ghanashyam Upadhyay, who is camping in Imphal, also joined the team on arrival, the sources said.

The team comprises officers who have expertise in special crime, crime scene recreation, interrogation and technical surveillance. It will also have experts from the CBI's elite Central Forensic Science Laboratory, the sources said.

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

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

The last location of their mobile phones was traced to Lamdan, near

the winter flower tourist spot in Churachandpur district, police had said.

In a post on X, Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh had said on Tuesday: "In light of the distressing news that emerged yesterday regarding the tragic demise of the missing students, I want to assure the people of the state that both the state and central government are closely working together to nab the perpetrators."

He said the presence of the CBI officers in the state "underscores the commitment of our authorities to swiftly resolve this matter".

"I have been constantly in touch with Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri @AmitShah ji to find the perpetrators and bring them to justice," Singh said.

Security personnel have been put on alert and additional measures taken to prevent any incident following the photos of the deceased students going viral, a senior officer said. The government has assured people that "swift and decisive action will be taken against all those involved in the kidnapping and killing of Phijam Hemjit and Hijam Linthoingambi".

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

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

## Several injured after students' protest rally in Imphal turns ugly

*The students, raising slogans of 'we want justice', were heading towards the chief minister N Biren Singh's bungalow*

**IMPHAL, Sept 27:** Several students were injured on Wednesday after security forces fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse a stone-pelting mob in Imphal's Moirangkhom, about 200 metres from the CM's secretariat.

The students were participating in a rally which started from Hau grounds of the state capital protesting the kidnapping and killing of two youths, who went missing in July and whose photographs went viral on social media recently.

The students, raising slogans of "we want justice", were heading towards the chief minister Biren N Singh's bungalow, officials said.

Lanthengba, a student leader leading the rally told reporters, "We demand that the killers of the



two students be arrested within 24 hours and their bodies be recovered for their last rites. We also want to meet the chief minister to

address our grievances. How can we continue with our studies when our friends and classmates are being murdered in cold blood."

Police tried to cool down tempers by announcing that "arrangements are being made to allow student representatives to meet both the chief minister and the governor."

However, the situation suddenly turned ugly and some students started pelting stones prompting the security forces including RAF personnel to fire several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse them, officials said.

This comes a day after a clash between RAF personnel and locals left 45 protesters, mostly students, injured. (PTI)

## Armed guard of Meghalaya HC kills self with service rifle



**SHILLONG, Sept 27:** An armed guard of an additional judge of Meghalaya High Court on Wednesday allegedly shot himself to death with his service rifle, police said.

The incident took place around 6.30 am at the residence of Justice Biswadeep Bhattacharjee under Laban police station where the 46-year-old personnel was on duty, they said.

Police have taken the body to the Shillong Civil Hospital for post-mortem and an investigation into the incident was ordered, a senior police officer said.

Family members, who were present at the hospital, said they suspected the man suffered from depression. (PTI)

## Cash incentives to Arunachal Wushu players not participating in Asian Games

**ITANAGAR, Sept 27:** Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday assured that the three Wushu players of the state, who could not participate in the Asian Games at Hangzhou in China, will be treated as participants of the Indian Wushu team and given ₹ 20 lakh incentive as per the state's sports policy.

The three players could not participate in the sporting event due to denial of visa by the neighbouring country.

The three Wushu players — Onilu Tega, Nyeman Wangsu and Mepung Lamgu — along with sports and youth affairs minister Mama Natung, their coach Maibam Premchandra Singh, sports secretary Abu Tayeng, officials of the Arunachal Olympic Association and Arunachal Wushu Association had called on Khandu at his office, a CMO communicated.

Stating that the three athletes were the first from Arunachal Pradesh to qualify for the Asian Games but had to miss the prestigious event for no fault of theirs, Khandu said they will receive the cash incentive of ₹ 20 lakh each in accordance with the state's sports policy for an athlete participating in the Asian Games.

He also said coach Maibam Premchandra Singh would also receive his share of 10 per cent of the incentives awarded to the athletes.

Interacting with the young Wushu players, Khandu encouraged them to train harder and focus on the 2026 Asian Games scheduled to be held in Tokyo, Japan.

He commended the Arunachal



Wushu is yet to be included as an event in the Olympics.

"As true sportspersons, you are not supposed to get disheartened but prepare harder for the next tournament. You might have lost this chance to show your talent, but for us you are heroes and medal winners," he said.

He also asked them not to worry about their future as the state's sports policy provides for a government job to excelling sportspersons.

"You need not worry. You are very young now. As and when the time comes, you will get a job with the government," he added.

Encouraging them to concentrate on their training, the chief minister assured them that all expenses of their training, dietary requirements, etc will be borne by the state government keeping in mind the Tokyo Asian Games.

Wushu is yet to be included as an event in the Olympics.

He commended the Arunachal

## 'RAF refutes making casteist remarks'

**IMPHAL, Sept 27:** The CRPF/RAF has refuted making casteist remarks while dealing with demonstrators protesting the killing of two students who had been missing since July 6, Manipur Police has said.

The clarification came after a video went viral where an RAF personnel was allegedly heard stating, "It's not our community, do whatever you want (humara jaati nahi hain, kuch bhi karo)," made rounds on social media inviting widespread condemnation from social media users.

In a post on 'X' on Tuesday night, police said, "A video is being circulated on WhatsApp groups/Twitter showing that RAF personnel while dealing with violent mob are passing casteist remarks. The voice in the clip is not of RAF personnel. It appears that video maker has intentionally recorded casteist remarks in his own voice to tarnish the image of RAF troops. The alleged video has been made to defame and discourage the RAF personnel who are performing their duty with high level of dedication and sincerity." (PTI)

## We stand in staunch opposition against AFSPA: NSF



**DIMAPUR, Sept 27:** The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) said it "stands in staunch opposition to the continuation of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in the Naga homeland".

In a statement issued today, the NSF said the Ministry of Home Affairs' decision to prolong the application of AFSPA, as per the notification dated September 26, 2023, on the pretext of "Law and Order" problem, is an attempt to project the Nagaland state as a land of lawlessness and chaos.

The NSF then said the continuation of AFSPA in the "Naga homeland is not just regrettable; it is an affront to the principles of democracy, justice, and human rights".

Over the years, according to the NSF, this legislation has long been synonymous with grave human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and violations of civil liberties by armed personnel acting on behalf of the state- further exacerbating the mistrust between the civilian population and the security forces. "It is a testament to the erosion of democratic principles when such legislation continues to be applied in a region that aspires for peace, justice, and reconciliation, which the Naga people have endured the ramifications of this draconian law for far too long".

The Naga Students' Federation then called upon the Government of India to repeal the "contentious AFSPA" and to initiate a genuine process of conflict resolution that respects the rights and dignity of the Naga people. "We implore upon the Government of India to uphold the principles of justice, human rights, and the rule of law in the region", it added.

Furthermore, the apex Naga student body then urged the Government of India to engage in constructive dialogue with all stakeholders on board to work towards a comprehensive and enduring solution to the protracted Indo-Naga issue while fostering an atmosphere of trust and reconciliation.

The NSF also said it "stands united with the Naga people in our quest for a just and peaceful society and we remain committed to advocating for the rights and aspirations of our people". (NNN)

## CM lays foundation stones for two tourism infra projects in North Sikkim

**GANGTOK, Sept 27:** Sikkim chief minister Prem Singh Tamang on Wednesday laid the foundation stones of two infrastructure projects in Lachung and Lachen towns.

He laid the foundation stone of the Maitreya Buddha-cum-cultural complex in Lachen and Guru Rinpoche statue and cultural complex in Lachung, both in North Sikkim.

"The projects will boost tourism in both the places and attract more global visitors in future," the chief minister said.

Tamang hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to transform remote border villages into vibrant villages and said both the towns will benefit significantly from this initiative of the central government.

"The upcoming projects, coupled with the Vibrant Village Programme under the government of India, will contribute significantly to long-term development of these border regions," he said.

The CM said tourism infrastructure projects represent the state government's commitment to preserving the state's culture and traditions, in addition to generating employment opportunities for local youth and



aspiring tourism stakeholders.

He appealed to the local people to extend their co-operation and boost tourism in Lachen and Lachung.

To preserve the age-old tradition of yak herding, which faces the threat of extinction due to herders migrating to urban areas, the chief minister announced the annual Yak Festival to be held in either Lachen or Lachung to keep the traditional occupation alive and pass it on to future generations. (PTI)

## BID TO HARNESS GEOTHERMAL POTENTIALS

## Arunachal inks pact with Norwegian Geotechnical Institute

**ITANAGAR, Sept 27:** The Arunachal Pradesh government on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute (NGI) to explore feasibility of harnessing geothermal potentials that the state's numerous hot springs offer.

The MoU was signed by state secretary and technology secretary Repo Ronya and Dr Rajinder Bhasin, technical expert from NGI, in presence of chief minister Pema Khandu, science and technology minister Honchun Ngangam, chief secretary Dharmendra and senior advisor of Norwegian embassy in New Delhi, Dr Vivek Kumar.

Congratulating the NGI and the department of science and technology, Khandu termed the signing of the MoU as a right step towards green and clean energy production especially in the light of global warming concerns.

"It is a great coincidence that this MoU is being signed on World Tourism Day as its theme this year is 'Tourism & Green Investment' that perfectly goes in tandem with this new initiative," the chief minister said.

He expressed optimism that the study would lead to development

of renewable geothermal sources in the state and increase energy supply to meet present and future demands.

"Many of the hot springs is located in mountain areas where generators run on fossil fuel for electricity and heating. These can be replaced by geothermal energy with no CO2 emissions," Khandu said.

Admitting that this is completely a new technology for the state, the chief minister expressed hope that NGI, with its expertise in the field and experience in successfully implementing a project in Ladakh, will give a new direction to energy production that would be beneficial not only to the local populace residing in the high mountains, but also to the army personnel posted there.

Khandu also expressed hope that Arunachal's relation with NGI will go beyond harnessing geothermal resources, especially in the fields of road construction and tunneling.

"Arunachal Pradesh is geographically and geologically completely different from rest of the country. Therefore, a tailor-made technology is needed for construction of roads and tunnels here. As



Norway, with similar geological features, has one of the world's best road infrastructure and world class tunnels, we can benefit from its technology," he said.

Dr Bhasin agreed with the chief minister and informed that Norway, despite being a small country, has about 7000 km of tunnels that shorten road distances eventually enhancing government revenue.

Dr Bhasin, who visited a few places in West Kameng, said the state has tremendous potential for

development of infrastructure to make it one of the best tourism states in the country.

