

**6 WORLD**

- 56 people killed in two suicide blasts in Pakistan
- Extremist attack kills at least 12 soldiers in Niger

**8 NATION**

- PM to visit Telangana tomorrow, will inaugurate developmental projects
- Will Rahul speak on issue of women safety in Rajasthan: BJP

### Company's general meeting held

**HT Correspondent**

**DONGKAMUKAM, Sept 29:** Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Rongkhang Co-operative Lamps Ltd was held at Ghilani in West Karbi Anglong on Friday under the chairmanship of Mongol Bey. Chief guest, Ditola Hasnu, chairman of the Veterinary Development Board, said that despite being one of the oldest companies in Karbi Anglong, the Rongkhang Co-operative Lamps Ltd is struggling for its existence. The present shareholders and conscious citizens need to come forward. He urged that a delegation be sent to meet Karbi Anglong. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

### 1 killed, 3 attacked by elephants in Jorhat

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, Sept 29:** A forest department fixed pay worker, Atul Kalita was killed and three others were injured by an elephant in the wee hours of Friday at Vijaynagar area under Titabar beat of Mariani range in Jorhat forest division. A Forest department official said that Kalita was part of a forest team that had gone to chase away a herd of elephants, when (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

### Body recovered in Jorhat

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, Sept 29:** The body of person identified as Rajib Bora (43), who was a truck handyman, was found inside a truck parked at Borpool area in Jorhat on Friday evening.

According to local, the driver of the vehicle, who had reportedly gone out for some work in the afternoon, discovered Bora's body inside the vehicle in the evening. The police was informed and the body taken to the Jorhat Medical College and Hospital for post mortem. The police are investigating the matter. The deceased hailed from Cinamara on the outskirts of Jorhat town.

## India-Canada issue discussed, both sides came out 'better informed': Jaishankar

**WASHINGTON, Sept 29:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said that the Canadian allegations with regard to the death of a Khalistani separatist was discussed during his meeting with the Secretary of State Tony Blinken a day earlier and noted that the two delegations came out "better informed" after the meeting.

"Yes, I did," Jaishankar said in response to a question during his appearance at the prestigious Hudson Institute think-tank when asked if the issue of Canadian allegations came up during his meeting with Blinken at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the State Department.

The US side shared its assessments on this whole situation and he explained to the

Americans a summary of India's concerns. "I think hopefully we both came out better informed," Jaishankar said.

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

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

The Canadian Prime Minister, he said,



made some allegations initially privately and then publicly. "Our response to him both in private and public was that his al-

legation was not consistent with our policy. And if he had, his government had anything relevant specifics, we would look into," he said. "We were open to looking at it now. That's where that conversation is at this point of time," Jaishankar said.

He said that for India, Canada has become a country where organised crime from India mixed with trafficking in people, mixed with secessionism and violence which is a very toxic combination of issues that people who have found operating space. He acknowledged that there has been a lot between India and Canada on this issue preceding the remarks of the Canadian prime minister.

In the last few years, the issue of Khal-

istan has come back very much into play, because of what "we consider to be a very permissive Canadian attitude towards terrorists, extremists, people who openly advocate violence and they have been given operating space in Canada because of the compulsions of Canadian politics." "I don't think most Americans, perhaps Canada, looks very different, it sort of depends, from where the interests where the shoe pinches. For us, it has certainly been a country where organised crime from India, mixed with trafficking in people mixed with secessionism, violence, terrorism. It's a very toxic combination of issues and people who have found operating space there," (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Situation in Imphal valley tense, curfew relaxed

*Several injured in clashes between protestors, security forces*

**IMPHAL, Sept 29:** The situation in Manipur's Imphal valley was calm, but tense on Friday morning after a night of violent clashes including an attempt to attack the empty ancestral residence of Chief Minister N Biren Singh here.

Authorities relaxed curfew in Imphal East and Imphal West districts from 5am to 11am to help people buy essential items and medicines.

The relaxation, however, shall not apply to "any gathering or large-scale movement of persons or sit-in protests which is unlawful in nature," an official order said.

A mob tried to attack the CM's empty ancestral house on Thursday night, despite heavy security clampdown and curfew in Imphal valley. Security forces, however, foiled the attempt after firing several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the mob.

"There was an attempt to attack the chief minister's ancestral house at Heingang locality in Imphal. Se-



curity forces stopped the mob around 100-150 metres away from the house," a police officer said.

The Chief Minister lives in a separate, well-guarded official residence in the centre of the state's capital. The police officer said, "Two groups of people came from different directions and approached the CM's ancestral residence but they were stopped."

The authorities switched off the

electricity connection in the entire area to help reduce the visibility of the protestors. More barricades were added to the previous ones near the house.

Several people were injured in clashes between security forces and protesters at different places in the state capital on Thursday night, sources said.

At Hattat Minuthong in Imphal East, a rally demanding justice for

the killing of the two students turned violent after security personnel stopped them from advancing further. A number of people were injured in the incident and had to be admitted to a local hospital, sources added.

A house was torched at Checkin in Imphal East by a mob late on Thursday night. Fire personnel later doused the blaze, officials said. At Wangkhei, Khurai and Kongba in Imphal East district, protesters burnt tyres and blocked roads with iron pipes and boulders to restrict the movement of security forces, they said.

The Manipur government on Thursday constituted a committee to verify complaints of alleged use of excessive force on protesters, mainly students, by security forces here over the last two days, an official order said.

"A meeting of senior officers of CAPF was held to discuss the present law and order situation in the state. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## KAAC CEM challenges allegations against him

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Sept 29:** Chief executive member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang on Friday said that those making allegations against him should file a complaint with the autonomous council so that an enquiry can be held.

The opposition Congress has alleged that the CEM has drawn ₹ 100 crore through firms in the name of his wife and relatives by doing work that overlapped.

Talking to the media on the sidelines of the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' programme, the CEM said, "The Congress held a protest in their own office. They should have made a written complaint and presented it to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, but it was not done. A Congress worker and two youths of All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHL) of the opposition filed a PIL in the Gauhati High Court. In the single

bench they lost after making enquiries. Then they appealed to the division bench, after which, an independent enquiry was done and a clean chit was given."

The CEM also challenged the Congress to dig out a single rupee that his wife had made through contract work.

"My wife is a government employee. The Congress does not



want development in Karbi Anglong. After peace was established in the district, development work has been carried out. There were ethnic clashes and insurgent organizations were formed during the Congress regime," said Tuliram Ronghang. Ronghang also demanded that leader of the opposition in the state legislative assembly, Debabrata Saikia should apologize to the people of Karbi Anglong for making wild allegations.

Earlier the CEM participated in the Meri Maati Mera Desh programme organized by 'ARDI' - Area Level (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Small tea growers play crucial role in industry: Goyal



**GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal on Friday highlighted the pivotal role played by small tea growers in the plantation sector and stressed the need for enhanced livelihood opportunities for them.

The union minister, in a video address to the stakeholders present at the National Small Tea Growers Conference, focused on the importance of promoting organic tea through marketing and leveraging India's position as a one-stop destination for various tea vari-

eties. He also called for targeting high-value markets like Europe, the US, and the Middle East.

The union minister also stressed the need for sustainable solutions to address climate change challenges and encouraged innovation across the entire tea supply chain. He expressed confidence that this conference would catalyze positive transformations within the industry and enhance the livelihoods of valued tea growers. On the occasion, Tea Board's former chairman Prabhat Bezbaruah said that it was imperative to support the small growers and empower them for quality tea production.

It is crucial for the organized sector and government bodies to support small tea growers in their journey towards quality tea production, he said.

The day-long conference was jointly organized by Solidaridad and the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers' Associations (CISTA).

During the conference, detailed discussions were held on the essential role of small tea growers in the Indian tea industry, their challenges, and the need for knowledge empowerment.

Solidaridad Network Asia managing director Shatadru Chattopadhyay pointed out that to understand the dynamics of the tea industry one has to acknowledge small tea growers (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Age of consent: Law panel recommends amendment to POCSO Act

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** The Law Commission has proposed some amendments to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act to deal with cases wherein there is tacit approval, but not legal consent, from children aged 16 to 18 years.

The Law Commission has advised the government not to tinker with the existing age of consent under the POCSO Act and suggested introducing guided judicial discretion in the matter of sentencing in cases involving tacit approval of children in the 16-18 age bracket.

The commission, in its report submitted to the Union law ministry, said the amendments are necessary as such cases do not merit to be dealt with the same severity as the cases that were ideally imagined to fall under the POCSO Act.

Over the years, the POCSO Act, which seeks to protect children from sexual assault, sexual harassment,



and pornography, has often come in conflict with the role of consent in determining the nature of relationships between adolescents.

The act defines a child as a person aged below 18.

According to Section 6 of the POCSO Act, "Whoever commits aggravated penetrative sexual assault shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term which

shall not be less than 20 years, but which may extend to imprisonment for life, which shall mean imprisonment for the remainder of the natural life of that person and shall also be liable to fine, or with death."

However, the law panel has suggested that certain amendments need to be brought in the POCSO Act to remedy the situation in cases wherein (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Noted Tiwa writer to speak on languages

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Sept 29:** Noted writer of Tiwa literature and executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)'s animal husbandry and veterinary department, D Upping Maslai will participate in the international seminar on 'Kokborok and Other Languages of North East India' to be held on October 1 and 2 at the Tripura Tribal Folk Music College in Khumlung in Tripura.

The seminar is being organized by Kokborok Kokrwai Bosong and Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). Maslai will speak in the seminar as a resource person on the subject of the close relationship between Tiwa, Dimas and Tiprasa languages. Maslai has written two books on Tiwa language. He has written books including Tiwa Matkhop Sigai Lai, Assamese Word Book, Mat Sigaina Naw and Shunmandong - a book narrating his (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## 5G technology to aid in job creation, sustainable development

### DONER minister inaugurates 5G Experience Centre in Guwahati

**GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** The Northeastern region can now reap the benefits of 5G technology and harness it for socio-economic development with the city getting a 5G Experience Centre and Applications.

Union Department of North East Region (DONER) minister, G Kishan Reddy on Friday virtually inaugurated the 5G Experience Centre and Applications in the city in collaboration with various government agencies.

This initiative aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision articulated during the golden jubilee celebrations of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in December 2022.

The Prime Minister had high-



lighted the government's focus on leveraging 5G technology and digital connectivity for job creation, meeting development goals, and

achieving sustainable development goals (SDG) by 2030 in the North Eastern Region (NER), the minister said. "India's digital economy

has witnessed remarkable growth, outpacing some of the world's largest economies. Services like Aadhaar, united payments interface (UPI) and digilocker have played pivotal roles in the country's digital transformation," he pointed out.

Recognizing the potential of digital revolution, the North Eastern Council, under the Ministry of DoNER, fully funded India's first 5G training labs and 5G health use case applications across seven northeastern states (except Arunachal Pradesh), Reddy said.

"This groundbreaking initiative will not only strengthen digital connectivity in the northeast, but also position the region as a significant player (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Guv reviews initiatives of food & public dept

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Friday reviewed the various initiatives of the state food, public distribution and consumer affairs department at the Raj Bhavan.

State food, public distribution and consumer affairs minister Ranjeet Kr Dass provided the Governor with an overview of the department's activities in the state. He also outlined the department's initiatives aimed at benefiting both the department and the people of the state.

Additional chief secretary of the department, Biswaranjan Samal gave a comprehensive presentation on the department's core responsibilities. He placed particular emphasis on various aspects, including the implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 and One Nation One Ration Card programme and distribution of subsidized wheat, salt, and cooking oil, highlighting ample stock of essential commodities. He also said that the department is ensuring constant price monitoring and regulation, consumer protection, awareness initiatives, and the maintenance of uniform and accurate weights and measures standards.

Since May 1, 2022, over 2.5 lakh ration cards, encompassing approximately 52 lakh duplicate/ineligible ben-

eficiaries, have been identified and removed from the NFSA database. Moreover, the Aadhaar seeding rate for ration cards has risen from 30.54 per cent in November 2021 to an impressive 99.49 per cent, while Aadhaar seeding against beneficiaries has increased from 11.70 per cent to 97.80 per cent. The state has also successfully deployed electronic point of sale (ePoS) devices at 34,285 Fair Price Shops throughout the state. These shops have been integrated into the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) platform since June 2022 as part of the NFSA, said officials present on the occasion.

Governor Kataria inquired about the department's role in addressing price surges in the market and sought details on the measures taken to stabilize prices during the festive season. Further, he emphasized the need for establishing a mandi system in the state, particularly to support farmers in obtaining fair prices for their produce.

The Governor underscored the importance of diversifying agricultural production beyond paddy cultivation. He advocated the need for encouraging farmers to engage in pulse and other allied farming practices to ensure the state's self-sufficiency in agricultural production.

The meeting was attended by different various officials of the department.



# India in talks with more jurisdictions to make material impact on cross-border payments: RBI DG

**KOLKATA, Sept 29:** Reserve Bank Deputy Governor T Rabi Sankar on Friday said the high cost of remittances for countries despite the available technology was "unconscionable", and India is in talks with more jurisdictions to make a material impact on cross-border payments.

Sankar, during a virtual address at the BCC&I Indo-Pacific Economic Conclave, said according to World Bank research, global cross-border remittance in 2022 was estimated to be USD 830 billion, and India was the top recipient.

"As per the World Bank's remittance prices worldwide database, the global average cost of a retail size of remittance (retail size - USD 200) was 6.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2022. For some countries, this cost can be as high as 8 per cent.

"Such a high cost in today's context, when data connectivity is so cheap, is simply unconscionable. I believe that given the available technology, the present situation is not sustainable," he said.

The top RBI official said India has been making efforts to tackle the challenge of the high cost of remittances, and the newly intro-

duced central bank digital currency (CBDC) offers a potential solution in this context. "If we come up with a technologically viable solution to link the CBDC systems across countries, it can dramatically bring down cost of cross-border payments by completely bypassing the legacy correspondent banking system," Sankar said.

He, however, said this will require international cooperation and agreement on multiple legal and technological protocols, "something which should be quite doable in today's hyper-connected global economy", especially when the welfare gains are substantial.

"We are in talks with some other jurisdictions to make a material impact on the high cost of remittances," said Sankar.

In February this year, India and Singapore had enabled the UPI-PayNow linkage to enable users in either country to make convenient, safe, instant and cost-effective cross-border transfers using their respective mobile apps.

"We have followed up on this in July by signing a MoU with the Central Bank of the UAE (for) co-operation regarding interlinking on mutual payments and messaging



systems, among other things," Sankar added.

The RBI deputy governor also talked about the risks that private digital currencies pose for countries like India and other emerging economies. Such currencies impede the ability of emerging market countries to manage their external sector or maintain policy independence, he said.

"Within the set of private virtual currency, the inherent flaws, vulnerabilities and risks posed by stablecoins outweigh their purported

benefits. In fact, all the perceived benefits of stablecoins can perhaps be more easily and responsibly achieved by linking CBDCs or fast payment systems of differential jurisdictions," Sankar said.

Meanwhile, speaking at a special session on 'India Leads - Towards 3rd Largest Economy', Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, called for more private investment in the infrastructure sector, and a "creative redevelopment" of cities.

"That is a sector in particular,

which is attracting very little private capital. At the moment, just about 5 per cent of investment in infrastructure is coming from private capital. And, that is not sustainable in the sense that capacities of the governments are limited, and thereby, we have to create opportunities for the private sector to come in.

"Our journey in the future will depend on the quantum of our success in the 'Amrit Kaal'. The role of our cities and an orderly transition to urbanisation is going to play a major part," Seth said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described the coming 25 years until the centenary of India's Independence in 2047 as 'Amrit Kaal'.

Seth said more focus is required on the energy sector, which at present is "not exactly open for the market forces".

The cost recoveries in the sector are not optimum for economic forces to have a sound play, he said. The senior government official also listed reskilling and financial sector efficiencies in terms of cost and ease of intermediation as critical aspects in India's journey towards becoming the third largest economy in the world. (PTI)

## Sensex rises 320 pts, Nifty closes above 19,600 on buying in metal, energy shares

**MUMBAI, Sept 29:** Benchmark Sensex rose by 320 points while Nifty closed above the 19,600 mark on Friday after value-buying in metal, financial and energy stocks aided by positive trends in the US and European markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 320.09 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 65,828.41. During the day, it jumped 643.33 points or 0.98 per cent to 66,151.65. The Nifty advanced 114.75 points or 0.59 per cent to end at 19,638.30.