"I have worked for about a decade in Bhutan and I thought it was the ultimate. But visiting Arunachal Pradesh for the first time, I realised that I was wrong all the time. This is heaven," he said.

Representing the Norwegian embassy, senior advisor Dr Vivek Kumar said the embassy is ready to facilitate cooperation between

Norwegian agencies and experts with the state government in sectors that matter.

The current project is also being technically supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy through NGI.

The Centre for Earth Sciences & Himalayan Studies (an autonomous organization of state's department of science & technology) has been interacting with NGI for technical assistance to perform feasibility studies for harnessing geothermal resources in the state.

The intention of the MoU is to provide a facilitating mechanism for the two parties to work together on mutually agreed, progressive and supportive activities; aiming for further development in the field of geo-techniques and rock engineering by dealing with complex sub-surface geological and geotechnical issues faced by the state.

To begin with, NGI will carry out geological, geochemical and geothermal investigation of few selected geothermal sites in Tawang and West Kameng districts that will include MT survey to decipher the deeper geo-electrical configuration of geothermal springs (hot-springs) and feasibility to utilize the geothermal energy resources for further use. (PTI)

## Nagaland to carry out cleanliness drive on Saturday instead of Sunday



### HT Correspondent

**DIMAPUR, Sept 27:** Following opposition from various organisations, the Nagaland government has decided to carry out the nationwide cleanliness drive across the state on September 30 (Saturday) instead of the designated date of October 1 on account of the day falling on a Sunday.

In an office memorandum on Wednesday, the state home department said the respective deputy commissioners have been designated as the nodal officers for planning, taking measures as necessary, and coordinating with all the urban local body administrators for the urban areas and all the block development officers for the rural areas, and district officers of other departments/agencies as may be required, for ensuring successful execution of all the activities in regard to the cleanliness drive in the districts in line with the instructions from the government of India.

At the state level, the nodal officer for overall coordination of the entire cleanliness drive will be the commissioner, Nagaland.

Various organisations, including the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, NSCN (IM), Naga Students Federation (NSF) and the

Nagaland Theological Colleges Association (NTCA), voiced opposition to the call for the nationwide cleanliness drive by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a Sunday.

The NBCC said Sunday is not just a holiday but it is a day of worship for the Christians. It added that since October 1 falls on a day of worship for Christians, it will sacrifice another day to "show our cooperation and solidarity to the nation". Terming the call for the cleanliness drive on a Sunday as playing with the Naga people's religious ethos, the NSCN (IM) said the Nagas as Christians cannot simply abide by the call of the Prime Minister no matter how noble the cause is.

The NSF said PM Modi's call for a collective cleanliness drive on Sunday has raised concerns among the Christians in India and beyond.

It said this call for a nationwide event on a Sunday is deeply insensitive to the religious sentiments of the Christian community and out rightly detrimental to the very essence of secularism.

The NTCA said scheduling of this national event on a Sunday inadvertently clashes with the holy day for millions of Christians across the country.



## 65 pc houses in Joshimath impacted by land subsidence: Govt report

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Land subsidence has affected around 65 per cent of the houses in the pilgrimage town of Joshimath in Uttarakhand, according to a report by government agencies.

Starting January 2, a number of houses and civil structures in an area located near Joshimath-Auli road began to display major cracks due to land subsidence, prompting the relocation of 355 families. According to local residents, land subsidence had been noticed over several years but became increasingly severe from January 2 to January 8. A 35-member team conducted a "Post Disaster Needs Assessment" from April 22 to April 25 to assess the damage caused and to identify the assistance required for the long-term recovery and reconstruction of the affected sectors. The team consisted of professionals from the National Disaster Management Authority, UN agencies, Central Building Research Institute, National Institute of Disaster Management, and other agencies. According to the assessment report, 1,403 of the total 2,152 houses in Joshimath have been affected due to land subsidence and these need immediate attention.

"A total of 472 houses need to be reconstructed and 931 houses need to be repaired/retrofitted. It is important to note that the partially damaged houses must be retrofitted in line with 'build back better' principles in order to enhance their resilience against not just landslides, but also other disasters," the report read.

The report said the main causes of damage to buildings in Joshimath include the use of weak building materials, insufficient reinforcement, structural flaws, and the location of buildings on steep slopes. It highlighted that the buildings suffered more damage, even when subjected to minor ground subsidence, due to the use of weak mud-based mortar to hold the bricks or stones together.

Some buildings do not have strong support structures like reinforced concrete (RC) or wooden bands to keep them stable. The agencies said some buildings have very long walls that aren't well

supported and light roofs which cause the building to expand and contract, leading to damage when the ground moves.

They also urged the state government to completely ban new construction in the town till the end of the monsoon season and allow relaxation only for light-weight structures after post-monsoon re-assessment of ground conditions.

The report highlights that although building bylaws exist, they are not mandatory for residential buildings.

"People obtain permits only when they need a loan or for other government requirements. One of the primary reasons for Joshimath's current situation is the absence of a building permit system. Had there been risk-based building bylaws in place and existing buildings were in compliance with them, the extent of damage would have been less, and retrofitting would have been less expensive," the report said. Another issue of concern identified in the report is the "lack of town planning and absence of risk-informed land use maps".

"The roads are too narrow, and there are hardly any open spaces in the neighbourhoods. This makes the town highly unsafe since access in emergency situations is almost impossible," it said, emphasising the urgent need for a comprehensive development plan.

The agencies emphasised the immediate need for the development of a prospective plan with the objective of creating a safe and resilient Joshimath for the next 10-15 years. Incidents of land subsidence in Joshimath were reported in the 1970s too.

A panel set up under the chairmanship of Garhwal Commissioner Mahesh Chandra Mishra submitted a report in 1978, stating that major construction works should not be carried out in the city and the Niti and Mana valleys as these areas are situated on moraines, a mass of rocks, sediment, and soil transported and deposited by a glacier.

The Himalayan town lies in seismic zone V (the region most vulnerable to earthquakes) and is prone to landslides and flash floods. (PTI)

# India will soon emerge as global economic powerhouse: PM

**AHMEDABAD, Sept 27:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said his aim is to make India a global growth engine and expressed confidence that the country will soon emerge as an economic powerhouse of the world.

Speaking at an event to mark 20 years of success of the Vibrant Gujarat Summit, Modi said they sowed small seeds of a "Vibrant Gujarat" 20 years ago, and today it has developed into a big tree.

Modi also said that Vibrant Gujarat became a success at such a time when the previous central government (UPA dispensation) was "indifferent" to the industrial progress of the state.

"We organised Vibrant Gujarat to make the state a growth engine of India. The country has seen this imagination becoming a reality. In 2014, when I was given the opportunity to serve the country, my aim was to make India a global growth engine," Modi said addressing a gathering of industrialists and businessmen.

Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and state BJP president C R Paatil were also present on the occasion.

"We are standing at such a phase that India will soon emerge as a global economic powerhouse," Modi said, adding that global

agencies and experts are today talking on similar lines.

"In a few years, India will be among the world's top three economies. This is Modi's guarantee," the PM said.

He appealed to the country's industry to think of sectors where India can explore new possibilities or strengthen itself, and how Vibrant Gujarat can give momentum to this mission.

Modi highlighted how from a humble beginning, the Vibrant Gujarat events have turned into an institution and many states later followed it by organising their own investment summits.

Swami Vivekananda said that every work passes through three stages- first it is mocked, later it faces opposition and finally it is accepted, especially when the idea is ahead of time, Modi noted, comparing the success of Vibrant Gujarat and how it passed through different stages.

Today the world can see the success of Vibrant Gujarat, he said.

"But when it was (first) organised, the then central government showed indifference to Gujarat's development. I have always talked about India's development through Gujarat's development, but those in power at the Centre had also associated Gujarat's development with politics," Modi said.

The then ministers in the central



government used to refuse to attend the summit, he said.

"They told me personally they would join, but later refused, perhaps after pressure from the top. Far from support, they were busy creating hurdles," he said, adding that even foreign investors were threatened not to go to Gujarat.

"Despite such threats, foreign investors visited Gujarat even when there was no special incentive here. They came here because they could experience good governance, fair governance, policy-driven governance, an equal system of growth, and a transparent government in daily life," he said.

Recalling the first Vibrant Gujarat Summit in 2003, Modi said it

became a success because of the state's people in whom he had huge trust.

He said he was a first-time chief minister and faced crises such as the 2001 earthquake, preceding drought years, collapse of cooperative banks, the 2002 Godhra tragedy and the state-wide violence in its aftermath.

"Even then, those with an agenda analysed the events in their own way. They said the youth, industry and business will leave Gujarat, and Gujarat will be destroyed in such a way that it will become a burden for the country," the PM said.

There was a conspiracy to defame Gujarat globally, and an at-

tempt was made to create a situation of hopelessness, he said.

"It was said that Gujarat will never stand on its feet. Amid such a crisis, I took a pledge that whatever the situation, I will take Gujarat out of all this," Modi said, adding that Vibrant Gujarat became an important medium for the same.

"It became a medium to increase the confidence of Gujarat and make it face the world confidently," he said.

The summit became a medium to showcase Gujarat's decision-making process and its focussed approach to the world, Modi said.

The event became a medium to showcase the industrial capacity of India, including Gujarat, to the world, infinite possibilities of the country's various sectors, use of India's talent within the country, and a medium to show India's cultural tradition to the world, he said.

When Vibrant Gujarat was launched, there were no big hotels for foreign delegates to stay, he said.

Modi recalled that when the summit was organised in 2009 amid global recession, everybody including his then officers suggested that it be cancelled, but he decided to continue. The 2009 summit added a new chapter of success, he added. (PTI)

## K'taka to move SC challenging Cauvery panel's direction to release water to TN: CM Siddaramaiah

**CHAMARAJANAGAR, Sept 27:** The Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's direction to Karnataka to release water to Tamil Nadu will be challenged before the Supreme Court, chief minister Siddaramaiah said on Wednesday.

The panel had directed Karnataka to release water at the rate of 3,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) to the neighbouring state from September 28 to October 15. Siddaramaiah said he had spoken to the state's legal team, which opined that it should be challenged in the apex court.

"We are challenging the order of the Regulation Committee before the Supreme Court. We don't have water to give," the chief minister told reporters at Male Mahadeshwara Hills in this district.



deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar had on Tuesday expressed satisfaction over the CWRC rejecting the request of Tamil Nadu, which wanted Karnataka to release 12,000 cusecs. The

committee recommended Karnataka to release 3,000 cusecs of water to the neighbouring state. Karnataka submitted before CWRC at its meeting in New Delhi on Tuesday the shortfall in cumulative inflows to its four reservoirs in the Cauvery basin up to September 25, which hold just 53.04 per cent of their capacity.

According to Karnataka officials, due to the failure of the south-west monsoon (from June to September) this year, there is no sufficient storage in the four reservoirs and the State is facing such a grave situation that it is finding it extremely difficult even to cater to the drinking water requirements, let alone supplying for irrigation. The rainfall received in Karnataka this year in August and September is the lowest in the last 123 years, they said. (PTI)

## After alliance with BJP, JD(S) should not call itself a secular party: CM Siddaramaiah

**CHAMARAJANAGAR, Sept 27:** Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday took a swipe at the former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda-headed JD(S), saying it should not call itself a secular party after forging an electoral alliance with the BJP for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

JD(S) on Friday decided to ally with the BJP following a meeting of its leader and former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy (Gowda's son) with Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP national President J P Nadda in New Delhi.

"They have now made an alliance with BJP for elections, what should we call them?" Siddaramaiah asked in response to questions by reporters at Konanakere in this district.

"Name says secular. Are they secular now? Should we accept what they say? Even after going with a communal party, still they are secular? Should we accept? Let them go with BJP or anybody we don't have objections. But they should not say they are secular, that's all. They should not say that Janata Dal is a secular party," the CM said JD(S) had earlier formed governments in coalition with both BJP and Congress respectively for 20 months from January 2006, and for 14 months from May 2018, with Kumaraswamy as the Chief Minister.

Earlier today, Kumaraswamy hit out at Congress' leaders for alleging that Deve Gowda has proved JD(S) is 'b-team' of BJP by allying with them, and said he had gone with BJP on the invite of Shah, instead of with Congress, after 2018 Assembly polls, he could have run the government for full five years.

Accusing the Congress of 'destroying' secular forces across the country, Kumaraswamy alleged they even tried to "finish off" the JD(S) after having an alliance with the party. Noting that JD(S) did not send Siddaramaiah out of the party, Kumaraswamy alleged that in 2004 Siddaramaiah had tried to meet the then BJP leader M Venkaiah Naidu in Chennai for having an understanding and forming a government. (PTI)

## SC tags plea seeking FIR against Udhayanidhi Stalin with pending petition

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday tagged a plea, which has sought registration of an FIR against Tamil Nadu minister Udhayanidhi Stalin over his "eradicate Sanatan Dharma" remark, with another similar pending petition.

A bench of justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M Trivedi was hearing a plea seeking direction for registration of an First Information Report (FIR) against Udhayanidhi Stalin and DMK leader A Raja for their comments on Sanatan Dharma.

On September 22, the top court had agreed to hear a separate plea filed by Chennai-based lawyer B Jagannath seeking registration of an FIR against Udhayanidhi Stalin and others over his "eradicate Sanatan Dharma" remark, which the petitioner likened to hate speech.

Udhayanidhi Stalin, who is also an actor, is the son of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and ruling DMK chief M K Stalin.

The plea filed by Delhi-based advocate Vineet Jindal came up for hearing before the bench on Wednesday.

"We will not issue notice but we will tag it," the bench told the counsel appearing for the petitioner.

The lawyer appearing for Tamil Nadu argued that the plea was "public interest litigation in the nature of publicity interest litigation".

He said the top court had last week issued notice on the other petition having similar prayer and there was no need to have another such plea.

"Instead of taking notice, we will take it up on that day," the bench said, adding, "The question of entertaining itself, we will take it up that day".

Termining it an "unfortunate scenario", the state's counsel said in this matter, several writ petitions have been filed in different high courts and it becomes difficult for the state.

"You have the appropriate remedy under the Constitu-



tion," the bench observed, adding, "We are only tagging it". In his petition, Jindal has said that he is aggrieved by the "outrageous, defaming and demeaning remarks" allegedly made by the two DMK leaders against Sanatan Dharma.

The plea has claimed such remarks against the Sanatan Dharma amounted to "hate speech".

"The petitioner, being a Hindu and Sanatan Dharma follower, his religious sentiments are hurt by statements made by the respondent no. 7 and 8 (Udhayanidhi Stalin and Raja) calling for eradicating Sanatan Dharma and further comparing Sanatan with mosquitoes, dengue, corona, and malaria," the plea said.

It has also sought a direction to the Centre and state of Tamil Nadu to take appropriate action against the Delhi and Chennai Police for allegedly not initiating any inquiry suo-motu against the two in view of the April 28 order of the apex court.

The top court had on April 28 this year directed all states and union territories to register cases against those making hate speeches even if no complaint was made. (PTI)

## Ayodhya will witness surge in economic activities after inauguration of Ram temple: Nripendra Mishra

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Shri Ram Mandir Construction Committee Chairperson Nripendra Mishra said areas surrounding Ayodhya will witness a surge in economic activities after the inauguration of the Ram temple and the city may undergo expansion similar to the National Capital Region.

Mishra, a former principal secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, told PTI Video in an interview that the Shri Ram Jambhoomi Teerth Kshetra has been receiving demands for the renovation of places associated with Lord Ram in Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Nepal.

However, he said they have decided to leave this responsibility on the local people.

Mishra said economic activities in Ayodhya are expected to soar once the Ram temple opens to the public in January.

"As money flows in, people will have many opportunities, and along with these opportunities, there will be increased investments in the area. We have received 16 ap-

plications for building hotels, and a plan for a smart city is also in progress," he said.

Mishra, a member of the trust, explained that a master plan is being worked out to improve transportation infrastructure in Ayodhya. "One day, it might be necessary to expand Ayodhya just like the national capital region of Delhi."

He said the current Ayodhya is not equipped to handle the huge number of visitors expected in the city and its increasing population.

He said the current population of Ayodhya is approximately 3.5 lakhs and it is estimated to see five lakh more added as visitors and others who migrate after the economic activities surge once the temple is inaugurated.

"This population is both a challenge and an opportunity. Local people can provide accommodations to the visitors in their homes at affordable rates. It is true that this area needs to expand," he said.

Mishra mentioned that the state government would need

to take appropriate steps for the expansion of the regions, including designating the surrounding areas of Ayodhya and stopping unauthorised construction.

Asked if the trust could also take up the development of other places associated with Lord Ram in different parts of the country, Mishra said, "The trust does not currently have such plans."

He acknowledged that demands for renovation have come from places such as Buxar in Bihar and Bastar in Chhattisgarh and even from Nepal.

"However, the trust believes that it should not take up expansion programmes in this manner rather leave it to the local people," he said.

He also dismissed land disputes that arose during the construction of the Ram temple and claimed that there are no disputes now.

He mentioned that the trust had to face criticisms due to disputed lands known as 'Nazool' lands. 'Nazool' land refers to land that does not have a clear owner. (PTI)

## '2018-Everyone is a Hero' India's official entry to Oscars '24

**CHENNAI, Sept 27:** Survival drama "2018-Everyone is a Hero", based on the Kerala floods that year, is India's official entry to the Academy Awards 2024, the Film Federation of India announced here on Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference, Girish Kasaravalli, noted filmmaker and chairperson of the selection committee, said the 16-member jury unanimously selected the Malayalam film to represent the country.

Kasaravalli, a renowned voice in Kannada cinema, said they had a lengthy discussion before choosing "2018" to represent India at the 2024 Academy Awards.

"It was a pan-Indian selection. And we were happy that we were 16 members and we watched 22 films in one week's time. It was a difficult decision because there were so many good films and we had to analyse to find out which film had better merit. Finally, we decided on '2018 - Everyone is a Hero'," the filmmaker said.

According to Kasaravalli, the Jude Anthany Joseph-directed film highlights "Indian ethos, situation and people".

"It's a film that talks about a calamity that Kerala faced in 2018. It not only represents India but also the calamity that's happening around the world. The film also excels cinematically and technically," he said.

"Such messages are linked to climate change and the so called development," he added. Lead star Tovino Thomas, who is currently in Amsterdam for the Septimus Awards where he won the best Asian Actor trophy for "2018", said it was time for celebration for the team.

"I was very happy last night and woke up even happier to this exciting news as our film '2018' has been selected as India's official entry (to Oscars). We worked in extreme conditions but it's all paying off. This movie is now getting international acclaim. It's great," Thomas told PTI over phone from Amsterdam.



"I'm not with the team to celebrate this moment. But this definitely calls for a celebration," he added. Joseph said the announcement came as a happy surprise. "It was such a happiness that our film is going for the Oscars as the country's official entry," he added.

Ravi Kottarakara, FFI president, said as many as 22 titles including Hindi films "The Kerala Story", "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani", "Gadar 2", "Zwigato", "The Vaccine War", "Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway" as well as "Balagam" (Telugu), "Vaalvi" (Marathi), "Baaplyok" (Marathi) and "August 16, 1947" (Tamil) were also in the running. But the jury unanimously chose

"2018".

"2018" also stars Tanvi Ram, Kunchako Boban and Aparna Balamurali. In June, the makers claimed that the film had crossed over ₹ 200 crore at the box office to become the highest grossing film in Malayalam cinema.

FFI, an autonomous body of producers, exhibitors, studio owners and distributors, decides India's official entry to the Oscars for the best international feature category. Last year, "RRR" and "The Elephant Whisperers", the two Indian films which won the best original song and best documentary short, were sent to the Oscars directly by the makers, but India's official entry in the international film category, Gujarati film "Chhello Show" (Last Film Show), failed to make the cut in the final five nominations. The last Indian film that made it to the final five was the Aamir Khan-led "Lagaan" in 2001.

The 96th Academy Awards are scheduled to take place on March 10, 2024 in Los Angeles. (PTI)

## Indian Navy to come out with new indigenisation roadmap

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** The Indian Navy will unveil an updated indigenisation roadmap next week, outlining its specific initiatives to ensure self-reliance in various critical technologies and platforms.

The roadmap will be released at the second edition of the annual "Svayambhava" seminar to be held on October 4 and 5. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the conclave.

At a media briefing, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh said the Navy resolved to develop 75 technologies at the "Svayambhava" seminar last year and the aim has been achieved.

"The promises made last year have been fully met," he said. Without divulging the details, Vice Admiral Singh said a number of policy decisions and new announcements will be brought out at the two-day seminar.