Among the Sensex firms, NTPC climbed over 3 per cent emerging as the biggest gainer. Tata Motors, Sun Pharma, Tata Steel, State Bank of India, UltraTech Cement, JSW Steel, Bajaj Finance, Reliance, ICICI Bank and IndusInd Bank were the other major gainers.

Power Grid, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and Titan were among the laggard.

"Markets made a recovery attempt after Thursday's fall and managed to close half a per cent higher. The tone was positive for most of the session however dip in the final hour trimmed the gains," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services said that while stocks witnessed a rebound on Friday, the market is facing stiff resistance at higher levels due to insipid liquidity and a lack of triggers to overcome the bears. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 1.31 per cent and smallcap index advanced 0.57 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, metal jumped 2.71 per cent, healthcare rallied 2.22 per cent, oil & gas (1.30 per cent), commodities (1.25 per cent), energy (1.16 per cent) and power (1.02 per cent). IT and tech were the laggards. On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark fell 180.74 points or 0.27 per cent, and the Nifty declined 35.95 points or 0.18 per cent.

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

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.49 per cent to USD 95.28 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,364.22 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

## Tata Steel inks pact with IOCL to further reduce carbon footprint

**JAMSHEDPUR, Sept 29:** Tata Steel on Thursday said it has signed an agreement with Indian Oil Corporation Limited and its business associate to further reduce carbon footprint at its Ferro Alloys plant.

The agreement encompasses LPG supply, installation of LPG facilities, and the operation and maintenance of the same at the company's Ferro Alloys Plants in Gopalpur of Ganjam and Athagarh of Cuttack districts in Odisha, the steel major said in a statement.

Tata Steel has decided to transition from Furnace Oil and High-Speed Diesel to a more sustainable fuel option - Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) in response to the pressing environmental concerns and the global imperative to reduce carbon emissions.

This eco-friendly move is expected to bring about a considerable reduction in carbon emissions, it said.

Tata Steel's Ferro Alloys and Minerals Division Executive-In-Charge Pankaj Satija said, "The agreement, which is a part of our sustainability initiatives, will help us in reducing the carbon footprint at our plants. We will continue our commitment towards decarbonisation and endeavour for a greener future." (PTI)

## Rupee rises 14 paise to 83.05 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, Sept 29:** The rupee appreciated 14 paise to settle at 83.05 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, boosted by a firm trend in equity markets and a sharp correction in the greenback against major rivals overseas.

However, selling pressure from foreign equity investors and rising crude oil prices in international markets weighed on the domestic unit, forex traders said.

The rupee opened strong at 83.13 against the US dollar and moved in the range of 83.03 to 83.13 against the greenback. It finally settled at 83.05 (provisional), registering a gain of 14 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee settled 3 paise higher at 83.19. Analysts said the rupee also strengthened due to a significant decline in India's current account deficit (CAD). However, rising interest rates and US bond yields prompted foreign investors to stay in selling mode. CAD almost halved to USD 9.2 billion, or 1.1 per cent, of GDP in the first quarter of the current fiscal from USD 17.9 billion (2.1 per cent of GDP) a year ago, the Reserve Bank of India said on Thursday.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said, "Indian rupee strengthened on Friday on weak US dollar index and a decline in crude oil prices. Positive tone in domestic markets also strength-

ened the rupee. However, FII outflows capped sharp gains". The dollar declined on concerns over looming US government shutdown fears. Disappointing economic data from the US also weighed on the greenback, he added.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on as US government shutdown worries may keep the dollar pressure. Recovery in global markets may also support the local currency.

"However, expectations of recovery in crude oil prices and selling pressure from foreign investors may weigh on the rupee," Choudhary said, adding "Traders may also take cues from India's fiscal deficit data. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 82.70 to ₹ 83.40".

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, declined by 0.52 per cent to 105.68. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.36 per cent higher at USD 95.72 per barrel. On the domestic equity front, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 320.09 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 65,828.41. The broader Nifty climbed 114.75 points or 0.59 per cent to end at 19,638.30. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 3,364.22 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

## Berger Paints expects margin stability amid rising crude prices

**KOLKATA, Sept 29:** Berger Paints India Ltd, the country's second-largest paint manufacturer, does not foresee any significant impact on its profit margins despite the recent surge in crude oil prices, according to a senior company official.

Production of paint heavily depends on crude-based derivatives which are used as raw materials.

Berger said the current pain is mostly covered with its previous price increases and is not considering any further hikes in the festive season to push sales.

However, if crude oil prices continue to remain elevated for a longer duration, the company anticipates a potential dip in profits compared to the first quarter levels.

"If the prices remain at this level, which we expect, we see no immediate or significant impact going forward, except that profitability may be lower than in Quarter 1," Berger Paints Managing Director & CEO Abhijit Roy told PTI.

Brent crude, a benchmark for India, has at one point of time surged to nearly USD 98 per barrel from USD 75 in July. It is currently trading around USD 93.3 per barrel. Roy pointed out that there is sufficient finished stock in the system to sustain operations until November. The real impact is expected to be felt in December, which, however, will likely be relatively small until the third quarter.

Roy expressed concern that if crude oil continues

to hover above USD 100 for an extended period, it could start to exert pressure on the company's financials.

Despite these challenges, the paints maker is banking on a robust third quarter (September to December) due to the extended gap between the monsoon season and the delayed festive season.

Berger Paints witnessed double-digit volume growth in the first quarter ending June and is aiming at retaining this growth momentum. During Q1FY24, the consolidated revenue of Berger rose 9.8 per cent YoY, totalling ₹ 3,030 crore.

This growth was propelled by a robust YoY volume increase of 12.7 per cent. During Q1FY24, the company expanded its footprint, adding over 1,500 new retail touchpoints and deploying more than 1,300 colour bank machines. This expansion contributed to an increase in market share from 19.3 per cent in March '23 to 20.2 per cent in the June quarter.

Berger Paints aims to maintain EBITDA margins within the range of 16 per cent to 18 per cent, management informed in the first-quarter earnings conference call.

Analysts have noted that the Indian paints sector may face intensified competition with the entry of new players such as Grasim, Astral, Pidilite, and JK Cement into the market in FY23. (PTI)

## Sleek luxury modular kitchens & wardrobes at Adabari

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Sept 28:** Sleek by Asian Paints is the pioneer in modular kitchens and now they are into wardrobe and other fitted furniture like crockery unit, TV unit, mandir, study table etc opened exclusive showroom in association with Interior Forum at Adabari, Guwahati. This exclusive show-

room was inaugurated by Assamese film actress Barsha Rani Bishaya on Wednesday in the presence of designer Prakash Agarwal and other dignitaries.

Speaking on the occasion chief guest actress Barsha Rani Bishaya says new venture of Interior Forum will fulfil all the needs of a housewife. When a housewife dreams for her home, her priority is kitchen first and sleek modular kitchens and wardrobes is one stop

awali, he added.

Senior manager (marketing) Anuj Gupta said in this showroom customers can get modular kitchen, wardrobe and accessories based on customers budget. A customer will get "entire kitchen & wardrobe solution under one roof".

Speaking on the occasion, senior manager (sales) Jyotirmay Singh said we understand the market need, and design the kitchen with world class designs handpicked for our customer. This is our second showroom in Guwahati, our first showroom is in Anil Plaza, GS Road, to help the customers in designing and realising the kitchen and wardrobe of their dreams. The building industry in the north east is developing rapidly, and the kitchen is an essential part of residential property.

## India calls for Global Stocktake to address gaps in climate funding

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** The first-ever Global Stocktake should "accentuate" the gaps in funding between the scale of the requirement in developing nations and the available public and additional funding, India has said.

The Global Stocktake is a two-year review by the United Nations to evaluate progress toward the Paris Agreement goals. Started at COP26 in Glasgow, this process will conclude at COP28 in Dubai.

In a submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) outlining its expectations for the Global Stocktake, India emphasised that it should identify obstacles to the support provided by developed countries in terms of finance, technology deployment and transfer, and capacity building for the developing nations.

India called for an assessment under the Global Stocktake process to examine the gaps in the efforts of the developed countries to control and mitigate their emissions, considering the differenti-



ated responsibilities outlined in the Paris Agreement.

The country pointed out that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) had previously highlighted "significant gaps in pre-2020 action".

The IPCC had indicated that the developed countries must reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25-40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020 and revisit their 2020 targets no later than 2014.

India also underscored that Annex I countries -- a group of na-

tions that are part of the Annex I to the UNFCCC and considered to be more economically developed and industrialised -- had only reduced emissions by 5 per cent between 2008-2012.

Annex I countries are generally expected to take the lead in combating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the UNFCCC Secretariat's assessment, despite committing to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 18 per cent relative to 1990 levels between

## Centre's fiscal deficit at Aug-end touch 36 pc of full-year target: CGA



**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** The Centre's fiscal deficit in the first five months of 2023-24 touched 36 per cent of the full-year target, government data showed on Friday.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit -- the gap between expenditure and revenue -- was ₹ 6,42 lakh crore as of August-end, according to the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA).

The deficit stood at 32.6 per cent of the Budget Estimates (BE) in the corresponding period of the financial year 2022-23.

In the Union Budget, the government projected to bring down the fiscal deficit to 5.9 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the current 2023-24 financial year. The fiscal deficit was 6.4 per cent of the GDP in 2022-23 against the earlier estimate of 6.71 per cent. Unveiling the revenue-expenditure data of the central government for the April-August period of 2023-24, CGA said the net tax revenue was ₹ 8.03 lakh crore, or 34.5 per cent, of the BE for the current fiscal. The net tax revenue collection was 36.2 per cent at August-end 2022.

The central government's total expenditure in the first five months stood at ₹ 16.71 lakh crore, or 37.1 per cent, of the BE. The expenditure was 35.2 per cent of the BE a year ago. Of the total expenditure, ₹ 12.97 lakh crore was on the revenue account and ₹ 3.73 lakh crore towards the capital account. Fiscal deficit is the difference between the total expenditure and revenue of the government. It is an indication of the total borrowings that are needed by the government. (PTI)

## Asian shares mixed, with most regional markets closed after Wall St ticks higher



**BANGKOK, Sept 29:** Asian markets were mixed on Friday, with only a few open due to public holidays across the region. U.S. futures edged higher while oil prices were little changed.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index was down 0.1 per cent at 31,857.62. Australia's S and P / ASX 200 added 0.4 per cent to 7,049.10. India's Sensex gained 0.4 per cent, while in Bangkok the SET declined 0.4 per cent.

Markets were closed in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Taiwan and Seoul.

China Evergrande, the world's most heavily indebted real estate developer, said in a notice to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange that its shares would remain suspended until further notice after they plunged nearly 20 per cent on Wednesday and were suspended from trading as of Thursday.

Evergrande is at the centre of a property market crisis that is dragging on China's economic growth.

On Thursday, the S and P 500 rose 0.6 per cent to 4,299.70. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.3 per cent to 33,666.34, and the Nasdaq composite gained 0.8 per cent, to 13,201.28.

A drop in oil prices took some heat off the stock market, a day after crude reached its highest price of the year. Early Friday, U.S. benchmark crude shed 2 cents to USD 91.69 per barrel. It declined nearly USD 2 on Thursday. Brent crude oil, the international standard, gave up 4 cents to USD 93.06 per barrel.

Treasury yields also relaxed Thursday, giving stocks a breather, particularly Big Tech companies.

A 2.1 per cent climb for Meta Platforms and 1.5 per cent gain for Nvidia were two of the strongest forces lifting the S and P 500.

On Wall Street, Peloton Interactive jumped 5.4 per cent after the online exercise bike and fitness company announced a five-year partnership with athletic wear maker Lululemon Athletica.



# Explore avenues to boost per capita income: Guv Kataria to Finance dept

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** Governor Gulab Chand Kataria led a meeting with top officials of the Finance department in the presence of Finance minister Ajanta Neog to assess the department's activities at Raj Bhavan in Guwahati. During the meeting, Finance minister Ajanta Neog provided an overview of various initiatives undertaken by the Finance department, highlighting its commitment to driving transformative changes for the overall development of the state.

Additional chief secretary of the Finance department, Samir Kumar Sinha, delivered an extensive presentation that covered a wide range of the department's activities. This included a detailed analysis of the current year's budget, along with figures from the preceding three years, showcasing allocations and utilisation. The presentation also featured key performance indicators for the Finance department, as well as a comparative analysis of Assam in relation to other states in India. It also touched upon significant state-sponsored schemes implemented by the Finance department.



Furthermore, the additional chief secretary provided insights into various crucial financial aspects, such as GSDP per capita income, own revenue collection (tax revenue and non-tax revenue), own tax to GSDP Ratio, share of central taxes received from the government of India, grants-in-aid received from the government of India, revenue expenditure, interest payment to revenue receipt, capital expenditure, revenue deficit, debt to GSDP ratio, and fiscal deficit. He also discussed the

Assam Tea Industries Special Incentive Scheme, 2020 (ATISIS), and The Assam Microfinance Incentive and Relief Scheme (AMFIRS), 2021.

The additional chief secretary also presented the vision of the Finance department for Amrit Kaal, focusing on inclusive growth, job creation, infrastructure improvement, rural development, and enhancing the investment climate.

Governor Gulab Chand Kataria highlighted the pivotal role played by the Finance department in the

state's growth and development. He stressed the importance of effective collaboration between the Finance department and other departments to ensure the seamless execution of development and welfare activities across the state for the benefit of the people.

Additionally, the Governor stated the need to heed audit recommendations, as the central government disburses funds to the state after the issuance of utilisation certificates. He urged the Finance department to provide these certificates diligently within the stipulated time frame to ensure the uninterrupted flow of development initiatives.

The Governor also shared insights on increasing the state's per capita income and encouraged the Finance department to explore alternative avenues for generating additional revenue.

The meeting was attended by several senior officers from the Finance department and Raj Bhavan, including commissioner and secretary to the Governor SS Meenakshi Sundaram, commissioner and secretary of the Finance department Jayant Narlikar, and others.

## Indian Army partners with NIEDO, Coal India, and Oil India for educational initiatives

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, Sept 29:** In a momentous ceremony held at the Dibrugarh Military Station, the Indian Army forged a significant partnership by signing a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Project DARPAN (Dro and Rising Sun Preparatory Academy in NE) and Project SPEARS (Selection & Preparation for Employment in Army by Rising Sun). The collaborative effort involved the National Integrity and Educational Development Organisation (NIEDO), Coal India Limited, and Oil India Limited. The event was graced by esteemed dignitaries, including Bimal Borah, state minister for Industries & Commerce and Public Enterprises.

The MoU between the Indian Army, NIEDO, Oil India Ltd, and Coal India Ltd signifies a collective commitment to offer value-based education to underprivileged children residing in Upper Assam.

Through these innovative initiatives, the Indian Army aims to establish a prominent educational hub in Dibrugarh district, dedicated to preparing children from disadvantaged backgrounds for entrance examinations such as NDA (National Defence Academy) and



CDS (Combined Defence Services). The projects extend a helping hand by providing free-of-cost residential coaching, along with lodging and meals, to approximately 120 deserving children over a one-year period.

NIEDO and GAPS (Georgian Academy for Professional Studies) will play pivotal roles in delivering academic guidance, comprehensive syllabus modules, and qualified faculty with rich experience to train students for NDA and CDS examinations.

The Indian defense forces have always symbolised honour and integrity as a 'Way of Life', rather than merely a job. The youth of the

north-eastern region, brimming with energy and enthusiasm, aspire to contribute to the nation's growth, making them promising candidates for future defence officers. However, the lack of coaching facilities, infrastructure, and proper guidance has limited their participation in this noble profession. In response to these challenges, Project DARPAN and Project SPEARS were conceived, offering specialised training by experienced faculty members. This ensures that the children are thoroughly prepared and equipped to navigate the rigorous selection process, including written examinations and personal interviews.