"The Indian Navy is at the forefront of the Atmanirbhar (self-reliance) initiative. It (self-reliance) is the core principle for us," the Vice Chief of the Indian Navy added. Listing various initiatives on the indigenisation front, he said the Navy now has an array of approved products and many such projects will be concluded soon. (PTI)



# Kharge slams PM Modi over Manipur situation, demands 'incompetent' CM be sacked

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the situation in Manipur and demanded that he sack the BJP's "incompetent" chief minister as a first step to control the turmoil.

In a post on X, the Congress leader also said the northeastern state has turned into a "battlefield" because of the BJP and violence against women and children has been weaponised.

His remarks came after a clash broke out in the Singjamei area of Imphal on Tuesday night between RAF personnel and locals protesting the killing of two students, who had been missing since July 6. The security personnel lobbed tear gas shells and fired rubber bullets at the protesters and lathi-charged them, leaving 45 of them, mostly students, injured.

Manipur has been on edge since ethnic clashes broke out in the state on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

"For 147 days, people of Manipur are suffering, but PM Modi does not have time to visit the state. The horrific images of students being targeted in this violence have once again shocked the



entire nation," Kharge said.

"It is now apparent that violence against women and children was weaponised in this strife. The beautiful state of Manipur has been turned into a battlefield, all because of the BJP," he said.

"High time, PM Modi sacks BJP's incompetent Manipur Chief Minister. This would be the first step to control any further turmoil," Kharge said.

In a post on its official X handle, the Congress party targeted Modi, accusing him of not bothering about Manipur but his own image.

Violence has been going on in Manipur for almost 150 days, hundreds of lives have been lost in the state and thousands of families

have been rendered homeless, it said.

"The recent murder of two students who went missing in July has shocked the entire country. The situation in the state is not improving. In such a situation, the BJP government of the state should be dismissed immediately."

"It is also clear that PM Modi is not concerned about the people of Manipur, he is only concerned about his image. He is just busy with campaigning for elections," the Congress said in a post in Hindi.

Congress leader P Chidambaram said the situation in Manipur has gone from bad to worse and no section of people has confidence in the state govern-

ment or Chief Minister N Biren Singh.

"In fact, the CM is the problem because of his incompetence and bias. The first step toward restoring normalcy in Manipur is to remove the government and the chief minister," he said on X.

"I have learned that 2000 Meiteis staying in Senapati district were forcibly driven out the district. Ethnic cleansing has spread from the capital to the districts whether they are dominated by the Meiteis or the Kukis."

"The central government has switched off Manipur. It may have even lost count that 145 days have passed since the cycle of violence started on May 3, 2023," he said.

The Congress has been targeting the government over the Manipur violence and asking why the prime minister hasn't visited the strife-torn state yet.

The situation remained calm but tense in Imphal on Wednesday morning following last night's clash. Manipur Police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and RAF personnel were seen deployed in strength throughout the Imphal Valley.

Although the state government has declared a holiday for schools on Wednesday, students of some Imphal-based institutions have vowed to congregate at their schools. (PTI)

## PM congratulates medal winners at Games

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday congratulated women's 25m pistol team for winning an "exemplary" gold in the Asian Games and also lauded women's 50m rifle 3 position team for winning silver.

"An exemplary Gold for India. Congratulations to the 25m Pistol Women Team, comprising Manu Bhaker, Rhythm Sangwan and Esha Singh for their spectacular victory! Their remarkable teamwork has yielded great results. Best wishes for their future endeavours," he posted on X.

He added, "Our dedicated and talented 50m Rifle 3 Positions Women's Team has clinched a well-deserved Silver Medal in the Asian Games. They have demonstrated extraordinary talent. Congratulations to Sift Kaur Samra, Ashi Chouksey and Manini Kaushik."

The triumvirate of Bhaker, Singh and Sangwan fired in tandem to shoot the gold medal in the women's 25m pistol team event, as Indian shooters dominated proceedings at the Hangzhou Shooting Range Hall. (PTI)

## Lawmakers from CM Shinde-led Shiv Sena won't win next election, claims Sanjay Raut

**MUMBAI, Sept 27:** Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Wednesday claimed that lawmakers from the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde will not win the next election.

Speaking to reporters here, Raut also claimed that CM Shinde was keen on a foreign tour, while farmers in parts of the state were staring at crop losses due to erratic rainfall.

Asked about the possibility that Shinde's side may issue a whip against four Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs for skipping voting on the women's reservation bill in Parliament, Raut said, "It is a trivial matter for us that they would issue a whip against four of our Lok Sabha members."

"They (Shinde group lawmakers) should first know that none of them are going to win the next election," the Rajya Sabha member claimed.

A revolt led by Shinde in June last year led to a split in the Shiv Sena and collapse of the Uddhav Thackeray-headed Maha Vikas Aghadi government in the state.

Raut said Shinde had plans to visit some foreign countries to attract investment, and claimed the CM cancelled his plans only after a

critical post on X by Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray.

"Instead of trying to attract FDI from his foreign tour, Shinde should first bring back the investment that was supposed to come to Maharashtra but went to a neighbouring state," he said.

Shinde's visit to the United Kingdom and Germany, scheduled from October 1 to 8, has been postponed, an official from the CMO said on Tuesday, adding the new dates are being worked out.

Asked about reports of Shinde-led group citing water scarcity and other issues in the state leading to postponement of his foreign tour, Raut sarcastically said, "Did he come to know about all those challenges only after Aaditya tweeted? We should be thankful to CM Shinde for showing such sensitivity."

"Why did he (CM Shinde) not visit Nagpur, which was literally submerged due to illegal constructions and encroachments. There are farmers likely to lose their crops because of the erratic rains, but Shinde seems to be keen on his foreign tour," the Sena (UBT) leader claimed.

"When the people of Nagpur were reeling under heavy rains, Shinde invited film stars to his official res-

idence (in Mumbai). He should not forget that solving people's problems is his duty. Farmers are protesting against imposition of export duty on onions, but he does not pay attention," Raut said.

On the meeting between union commerce minister Piyush Goyal and union traders from Maharashtra remaining inconclusive, the Sena (UBT) leader said, "It is unfortunate. The issue pertains to Maharashtra and the minister was in Mumbai. Still, he asked everyone to meet him in Delhi later."

Raut also taunted deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, saying he does not have enough rights to take right decisions.

"Pawar was present at the meeting aimed at finding a solution to onion traders' demand, but he failed to do it. He does not have enough rights to take right decisions. It is saddening to see farmers' onions worth Rs 100 crore getting stuck and the government not paying enough attention to it," he said.

Raut dismissed as rumours the reports that Ajit Pawar's wife Suneeta Pawar is likely to contest the next year's Lok Sabha election against Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MP Supriya Sule from the Baramati constituency. (PTI)

## Fresh clash along Assam-Meghalaya

other with bows and arrows and catapults. At least six people, including five Meghalaya residents and a forest guard from Assam, were killed in a firing incident in Mukroh along a disputed section of the Assam-Meghalaya interstate boundary on November 22 last year. Official talks to reorganize the interstate border between the two neighbouring states are at an advanced stage, with the Chief Ministers of the two states set to hold a meeting early next month for another round of discussions. Last year, Assam and Meghalaya signed a border pact to resolve the dispute in six areas of difference.

The talks for the remaining six areas of difference are at an advanced stage, sources said. Meghalaya was carved out from Assam as a separate state in 1972, and it had challenged the Assam Reorganization Act, 1971, leading to disputes in 12 areas of the 884.9 km-long border between the two states.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, on assuming the office in May 2021, had announced that his priority was to resolve long-standing boundary disputes with the neighbouring states. Subsequently, three regional committees were set up in August 2021 to resolve the issues in a phased manner.

The regional panels submitted their recommendations which were handed over to Union home minister Amit Shah in New Delhi by the two Chief Ministers. According to last year's agreement between the two states, 36.79 sq km of disputed area was taken up for settlement in the first phase with Assam getting full control of 18.51 sq km and Meghalaya over 18.28 sq kms of land. (PTI)

## AFSPA extended in Manipur

19 police stations without the consent of the state police. Security officials have been advocating bringing the entire state under AFSPA so that they could easily ensure that the presence of terror groups within the valley is reduced or eliminated, sources said.

The security agencies have been warning that banned terror groups United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and People's Liberation Army (PLA), Kanglei Yawol Kanba Lup (KYKL), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and KCP have been forming their base in the Imphal valley of the state.

They have also been warning about the possibility of these terrorists mingling with crowds during any protest to stoke tensions in restive Manipur, the sources said. They said at present UNLF has a cadre strength of 330, followed by PLA with 300 and KYKL with 25 who were active within the groups of the majority community. The overwhelming support being extended to cadres of these banned organizations was witnessed on June 24, when Army and Assam Rifles, based on specific intelligence, nabbed 12 members of KYKL in East Imphal including self-styled 'Lt Colonel' Moirangthem Tamba alias Uttam. Uttam was one of the masterminds of the ambush on 6 Dogra regiment in 2015 that left 18 army soldiers dead. The officials said there were apprehensions that the arms and ammunition looted from the Manipur Police armoury could have landed with these terror groups.

Among the arms looted included .303 rifles, medium machine guns (MMG) and AK assault rifles, carbines, Insas light machine guns (LMG), Insas rifles, M-16 and MP5 rifles. The officials said around 4,537 arms and 6.32 lakh rounds of ammunition were missing mainly from Manipur Police Training Centre (MTPC) at Pangei in East Imphal, 7th India Reserve battalion and 8th Manipur Rifles, both located at Khabeiso in Imphal city.

The extension of the AFSPA in the hill areas was of least significance as more than 20 terror groups from the tribal areas had entered into an agreement Suspension of Operations (SoO) with the Centre and the state government. More than 180 people have been killed and several hundred injured since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts. (PTI)

## Longsing Ronghang crowned

of Ronghang to succeed the throne. After the candidate agrees to take the charge of the king, he then goes to Ronghang Rongbong to convey his willingness to be king before the Pinpomar. Preparation for the coronation of the new king then begins. On the previous night the Pinpos from Ronghang Rongbong reached the house. Next the coronation process began. As a ritual a sacrificial worship by offering fowls was performed to appease the local deities. Banta - a traditional oblation consisting of five betel leaves and five betel nuts brought from Ronghang Rongbong by the pinpos was placed before the candidate. After necessary rituals and formalities were done a white turban was wrapped around the head of the newly crowned king Longsing Rongbong by the Pinpomar.

After the end of the coronation of the king a feast was held on behalf of the new, Tuliram Ronghang said. "It is a great moment and privilege to witness the coronation of the new Karbi traditional king. The Karbis have preserved their own culture and tradition. I thank the Pinpomar for the proper conducting the coronation of the new traditional king and also thanked other customary heads and dignitaries present here."