## Historic KPM Hall renovated and inaugurated in Sivasagar

**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, Sept 29:** The renovated historic Kali Prasad Memorial Hall, also known as the Sivasagar Kala Bithika (Art Gallery), was inaugurated by Topon Kumar Gogoi, the MP of Jorhat Parliamentary Constituency. The event was attended by art lovers and citizens of the town.

MP Topon Kumar Gogoi highlighted the significance of the KPM Hall, describing it as a place where the people of the town dream new dreams. He initiated a dialogue with the trust members and decided to renovate the building with a grant from the 15th Finance Commission to S M B. The newly renovated KPM Hall will provide budding artists in the district with a platform to showcase their talents.

The Sivasagar Municipality Board (SMB) invested ₹ 38.64 lakh in civil works and ₹ 34.43 lakh in electrical works from the 14th and 15th Finance Commission grants to give the heritage building a new lease of life.

Jayashree Chaliha, daughter of

Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala and daughter-in-law of the Chaliha family of Sivasagar, spoke on behalf of the trustees, recalling the historic significance of the Hall, inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1934. The public hall has played a vital role in the development of several public institutions, including Sibsagar College and Sibsagar Girls' College.

Mrinali Konwar, chairperson of the Sivasagar Municipality Board, welcomed the guests and discussed projects aimed at upgrading civic facilities in the town. Dr Prakash Kotoky, chairman of the Sivasagar Development Authority, expressed gratitude to the MP for his support in transforming the dilapidated building into a beautiful structure. Tapan Kr Bora, AEE of SMB, announced that the fully air-conditioned building would be available for public and private functions on rent.

The event was attended by other dignitaries, including DDC Sivasagar Bitopam Neog, EO of SMB Kankana Saikia, and several senior citizens of the town.

## Workshop on wildlife forensics and legal provisions held in Haflong

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** A workshop on legal orientation and wildlife forensics was held in Haflong, to educate forest officials on the significance of wildlife crime investigation through biological evidence and DNA technology, as well as the systematic preparation of documents for such investigations. The workshop, organised by the Dima Hasao Forest department in collaboration with Aaranyak, took place at the Agricultural Guesthouse Auditorium in Haflong.

The workshop was attended by forest officials, including rangers, deputy rangers, and foresters from 12 ranges in the east and west divisions of the Dima Forest department of the North Cachar Autonomous District Council of the state. Dr M Firoz Ahmed, a senior scientist at Aaranyak, coordinated the event.

During a session on 'Legal provisions to check wildlife crime', Ajoy Kumar Das, senior law consultant of Aaranyak and a practicing advocate of Gauhati High Court, discussed recent amendments to the Wildlife (Protection)



Act of 1972. He explained that the species in the new four schedules appended to the legislation have been categorised. He also highlighted various aspects of the Wildlife (Protection) (Assam Amendment) Act, 2009.

Udayan Borthakur, a senior scientist at Aaranyak, spoke about 'Wildlife forensic using DNA technology'. He highlighted the importance of wildlife crime investigation through biological evidence and using DNA technology to establish a case in a court of law. Borthakur explained various DNA-based tools that can assist in wildlife crime investigations. He also handed over a forensic DNA sampling kit developed by the Wildlife Genetics Laboratory of Aaranyak to the Dima Hasao Forest department.

Advocate Ajoy Kumar Das addressed the topic of 'Preparation of Documents in Wildlife Crime Investigation' and explained the legal steps involved in wildlife crime investigations. He highlighted the importance of scientific evidence in court convictions and provided samples of seizure lists, forwarding reports, case diaries, arrest memos, inspection memos, and more. He stressed the use of a complaint petition instead of a charge-sheet in wildlife crime cases and provided guidance on preparing a complaint petition.

Tuhin Langthasa, DFO of West Division Dima Hasao, inaugurated the workshop and highlighted the need for a thorough understanding of legal provisions and investigative procedures. He shared challenges faced by the Dima Hasao Forest department in tackling wildlife crime and the successful resolution of those challenges.

The workshop ended with a vote of thanks offered by Dipankar Lahkar, a senior official at Aaranyak, with significant contributions from Nitul Kalita, a project officer at Aaranyak, to make the program a success.

## Body of missing fisherman found in Deroi River

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, Sept 29:** A tragic discovery was made on Friday when the lifeless body of Amrit Ghatowar (28), a resident of Krishna Bihari Tea Estate Ketelasuwa area near Demow, was recovered from the Deroi River. The incident unfolded after Amrit Ghatowar had ventured out for a fishing trip in the Deroi River alongside three companions.

According to sources, while Ghatowar and his three friends set out for their fishing expedition on Thursday, only three of them returned home. Concerns arose when Amrit Ghatowar failed to return with his friends.

The following day, the lifeless body of Amrit Ghatowar was spotted floating in the Deroi River. He had earned his livelihood through a thriving fish business.

The family members of Amrit Ghatowar, deeply distraught by the incident, promptly lodged an FIR at the Demow Police Station. Responding to the report, the Demow Police swiftly arrived at the scene, recovered the deceased's body, and arranged for a post-mortem examination to ascertain the cause of death.

## NFR announces train cancellations, diversions, and rescheduling

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** In light of ongoing infrastructure development works, the Northeast Frontier Railway has issued a notification detailing the cancellation, diversion, and rescheduling of several train services. These adjustments are necessary to facilitate Non-Interlocking and Pre-Non-Interlocking activities, as well as the construction and TRD (Track Renewal and Maintenance) block operations.

A series of train services, including the Katihar-Siliguri Intercity Express, Siliguri-Balughat Intercity Express, Radhikapur-Siliguri DEMU Special, and Malda Court-Siliguri DEMU Special, among others, have been cancelled for journeys commencing on specific dates in October.

Certain trains, such as the Sealdah-Alipurduar Kanchankanya Express, Delhi-Alipurduar Sikkim Mahananda Express, and Rajendranagar Terminal-Kamakhya Capital Express, will be rerouted via alternate routes during their journeys on particular dates. These diversions are necessary to avoid the construction zones and guarantee passen-



gers' convenience.

Similarly, train services like the Alipurduar-Sealdah Kanchankanya Express, Alipurduar-Delhi Sikkim Mahananda Express, and New Jalpaiguri-Rajendranagar Terminal Capital Express will take alternate routes to circumvent the construction sites on specific dates in October, ensuring minimal disruptions for passengers.

One train, the Dibrugarh-New Delhi Rajdhani Express, will be diverted via a different route on a particular date to

accommodate the infrastructure development works effectively.

Several train services have been rescheduled to different departure times to accommodate the construction and maintenance activities. This includes the New Delhi-Dibrugarh Rajdhani Express, New Jalpaiguri-New Delhi Express, Rajendranagar Terminal-Kamakhya Capital Express, and others.

Additionally, due to Pre Non-Interlocking & Non-Interlocking works at Rourkela Station yard in the Chakradharpur division of South Eastern Railway, specific train services, such as the Kamakhya-Lokmanya Tilak Express and Lokmanya Tilak-Kamakhya Express, will remain cancelled on particular dates.

These adjustments are vital to facilitate crucial infrastructure development projects, ensuring the safety and efficiency of the railway network in the region. Passengers are encouraged to stay updated on the status of their trains and plan their journeys accordingly during this period of necessary maintenance and upgrades.

## Small growers and industry leaders unite for sustainable tea production National Small Tea Grower's Conference 2023 held in Guwahati

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** The National Small Tea Grower's Conference 2023, held on Friday, in Guwahati, has emerged as a pivotal event in the Indian tea industry. Jointly organised by Solidaridad and the Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers' Associations (CISTA), with the support of various regional small tea growers' associations, this conference provided a platform for industry leaders, experts, and small tea growers from across India to address the challenges and opportunities in the tea sector.

The National Small Tea Grower's Conference 2023 highlighted the indispensable role of Small Tea Growers (STGs) within the Indian tea industry. STGs have made substantial contributions to the nation's tea production landscape, and this conference celebrated their dedication and commitment to tea cultivation. While recognising the impact of STGs, the event also delved into the challenges they face in their daily endeavours, including cultivation, processing, and marketing.

Piyush Goyal, minister of Commerce &



Industry, highlighted the pivotal role played by STGs in India's tea sector. He stressed the importance of promoting organic and GIT teas through brand marketing and targeting high-value markets like Europe, the United States, and the Middle East. Goyal also encouraged sustainable solutions to address

climate change challenges and innovation across the entire tea supply chain.

Dr Shatadru Chattopadhyay, managing director of Solidaridad Network Asia, recognised STGs as the unsung heroes of the tea industry. He praised their dedication and commitment, often amid daunting chal-

lenges. Prabhat Bezbaruah, former chairman of the Tea Board, highlighted the need for supporting STGs and empowering them for quality tea production. He stated the importance of the organised sector and government bodies in aiding STGs on their journey to producing high-quality teas.

Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, chairman of CISTA, stressed the revolutionary and dynamic nature of the small tea growers' segment. He called for sustainable development and knowledge empowerment to produce high-quality teas.

Small tea growers who attended the conference expressed their challenges and aspirations. They highlighted the need for support, knowledge, and guidance to enhance the quality of their teas. The conference focused on addressing key challenges faced by STGs, including sustainable tea production, knowledge gaps, climate adaptation, and market dynamics. A central theme was the urgent need for quality improvement in tea production to ensure the industry's long-term sustainability.

## SITA-sponsored career planning project inaugurated

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** Ramen Deka, vice chairman of the State Innovation and Transformation Aayog (SITA), inaugurated the SITA-sponsored project titled 'Workshop on Creating Awareness on Career Planning and Development' at KC Das Commerce College in Guwahati. The project will be implemented by KC Das Commerce College and Needemy LLP, Bengaluru. During the official program, vice chairman Ramen Deka handed over the first instalment of funds for the project, amounting to ₹ 8 lakh, with the estimated cost of the project being ₹ 20 lakh.

The primary objective of this project is to create awareness among students about career planning and development through workshops and relevant interventions.

In his speech, vice chairman Ramen Deka stressed the importance of such workshops in helping youth discover their strengths, develop essential skills, and choose the right career path. He highlighted that this initiative would make students job-ready, growth-oriented, and valuable contributors to the economy. Vice-Chairman Deka also advised parents not to exert excessive pressure on their children but instead allow them to choose subjects of their interest.

The event was attended by Dr Hrishikesh Baruah, principal of KC Das Commerce College, N Sawarji, a representative of Needemy LLP in Bengaluru, DS Hazari, ARO of SITA, Dipankar Bora, LO of SITA, as well as other officials and students from the college.

## Forest security nabs two poachers in Lumding

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 29:** In a significant operation on Friday, two individuals, identified as Sontosh Guwala and Raghur Ghor, both hailing from the Lumding Mudabasti area, were apprehended by a vigilant team of forest security personnel. The arrests took place in the Lalpara area under the jurisdiction of the Lumding Reserve Forest.

Sources within the Lumding Reserve Forest reported that the two poachers were apprehended while allegedly plotting to illegally hunt wild animals within the forest's boundaries.

Swift action by the forest security personnel led to the seizure of two homemade firearms, along with live ammunition, from the possession of the arrested individuals. In response to this serious offense against wildlife, authorities have registered a case under the Wildlife Protection Act.

## Drugs mafia sentenced to lifetime imprisonment in Nagaon

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Sept 29:** The District and Sessions Court in Nagaon has handed down a 20-year rigorous imprisonment sentence to RK Hopingson, a well-known drugs mafia hailing from Manipur, under the NDPS Act. In addition to the prison term, Hopingson has been fined ₹ 2 lakh.

The case against Hopingson was registered at Nagaon Police Station after his arrest in October 2021. He was apprehended along with 20 soap cases containing suspected narcotics substances, including heroin, near the Nonoi Outpost.

Following a lengthy trial under the NDPS Act that spanned over two years, the court delivered its verdict, sentencing Hopingson to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment and imposing a ₹ 2 lakh fine. Failure to pay the fine would result in an additional six months of imprisonment for the convicted accused.

Speaking to the media, public prosecutor and senior legal practitioner Bibha Phookan reiterated that Hopingson, the convicted drugs mafia, was arrested by Nagaon Police near the Nonoi Outpost during a routine inspection in October 2021. At that time, he was transporting 20 soap cases filled with narcotics substances, including heroin, in a Fortuner car that had no number plate.

## Headmaster of primary school teaches all classes in six classrooms

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, Sept 29:** In a concerning incident in Sivasagar district, it has come to light that the headmaster of Borbam Sarbajanin Primary School has been conducting all classes in six classrooms. This school is located in Borbam Gaon near Demow and was established in 1982. Gobin Taye serves as the headmaster of Borbam Sarbajanin Primary School, where he is responsible for teaching all classes and managing various education department-related tasks. Taye is the sole teacher at the school and has to rush from one class to another to conduct lessons. Currently, the school has 80 students, and each class must be held in one of the six available classrooms.

Previously, there was an assistant teacher at the school, but in June, the assistant teacher was transferred to another school. Gobin Taye, the headmaster, stated that the school serves students from six different villages, and he has 80 students under his care. He said that he is the only teacher at the school and expressed his disappointment with the situation. He has reported the issue to the block primary education officer, district education officer, and has submitted an application to the district commissioner. Taye called for the prompt appointment of teachers at Borbam Sarbajanin Primary School and appealed to the chief minister and Education minister of the state for assistance.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*If we ever forget that we are one Nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under. - Ronald Reagan*

## The Khalistan Question

As India braces itself for the 18th Lok Sabha elections scheduled for early 2024, one question looms large: will Khalistan emerge as a central campaign issue for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)? To understand this, let's reflect on Modi's remarkable electoral journey. In 2019, he secured a resounding victory in the 17th Lok Sabha elections, surpassing even his 2014 triumph. This success was attributed in part to the heightened attention generated by the tragic incident where 40 CRPF personnel lost their lives en route from Jammu to Srinagar. Modi's perceived retaliatory airstrike on Balakot in north-west Pakistan further solidified his image as a resolute leader. The Khalistan issue reared its head after the recent G20 summit, where Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raised concerns about the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the President of the Surrey Gurdwara in British Columbia. Nijjar was also identified by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) as the leader of the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF) and was reportedly killed by unidentified assailants believed to be Indian agents. This incident reignited discussions surrounding Khalistan, which had previously been dormant.

In response, Prime Minister Modi took swift action, downgrading diplomatic activities involving Canada. This move sent shockwaves, particularly among the Punjabi community, especially Sikhs with close family ties in Canada. Canada is home to the world's second-largest Sikh population, and Sikhs hold significant positions in Canadian politics and government. This community maintains strong connections with their homeland, often traveling back and forth, further facilitated by direct flights between Amritsar and Toronto. When Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal expressed these concerns to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, it caused unease among Punjabis, particularly Sikhs. It's important to note that the BJP doesn't wield significant political influence in Punjab. When the party has secured parliamentary constituencies in the state, it has typically relied on alliances or popular figures like Hema Malini and Sunny Deol. However, their success in Punjab depends on substantial Sikh support, making overemphasizing the Khalistan issue a risky move. But history shows that Modi can leverage national security issues effectively, as seen in the Pulwama-Balakot events during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Khalistan could become a potent issue for the ruling party, potentially placing the INDIA bloc at a disadvantage. The Congress party has already voiced support for the government's stance. Once Modi takes a strong position on the Khalistan threat, the Opposition may struggle to maintain a firm position on national security, as seen during the Kargil conflict and Pulwama attack.

Adding to the tension is the recent killing of Sukhdeep Singh Gill, a Khalistani terrorist according to the NIA. He met a fate similar to Nijjar, shot dead in Winnipeg, Canada, by unidentified assailants. Both victims were politically active, advocating for Sikh issues, and both fell to unknown attackers. The question now is whether these events will escalate tensions or prompt the Canadian government to seek de-escalation. In the coming months, the Khalistan issue will continue to evolve, with political consequences in both India and Canada. As we watch these developments, it's crucial for all stakeholders to approach this sensitive matter with diplomacy and caution, keeping the welfare of their citizens and the spirit of international cooperation at the forefront of their actions.

## Madras HC's bold stand to restore respect for elderly parents

By: Lalit Garg

In the newly emerging social order and family structure, the lives of elderly parents are becoming increasingly tragic. The neglect and indifference shown towards elderly parents by their children in society have reached alarming levels, necessitating court intervention. Parents are not only facing disrespect but also being deprived of essential necessities like food, water, medicine, and shelter. This issue is exacerbated by the growing dominance of materialism and money, resulting in parents falling victim to harassment by their own children.

To address these escalating problems, the courts are not only intervening in property disputes between children and parents but also emphasizing the broader responsibility of children to fulfill the needs and wishes of their elderly parents. The Madras High Court's recent decision is challenging the concept of blood relations in today's society. The court aims to foster a more compassionate mindset to transform the social environment. By ending the indifference and neglect of elderly parents, the court seeks to cultivate a sense of protective care, reviving the concept of an ideal family and enabling elderly individuals to lead healthier, carefree, and frustration-free lives. The problems faced by elderly individuals today have developed gradually due to shifting social values influenced by consumerist culture, metropolitan modern consciousness, changes in the thinking of the new generation, inflation, and concerns about their children and spouses. To rectify this troubling trend of neglecting the elderly, the court's decision underscores the importance of shifting this flawed mindset, which not only makes life difficult for elderly parents but also widens emotional distances between people. Why do children, who receive the best from their parents even in times of hardship, neglect their duty when their parents grow old? Why does their greed center on their parents' property? Although not all children neglect their parents, such cases are increasingly prevalent. The unfortunate reality of the present era is that elderly individuals are left fearful on their own doorsteps. Neglecting the elderly tarnishes the once-cherished tradition of healthy and cultured family life. The court's compassionate approach aims to bridge the growing divide between children and parents, creating an environment where elders in the family are never seen as a burden but are cherished and integrated into family life.

There is always room for improvement. Respecting elderly parents in family life requires us to move in the right direction, think correctly, and act responsibly. The rising number of lawsuits related to elderly parents in courts is a grave concern, necessitating not only a revolution of ideas but also individual and family revolutions.

In India, elders are traditionally revered, and historical examples abound of individuals sacrificing personal desires for their parents' wishes. Yet, in modern society, the gap between elderly parents and their children is widening due to neglect, leaving them vulnerable to the challenges of aging. Today, the elderly often suffer from loneliness, family neglect, contempt, fear of eviction, or homelessness. These issues are increasingly brought to the courts for resolution. It's essential to ask whether the court's role should include advising children to fulfill their duty to care for their parents. When situations become dire, courts must take decisive action and make strong statements. India embraces the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', where the whole world is considered one family. In a country with such a profound ethos, it is distressing to witness children neglecting and disrespecting their parents. This issue is exacerbated by the prevalence of nuclear families and the pursuit of materialism, leaving elderly parents frustrated and neglected. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, in its efforts to build a healthy and ideal society, should also consider the welfare of the elderly and implement programs to utilize their talents, skills, and experiences in building a stronger India. Concrete efforts are required to alleviate the sorrow and terror experienced by elderly parents, who often feel useless in society and within their own families.

In today's insensitive society, numerous incidents have come to light where elderly parents were even murdered due to greed for property. Such occurrences inflict profound emotional trauma on elderly parents, leaving them with distress and a longing for sympathy in their twilight years. Not only in major cities but even in small villages, elderly individuals are forced to seek refuge in 'Old Homes' when they are abandoned by their families. The proliferation of these 'old homes' is not a symbol of development but a troubling sign of societal neglect and a source of shame and embarrassment. (The author is a journalist & columnist)

## India's South East Asia Policy

*Earlier this month, the diplomatic bustle at the national level was focussed on G20 Summit. However, in addition to that the prime minister also focussed on India's Look East policy and participated at ASEAN and East Asia Summit in Indonesia, focussing on ways to counter China's regional dominance*



The G20 New Delhi Summit in early September was in fact a global brand and image making exercise for the Government of India. An exercise in which the Prime Minister Modi, G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant and Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar were equally involved and committed and achieved the task with a finesse. The cherry on top was the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration, which was adopted unanimously at the summit.

However, Prime Minister Modi as a leader of the Global South and keeping in mind India's strategic and regional priorities, in spite of his heavy commitment to the G20 Summit, undertook a whirlwind tour of the Indonesian capital Jakarta, in order to attend the ASEAN and East Asia Summit. This shows the priorities of the G20 at both the regional and global level. On one hand India was hosting the prestigious G20 Summit but on the other hand it didn't overlook its regional priorities and strategy. Let's take a look at the reasons for PM Modi to fly to Jakarta to participate at these two events. In fact, India is evolving into a strategic actor in Southeast Asia. It has promoted ties – diplomatic, trade, defence and people to people, with almost all countries in the region from Vietnam, to Philippines to Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Brunei, Thailand, Singapore, Japan and S. Korea. Over the years, India has

signed an arms deal with Vietnam, stood with Philippines over China on sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea, and has increased defence cooperation with Indonesia.

The manner in which he managed the balance-of-power politics in the region is a classic model of diplomacy. Basically, China's aggressive posture in and around the South China Sea is driving India and its partners in the region together. Though these bilateral and multilateral relationships have not transformed into any formal alliances, but the trend is clear. India's regional forays will increasingly complement the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China in the coming years.

India initiated its Look East policy in 1991, which was transformed into an Act East policy in 2014, when India initiated a proactive engagement policy in the region to prevent it from falling a prey to the Chinese domination. Under Prime Minister Modi, India in recent years has steadily strengthened key partnerships across Southeast Asia, particularly with countries along the maritime rim of the Indo-Pacific.

These moves are clearly designed to cooperate with South-east Asian partners, who besides supporting the international rules-based international order insist on regional norms of behaviour in the face of rising Chinese assertiveness in the region.

Currently, India and Vietnam enjoy a "comprehensive strategic partnership" after Modi visited Vietnam in 2016. In contrast, the United States is only a "comprehensive partner" for Vietnam, two levels below India's status. Washington has struggled to raise the partnership and President Biden's recent visit to Vietnam was part of this endeavour.

The Philippines, an old and U.S.'s treaty ally, has also expanded security partnership with India. Late last month, Philippine Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo visited New Delhi and met with his Indian counterpart, S. Jaishankar. For the first time, India recognised the legitimacy of the 2016 arbitration ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in favour of Philippine sovereignty claims over China in the South China Sea.

India has also remained committed to evolve a security partnership with Indonesia. Indo-Indonesian defence relations got a boost in 2018, when Modi visited Jakarta and elevated relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership. The two nations also initiated a new naval exercise, Samudra Shakti, which incorporated a warfighting component. In addition the two countries are exploring potential air force cooperation as well. Indonesia may also follow in the footsteps of the Philippines by

purchasing BrahMos missiles.

India is also cooperating with Malaysia, on the basis of an enhanced strategic partnership signed in 2015. Although Kuala Lumpur's decision earlier this year to cancel a deal to purchase Indian-made Tejas fighter aircraft may have dampened the partnership somewhat, the intent clearly remains to strengthen ties in line with upholding the mutual goal of maintaining the rules-based international order in the region – especially internationally recognised maritime borders and freedom of navigation, neither of which Beijing accepts.

Brunei is another emerging partner for India along the South China Sea. In 2021, the two nations renewed their defence agreement for five years, and they regularly engage in joint exercises, port visits by navy and coast guard ships, and official defence exchanges.

India's strategic partnerships with Singapore and Thailand are also close and longstanding. Singapore regularly engages in bilateral exercises, high-level dialogues, visits, and professional training with India. Modi visited Singapore twice in 2018, and on the first trip, he signed 35 memoranda of understanding agreements on a range of security and economic issues.

In 2022, India and Thailand renewed their partnership and pledged to elevate defence engagements further, to include cybersecurity. Perhaps of greater

importance is the economic side of their relationship. In a nod to New Delhi's original Look East policy, Bangkok implemented its own Look West policy in 1997, in part to tap into the enormous Indian market. Moreover, Thailand and India are partnering with Myanmar to construct the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway that will significantly upgrade transport links between Southeast Asia and South Asia. Once the highway is completed, Modi and his government also want to add connections to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam – another clear rival to China's BRI.

India further has good relations with both Cambodia and Laos. In May, Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni visited India, and the two sides reaffirmed "the strong civilisational bond" between the two nations. Phnom Penh and New Delhi cooperate on a range of socioeconomic projects, including water conservation, and heritage protection. India's engagement with Laos is less robust, but nevertheless, New Delhi and Vientiane are likely discussing ways to boost economic ties. This is all the more remarkable as both Phnom Penh and Vientiane are widely considered to be firmly in China's camp.

Overall, India's proactive Act East policy is also a net positive for the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific strategy aimed at countering China. To provide a further impetus to New Delhi to do even more, the U.S. should also help India in its infrastructure and developmental projects, as well as trade deals, which could help lessen Beijing's economic dominance of Southeast Asia. However, New Delhi's policy of practical outreach to Southeast Asia – even if it were sustained only at current levels – would help further undermine Beijing. (The author is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commentator)

## India's inflation battle: The perennial fiscal challenge

By: Dipak Kurmi

The official inflation rate for India in August stood at 6.83%, marking a decrease from the previous month's 7.44%. However, it remains above the 6% maximum threshold set as the red line by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Since the shift to inflation targeting in 2016, the acceptable range for the consumer price index (CPI) has been between 2% and 6%. Notably, this marks the seventh instance in the past year where the monthly inflation rate has exceeded 6%. This persistent trend may raise concerns within the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). While there is a need to tighten the money supply further in order to combat inflation, the MPC has chosen to maintain the current interest rate, banking on the hope that inflation will naturally decrease. The RBI Governor has also hinted that high inflation is expected to persist for some time.

India's consumer price index is comprised of approximately 450 distinct items within the consumption basket, with variations tailored for rural and urban consumers. Notably, nearly 49% of the index's weight is attributed to food and related items. Consequently, when food inflation surges, it invariably drives up overall inflation rates. Presently, food inflation, carrying almost half of the weightage, stands at 10%, largely due to the escalating prices of vegetables, oilseeds, pulses, milk, and even cereals.

India has adopted a strategy involving the prohibition of exports or imposing substantial export taxes on a range of agricultural commodities, such as wheat, rice, sugar, and onions. These measures have a direct impact on the income of farmers who had anticipated substantial profits from overseas sales. For instance, in 2022, India successfully exported 7.4 million tonnes of parboiled rice, but it currently enforces a significant 20% export duty on this product. Given that India accounts for a substantial 40% share of global rice exports, these restrictions have contributed to a heightened scarcity of rice on the world market.

The export restrictions imposed by India have had a notable impact on importing nations such as China, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Nigeria. In the Philippines, the surge in rice prices has even raised the possibility of a minister's resignation. However, the question arises: has the export ban or tax effectively curbed rice inflation within India? The answer appears to be in the negative, primarily because the export tax is primarily applied to broken rice, which is largely destined for ethanol production.

Utilizing food resources for the production of vehicle fuel remains a contentious policy, particularly during a period of elevated global food inflation. The Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) all rice price index, for example, escalated by 9.8% in August, reaching a 15-year peak. Such inflationary pressures are likely to permeate India as well. While the ethanol policy is primarily driven by the aim to conserve valuable foreign exchange spent on crude oil imports, the domestic consequences of rising food prices necessitate a thoughtful reconsideration of using food crops for fuel production.

Beyond the challenges posed by food inflation, the outlook for crude oil prices is also signaling sustained high costs. Factors such as supply reductions from Russia and Saudi Arabia have already pushed oil prices past the \$85 mark, and they are expected to remain elevated. This development has adverse implications for India's imports, potentially leading to a further decline in the Indian rupee's value from 83 to 85 against the dollar. To counter the escalating oil import bill, the nation's reliance may pivot toward bolstering exports in the soft-

ware and IT services sector. However, this endeavor is not without its hurdles, given the noticeable slowdown in the software industry. Nonetheless, the medium to long-term prospects for India's software services sector remain robust, as underscored by NASSCOM, the industry's governing body.

Beyond the concerns surrounding food inflation, soaring oil prices, and the depreciating rupee-dollar exchange rate, a substantial driver of the current inflationary trend in India is the size of the fiscal deficit. The nation is grappling with a pronounced deficit, coupled with a mounting national debt, and efforts to rein it in appear to yield limited results. It's worth noting that during the pandemic, the fiscal deficit naturally expanded as the government implemented emergency relief measures, including provisions for free food, subsidized loans, and increased liquidity. However, certain decisions have raised eyebrows, such as the ongoing free food grain program, which has been in operation for over 48 months and has cumulatively cost the exchequer 4.5 lakh crore. Additionally, the recent cabinet announcement of a ₹1.7 trillion revival package for the debt-ridden telecom company Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has garnered attention.

Over the course of the last seven years, in response to a parliamentary inquiry, public sector banks in India have effectively written off nearly 15 trillion rupees in bad loans. This action bears fiscal consequences, as it necessitates the infusion of equity capital into these banks by the central government. The write-offs may have played a role in contributing to a lower bad-loan ratio and the overall enhancement of the banking sector's health. However, it is undeniable that the government's fiscal expenditures have become increasingly stretched, exerting inflationary pressures on the economy.

India's fiscal predicament is more critical than officially acknowledged. When assessing the debt service ratio, which quantifies the portion of the government's revenue allocated solely for servicing its escalating debt burden, India significantly exceeds the global median. The persistently high deficit contributes to elevated interest rates, putting critical sectors such as housing, real estate, and industrial projects at a disadvantage.

India made significant efforts to curb its propensity for deficit spending by enacting legislation in the form of the Fiscal Responsibility Law in 2003. This law set a legal limit, capping the fiscal deficit at 3% of the GDP. However, the harsh reality remains that India has consistently exceeded this limit every year, rendering the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) law ineffective. Even a review of the law conducted just before the pandemic is unlikely to offer a substantial remedy, as both debt and deficit levels far exceed what is considered healthy for the economy.

In the tumultuous and competitive landscape of a democratic society, there is a persistent demand for increased spending from vocal interest groups and vested stakeholders. Additionally, there is a growing inclination to provide free benefits and incentives. Moreover, the recently introduced industrial policy, offering initiatives like Production Linked Incentives and import protection, further compounds the fiscal implications. These measures, whether beneficial or detrimental, not only jeopardize the sustainability of India's debt and fiscal posture but also contribute to mounting inflationary pressures. The deep-rooted and substantial fiscal influence, a perpetual burden on India, cannot be simply rectified by tightening monetary policies, even as these policies exhibit restraint. The battle against inflation in India is undoubtedly a formidable challenge. (The writer can be reached at dipaknews5@gmail.com)

## Congress needs to start talks with SP on seat sharing immediately

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

Congress is in dominant position in the three election bound states of the Hindi belt – Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. Hence, the party may decide not to initiate seat sharing talks with Samajwadi Party (SP), which has only marginal presence in Madhya Pradesh, while very little presence in Rajasthan, and insignificant presence in Chhattisgarh. However, it would be a grave political mistake impacting political prospect of the Congress in the long run, especially during Lok Sabha election 2024 in Uttar Pradesh, where SP has dominant position.

What the Congress and SP need at present is sending a clear message to the anti-BJP electorate that they are united, which ultimately would boost the morale of rank and file of both the parties along with the entire INDIA alliance partners and the secular electorate across the country who are aiming at defeating PM Modi and BJP in 2024. Any message of disunity may make the secular voters disheartened and hopeless on the one hand, and boost the morale of PM Narendra Modi and RSS-BJP clan on the other.

The reports presently emanating from Uttar Pradesh suggest that both the Pradesh Congress and SP leaders are engaged in flexing their muscles on how many seats they should contest in the Lok Sabha election. Given this backdrop, immediate initiation of talks may halt the war-of-words between the leaders from both sides, which may help the both the parties to ease roadblock in seat sharing talks in Uttar Pradesh.

It is worth mentioning here that both the Congress and SP leaderships seem to have hardened their stance on seat sharing in Uttar Pradesh. Even SP president Akhilesh Yadav has given enough hints of hard bargaining by saying "SP is not demanding seats but giving them (Congress)".