The CEM also informed the gathering about the wish of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to witness the coronation of the new traditional king, but due to busy schedules could not be present. The CEM told Pinpomar that the CM will be visiting Ronghang Rongbong to see the seat of Karbi traditional king and Pinpomar. The CEM also said through the new traditional king Longsing Rongbong will be able to keep alive the Karbi customary practices. By evening the new king Longsing Rongbong was escorted to Ronghang Rongbong by the Pinpomar, where he was welcomed by the Lindokpos.

## Assam party seeks separate

in the creation of several states, while the saffron party refused to comment on it. Bengalis were described as Bangladeshis for no reason as out of 37,000 people declared foreigners, only one was deported, Roy claimed. "We are discriminated against in various ways. We do not get government jobs, our mother tongue is not recognized as one of the official languages. Our paper and sugar mills were closed down. Our tea gardens are suffering because of government apathy," he said. After delimitation, the number of assembly seats in Barak Valley with a population of 42 lakh was reduced from 15 to 13, while in the tribal majority Bodoland area, the same was increased from 12 to 15 though the population there is only 24 lakh, the BDF leader asserted.

Assam Congress working president Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha said, "Several states have already been carved out of Assam. We don't want a separate Barak state." Sarma had opposed 'Kamatapur' and 'Bodoland' states, but he has now spoken in support of separate Barak, the Congress leader said, questioning the Chief Minister's 'intentions'. When contacted, state BJP leaders refused to comment on the matter. (PTI)

## UPSC, APSC aspirants to

be changed through good education and if students from the district pass out with good results in their examinations," he further said. He also conveyed his best wishes to the students. MP Horensing Bepdyasing Englang, Darsing Ronghang, Rupsing Teron all MLA's and EMs, MACs, secretary of KAAC, Zafreen Mehlabin, director of the Guwahati based Unified Foundation, other dignitaries and students were also present on the occasion.

## Army Chief: Embrace 'unity of

peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific are not abstract ideals and that they are the foundation upon which the dreams and aspirations of millions of people rest.

Gen Pande said the Indian Army stands committed to these ideals. "I wish to acknowledge and appreciate the 'trust quotient' that you all fostered and helped build, during our deliberations," he said. "The frank exchange of thoughts and ideas has reaffirmed that we are bonded by a common thread, of 'values' that stand for collective good, of adherence to 'international laws and conventions', of respect for each other's sovereignty and of a yearning for peace," he noted. Talking about the outcomes at the conference, Gen Pande said the "commitment towards collaboration" has been the first takeaway.

"In an era characterized by rapid technological advancements and dynamic security paradigms, we acknowledged that our strength lies not merely in the individual prowess of our respective armies, but in the synergy and effect of our combined efforts," he said. "We have affirmed our shared commitment to collaborate on regional security challenges, by pooling collective perspectives, expertise and experiences," he added.

The Indian Army Chief also underlined the need for "exchange of best practices" and harnessing the power of shared knowledge to address future challenges in the region. "The need to give impetus towards enhancing bilateral relations through military diplomacy, is the next key takeaway. As military leaders, this gathering is well acquainted with the significance of military diplomacy initiatives," he said. "We have also affirmed the need for open and sustained dialogue, as a cornerstone for fostering mutual understanding and cultivating relationships," he said.

"It clearly emerged that, through shared values of cooperation, collaboration, and pursuit of common goals, the foundations for a constructive engagement are laid. That is the only way ahead, to give effect to peace and stability," Gen Pande noted. In a statement, the defence ministry said the event achieved the envisaged outcomes such as evolving a shared vision for military cooperation, fostering a sense of collective responsibility, sharing best practices, progressing defence diplomacy initiatives and reinforcing the importance of open and sustained dialogue to jointly address issues that impact the Indo-Pacific countries.

Gen Pande also held separate bilateral meetings with Chiefs of the armies of the participating countries. He held one-on-one discussions with General Morishita Yasunori (Japan), Lt Gen Simon Stuart (Australia), Lt Gen Nguyen Doan Anh (Vietnam), Lt Gen Peter Mbogo Njiru (Kenya), Gen Sheikh Md Shafiuddin Ahmed (Bangladesh), Major General John Boswell (New Zealand), Gen Sir Patrick Sanders (UK), Lt Gen Mao Sophan (Cambodia) and Gen Jung Hwan Park of Republic of Korea, according to the Indian Army.

Gen Pande also held bilateral talks with Gene Pierre Schill (France) and Gen Datuk Muhammad Hafizuddein Bin Jantan (Malaysia). Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar, Vice Chief of the Army Staff also held bilateral meetings with the heads of delegations of Brazil, Singapore, Mongolia and Thailand. (PTI)

## World Tourism Day

the beauty and culture of Karbi Anglong. Together, we can propel our region into the global spotlight, making it a coveted destination for travelers worldwide," he said. "I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who graced this event with their presence and support. Let us continue to work tirelessly towards promoting tourism and creating memorable experiences for all who visit our cherished land," he said. The tourism department on Tuesday organized a trekking with the theme, 'Where nature meets culture' at Langvoku. It was organized in association with Karbi Anglong Mountaineering Association and Karbi Film Society.

## Assam govt provides flood

the 'Aapda Rahat Kosh 2023' set up by Himachal Pradesh Government for relief and rehabilitation of flood affected people. In this regard, following chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's direction, minister of environment & forest etc, govt of Assam Chandra Mohan Patowary on Wednesday handed over a cheque of ₹ 10 crore to Himachal Pradesh chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu at latter's office at Shimla, Himachal Pradesh on behalf of government of Assam.

Receiving the cheque, Himachal Pradesh chief minister expressed his gratitude to government of Assam led by chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and also thanked forest minister Patowary for personally handing over the cheque. Speaking on the occasion, Patowary said that this contribution to the Aapda Rahat Kosh-2023 is invaluable in his government's continuous efforts to aid those affected by the recent monsoon disasters in Himachal Pradesh.

## World Tourism Day: Solo travel picks up pace, travellers pitch for solitude and me-time

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Vacations aren't always about friends, family, spouse or current love interest. They don't need to be about bonding with anyone either. In fact, solo travel can be double the fun, says a growing band of travellers venturing out, sometimes into the unknown, to holiday and just get some me-time while they're at it.

It's about doing what you want when you want, an increasing trend riding on disposable incomes and the need for independence. So, make -- or change -- your itinerary on the go, be touristy one day or simply chill the next, eat at Michelin-star restaurants or snack on street food. You are your own tour guide and 'your wish is your command'.

The idea of enjoying your company while discovering a new place was so appealing that Delhi lawyer Priya Singh happily ditched her girl gang for a solo bachelorette trip to Japan shortly before she was to get married.

"I didn't want to go somewhere with my girl friends, get drunk and play some stupid games. I wanted to experience something else, I wanted to do something I had never done before. That's how my first ever solo trip happened," Singh told PTI on World Tourism Day on Wednesday.

"It's an experience like no other... visit different cities, do pub crawls, meet new people, all by yourself. I wish I had taken more solo trips before my marriage," Singh, who later went on a solo trip to UK, added.

Seeking solitude, reconnecting with oneself or simply stepping out of one's comfort zone... the trigger factors for going on a solo trip are



as varied as the list of destinations to pick from.

For Delhi-based Nabiba Tasnim, who has been going on solo backpacking trips since she was 17, the trips are a "personal development course".

"This form of travelling is very empowering. It gave me a lot of self-confidence about doing things on my own, approaching a new person. It is like a personal development course in itself. It is a different addition of sorts. I, in fact, find planning trips with friends and family very difficult now," said the 27-year-old. She is project manager in a media company and has recently returned from a two-week solo trip to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The solo tribe is rapidly growing in numbers.

According to travel agency firm EaseMyTrip and travel fintech SanKash, solo travel has emerged as a standout travel trend of 2023 and has seen an astonishing "250 per cent increase" in popularity. No year was mentioned.

"In 2023, we've observed a significant shift in travel patterns, es-

pecially in the realm of solo exploration. This year, there has been an unprecedented surge in intrepid solo travellers embarking on personal voyages to uncharted destinations," Nishant Pitti, CEO and co-founder of EaseMyTrip, told PTI.

"We anticipate this trend will persist with solo travel becoming even more immersive and finely tailored to individual preferences in the foreseeable future," he added. According to internal data from vacation rental company Airbnb, solo travel in India "nearly doubled" between March 31, 2022 to March 31, 2023 compared to the same period in 2021-22. It did not offer exact figures.

Airbnb even rolled out a dedicated safety-focused solo traveler safety feature on its app last year for guests in over 50 languages, including English and Hindi.

The key component of this new feature is the ability for the solo traveller to easily share, with one-touch, their reservation itinerary with important and trusted people in their lives for added peace of

mind and in the rare event of an emergency during a stay, explained Amanpreet Bajaj, general manager, Airbnb India, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Of course, travelling alone does not translate to being lonely.

In fact, according to Tasnim, solo travelling is a great way to find people sharing same interests.

"I have made friends on my solo trips, and have travelled with them again. It is a great way to meet new people, make friends sharing similar interests. They don't know anything about you, there's no judgement, you are on your own. So, you are alone but never lonely that way," she added.

The challenges are many. For instance, there are safety issues and no one to share your expenses with -- be it room or taxi fares.

"Solo travelling can certainly be an expensive affair. If you are staying in a hotel you are paying for two people and if you are travelling in a cab you can't split. So yes, it is a tradeoff between having your own independence and being able to do your own thing," Tasnim said. Singh and Tasnim offer some handy tips for safety.

"The reason I chose Japan as my first solo trip destination was also to do with the fact that it is a very safe place in general. They say try something out of the blue, but I suggest doing that when you are in a group. Spend a little more, but don't stay in a dingy place, stay in a place like 'Khan Market of Tokyo'," Singh said.

Tasnim suggested that the first trip could be to some familiar place so you ease into the experience of travelling alone. (PTI)



## INTERNATIONAL EMMY AWARDS 2023

## Shefali Shah, Jim Sarbh and Vir Das land nominations

**MUMBAI, Sept 27:** Actors Shefali Shah, Jim Sarbh and Vir Das have been nominated for the 2023 International Emmy Awards. The International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences announced on Tuesday, 26 September.

Shah and Sarbh received nominations in acting categories for their critically acclaimed shows Delhi Crime and Rocket Boys respectively, while Das was nominated for his Netflix special Landing.

Shah took to her Instagram and wrote, "OMGGGGG I still can't believe it. Feel so so honoured to be nominated at the International Emmys alongside such esteemed artists. This one is really special and more so because it is for a character I am very very close to, Vartika Chaturvedi and for my favourite show #DelhiCrime2. This is for all of us in #DelhiCrime."

He also wrote on his social media, thanking everyone involved, "I was having quite a weird few days, and then all the pieces wrapped up neatly and I heaved a huge sigh of relief, played a game of sweaty basketball, cycled home in the cold

sweet rain, went in for a shower, and came out to all these messages and calls. I was an hour late to watch Dirty Harry with a neighbour, so I ran up, told him about the nom, and then we proceeded to watch the movie. 'Do you feel lucky, punk?' Yes."

"Honoured to be nominated for the International @iemmys amongst such talented artists. I loved playing Dr. Bhabha. Rocket Boys is deeply etched in my mind and heart," he added.

Das was also excited about the Emmy nod and wrote, "WHAT!!!!!! I got nominated for an Emmy award for best comedy my second iEmmy nomination. To everyone who worked on this show Vir Das Landing, I am SO proud of you, and so grateful to @netflix\_in for letting me tell my story. Off we go! #VirDasLanding @iemmys well...this is a weird full circle."

Earlier it was announced that Ekta Ravi Kapoor would be honoured at the 51st International Emmy Awards ceremony with the International Directorate Award for her contribution to the Indian television industry. (PTI)



## 'Traitor or patriot?' Salman Khan sends a message to India in 'Tiger 3' sneak peek

**MUMBAI, Sept 27:** Superstar Salman Khan on Wednesday shared a sneak peek into his upcoming film "Tiger 3", in which he returns as the titular spy now branded a "traitor".

"Tiger Ka Message", a video which appears to be a teaser of the Yash Raj Films project, was released on the occasion of veteran filmmaker Yash Chopra's birth anniversary.

Directed by Maneesh Sharma, the much-anticipated film also stars Katrina Kaif. It will hit the screens on Diwali in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

"Jab tak Tiger mara nahin, tab tak Tiger haara nahin (Tiger remains undefeated till he dies) #TigerKaMessage #Tiger3 arriving in cinemas this Diwali. Releasing in Hindi, Tamil & Telugu. #KatrinaKaif | #ManeeshSharma | @yrf | #YRF50 | #YRFSpyUniverse," Salman captioned the clip on his official X account.

The 1.43 minute-long clip shows RAW agent Avinash Singh Rathore aka Tiger asking the citizens of India to hand over a "character certificate" to him amid claims of being called a "traitor" and "enemy no 1". "They will all tell you that Tiger is your enemy. Tiger is a traitor. Tiger is enemy no 1. So after 20 years of service, I'm asking India for my character certificate. I will not tell my son, India will tell him who I truly am. Traitor or patriot?" the protagonist says in the video.

Tiger, played by Salman, embarks on a

life-threatening mission to hunt down his enemies in this vengeful action entertainer, the makers said in a press release.

"Tiger wants to clear his name for his country, for his family and he won't stop at nothing," it read. "Tiger 3" is set after the events of this year's Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Pathaan", which also featured Salman in a guest appearance. Shah Rukh is expected to make a special appearance in the film, which is the fifth film in the YRF Spy Universe, conceptualised by studio head Aditya Chopra. (PTI)

## PRIME VIDEO SETS OCTOBER 6 PREMIERE FOR 'MUMBAI DIARIES' SEASON 2

**MUMBAI, Sept 27:** The second season of the critically acclaimed medical drama "Mumbai Diaries" will arrive on Prime Video on October 6, the streamer said Wednesday. According to a press release, the new chapter will unfold with the doctors, trainees, and staff of Bombay General Hospital dealing with "the aftermath of the terror attacks and their personal struggles that follow, juxtaposing it against the devastation brought by the Mumbai floods".

Created and directed by Nikkhil Advani, "Mumbai Diaries" is produced by Monisha Advani and Madhu Bhojwani of Emmay Entertainment.

Nikhil Madhok, head of Hindi Originals, Prime Video India, said the second season of the show propels the narrative of the medical team at Bombay General Hospital forward, by putting them at the centre of a literal and metaphorical storm. "The series is our fourth collaboration with Emmay Entertainment, who share our commitment towards telling stories that entertain and engage. I am confident that this new season of 'Mumbai Diaries' will strike a deep chord with its relatability and authenticity with viewers, not only within the country but also from around the world," Madhok said in

a statement. Advani described "Mumbai Diaries" as an intricately woven medical drama that explores the trials and triumphs of frontline workers and the heroes of the medical community. "After the overwhelming love and acclaim received for 'Mumbai Diaries 26/11', we've upped the stakes this season for our protagonists as they're faced with challenges that will test them on all fronts. We're excited to be back with yet another collaboration with Prime Video, and look forward to bringing 'Mumbai Diaries' season two to viewers across the world," he added. (PTI)

## Taapsee Pannu's production 'Dhak Dhak' to release on October 13

**MUMBAI, Sept 27:** Road trip movie "Dhak Dhak", starring Fatima Sana Shaikh, Ratna Pathak Shah, Dia Mirza and Sanjhana Sanghi, will hit the screens on October 13.

Backed by Viacom18 Studios and Taapsee Pannu's Outsiders Films, the upcoming film is directed by Tarun Dudeja from a script co-written by Dudeja and Parijat Joshi.

Pannu shared the release date announcement on social media Wednesday. "My 4 heroes coming to take you along on a journey of their lifetime on 13th OCTOBER 2023. Get the engine revving!!!! #DhakDhak," the actor-producer wrote on X.

"Dhak Dhak" marks Pannu's second production venture after 2022's "Blurr", which was released online on Zee5. (PTI)



## Directors like me in no make-up look, but my dream is to do a period role: Sonam Kapoor



**MUMBAI, Sept 27:** Bollywood actor Sonam Kapoor on Tuesday said filmmakers have preferred to cast her in girl-next-door parts rather than giving her the chance to star in a movie that will need her to wear heavy costumes and jewellery.

At the Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival panel discussion on 'The Art of Costume Design - Celebrating the book and the legacy of Bhanu Athaiya', the actor, known for sartorial fashion choices off the screen, said she feels boxed in the image of a simpleton in films.

"I've done period dramas but for some reason, every director, even though I'm known for my clothes, every director likes me in simple clothes and no make-up. I'm always (playing) the girl-next-door. I've never done a period film with jewellery and Indian clothes."

"(In films) I'm always wearing simple

salwar kameez... So, my dream is to do a period dramatic role one day," Kapoor said, adding that she fulfils her desire to wear extravagant dresses for her red carpet appearances. The 38-year-old actor believes movies have inspired people's fashion choice for years.

"Cinema and films have a huge impact on how people dress... With her designs, Bhanu Athaiya created so many trends. With Sadhna ji, the short kurtas and tight churidars, which only Sadhna ji could wear... It was so significant that when you think of that era you think of that outfit." Filmmaker Ashutosh Gowariker, who was also part of the panel, fondly remembered his experience of working with Athaiya, India's first Oscar winner, on two of his films - "Lagaan" (2001) and "Swades" (2004). Athaiya had won the Academy Award for best costume design for Richard

Attenborough's "Gandhi" in 1983.

The director said he was in awe of the costume designer's "meticulousness" and "eye for detail".

"In 'Swades', we had a 'Ram Leela' song and in that the colour of the sari that Sita was wearing was so very important to her. She went and found the right colour. Even the look of Mohan Bhargav (Shah Rukh Khan), the kind of shirts he wears, she would herself go out and do things, and not rely on a research team or an assistant to get the job done."

"That is something that has stuck with me. I remember her to be the most hard working and soft-spoken. The only complaint I've against her is that she never gave me any sketches, which she made for my films. I had been telling her to, 'let me take a photo copy of it' and she did not let me take it." Gowariker also revealed that he

pursued Athaiya to do the costumes for his 2008 critically acclaimed and blockbuster hit "Jodha Akbar".

"Despite my persistence and trying to request her, she had to pass on it. So 'Jodha Akbar' costume was done by Neeta Lulla. In her book, she praised the design, jewellery and the whole wardrobe of 'Jodha Akbar'. That was a graceful thing to do - to appreciate it in her own book. It was amazing," he said. Athaiya died in 2020 at the age of 91. The event was also attended by Athaiya's daughter Radhika, who praised her mother's passion for art.

"She ate, lived and breathed art. This was her passion. She was able to give the focus because she single-handedly did the costumes, she made the sketch and invariably it would be the first sketch that would get approved whether it was with Raj Kapoor ji (or any other director)," she said. (PTI)



# Our ambition is to become biggest T20 league outside IPL: SA20 Commissioner Graeme Smith

**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** The kind of generational Indian T20 stars that IPL has produced in the last one and half decades has set the template to follow for a new franchise competition like SA20, former South Africa captain and commissioner of league Graeme Smith said on Wednesday.

"Our ambition is to be the biggest league outside India," Smith told PTI ahead of the second season's auction.

The SA20 comprises six franchises — MI Cape Town, Joburg Super Kings, Durban Super Giants, Paarl Royals, Pretoria Capitals, Sunrisers Eastern Cape, all of which are owned by the owners of IPL teams.

"I think IPL was there in the beginning. It took a couple of years to develop a number of generational stars and work within BCCI managed to create outstanding depth of cricketers in India. It

will be our goal too going forward," said Smith, who has always shared a cordial relationship with the Indian board, both as player and administrator.

"The highlight of the first season of SA20 was to see some youngsters and more established stars perform together. I think they played in the competition and were exposed to best practices by franchises — exposed to way of global thinking, getting the best

coaches, best medical advice," said Smith, who is very satisfied with how the league has shaped up in just one season.

In fact, Smith is happy that SA20 has kept a salary cap of USD 2.3 million, offering the best pay scale outside IPL.

So, do you plan to increase the salary cap this time? "Our salary cap is USD 2.3 million and teams can work with significant numbers for a league outside the IPL.

It gives us the ability to attract quality players," he said. Smith believes that SA20 brought a lot of positivity in South African cricket.

"The Season 1 exceeded all the expectations. We had such a limited amount of time to get up and running and we were able to attract six partners like six global franchises," said Smith.

As the league's commissioner, Smith has worked tirelessly with

his team to deliver a product that is acceptable in the market.

"Apart from the commercial side, it was important to bring some positivity back to South African cricket and see the fans flock to the stadium.