SP is presently adamant on contesting maximum number of seats among 80 Lok Sabha seats while conceding to give only a few seats to Congress. Sources said that SP is not ready to give more than 5-6 seats to Congress, since it has to also accommodate Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), Bhim Army, and Apna Dal (K).

Congress wants to contest on about two dozen seats, which the SP is not willing to concede. SP wants to give Congress as per its performance in 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when it won only one seat, while Congress wants seat sharing on the basis of 2009 election results when it won 21 seats.

Given such a roadblock in Uttar Pradesh, the initiation of seat sharing talks with SP for the three poll bound states will be important, where SP would not be much demanding.

SP has marginal presence in only Madhya Pradesh, where the party had won 1 seat in the Vidhan Sabha election 2018, while the Congress had won 114 seats out of total 230. BJP could win only 109 seats. Congress vote share was 40.89 per cent against 41.02 per cent of the BJP. SP's vote share was 1.3 per cent. For Congress it would be better to improve its vote share in the state given the latest moves of the BJP which has fielded several party stalwarts to retain its power in the state. Other state parties with presence in Madhya Pradesh include AAP. It is therefore important for the Congress to initiate seat sharing talks with both, to benefit from the alliance in other states.

In Rajasthan also Congress is in dominant position. Out of 200 seats it had won 100 seats in 2018, and the 6 of BSP MLAs have merged with it later. SP has no seat in the state, but RLD has 1 seat. CPI(M) has also 2 seats. SP has little support base and in 2018 its vote share was 0.18 per cent. RLD's vote share was 0.33 per cent and AAP's 0.38 per cent. The Congress will be benefitted by having understanding with the CPI(M) in Rajasthan where the CPI(M) has pockets of influence in at least six seats part from its two assembly seats. (IPA Service)

The global impact of the tailoring industry is a complex one, with its roots deeply embedded in the fabric of human civilization. From the ancient art of weaving to the modern fashion industry, the role of the tailor has evolved significantly. In today's world, where fast fashion and mass production dominate, the traditional skills of a tailor are becoming increasingly rare. This article explores the challenges and opportunities facing the tailoring industry in the 21st century. The rise of e-commerce and online retail has disrupted the traditional retail model, forcing tailors to adapt to new market conditions. However, the demand for custom-made clothing and high-quality craftsmanship remains strong, offering a niche market for skilled tailors. The article also discusses the importance of preserving traditional tailoring techniques and the role of government and industry organizations in supporting the sector. Finally, it looks at the future of the tailoring industry, highlighting the potential for innovation and growth through digital technology and sustainable practices.



# Sign languages as Career

By: Ranjan K Baruah

We should be aware that according to the World Federation of the Deaf, there are more than 70 million deaf people worldwide. More than 80% of them live in developing countries. Collectively, they use more than 300 different sign languages. As per the 2011 Census, the total population of deaf persons in India numbered about 50 lakh. The needs of the deaf community have long been ignored and the problems have been documented by various organizations working for the deaf. Obsolete training methodology and teaching systems need urgent attention which brings opportunity to choose sign languages as a career choice.

Sign Language is a system of communication that involves hand gestures and signs to communicate with deaf people. Each country has its own Sign Language system, like American Sign Language or Indian Sign Language. These are fully fledged natural languages, structurally distinct from the spoken languages. There is also an international sign language, which is used by deaf people in international meetings and informally when travelling and socializing.

There are online courses apart from offline courses. Some popular online courses are Learn and Master Sign Language, Educating Deaf Children: Becoming an Empowered Teacher, Introduction to Catalan Sign Language: Speaking with Your Hands and Hearing with Your Eyes, Professional Certificate in American Sign Language Science, Indian Sign Language and Sign Quiz, etc.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognizes and promotes the use of sign languages. The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 23 September as the International Day of Sign Languages in order to raise awareness of the importance of sign language in the full realization of the human rights of people who are deaf. The day is a unique opportunity to support and protect the linguistic identity and cultural diversity of all deaf people and other sign language users.

One may choose sign languages as their career choice in life. There are Sign Language courses dedicated to teaching basic to advanced, online and offline. There are certifications, PG diploma and other courses in the field of Sign Language. This course is a requirement for those who wish to take up work as interpreters of Sign Language. In the near future there shall be a requirement for many Sign Language Interpreters who will be interpreting at different community or public places such as hospitals, railway stations, etc.

Course fees vary from institute to institutes and diplomas are from 4 months to 6 months.

There are online courses apart from offline courses. Some popular online courses are Learn and Master Sign Language, Educating Deaf Children: Becoming an Empowered Teacher, Introduction to Catalan Sign Language: Speaking with Your Hands and Hearing with Your Eyes, Professional Certificate in American Sign Language Science, Indian Sign Language and Sign Quiz, etc.

ISLRTC: In the 2000s, the Indian deaf community advocated for an institute focused on ISL teaching and research. The 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2012) acknowledged that the needs of people with hearing disabilities had been relatively neglected and envisaged the development of a sign language research and training center, to promote and develop sign language and training of teachers and interpreters. The Finance Minister announced the setting up of Indian Sign Language Research and Training Center (ISLRTC) in the Union Budget speech of 2010-11. As a result, in 2011, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment approved the establishment of the ISLRTC as an autonomous center of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Delhi. The foundation stone



of the center was laid at IGNOU campus on 4th October, 2011. In 2013, the center at IGNOU was closed. After a long struggle by the deaf community, the Ministry approved the establishment of ISLRTC in New Delhi on 28th September, 2015.

There is a need for ISL interpreters which is an urgent requirement at institutes and places

where communication between deaf and hearing people takes place but India has less trained people which means it brings opportunity for the trained people to become ISL interpreters. (The author is the Adviser of Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship Department of BTC and can be reached at 8473943734 or bkrjanjan@gmail.com)

## Coal India Limited MT Recruitment 2023 – 560 Posts

Last Date: 12/10/2023.

Coal India Limited (CIL) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 560 Management Trainee vacancy to work in CIL. Candidates will be selected based on their GATE 2023 score. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Management Trainee

No of posts: 560 posts

Discipline-wise vacancy:

# Mining: 351 # Civil: 172 # Geology: 37

Scale of pay: Selected candidates will be placed as Management Trainee in E-2 Grade in the scale of pay of Rs 50,000 – 1, 60,000/- at the initial Basic of Rs 50,000/- per month during the training period. On successful and satisfactory completion of 1-year training period and passing the test conducted for the purpose, regularization will be in E-3 Grade in the scale of pay of Rs 60,000 – 1,80,000/- at the initial Basic of Rs 60,000/- with probation for 1 year, if not extended.

Eligibility Criteria of Coal India Limited MT Recruitment

Age Limit: The Upper Age Limit is 30 Years as on 31st August 2023 for General (UR) & EWS category candidates.

Age Relaxation: Category-wise relaxation in Upper Age Limit is mentioned below:

# OBC (Non-Creamy Layer) – 3 Years

# SC / ST – 5 Years

# For Persons with Disabilities:

^ General (UR) – 10 Years

^ OBC (Non-Creamy Layer) – 13 Years

^ SC / ST – 15 Years

GATE 2023 Score: Candidate must have appeared for Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) – 2023 and qualified.

Educational Qualification:

# Mining/ Civil: BE/ B.Tech/ B.Sc (Engg.) in relevant branch of Engineering with minimum 60% marks.

# Geology: M.Sc. / M.Tech. in Geology or Applied Geology / Geophysics or Applied Geophysics with minimum 60% marks.

Qualifying Marks: The minimum qualifying marks for GENERAL (UR), OBC (Non-Creamy Layer) & Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) category candidates are 60%. For SC, ST and Persons with Disability (PwD) candidates, relaxation of 5% is given in the minimum qualifying marks i.e. 55%.

Selection Process of Coal India Limited MT Recruitment

# Eligible candidates must have appeared for Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) – 2023.

# Based on the GATE-2023 Scores/Marks and requirement, candidates will be short-listed discipline-wise, category-wise in a ratio of 1:3 for further selection process.

# The final merit list will be prepared for each discipline on the basis of GATE-2023 Scores/Marks.

Application Fee:

# General/ OBC/ EWS: Rs.1180/- (fee Rs 1000+GST 180/-)

# SC/ST/PWD/ Coal India Ltd Employees: Nil

# Payment Mode: Online

Important Dates of Coal India Limited Recruitment 2023

# Opening date of Online Submission of Application: 13th September 2023

# Last date of Online Submission of Application: 12th October 2023

## NHM Recruitment 2023 – Online Apply For 345 Posts

Last Date: 10/10/2023.

National Health Mission (NHM), Assam has released an advertisement for the recruitment of 345 Specialist, Epidemiologist/ Entomologist, Public Health Personnel, Laboratory Technician and Data Manager posts for engagement on contractual basis under PM-ABHM, Assam. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. Specialist

No of posts: 10 posts

Remuneration: Rs.75,000/- per month.

Age Limit: Up to 43 Years as on 1st April 2023.

Educational Qualification: MBBS Degree with post Graduate Degree/ Diploma in a relevant field from a recognized Medical College and Registered with Assam Medical Council/ Medical Council of India.

2. Epidemiologist/ Entomologist

No of posts: 57 posts

Remuneration: Varies as per educational qualification. Pl check official notification.

Age Limit: Up to 43 Years as on 1st April 2023.

Educational Qualification:

# Medical Graduate (MBBS) preferably with 2 years experience in Epidemiology/ Public Health. OR

# Medical Graduate (Ayur/ Homoeo) with MPH/ DPH with 2 years experience in Public Health. OR

# M.Sc. (Epidemiology) with 2 years experience in Public Health. OR

# Post Graduate in the field of Life Science with 2 years experience in Public Health.

3. Public Health Personnel

No of posts: 57 posts

Remuneration: Rs.30,000/- per month.

Age Limit: Up to 43 Years as on 1st April 2023.

Educational Qualification:

# Post Graduate Degree or Diploma in Health Management or Public Health Management from Govt. recognized institute.

# Computer Proficiency: MS Office.

# High proficiency in written and spoken English and Assamese.

# Minimum 3 years experience in relevant field or health care will be preferred.

4. Laboratory Technician

No of posts: 154 posts

Remuneration: Rs.20,000/- per month.

Age Limit: Up to 43 Years as on 1st April 2023.

Educational Qualification: HSSLC or equivalent with a Diploma/ Certificate in Laboratory Technician from Govt. a recognized institute.

5. Data Manager

No of posts: 67 posts

Remuneration: Rs.20,000/- per month.

Age Limit: Up to 43 Years as on 1st April 2023.

Educational Qualification:

# Must have completed Graduation in any discipline and at least One Year Diploma in Computer Application/ PGDCA/ DOEAC 'O' Level or equivalent. OR

# BCA/ B.Sc (IT)/ B.Sc (Computer Science)/ DOEAC 'A' Level or equivalent. Minimum 1 year experience in the relevant field in a reputed organization.

Important Dates of NHM Assam Vacancy 2023

# Starting date of submission of online application: 22nd September 2023

# Last date of submission of online application: 10th October 2023

## BSSRV Recruitment 2023 – 12 Teaching Staff Vacancy

Last Date: 16/10/2023.

Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya (BSSRV), Golaghat has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 12 Professor and Associate Professor Posts in Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya (BSSRV), Golaghat. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Professor

No of posts: 6 posts

Department-wise vacancy:

# Assamese: UR # Computer Science: UR

# Economics: STP # English: OBC/MOBC

# Political Science: UR # Sociology: STH

Educational Qualification: As per UGC Regulations on Minimum Qualification for appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards of Higher Education, 2018 (No F.1-2/2017 (EC/PS) and up to date amendment of the said Act.

Pay Scale: Rs.1,44,200-2,18,200/-

2. Associate Professor

No of posts: 6 posts

Department-wise vacancy:

# Assamese: 2 [UR-1, OBC/MOBC-1]

# Economics: 2 [UR-1, STH-1]

# Political Science: 2 [OBC/MOBC-1, UR-1]

Educational Qualification: As per UGC Regulations on Minimum Qualification for appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards of Higher Education, 2018 (No F.1-2/2017 (EC/PS) and up to date amendment of the said Act.

Pay Scale: Rs.1,31,400-2,17,100/-

Other Criteria of BSSRV Recruitment

Citizen-ship: The applicant must be a citizen of India.

Age Limit: As per UGC Regulations on Minimum Qualification for appointment of Teachers and other Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards of Higher Education, 2018 (No F.1-2/2017 (EC/PS) and up to date amendment of the said Act.

Application Fee: Candidates must pay application fee as a Bank Draft of Rs 2,500/- (Rupees Two Thousand Five Hundred) only as non refundable processing fee in favour of Sati Sadhani University, Golaghat (A/C no.- 40535146080, IFSC Code, SBIN0000083) payable at State Bank of India Golaghat Branch.

How to Apply for BSSRV Golaghat Recruitment ?

# Interested and eligible candidates may apply using the prescribed form of application provided in the official recruitment notification along with the application fee, Attested copies of Marks Sheets and certificates from the H.S.L.C. onwards, other required documents.

# Candidates must send their applications to the following address.

The Registrar,

Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya,

Golaghat Engineering College Campus, Bogorijeng,

Golaghat, Assam-785621.

# Applicants are advised to give phone numbers and e-mail address in their own interest to facilitate prompt communication.

# Last date of submission of application is 16/10/2023.

## GNRC Medishop Recruitment 2023 – 5 Posts In Guwahati

Last Date: 07/10/2023.

GNRC Medishop Private Limited has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 5 posts of Developer, Engineer & Dietitian. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. Database Developer

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification: B.Tech / B.E. in Computer Science / BCA / MCA / M.Tech.

Experience: 2-5 Years.

Skills Required:

# Database programming.

# Designing database structures and tables.

# Optimizing SQL queries to integrate with applications.

# Developing functions, views, and stored procedures.

# Creating database automation with database jobs or shell script.

# Database security and integrity.

# Good Interpersonal & team Collaboration Skills.

# Problem-solving skills and the ability to fix issues independently.

Age Limit: 35 Years (Maximum)

2. Android App Developer

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification: B.Tech / B.E. in Computer Science / BCA / MCA / M.Tech.

Experience: 2-3 Years.

Skills Required: Java, Android Native, Flutter (Added

Benefit), Rest API.

Age Limit: 35 Years (Maximum)

3. Web Developer

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification: B.Tech / B.E. in Computer Science / BCA / MCA / M.Tech.

Experience: 2-3 Years.

Skills Required: HTML, CSS, PHP, My SQL, Bootstrap, JavaScript, JQuery, Rest API generation.

Age Limit: 35 Years (Maximum)

4. Certified Dietitian (Freelancer, For Outdoor Campaign Activities)

No of posts: 1 (Male)

Job Description: Required to accompany the team on Sunday from 7 am to 12 noon.

Age Limit: 35 Years (Maximum)

5. Mechanical Engineer

No of posts: 1 (North Guwahati)

Educational Qualification: B. Tech / Diploma in Mechanical Engineering.

Experience: 4-8 Years in Hospital Sector.

Note: SI No. 4 is not a regular post, This will be on a freelance basis.

Application Fee: Nil.

How to Apply for GNRC Medishop Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates mail their resume to the following email ID by mentioning Application for "Post Name" in email subject line.

Email ID: Prabal.Pathak@gnrcmedishop.com

Last date of submission of application: 07/10/2023.

About GNRC Medishop Pvt. Ltd.

GNRC Medishop Pvt. Ltd., was promoted by the GNRC Ltd. It's a retail chain of Medicine, FMCG, Paper Goods, Personal Care, Packed Grocery items etc. The annual turnover is 60 cr at present & planning to expand its business further.

## RBI Assistant Recruitment 2023 – 450 Assistant Vacancy, Online Apply

Last Date: 04/10/2023.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 450 Assistant vacancy. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Assistant

No of posts: 450 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

# SC: 45

# ST: 56

# OBC: 71

# EWS: 37

# UR: 241

No of posts @ Assam: 26 (at Guwahati)

Pay Scale: Selected Candidates will draw a starting basic pay of ₹20,700/- per month in the scale of ₹20700 – 1200 (3) – 24300 – 1440 (4) – 30060 – 1920 (6) – 41580 – 2080 (2) – 45740 – 2370 (3) – 52850 – 2850 (1) – 55700 and other allowances, as admissible from time to time.

Eligibility Criteria of RBI Assistant Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidates' age must be between 20 and 28 years. Candidates born not earlier than 02/09/1995 and not later than 01/09/2003 (both days inclusive) are only eligible to apply.

Age Relaxation: Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

# SC/ST: 5 years

# OBC: 3 years

# PWD/ UR: 10 years

# PWD/ OBC: 13 years

# PWD/ SC-ST: 15 years

Educational Qualification: Bachelor's Degree in any discipline with a minimum of 50% marks (pass class for SC/ST/PWD candidates) in the aggregate and the knowledge of word processing on PC.

Local Language Proficiency: Candidates applying for post in a particular recruiting Office should be proficient in the language (i.e., know to read, write, speak and understand the language) of the state/ any of the states falling under the recruiting Office.

Application Fee:

# SC/ST/PWD/EXS: Rs 50/-plus 18% GST

# UR/EWS/OBC: Rs 450/-plus 18% GST

Important Dates of RBI Assistant Vacancy 2023

# Starting Date of online application submission: September 13th, 2023

# Last Date of online application submission: October 04th, 2023

# Date of Online Preliminary Test: October 21st, 2023 & October 23rd, 2023

# Date of Online Main Test: December 02nd, 2023

## SBI PO Recruitment 2023 – 2000 Probationary Officer Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 03/10/2023.

State Bank of India (SBI) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 2000 Probationary Officer (PO) Vacancy. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Probationary Officer (PO)

No of posts: 2000 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

# SC: 300

# ST: 150

# OBC: 540

# EWS: 200

# GEN: 810

Pay: Rs 36000-1490/7-46430-1740/2-49910-1990/7-63840

Eligibility Criteria of SBI PO Recruitment

Age Limit: Not below 21 years and not above 30 years as on 01.04.2023 i.e. candidates must have been born not later than 01.04.2002 and not earlier than 02.04.1993 (both days inclusive).</



# 56 people killed in two suicide blasts in Pakistan

**KARACHI, Sept 29:** A powerful suicide blast ripped through a mosque in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province on Friday, killing at least 52 people and injuring over 50 others gathered to celebrate Prophet Muhammad's birthday, authorities said.

Hours later, another blast at a mosque in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Hangu city killed at least three people and injured five others.

The blast in Balochistan occurred near Madina Mosque on Al Falah Road in the Mastung district. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Mastung's Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Nawaz Gashkori, who was on duty for the rally, was among the deceased.

The explosion took place when people were gathering to mark Eid Miladun Nabi, the birth anniversary of Prophet Muhammad.

City Station House Officer (SHO) Mohammad Javed Lehri said the explosion was a "suicide

blast" and that the bomber exploded himself next to DSP's car.

The bomb attack came a day after the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) killed a key Islamic State (ISIS) commander in the Mastung district.

Lehri said that the wounded are being shifted to a medical facility while an emergency has been imposed in the hospitals.

At least 52 people were killed and over 50 injured in the blast in Mastung, District Health Officer Rashid Muhammad Saeed said.

Some of the injured were in critical condition. Officials expressed concern that the number of casualties may increase.

Balochistan interim Information Minister Jan Achakzai said rescue teams have been dispatched to Mastung. He added the critically injured persons are being transferred to Quetta and that an emergency has been imposed in all the hospitals.

"The enemy wants to destroy re-



ligious tolerance and peace in Balochistan...." Achakzai said. "The explosion is unbearable."

Caretaker Chief Minister Ali Mardan Domki has directed authorities to arrest those responsible for the blast.

"The perpetrators of the destruction do not deserve any leniency,"

he said. "Those who target peaceful processions will be dealt with firmly."

Chief Minister (CM) Domki urged the people to unite against terrorism, adding that Islam was a religion of peace and "those who commit such heinous acts cannot be called Muslims".

The caretaker CM also an-

nounced three days of mourning throughout the province over the tragic incident.

Interim Interior Minister Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti also strongly condemned the blast.

Stating that "terrorists have no faith or religion", Bugti asserted that all resources were being put to use during the rescue operation. He added that no effort would be spared in treating the injured and that terrorist elements did not deserve any concession.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and former premier Shehbaz Sharif said that carrying out such a despicable act on an occasion marking the birth of the Holy Prophet is detestable now and in the hereafter.

He condemned the attack and offered condolences to the families of the deceased and injured.

Soon after the explosion in Balochistan, the Punjab police also said that its officers were perform-

ing security duties for Friday prayers at mosques across the province.

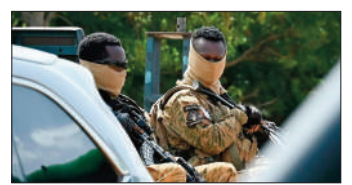
Meanwhile, the Karachi police said that Additional Inspector General Khadim Husain Rind has directed the police to remain "completely on high alert" in view of the Mastung blast.

He directed the policemen to tighten security arrangements regarding Eid-i-Miladun Nabi processions and Friday prayers across the city, as well as to monitor any unusual activities.

This is the second major blast that has terrorised Mastung over the last 15 days, Geo News reported.

Earlier this month, at least 11 people were injured in a blast in the same district. Mastung has remained a target of terror attacks for the past several years with a major attack in July 2018 being one of the deadliest in the district's history during which at least 128 people were killed. (PTI)

## Extremist attack kills at least 12 soldiers in Niger



**NIAMEY (Niger), Sept 29:** An attack by Islamic extremists in western Niger killed at least a dozen soldiers and wounded seven others, the West African nation's military junta said. The soldiers were on a mission in the Tillaberi region town of Kandadji when hundreds of jihadists on motorcycles attacked them Thursday, Gen. Salifou Mody, Niger's defence minister, said in a statement.

The wounded were evacuated to military hospitals, the statement said. The junta claimed that military personnel killed a hundred extremists and destroyed their motorcycles and weapons. The Associated Press was not able to independently verify the claim.

Niger has battled a jihadi insurgency linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group for years. Attacks have increased since mutinous soldiers toppled the country's democratically elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, in July. During the month after the junta seized power, violence primarily linked to the extremists soared by more than 40 per cent, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. Jihadi attacks targeting civilians quadrupled in August compared with the month before, and attacks against security forces spiked in the Tillaberi region, killing at least 40 soldiers, the project reported.

Niger was seen as one of the last democratic countries in Africa's Sahel region that Western nations could partner with to beat back the jihadi insurgency in the vast expanse below the Sahara Desert.

The United States, France and other European countries poured hundreds of millions of dollars into shoring up the Nigerien military.

Amid a swell of anti-France sentiment in its former colony, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the withdrawal by the end of the year of his country's 1,500 troops stationed in Niger.

France's ambassador to Niger, Sylvain Itte, left the country this week after a months-long standoff with the junta, which had ordered him out. The loss of support from France and potentially from the United States will make it hard for the junta to stave off the jihadis, conflict analysts believe. (AP)

## Biden offers dire warnings about Trump

**TEMPE (US), Sept 29:** President Joe Biden issued one of his most dire warnings yet that Donald Trump and his allies are a menace to American democracy, declaring Thursday that the former president is more interested in personal power than upholding the nation's core values and suggesting even mainstream Republicans are complicit. "The silence is deafening," he said. During a speech in Arizona celebrating a library to be built honoring his friend and fierce Trump critic, the late Republican Sen. John McCain, Biden repeated one of his key campaign themes, branding the "Make America Great Again" movement as an existential threat to the nation's political system.

He's reviving that idea ahead of next year's presidential race after it buoyed Democrats during last fall's midterm election, laying out the threat in especially stark terms: "There's something dangerous happening in America right now."

"We should all remember, democracies don't have to die at the end of a rifle," Biden said. "They can die when people are silent, when they fail to stand up or condemn threats to democracy, when people are willing to give away that which is most precious to them because they feel frustrated, disillusioned, tired, alienated." The 2024 election is still more than a year away, yet Biden's focus reflects Trump's status as the undisputed frontrunner for his party's nomination despite facing four indictments, two of them related to his attempts to overturn Biden's 2020 victory. The president's speech was his fourth in a series of addresses on what he sees as threats to democracy, a topic that is a touchstone for him as he tries to remain in office in the face of low approval ratings and widespread concern from voters about his age, 80.

Biden is trying to shift the political narrative to a line of attack he used frequently ahead of last year's midterms, when Democrats gained a Senate seat and only narrowly lost the House to the GOP. That could be especially tricky given that Biden is facing mounting pressure on Capitol Hill, where House Republicans are holding the first hearing in their impeachment inquiry and where the prospect of a government shutdown is looming with Trump actively egging one on. On the first anniversary of Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters staged an insurrection, Biden visited the Capitol and accused Trump of continuing to hold a "dagger" at democracy's throat. (AP)

## EAM Jaishankar, US Secretary Blinken discuss global developments amid India-Canada diplomatic row

**WASHINGTON, Sept 29:** India and the US have emphasised the continued importance of bilateral cooperation in areas like defence, space and clean energy as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Secretary of State Antony Blinken and exchanged notes on global developments, amid a simmering diplomatic row between India and Canada over the killing of a Khalistani separatist.

Jaishankar is currently on a five-day official trip to Washington DC. Thursday's meeting at the State Department was the highest-level interaction between the two countries after the recent G-20 Summit in New Delhi when President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi met.

"Great to meet my friend US Secretary of State @SecBlinken at the State Department today. A wide-ranging discussion, following up on PM @narendramodi's June visit. Also exchanged notes on global developments. Laid the groundwork of our 2+2 meeting very soon," he posted on X on Friday.

"Thank you to Indian External Affairs Minister @DrS-Jaishankar for hosting @POTUS earlier this month. We discussed India's successful G20 presidency, creation of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, and the upcoming #USIndia 2+2 Dialogue in New Delhi," Blinken posted on X. The two top diplomats "discussed a full range of issues, including key outcomes of India's G20 presidency, and the creation of India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor and its potential to generate transparent, sustainable, and high-standard infrastructure investments," State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a readout of the meeting.

However, the two sides remained tight-lipped about the direct or indirect implications of the diplomatic row between India and Canada over the killing of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia early this year.

"The Secretary and the External Affairs Minister also emphasised the continued importance of cooperation ahead of



the upcoming 2+2 Dialogue, in particular in the areas of defence, space, and clean energy," Miller said.

New Delhi will host the fifth edition of India-US 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, Jaishankar announced on Thursday. Although he did not reveal the dates of the meeting, it is learnt that the ministerial dialogue would be held in the first half of November.

The US delegation would be represented by Blinken along with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will lead the Indian delegation. "I actually look forward to seeing you in Delhi for the 2+2," Jaishankar told Blinken, as the latter welcomed him at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the State Department for the meeting.

The last 2+2 ministerial was held in Washington DC on April 11. Started during the previous Trump administration, the first 2+2 ministerial was held in New Delhi on September 6, 2018.

"Focused discussion on India-US collaboration on critical and emerging tech and creating resilient supply chains at discussion convened by @USISPFForum," Jaishankar said in another post on social media platform X.

"Glad to know that India is the major talking point in cor-

porate boardrooms. Our collaboration offers more possibilities with each passing day," he said.

Secretary Blinken refused to respond to reporters' questions about the India-Canada row. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has alleged that the Indian government was behind the killing of Nijjar on June 18. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020. India has rejected Canada's allegations as "absurd" and "motivated".

"It's a pleasure to welcome my friend and colleague, Foreign Minister Jaishankar, here to the State Department, back to Washington. We've had very good discussions over the last weeks - of course at the G20, in New York at the General Assembly - and I'm looking forward to pursuing them this afternoon," Blinken said welcoming Jaishankar at the Foggy Bottom headquarters of the State Department.

Both the top diplomats were smiling and in a cheerful mood as they appeared before the media at the Treaty Room of the State Department for a photo-op ahead of their bilateral meeting on Thursday. "Good to be back here, and we, of course, had the prime minister here this summer. We thank the US for all the support at the G20 summit," Jaishankar said in his brief remarks. Soon thereafter, the two leaders headed for the bilateral meeting.

Jaishankar, who arrived here from New York on Wednesday after addressing the 78th General Assembly session of the United Nations on Tuesday, held a series of meetings with top Biden administration officials on Thursday.

He started the day with a visit to the White House for a meeting with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. The White House did not issue a readout of the meeting.

"Recognised the tremendous progress in our bilateral relationship this year and discussed taking it forward," Jaishankar posted on X.

After a meeting with representatives of the think tanks from Washington DC, Jaishankar met US Trade Representative Katherine Tai. (PTI)

## US quietly acknowledges Iran satellite successfully reached orbit as tensions remain high

**DUBAI, Sept 29:** The United States has quietly acknowledged that Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard successfully put an imaging satellite into orbit this week in a launch that resembled others previously criticised by Washington as helping Tehran's ballistic missile programme.

The US military has not responded to repeated requests for comment from The Associated Press since Iran announced the launch of the Noor-3 satellite on Wednesday, the latest successful launch by the Revolutionary Guard after Iran's civilian space program faced a series of failed launches in recent years. Early Friday, however, data published by the website space-track.org listed a launch Wednesday by Iran that put the Noor-3 satellite into orbit. Information for the website is supplied by the 18th Space Defense Squadron of the U.S. Space Force, the newest arm of the American military.

It put the satellite at over 450 kilometers (280 miles) above the Earth's surface, which corresponds to Iranian state media reports regarding the launch. It also identified the rocket carrying the satellite as a Qased, a three-stage rocket fuelled by both liquid and solid fuels first launched by the Guard in 2020 when it unveiled its up-to-then-secret space programme.

"Noor" means "light" in Farsi, while "Qased" means "messenger." Authorities released a video of a rocket taking off from a mobile launcher without saying where it occurred. Details in the video earlier analyzed by the AP corresponded with a Guard base near Shahrud, about 330 kilometers (205 miles) northeast of the capital, Tehran. The base is in Semnan province, which hosts the Imam Khomeini Spaceport from which Iran's civilian space program operates. The website space-track.org also listed the missile as having

been launched from the Guard base at Shahrud. Speaking Thursday night to Iranian state television, Guard space commander Gen. Ali Jafarabadi described the Noor-3 satellite as having "image accuracy that is two and a half times that of the Noor-2 satellite." Noor-2, launched in March 2022, remains in orbit. Noor-1, launched in 2020, fell back to Earth last year.

Jafarabadi said Noor-3 has thrusters for the first time that allow it to maneuver in orbit. He also offered a wider description of Iran's hopes for its satellite program, including potentially controlling drones. That could raise further concerns for the West and Ukraine, which Russia has bombarded with Iranian-made bomb-carrying drones for over a year.

"If you look at the recent wars in the world, you will see that success on the battlefield is very dependent on the use of satellite technologies," Jafarabadi said. (PTI)

## Over 70% of Nagorno-Karabakh's population flees as separatist govt says it will dissolve

**YEREVAN (ARMENIA), Sept 29:** More than 70% of Nagorno-Karabakh's original population has fled to Armenia as the region's separatist government said it will dissolve itself and the unrecognised republic inside Azerbaijan will cease to exist by year's end after a three-decade bid for independence.

By Friday morning 84,770 people had left Nagorno-Karabakh, according to Armenian officials, continuing a mass exodus from the region of ethnic Armenians that began Sunday. The region's population was around 120,000 before the exodus began.

The moves came after Azerbaijan carried out a lightning offensive last week to reclaim full control over the breakaway region and demanded that Armenian troops in Nagorno-Karabakh disarm and the separatist government disband.

A decree signed by the region's separatist President Samvel Shakhramanyan cited a Sept 20 agreement to end the fighting under which Azerbaijan will allow the "free, voluntary and unhindered movement" of Nagorno-Karabakh residents to Armenia. Some of those who fled the regional capital of Stepanakert said they had no hope for the future.

"I left Stepanakert having a slight hope that maybe something will change and I will come back soon, and these hopes are ruined after reading about the dissolution of our government," 21-year-old student Ani

Abaghyant told The Associated Press on Thursday.