"Most importantly, the cricket in season 1 was outstanding. Some local young talent really stood up, global stars shone through and it was a very successful season," he said. (PTI)



## INDIA HAS A DISMAL TRACK RECORD AGAINST THE WEST ASIAN SIDE WE NEED TO PLAY AS A COHESIVE UNIT AGAINST SAUDI ARABIA: SUNIL CHHETRI

**HANGZHOU, Sept 27:** Indian football team captain Sunil Chhetri feels they will have to play as a "cohesive unit" if they are to challenge the mighty Saudi Arabia in their round of 16 match at the Asian Games here on Thursday.

Chhetri is aware of the problems India is facing during their current campaign in Hangzhou. He is also conscious of India's dismal track record against Saudi Arabia and the strength of the West Asian side.

He believes that if India can stick to the right strategies and his young teammates continue to play as a cohesive unit as they did in the three earlier outings, then the pre-quarter-final battle could be a tantalising one.

"We were shown a lot of clips from the Saudi games by our coach, not only the ones that they played here but also a few of their matches from the recent past. He spoke about different ways in which we go out and apply ourselves. "On the face value, they are a very good side with a lot of good, decent players, who are good with the ball...a lot of quality in and around the whole team," said the Indian captain.

Saudi Arabia, the fifth-largest country in Asia and ranked 57 in the FIFA ranking, have always held the upper hand against India,

ranked 102, having scored 18 goals in five matches while India could manage only two.

The last meeting between the two teams in the Asian Games ended in a solitary goal victory for Saudi Arabia in 1982 quarter-finals in New Delhi.

In Hangzhou, India played three matches, losing against China (1-5), winning against Bangladesh (1-0), and settling for a draw against Myanmar (1-1). These four points earned them a spot in the round of 16, setting the stage for the eagerly anticipated showdown against Saudi Arabia.

Their rivals, on the other hand, won two matches and drew against Iran in Group B.

The team's success, despite facing a few problems, can be attributed to India's meticulous strategies and dedication to their collective goal. Chhetri emphasised the significance of working together as a cohesive unit, highlighting the importance of unity and solidarity within the team.

"And that is why the emphasis from the coach is very simple: we go in as a unit and avoid situations where they get one versus one; that's one of the major tactics," Chhetri continued.

"We saw a lot of clippings, a lot of formation, and different things that the coach wants to try. He also has one more day to see how



the boys have recovered from three games in five days," Chhetri added.

On being asked about the experience of playing three games in the Asian Games, Chhetri said, "The experience has been a quite difficult one. But now that we have qualified (for the round of 16), it's also fruitful.

"But I must admit it, it wasn't easy the way it was and the things that we have to deal with as a team haven't been easy, but what's done is done and now we're just looking forward with all our focus and concentration on the Saudi game."

The squad features many young talents, and Chhetri expressed confidence in their potential. "There are many youngsters in the squad who probably did not have the taste of this kind of tournament atmosphere. And to be fair, it's quite evident, but what is also good is that everyone has given their best till now.

"I think a lot of us, especially the youngsters lacking in experience, are matching with our enthusiasm and the zeal to do well for the nation.

"And it's not easy, especially when you are a youngster, but all of them are first improving every day and second, wanting to give everything they have got," added Chhetri. (PTI)

*Williamson likely to play World Cup warm-up matches*



**CHRISTCHURCH, Sept 27:** New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson is set to return from a long injury layoff in his side's World Cup warm-up matches, starting in India this week.

The star batter hasn't played any cricket since March when he ruptured the ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) in his right knee while fielding for Gujarat Titans in the IPL. He underwent surgery in April.

"The plan is to be involved in the warm-up games. There is a strong desire to be involved as much as I can," Williamson said ahead of the team's departure to India.

"Basically, it's just wanting to progress what I am doing now — the running, the fielding, time in the middle with the bat." New Zealand will take on Pakistan and South Africa in World Cup warm-up matches on September 29 in Hyderabad and October 2 in Thiruvananthapuram respectively.

They play England in the tournament opener in Ahmedabad on October 5.

Asked if he was still experiencing discomfort, Williamson said: "Not a huge amount."

"Although the load is going to keep increasing, so there is a little bit of an unknown. But it has felt pretty good really in the last few weeks." "Although it's going well, you still have days that vary a little bit. So it's working through those warm-up games to get as much out of it as I can, and as a team, without bothering it too much," he added.

Williamson had played a crucial role in New Zealand's campaign in 2015 and 2019 editions when they reached successive finals.

Talking about the most difficult aspect of his recovery Williamson said: "Not so much the sprinting, more the slowing actually. From sprinting, the braking, a little bit of a change of direction. It's all been part of the plan, and introducing it towards the end of recovery." (PTI)

## Paes becomes first Asian man to be nominated as a player to Int'l Tennis Hall of Fame



**NEW DELHI, Sept 27:** Multiple Grand Slam winner Leander Paes on Tuesday emerged as the first Asian man to be nominated for the International Tennis Hall of Fame in the player category.

The 50-year-old Paes was one of the six nominees announced for the Class of 2024. He will be competing with Cara Black, Ana Ivanovic, Carlos Moya, Daniel Nestor and Flavia Pennetta in the Player Category.

Li Na, the Chinese player who won the women's singles title at Australian Open and French Open, became the first Asian player to get nominated to the ITHF in 2019. "It means the world to me that I am the first Asian man to be nominated for the International Tennis Hall of Fame in the Player Category," said Paes.

"After three decades of passion for our sport and playing for 1.3-plus billion Indians in the Olympics and Davis Cup, I am thrilled that my hard work has been recognized."

"I have so much gratitude for my parents, siblings, coaches, Davis Cup captains and everyone who has played a role in my career," he added.

Besides Paes, former India

player Vijay Amritraj was also nominated in the contributor category.

"The ballot will also include two nominees in the Contributor Category, Vijay Amritraj and renowned journalist Richard Evans," ITHF said on its website.

Paes is a winner of 18 Grand Slam titles in doubles and mixed doubles, besides being a former doubles world No. 1.

In a career spanning three decades, he captured eight Grand Slams in doubles, 10 in mixed doubles and a career Slam in both disciplines.

"Tennis has given me so much, and I hope this nomination inspires every young kid around the world that with passion in your heart, hard work and belief in yourself, you too can become a champion," Paes said.

Paes spent a total of 462 weeks inside the ATP doubles top 10, including 37 weeks at No. 1, and won 55 doubles titles on tour.

A Davis Cup mainstay for India for 30 years, Paes holds the competition's record with 43 doubles ties victories. In 1996, he became India's only Olympic medalist in tennis, earning bronze at the Atlanta Games. (PTI)

## Sangita hits hat-trick as India blank Singapore 13-0 in Asian Games women's hockey

**HANGZHOU, Sept 27:** Young striker Sangita Kumari slammed a hat-trick as a dominant Indian women's hockey team scored goals at will to thrash lowly Singapore 13-0 in its opening Pool A match at the Asian Games here on Wednesday.

While the Indians pumped in as many as eight goals in the first two quarters, the Singaporeans did show some resistance after the halfway break as they conceded just five goals.

Sangita (23rd, 47th, 56th) scored thrice, while Navneet Kaur found the net twice in the 14th minute.

Udita (6th), Sushila Chanu

(8th), Deepika (11th), Deep Grace Ekka (17th), Neha (19th), Salima Tete (35th), Monika (52nd) and Vandana Katariya (56th) were the other goal scorers.

India will take on Malaysia in their next pool match on Friday.

"It was a good performance, we are happy with the result. The young girls complemented the seniors well. It made our job easy," skipper Savita said after the match.

"We are taking match-by-match here. Our next focus is on Malaysia, we have one day gap in which we will prepare and study Malaysia's game. We will

just focus on our plans.

"There is also Korea in our pool and they are a very good team but we will try to win and top the pool. Our mindset is right, everybody knows why they are here. Our target is to qualify (for Olympics) directly," she added.

The gulf between India and Singapore was evident as the Savita Punia-led side mounted attack after attack to score eight goals in the opening two quarters.

The Indians' relentless attacks resulted in a heap of penalty corners and they managed to convert five of them.

India took the lead in the sixth minute when Udita scored from a penalty corner with a slap shot. Two minutes later, they were awarded a penalty stroke and Sushila made no mistake.

Penalty corners came thick and fast for the Indians and Deepika tripled the lead with a perfect flick. Navneet scored two quick goals a minute from the first quarter — first from a penalty corner and then a field goal seconds later.

Navneet snatched the ball from a defender and then dodged past the Singapore goalkeeper — with fine stick work to push the ball in. (PTI)

## Tough to look beyond Shreyas in WC playing XI, Gill will be main player for India: Azharuddin

**HYDERABAD, Sept 27:** Former captain Mohammad Azharuddin can't look beyond Shreyas Iyer in India's playing eleven in the ODI World Cup and also backed a possible last-minute inclusion of R Ashwin in the 15-man squad.

India find themselves in a problem of plenty in the middle with Iyer, Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav staking a claim for one spot. Iyer, who was India's designated number four before a back injury ruled him out of the game for six months, struck an attacking hundred in Indore to put himself ahead of Kishan and Suryakumar in the middle-order race.

"Good competition always brings the best out of the players. Shreyas is an exciting player and he really batted well the other day after losing out on games due to his back issues. He is very positive with his intent and looks to score all the time."

"He can make a big impact in the game. It is very hard to look past him unless you are looking for a left-hander in the middle, then



Ishan comes into picture. However, I feel Shreyas has done enough," Azhar told PTI on Wednesday.

Ashwin, who had played only two ODIs since 2017 before being picked for the ODI series against Australia, is expected to replace Axar Patel in the squad if the latter doesn't regain full fitness.

He gave a good account of his

skills in the first two ODIs before being rested for the final game in Rajkot. The wily off-spinner also has Azhar's vote.

"Ashwin is someone who should be in the team. It is not very easy to line up against him as he has got a lot of variations. The team has already been announced. It remains to be seen whether Axar is in there

or not. "Instead of two left-arm spinners, Ashwin can also bat well, he should find a place," said Azhar, who captained India in three World Cups. While Shardul Thakur has

done alright in the chances he has got, he doesn't match the skills of Mohammad Shami who should be preferred over the former in the playing eleven, said the 60-year-old. The recent selection showed that the management has not fully made up its mind on the fast bowling combination. Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Siraj walk into the playing eleven.

"Shami has been doing well for a long time. Shardul too has done alright in the limited chances he has got. But you don't require everyone to bat in the 11. Shami has also batted well at times."

"Shardul is a bowling all-rounder not a batting all-rounder. When you already have Haridk Pandya you don't need Shardul in the playing eleven," he said.