During the three decades of conflict in the region, Azerbaijan and separatists inside Nagorno-Karabakh, alongside allies in Armenia, have accused the other of targeted attacks, massacres and other atrocities, leaving people on both sides deeply suspicious and fearful. While Azerbaijan has pledged to respect the rights of ethnic Armenians in the region, most are now fleeing as they do not believe the Azerbaijani authorities will treat them fairly and humanely or guarantee them their language, religion and culture.

After six years of separatist fighting ended in 1994 following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nagorno-Karabakh came under the control of ethnic Armenian forces, backed by Armenia. Then, during a six-week war in 2020, Azerbaijan took back parts of the region in the south Caucasus Mountains along with surrounding territory that Armenian forces had claimed earlier. Nagorno-Karabakh was internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan's sovereign territory.

Armenia alleged the closure denied basic food and fuel supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan rejected the accusation, arguing that 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. (AP)

## Inflation drops sharply in Europe; it offers a glimmer of hope, but higher oil prices loom

**FRANKFURT, Sept 29:** Inflation that has been plaguing Europeans declined sharply in September, strengthening hopes that consumers will eventually get relief from costlier groceries, vacations and haircuts — and that the European Central Bank won't have to further restrict the economy by raising interest rates from already-record highs.

The annual rate was 4.3% this month, a drop from 5.2% in August. But recently higher oil prices are casting a shadow over prospects for beating inflation back down to the central bank's target of 2%. Core inflation, which excludes volatile fuel and food prices, fell more than analysts expected — to 4.5% from 5.3%, according to data released Friday by the European Union's statistics agency, Eurostat. The ECB closely watches this figure to assess how inflation is coming down.

The fall in core inflation "reinforces our view that the ECB has finished raising interest rates," said



Jack Allen-Reynolds, deputy chief eurozone economist at Capital Economics. He predicted that the overall inflation rate would tumble to 3.5% by the end of the year.

Energy prices dropped 4.7% in September, while food price inflation remained uncomfortably high at 8.8%. Readings across the major economies that use the euro currency were a mixed bag. Germany's annual inflation fell to 4.3% in September from 6.4% a month earlier, while

Spain's increased to 3.2% from 2.4%. Economists warn, however, that the large drop in Germany, the 20-country eurozone's largest economy, was exaggerated by a statistical quirk — the end of a subsidised transportation ticket and a fuel subsidy in September 2022 that had raised consumer prices that month.

The latest inflation figures follow what may have been the final interest rate increase by the ECB in its swift series of hikes. It brought

its benchmark deposit rate to a record high of 4% this month, up from minus 0.5% in July 2022.

ECB President Christine Lagarde said that if interest rate levels are maintained for a "sufficiently long duration", that would make a substantial contribution to returning inflation to 2%, a goal the bank does not expect to reach until 2025. High prices have been holding back the European economy because people's paychecks don't go as far as they used to in covering their bills, forcing them to cut back on other spending. Economic growth has stagnated to just above zero in the first six months of the year, with some indicators pointing to a downturn in the current July-to-September quarter.

This burst of inflation was set off as the global economy rebounded from the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to shortages of parts and raw materials. It got worse when Russian invaded Ukraine, sending energy prices soaring as Moscow cut off most

natural gas to Europe.

Supply chain bottlenecks and energy prices have eased, but inflation has worked its way through the economy. Prices are higher for services such as haircuts and hotel stays, and workers have demanded pay raises to make up for their lost purchasing power. The ECB has been trying to get a handle on inflation by raising interest rates, which make it more expensive to borrow for big purchases such as houses or new factory equipment to expand a business. That reduces demand for goods and, in turn, inflation. But higher rates also can weigh on economic growth, leaving the central bank facing a balancing act over how far to go.

Many economists think the ECB has finished raising rates unless something drastic happens to keep inflation from falling further. That could be a further increase in oil prices, which have risen recently after major producers Saudi Arabia and Russia extended production cuts. (AP)

## Seattle police officer who joked after Indian student's death taken off patrol duty

**SEATTLE, Sept 29:** A Seattle Police officer, who joked about the horrific death of a 23-year-old Indian student earlier this year, has been pulled off patrol duty, weeks after the South Asian community here demanded action against him.

Jaahnavi Kandula was killed by an over-speeding police car while crossing a street in January. The department Thursday confirmed by email that Officer Daniel Auderer "has been administratively reassigned to a non-operational position," said a report in The Seattle Times.

Auderer was a member of the SPD's traffic squad and vice president of the Seattle Police Officers Guild. The police department had released footage from a body-cam earlier this month in which Auderer can be seen laughing about the deadly crash and dismissed any implication that another officer, Kevin Dave, might be at fault or that a criminal investigation was necessary, the report said.

Dave was responding to a report of an overdose and driving at 74 mph (about 119 kmph) in a 25-mph zone when he struck Kandula, who was thrown more than 100 feet. The video footage showed Auderer, who was involved in the investigation, calling Kandula a "regular person" and suggesting that the department "write a check". "USD 11,000. She was 26 anyway," he said, mistaking Kandula's age.

"She had limited value," Auderer is seen as saying. The King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office is reviewing the case, considering whether to pursue charges against Dave, The Seattle Times report said.

About 15 days ago, the Seattle Community Police Commission recommended the city police chief to relieve Auderer from duty and withhold his pay.

Earlier last week, about 25 members of the Hindu community had organised a prayer ceremony for Kandula under a cloudy sky at Denny Park. The Shanti Puja, a Hindu prayer ceremony, is performed to invoke peace and blessings for the departed soul. (AP)



## NTPC inks pact with 6 kendriya vidyalayas in Arunachal



**ITANAGAR, Sept 29:** The National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) has signed a pact with the Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya Arunachal Pradesh Trust (VK-VAPT) for infrastructure development in six schools as part of its corporate social responsibility, officials said.

The six schools are Balijan, Sunpura, Jairampur, Banderdewa, Ziro and Kharsang kendriya vidyalayas, they said.

The agreement was signed in the presence of NTPC's Bongaigaon-based regional director

Partha Mazumder, chief general manager Karunakar Das, general manager (HR) Rajnish Rastogi, VKV secretary Sujata Nayak and joint secretary Rupesh Mathur, a statement said on Friday.

VKVAPT has been playing a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape of Arunachal Pradesh, the statement said.

The signing of the pact signifies NTPC's commitment to support education and infrastructure development in the country, it added. (PTI)

Three Wushu players from Arunachal Pradesh selected to represent India in the ongoing Asian Games in China were denied visa

## Arunachal always a part of India, China has no claim: CM Khandu

**TAWANG, Sept 29:** China has no claim over Arunachal Pradesh as the state has always been part of India, chief minister Pema Khandu asserted on Friday.

Referring to the recent denial of regular visa to three Wushu players from Arunachal Pradesh for the Asian Games in Hangzhou, he said China "unnecessarily" tries to bring a "political angle" whenever there is an issue related to the border state.

"China has no claim over Arunachal Pradesh. Never in history has Arunachal Pradesh been part of China. It has always been integral part of India," he said on the sidelines of the 36th senior national tug of war championship 2023 that began here.

The three Wushu players from Arunachal Pradesh were selected to represent India in the ongoing Asian Games but China gave them stapled visa leading to cancellation of their visit.

Khandu said China had even given a new name to Arunachal Pradesh and released a new map but the country has no locus standi on it.

"Such claim has no meaning," he said, adding that the Ministry of External Affairs has handled the issue since that is the appropriate authority.

Referring to the three Wushu players, the chief minister said the state government has given ₹ 20 lakh each as a policy to reward anyone from Arunachal Pradesh participating in international competitions.

"Since they were selected for the Asian



Games and could not go for no fault of theirs, we have decided to give them the money," he said.

Khandu said the state government will ensure best training for the three players for their preparation for the 2026 Asian Games

to be held in Japan so that they can bring laurels.

Welcoming the players participating the national tug of war competition, he said Arunachal Pradesh is rich in biodiversity with 80 per cent area is covered by forests.

"It is a very beautiful state with clean air and tourists are most welcome to the state," he said.

The chief minister also said that it is an attractive destination for adventure tourism like river rafting. (PTI)

## Over 20 MLAs of Manipur urge Centre to act against the killers of 2 students

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** More than 20 MLAs of Manipur, currently camping in Delhi, have urged the Centre to take action against those behind the kidnapping and killing of two youths in the restive state.

The legislators have also urged Union home minister Amit Shah to ensure that the CBI probe is expedited.

"Most legislators present in Delhi have already asked central government to deliver justice at the earliest. Let us ensure justice is given in the next few days by arresting the culprits involved," one of the MLAs Rajkumar Imo Singh wrote on X.

He urged people in Manipur not to indulge in violence and said all forms of agitation should be done peacefully.

"Let us ensure justice is given to the murdered students at the earliest," he said.

Singh said if the CBI is not able to deliver justice within the next few days, "let us sit down here in Delhi along with our people to take a new course of action".

"But let us also ensure that our common cause to save indigenous people is not diverted, our common cause to ensure that illegal migrants are all detected, action against insurgent groups breaking ground rules are taken up, border fencing is completed," he said.

The BJP MLA said everyone should stand united in one voice.

"If we are disjointed at this point



of time, people seeking new pastures will be smiling and laughing at us making us all come up against each other. Let us all stand together for Manipur," he appealed.

Singh also strongly condemned the alleged "act of barbarism by the armed forces" and asked why they can't use water cannons and other forms to stop such agitation. "Armed Forces should be instructed to be more humane in dealing with such kinds of delicate situation. Those involved should be given punishment as per law," he said.

Violent protests rocked Manipur's capital for two days since Tuesday as thousands of students protested the kidnapping and killing of two youths, pictures of

whose bodies had gone viral.

On Tuesday night, a clash occurred between RAF personnel and locals over the murder of the duo, prompting the law enforcers to lob tear gas shells and fire rubber bullets at the agitators and baton-charge them, leaving 45 of the protesters, mostly students, injured.

On Wednesday, around 20 protesters were injured in similar clashes with security forces.

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. (PTI)

## Man assaulting Nagaland woman in video in Ahmedabad police net

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** The man accused of assaulting a woman from Nagaland has been arrested recently.

The man has been identified as Mohsin Rangrez. According to sources the woman (24) was a business partner of Rangrez. Rangrez is owner of a spa at Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

Rangrez (29), a resident of Danilinda, was arrested by Gujarat police, when he went to meet the complainant at a gurudwara.

A video emerged on social media platforms, showing a woman from the Northeast being subjected to assault by a man in Ahmedabad.

The video showed the woman was assaulted and dragged by her hair, tearing her clothes by the

**Nagaland police arrest 157 people under NDPS Act**

**HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, Sept 29:** Continuing their efforts to combat drug use in the state, the Nagaland police apprehended 157 people and registered 133 cases under the (NDPS) Act in the last three months. According to an official report on Friday, the police seized 139,503 kg ganja, 28,853 kg opium, 5,164 kg heroin, 1,145 kg brown sugar, 5,750 yaba tablets, 20,116 units of other synthetic drugs and 2,446 bottles of cough syrup estimated to be over ₹ 20 crore.



owner of a spa at Ahmedabad in Gujarat. The incident took place on September 25.

The entire incident was captured

on CCTV camera outside the spa and investigation into the case began on September 27 after an FIR was registered.

**MHA extends biometric tracing of illegal migrants in Manipur deadline**

**IMPHAL, Sept 29:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has agreed to extend the deadline for completion of capturing of biographic and biometric details of illegal migrants in the state of Manipur by six months i.e upto March 31, 2024, an official statement said recently.

The process of capturing had been initiated and the initial timeline for completion of the exercise is September 30, 2023, the statement also said.

It may be mentioned that the state government of Manipur and the Manipur legislators currently in New Delhi had requested the MHA to extend the deadline so that capturing of the data of all illegal migrants from Myanmar can be ensured, in view of difficulties in the present situation. Considering the requirement of more time to complete the exercise, the Ministry has agreed to extend the deadline and also instructed the state government of Manipur to take up appropriate necessary action to complete the exercise within the revised time period i.e by March 31, 2024, the statement added. (NNN)

## Mon district administration lifts travel advisory

**HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, Sept 29:** In a significant development, the Mon district administration on Friday withdrew its travel advisory, which cautioned people against travelling via the Sonari route in Charaideo district of Assam.

Mon DC Ajit Kumar Verma, in an advisory on September 26, had asked vehicles bound to and from Mon district to refrain from travelling via Sonari route due to a tense situation at Sonari following a vehicle accident at Ang-

jangyang sub-division of the district.

The district administration reported that based on their assessments and reports, Mon's police and civil societies, in collaboration with their counterparts in Sonari, are successfully restoring normalcy to the situation.

"Therefore the said travel advisory stands withdrawn and vehicular movement along the said route may be resumed with effect from September 29," it notified.

On September 26, the Mon district admin-

istration said that a Tata Yodha (AS 33C 0941) vehicle met with an accident at Angjangyang sub-division under the district. Following this, a missing complaint was filed by the owner of the vehicle at Aboi police station under Mon district on September 25.

Based on the missing complaint, a search operation led by the officer in charge of the police station was launched during which the missing vehicle and two bodies were retrieved on September 25 from the accident site, 200

feet below the road between Angjangyang and Longching under Mon district.

Accordingly, due procedure was followed and the post-mortem was conducted at Mon district hospital. After observing all necessary formalities, the bodies were handed over to the family members on September 26.

The district administration said the incident of September 25 was completely a case of an unfortunate vehicle accident and no case of foul play was linked with it.

## Students in Bangladesh demand justice for the two slain students in Manipur

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Sept 29:** Students of Prime Medical College at Rampur in Bangladesh on Thursday night staged silent candlelight protests over killings of two teenage Meitei students.

They demanded action against the killers of the two students Phijam Hemanjit (20) and Hijam Linthoingambi alias Luwanganbi (17) amid the ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur.

Supriya Bhattarai, a leader of the students stated that the authorities should hand over the dead bodies of the two students to the next of kin of their families at the earliest. The two students went missing after they went out on a motorcycle on July 6 in the Churachandpur district of Manipur. They have been assumed dead after their photographs surfaced on social media on September 25.

Bhattarai also said that the students in their college can feel the pain of the family members of the deceased. "We strongly condemned the act of the Kuku militants for their killing of innocent students."

The festoons and placards were stalled at the



protest site. It read, "We are demanding early justice for the two students."

The student leader further stated that the culprits must be arrested soon and punished according to the

law of the Indian government.

Over 10,000 Meiteis live in four different districts in Bangladesh, namely Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, and Habiganj.

### LOST

I, Vaishnavi Rongpharpi daughter of Chandra Rongphar lost my original HSLC Admit card bearing Roll. B21-0457 NO. 0406, Registration Number. 15/UJ/0825/285745/19, School name Nightingale English High school, Manja, Karbi Anglong. If anyone finds the lost document kindly contact : 7002477585

### REVISION OF PUBLIC TIME TABLE

The Public Time Table Timings of Schedule/Special Trains at originating, terminating and stoppage stations have been revised with effect from 1st October, 2023 and onward, Due to enforcement of the New Working Time Table-95.

All concerned are requested to follow NATIONAL TRAIN ENQUIRY SYSTEM (NTES) for any information regarding the train running status and schedule on real time basis.

General Manager (Operations), Maligaon

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
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Dated:- 28/09 /2023

**TENDER NO. 07 OF 2023-24**  
**PRESS NOTICE/IFB**

The Executive Engineer (Agriculture), Kokrajhar Division, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for the work "Construction of 04(four) nos. covered threshing floor in BTAD area under RKVY-RAFTAAR, 2023-24" amounting to Rs. 1,00,00,000.00 (Approx) (Rupees one crore ) only from the registered contractors of Class-I category of Agriculture Deptt. of BTC.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer (Agriculture),  
Kokrajhar Division, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/545

No.EE (Agri.)/Koj/BTC/e-Tender/2023-24/1819

Dated:- 28/09 /2023

**TENDER NO. 06 OF 2023-24**  
**PRESS NOTICE/IFB**

The Executive Engineer (Agriculture), Kokrajhar Division, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for the work "Construction of 04(four) nos. of Input Go-Down under RKVY-RAFTAAR, 2023-24" amounting to Rs.1,00,00,000.00 (Approx) (Rupees one crore ) only from the registered contractors of Class-I category of Agriculture Deptt. of BTC.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

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Kokrajhar Division, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/544



## PM to visit Telangana tomorrow, will inaugurate devp projects worth over ₹ 13,500 crore

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Telangana on Sunday during which he will lay the foundation stone and dedicate to the nation multiple developmental projects worth more than ₹ 13,500 crore, his office said. At 2:15 PM on Sunday, the prime minister will reach Mahabubnagar district, where he will dedicate to the nation and lay the foundation stone of multiple developmental projects worth more than ₹ 13,500 crore, in important sectors such as road, rail, petroleum and natural gas and higher education. During the programme, the prime minister will also flag off a train service through video conferencing, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

In a step that will provide impetus to the prime minister's vision of development of modern road infrastructure across the country, foundation stone and dedication to nation of multiple road projects will be done during the programme, it said.