For him, the Indian player to watch out for will not be Rohit Sharma or Virat Kohli, as he has

put his money on Shubman Gill. Gill has been in sensational form over the past 12 months and has racked up five ODI hundreds this year.

"This time, Gill will be the main player for India. Obviously, the others around him are also batting well. If he can give India a good start it will set the ball rolling," said Azhar.

Considering India have not won an ICC event since 2013, Azhar feels the team is bound to feel the pressure of not being able to win knock-out games over the past decade.

"It is going to be a very competitive world cup. India have a very good team. Grounds will be full as India are hosting after a long time." Asked if India are peaking at the right time following the Asia Cup title and series win over Australia, Azhar said: "I really don't understand this peaking business. When you are playing you are playing well, doesn't matter whether you are peaking or not peaking." (PTI)



# Samra steals show with Gold as Indian shooters dominate

**HANGZHOU, Sept 27:** Young star Sift Kaur Samra stole the show with a gold medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 position event as Indian shooters set the range ablaze by securing as many as seven medals at the Asian Games here on Wednesday.

In the same event, Ashi Chouksey, who was in contention for a silver, settled for bronze with a score of 451.9, while Esha Singh claimed silver in the women's 25m pistol event with a total of 34.

On her way to silver, Esha upstaged her senior Manu Bhaker who finished a disappointing fifth after topping the qualification.

Samra produced some excellent shooting to claim the yellow metal with a world and games record score of 469.6. She also became the first Indian shooter to win gold in rifle 3 position.

Earlier, the triumvirate of Bhaker, Esha and Rhythm Sangwan fired in tandem to shoot the gold medal in the women's 25m pistol team event, as Indian shooters dominated proceedings at the Hangzhou Shooting Range Hall.

In the day's last shooting final, Anant Jeet Singh Naruka claimed the

silver medal in men's skeet event, adding to the team bronze he won alongside Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Gurjoat Khangura.

Naruka finished his last round with 10/10 to end his event with an impressive 58/60 but it was still not good enough for gold as Kuwait's Abdullah Alrashidi equalled the world record with a perfect 60/60 to finish on top of the podium.

Nasser Al-Attiya of Qatar bagged the bronze with 46.

Manu, Esha and Rhythm totalled 1759 to finish on top of the podium and help the country clinch its fourth gold medal in the ongoing sporting extravaganza. This was the second gold medal for India in shooting in these Games.

Meanwhile, the Indian team of Angad Vir Singh Bajwa, Gurjoat Khangura and Anant Jeet Singh Naruka bagged the team bronze medal in the men's skeet event.

The trio shot a total of 355 to settle for the third position. The hosts China won the gold medal while Qatar claimed the silver.

The Indian women's team, however, crashed out of the skeet event by fin-



ishing in the fourth position behind Kazakhstan, China and Thailand.

In the women's 3P event, host nation China's Qiongyue Zhang crashed what could have been an India one-two, by winning the silver with a score of 462.3.

Before her triumph in the final, Samra broke the Asian Games record in qualification with a total score of

594 (out of 600) along with China's Xia Siyu, who finished on top by virtue of higher inner 10 scores (closer to the centre of the target.)

Chouksey had a total of 590 and qualified in sixth position. Manini Kaushik finished 18th with a score of 580.

The trio of Samra, Chouksey and Manini claimed the team silver in the

women's 50m rifle 3 position event with a total score of 1764 in the qualification.

In the pistol qualification, Manu topped the qualification after finishing the last rapid-fire series with 98.

In the women's 25m pistol, the Chinese bagged the team silver with 1756, while the shooters from South Korea settled for the third position with 1742.

They claimed the top prize minutes after the trio of Chouksey, Manini and Samra combined to shoot a total of 1764 points in the qualification and finish second on the podium in women's 50m rifle 3 position event.

Hosts China won the gold with an aggregate score of 1773, while South Korea bagged the bronze with a total score of 1756.

Samra and Chouksey qualified for the finals as well by finishing second and sixth respectively, while Kaushik bowed out in the individual event by finishing 18th.

While Kaushik missed out on the final, Samra shot 100 in two series to finish with a total of 397 after kneeling and prone positions.

Samra and Chouksey were excellent in their three series, more so in stand-

ing section, to finish in the top 8 and qualify for the individual final.

In the women's 25m pistol, while Manu topped the qualification round, Esha (586) finished fifth.

Rhythm (583) ended seventh but since only two shooters per country are allowed in the final, she missed the cut.

In the 25m range, the 18-year-old Esha shot 34 to settle for the second place, while China's Rui Liu won the gold medal with a games record score of 38. South Korea's Jiin Yang ended with bronze after shooting 29.

On her way to gold, Rui Liu broke the record held by India's Rahi Sarnobat (34).

In the gold medal contest, Esha missed three out of her five shots, while the Chinese missed the target only once to emerge victorious.

Esha's medal was India's 10th in shooting here, bettering the 2018 edition of nine medals.

Meanwhile, there was an unusually long delay in the final because of a missing shot of the Korean shooter, leaving the judges to inspect the target and the back-up target to see if the shooter actually missed the target or failed to register. (PTI)

## 3rd ODI: Australia ride on four half-centuries to score 352 for 7 against India

**RAJKOT, Sept 27:** Mitchell Marsh's stroke-filled 96 and Marnus Labuschagne's polished 72 took Australia to a commendable 352 for 7 against India in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday.

While Marsh missed reaching triple figures by a whisker, Australia's batters came good collectively in what will be their last official ODI before the start of the World Cup.

David Warner had himself to blame for his dismissal after a fiery 56 off 34 balls (6x4s, 4x6s), but he set the tone for Australia early on. Steve Smith also put brakes on his poor run of scores to make a rapid 74 and towards the end, Labuschagne upped the ante with his 58-ball knock to help Australia post their challenging score. Labuschagne also became Australia's top run-getter in the ongoing calendar year.

On a hot and humid day, drinks were brought out more often than not between change of over while batters dropped down to their haunches, turning out to be quite a laborious effort for the Australian batters after



their captain chose to bat.

Marsh took the attack to Jasprit Bumrah (3/81 in 10 overs), hitting two fours and a six and forcing India to take off the solitary slip since there was no early movement on offer.

Warner too shrugged off a slow start to hit Mohammed Siraj for two imperious sixes as Australia seized early momentum.

The assault continued as Prasidh Krishna was hit for three fours and a six in his opening over with Warner taking the lead. The Australian opener completed his ninth fifty against India and 31st overall with a six over

fine leg off Siraj.

However, Warner's charge ended while trying to scoop Prasidh, walking across the wickets but only to edge it behind. In search of a big score, Smith opted for consolidation with Marsh, who had long shifted gears to drop the anchor. Bumrah was brought back for the 23rd over but Marsh clobbered him for three fours and two sixes to collect 19 runs — he gave that many in two separate overs — which finally forced India to bring Kuldeep Yadav (2/48) into the attack.

While India found it difficult to penetrate owing to a placid surface, the Australian pair of Marsh and Smith amassed 137 from 119 for the second wicket.

However, the Australian pair did struggle with the heat and humidity late in the afternoon and increasingly looked for boundaries while sacrificing the doubles.

For the second time this year and against the same opponent, Marsh came close to bringing up only his second ODI century but missed it by four runs. (PTI)

## Vishnu Sarvanan wins Bronze; sailors end campaign with one silver, two bronze medals

**NINGBO, Sept 27:** Indian sailor Vishnu Sarvanan won a bronze, the country's first-ever medal in the men's dinghy ILCA-7 event at the Asian Games here on Wednesday.

Sarvanan finished with a net score of 34 points to miss the silver medal by just one point in the gruelling 11-race competition.

South Korea's Jeemin HA took the second spot with 33 points. Singapore's Jun Han Ryan Lo claimed the gold with a net score of 26.

Lack of wind, however, denied India a medal in women's single dinghy ILCA-6 event where Nethra Kumanan had to settle for a disappointing fourth place finish after race No 12, which was to be the final one in the category, was cancelled.

After the penultimate race, Nethra (41 net points) was three

points behind Singapore's Jing Hua Victoria Chan (38).

But she eventually failed to secure a podium finish as race 12 could not be held and the event was cancelled.

Nevertheless, the Indian sailors matched their 2018 Asian Games feat of one silver and two bronze medals here.

Earlier on Tuesday, 17-year-old Neha Thakur grabbed a silver, while Ebad Ali claimed a bronze, India's first-ever medal in the men's windsurfer RS:X event.

In sailing, the competitor's worst score (which is equivalent to their respective positions) from all the races is subtracted from the total points to determine the net score.

The one with the lowest net score is adjudged the winner.

Sarvanan had a total score of 48 and his worst race was No. 8,

where he finished last in the 13-competitor field after retiring because of a technical foul.

So, he ended up with 14 points with the addition of one penalty-point in race No 8.

Sarvanan, thus, finished with 34 net points by subtracting 14 points from his overall score of 48, just one-point behind Jeemin, who took the silver.


A reigning National champion since 2017, Sarvanan finished second as the second-best Asian at the Tokyo Olympics by virtue of his 20/25 overall finish.

Sarvanan, who learnt sailing under his father's guidance at the age of nine at Army Yachting Node in Mumbai, won a silver in the 2019 Under-21 World Championships in Croatia.

He also won a silver in 2021 Olympic Qualifiers Asian Championships. (PTI)

অসম চৰকাৰ

# চীৰ ছহিদ ভগৎ সিঙৰ জয়ন্তী








স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলনৰ অমৰ ছহিদ ভগৎ সিঙৰ জয়ন্তীত  
অসমবাসীৰ হৈ তেখেতলৈ গভীৰ শ্ৰদ্ধাঞ্জলি জ্ঞাপন কৰিছোঁ।

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তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰচাৰিত

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## Adopt One Health: Stop Rabies

### Help eliminate Rabies by 2030

# World Rabies Day

## 28<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2023


### This World Rabies Day, let us raise awareness and ensure elimination of Rabies by 2030.


### Do's in case of an animal bite

- ☀ Immediately wash the wound thoroughly with soap and running water for a minimum of 15 minutes
- ☀ Apply antiseptic
- ☀ Contact a doctor or visit a health institution for treatment immediately
- ☀ Ensure your domestic dog is vaccinated against Rabies

### Don'ts in case of an animal bite

- ☀ Do not ignore licks/scratches/wounds caused by animals
- ☀ Do not believe in superstitions
- ☀ Do not pack or stitch the wound
- ☀ Do not ignore immediate cleaning of wound

 Remember, an animal usually bites only if provoked or in self-defence.



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