Prime Minister Modi will lay the foundation stone of key road projects that are part of Nagpur-Vijayawada Economic Corridor, including the 108 km long four-lane access controlled greenfield highway from Warangal to



Khammam section of NH-163G and 90 km-long four lane access controlled greenfield highway from Khammam to Vijayawada section of NH-163G. These road projects will be developed at a total cost of about ₹ 6,400 crore, the statement said. The projects will reduce travel distance between Warangal and Khammam by about 14 km; and between Khammam and Vijayawada by about 27 km, it said.

Prime Minister Modi will also dedicate to nation a road project – four lan-

ing of 59 km long Suryapet to Khammam section of NH-365BB.

Built at a cost of about ₹ 2,460 crore, the project is a part of Hyderabad – Visakhapatnam Corridor and is developed under Bharatmala Pariyojana. It will also provide better connectivity to Khammam district and coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh, the statement said.

The Prime Minister will also dedicate 37 km of Jakla-Krishna New Railway Line. Built at a cost of more than ₹ 500 crore, the new rail line sec-

tion brings areas of the backward district of Narayanpet for the first time onto the Railway map. Prime Minister Modi will also flag off the Hyderabad (Kacheguda) – Raichur – Hyderabad (Kacheguda) train service from Krishna station via video conferencing.

The train service will connect Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Mahabubnagar, Narayanpet districts in Telangana with Raichur district in Karnataka.

The service will provide first-time rail connectivity to several new areas in backward districts of Mahabubnagar and Narayanpet, benefiting students, daily commuters, labourers, and local handloom industry in the region.

In line with the prime minister's vision of improving logistics efficiency in the country, foundation stone and dedication to the nation of important oil and gas pipeline projects will be done during the programme.

Modi will dedicate to the nation 'Hassan-Cherlapalli LPG Pipeline Project' which is built at a cost of about ₹ 2,170 crore. The LPG pipeline, from Hassan in Karnataka to Cherlapalli (suburb of Hyderabad), provides a safe, cost-efficient, and eco-friendly mode of LPG transportation and distribution in the region. (PTI)

## INDIA bloc will take care to ensure no disputes among partners ahead of state polls: Pawar



**PUNE, Sept 29:** The INDIA bloc will take precautions to ensure that there are no disputes among its alliance partners in states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh where elections are due in a few months, NCP chief Sharad Pawar said on Friday.

He was speaking to reporters at Baramati in Maharashtra's Pune district. Pawar also spoke about issues like Maratha reservation and export duty on onions.

More than two dozen opposition parties have formed the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to take on the BJP in next year's general elections.

Replying to a question about apparent friction in West Bengal as the Congress has staked claim to some seats,

the veteran politician said there are no elections there in the immediate future.

"When elections near, the possibility of differences (among INDIA bloc partners) cannot be ruled out. However, we will sort the issues by sending neutral leaders from the alliance," he said.

Pawar stressed that elections are due in a few months in four to five states and that is more important for them.

"INDIA bloc will see how all the alliance partners come on one page in states like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. After returning to Mumbai, I will hold discussions with Congress and other party leaders and we will take precautions to ensure that there are no disputes among the alliance partners (in these states)," he said.

This process will start in the next eight to ten days, the NCP chief said.

Assembly elections are due in a few months in Chattisgarh, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Telangana.

Asked about Maratha reservation, which is currently under the spotlight, the NCP president said he read in news reports that the Eknath Shinde government in the state has promised to address the issue. It is to be seen what decision the state government takes in the coming days, Pawar said.

Replying to a question about the 40 per cent export duty on onions, he said it is an injustice to farmers.

"It has been our demand that this export duty be withdrawn. Union minister Piyush Goyal has called a meeting in Delhi on the issue. Let's hope something positive comes out of that meeting. Else, the restlessness among the farmers won't be contained," he said.

Asked about BJP state president Chandrashekar Bawankule's purported suggestion to his party workers to take scribes to dhavas to avoid negative publicity, Pawar said journalists from Maharashtra are not hungry for tea and food at those eateries.

"This kind of remark is an insult to the journalists' fraternity. What to talk about those who make this kind of statement? It is better to ignore such things," he added. (PTI)

## Will Rahul speak on issue of women safety in Rajasthan, ask Gehlot to resign: BJP

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** The BJP on Friday sharpened its attack on the Congress on the issue of women's safety in poll-bound Rajasthan and demanded that former its party president Rahul Gandhi ask chief minister Ashok Gehlot to tender his resignation. Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters here, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla asked Gandhi to break his silence and raise questions on the functioning of his party's government under Gehlot.

This came after a partially-chained body of a woman was found on the side of a road in a village in Jaipur earlier in the morning and the police suspected it to be a case of murder.

"This is not just one incident... Rajasthan under chief minister Ashok Gehlot is leading the country in crime against women," Poonawalla claimed and cited several other cases of murder, rape and other crimes registered in the state in recent past. He further claimed that law and order in Rajasthan has been "completely destroyed" in the 4.5 years of Congress rule in the state.

"Priyanka Gandhi gave a slogan 'ladki hoon, lad sakti' (girls can fight) but women in Rajasthan today are asking

'ladki hoon to kya Rajasthan mein bach sakti hoon' (If girls are safe in Rajasthan)," he added. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ensured that women enjoy their constitutional right, women's right to safety is not being ensured in Rajasthan, he charged.

"Congress leaders talk about women safety and empowerment, make big claims about them. Often their leaders and spokesperson indulge in vulture politics raising the issue of women safety in other states," Poonawalla said.

"Will Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra visit Rajasthan, take up the issue in the state with the chief minister and ask for his resignation," he wondered. The BJP spokesperson referred to some recent cases of crime against women in Rajasthan and said "neither Rahul Gandhi, nor Priyanka Vadra ever come out with a statement condemning these incidents". None of the INDIA alliance partners have also come out with any statement on these incidents in Rajasthan, he charged.

"Why is this selective outrage?" Poonawalla asked Gandhi and the opposition parties' INDIA bloc in a veiled reference to their stand on violence against women in Manipur. (PTI)

## Law Commission working on formula so that 2029 onwards LS, assembly polls can be held together

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** The Law Commission is working on a formula to synchronise all assembly polls by extending or reducing the tenure so that all state elections can be held along with the Lok Sabha polls 2029 onwards, sources said on Friday.

As the government has already set up a high-level panel to explore simultaneous polls for Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies, the Law Commission may also be asked to include the third tier of elections along with its current mandate for national and state-level polls.

The sources also said the law panel is devising a mechanism to ensure a common electoral roll for Lok Sabha, assemblies and local bodies to reduce cost and use of manpower for undertaking an almost identical exercise which is carried out now by the Election Commission and various state election commissions.

The Law Commission's report on simultaneous polls is not ready as some issues are yet to be settled, the sources pointed out.

For synchronising various assembly polls to ensure both state and Lok Sabha elections are held together from 2029 onwards, the Commission under Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi may suggest reducing or enhancing the tenure of legislative assemblies.

A mechanism is being devised to ensure that once Lok Sabha and assembly polls are synchronised, voters go to the polling booth only once to cast their ballot for both the elections.

They said since assembly and parliamentary polls are held in phases, the Commission is working out modalities to see that voters do not go to polling stations more than once to cast their ballot for the two polls.

The Commission, they said, is of the view that assembly and par-

liamentary polls can be held together and it is only working out modalities for the smooth conduct of the gigantic democratic exercise.

As of now the mandate of the Commission is to suggest ways to hold assembly and Lok Sabha polls together. But the high-level committee under former president Ram Nath Kovind has been tasked with recommending how Lok Sabha, assembly and local body polls (panchayat, municipalities, zila parishad) can be held together.

Keeping in mind the terms of reference of the Kovind panel, the ambit of the Law Commission can also be increased to include holding local body polls along with national and state polls, the sources said.

One suggestion the law panel can make is to hold the three-tier polls in two phases in one year. In the first phase, Lok Sabha and assembly polls can be held and in the

second phase, local body polls can be organised.

This, the sources said, is a practical approach keeping in mind the varied climatic conditions in the country.

In August 2018, the previous Law Commission had endorsed the Modi government's proposal to hold simultaneous polls to Lok Sabha and state assemblies, saying it will prevent the country from being in constant election mode, but it had sought further public discourse on the issue before arriving at a final decision.

The panel in its draft report had also said the exercise cannot be held in the present constitutional framework, and suggested changes required to carry out the two sets of polls together.

In April 2018, the law ministry had asked the Law Commission to examine the issue of holding simultaneous polls to Lok Sabha and state assemblies. (PTI)

## Man held for raping 8-year-old girl in Mathura

**MATHURA (UP), Sept 29:** A man has been arrested for allegedly raping an eight-year-old girl here, police said on Friday.

According to a complaint lodged by the girl's father, the minor had gone to her relative's place in their village in Mahavan police station area on Sunday.

When she was returning home, an unidentified man lured her to a secluded place on the pretext of giving her candy and raped her, police said.

The girl managed to reach home. She was bleeding and was immediately taken to the district hospital, where she was administered first aid and later referred to S N Medical College, Agra, they said.

"Our team arrested Ranjit in connection with the case on Thursday night. He lived in the neighbourhood and knew the victim," Senior Superintendent of Police Shlok Pandey said.

"The accused was planning to abscond. He has confessed to the crime," he said. An FIR has been registered in the matter. (PTI)

## Need to dismantle network of illicit trade, organised crime, terror: Anurag Thakur

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** Union minister Anurag Thakur on Friday said the relationship between illicit trade, organised crime and terrorism poses a clear and present danger to global security and made a strong pitch to dismantle the networks that seek to undermine the country's security and prosperity.

Addressing the MASCRAD 2023 conference organised by FICCI, Thakur said the surge in illicit trade is a troubling consequence of globalisation that casts a shadow on India's progress towards achieving the goal of a USD 5 trillion economy.

"Illicit trade, whether conducted through activities like smuggling, counterfeiting or tax evasion, exacts a considerable socio-economic toll. It not only hinders our advancement but also drives up expenses, pushing these crucial goals even further



from our reach," he said.

"Let us join hands in this vital endeavour, working together to dismantle the networks that seek to undermine our security and prosperity. The fight against illicit trade is not just an economic battle; it is a battle for peace, stability and the future of our world," Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Thakur said.

He said the intricate and alarming expansion of illicit trade underscore the need for enhanced intergovernmental collaborations and public-private partnerships to formulate a comprehensive strategy.

"Combating the pervasive social and economic determinants inflicted by illicit trade now stands as an imperative, reflecting India's steadfast commitment to preserving its hard-earned economic strength and securing a prosperous future," he added.

Thakur said illicit trade serves as a significant source of revenue for terror organisations, enabling them to finance their nefarious activities.

"These illegal networks thrive on the sale of counterfeit goods, smuggling of products, narcotics and arms, channelling the profits into funding acts of terror that disrupt the peace and stability of nations," he said.

"The intertwined relationship between illicit trade, organised crime and terrorism poses a clear and present danger to global security, making it imperative that we confront this issue head-on," he said. (PTI)

**KOZHIKODE, Sept 29:** Four people, including a nine-year-old boy, who were under treatment for Nipah in Kozhikode, have recovered, state Health Minister Veena George said on Friday.

Sharing the "good news", the minister said in a brief statement that they have tested "double negative" (they were tested twice and turned out to be negative).

A total of six people were infected with the virus in the district, and of them, two died. Of the two deaths, the first person who died on August 30 was found to be the index case, or patient zero, from whom others caught the infection.

Earlier, the Kerala government had withdrawn containment in all zones and allied restrictions imposed in the northern district, as no new cases of Nipah virus have been reported here since September 16.

However, the district authorities urged people to continue their vigil against the virus infection, maintain social distancing and ensure the use of masks and sanitizer.

All institutions in the district had been closed since September 14, and online classes were being held after the virus outbreak was declared in the state on September 12. (PTI)

## Passengers face harrowing time due to cancellation of flights, bus services

**BENGALURU, Sept 29:** As many as 44 flights to and from the Kempegowda International Airport here were cancelled owing to the Karnataka bandh over the Cauvery water sharing issue with Tamil Nadu, airport authorities said on Friday. Similarly, state transport corporations too cancelled many of their bus services, especially in the Cauvery basin districts of Mysuru, Mandya and Chamarajanagar, where the bandh had the most impact.

Some passengers had a harrowing time as they missed their flights, buses and trains due to the day-long shutdown. Many passengers were distraught following the cancellation of flights and bus services.

"We cancelled 44 flights today. They include 22 flights to and an equal number of flights from Bengaluru due to the strike," an airport official told PTI.

The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) said there were only 59.88 per cent bus



operations in southern parts of Karnataka. The worst-hit KSRTC divisions in terms of operations were Mysuru and Chamarajanagar.

Against the scheduled departure of 447 buses, only seven plied in Mysuru while in Chamarajanagar, eight out of 247 bus services operated. Mandya, Chikkamagaluru and Bengaluru witnessed 37.25 per cent, 51.49 per cent and 57.39 per cent operations, respectively, against the scheduled departures.

Bus stands and railway stations in southern Karnataka and the airport in Bengaluru were a deserted look.

Farmers and pro-Kannada organ-

isations staged protests outside the airport as well.

A group from pro-Kannada organisations gathered near the arrival gate of Kempegowda International Airport here to register their protest over the Cauvery water dispute.

They started raising slogans following which they were taken into preventive detention by the Bengaluru Police.

"We have taken 12 people into preventive detention. They had gathered at the airport premises to register their protest over the Cauvery water dispute. They were detained and taken into preventive detention," a senior police officer said.

Similarly, agitation took place at bus stations where the activists staged demonstrations and raised slogans holding banners, posters and placards.

The agitators blocked many roads in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Mandya and Chamarajanagar leading to a chaotic situation. (PTI)

## Delhi's launches action plan to check winter pollution; focus on dust, vehicular, industrial emissions

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** The Delhi government on Friday launched a 15-point action plan to mitigate air pollution in the national capital during the winter, with a strong emphasis on addressing dust pollution, vehicular emissions and the open burning of garbage.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced at a press conference that separate and specific action plans have been designed for each of the 13 air pollution hotspots of Delhi based on real-time air quality data collected from 40 monitoring stations in the national capital.

The winter action plan primarily focuses on preventing crop residue burning, dust pollution, vehicular and industrial emissions, open burning of garbage, regulating firecrackers, tree planting, ensuring effective implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), managing e-waste and fostering collaboration with neighbouring states, Kejriwal said. Thirteen teams have been formed to implement these action plans at the identified air pollution hotspots.

"To combat crop residue burning, the Delhi government successfully implemented a free bio-decomposer technique in the past three years, which has yielded positive results. Last year, we treated 4,400

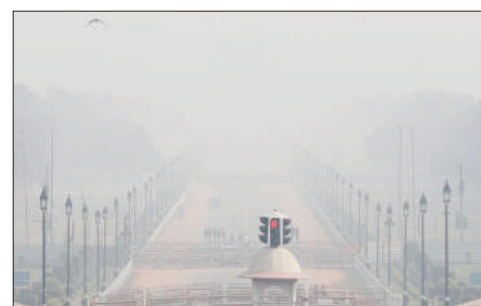
acres of farmland with the bio-decomposer method. This year, we will use it on 5,000 acres of both Basmati and non-Basmati rice fields, all free of cost," Kejriwal said. The chief minister also announced an anti-dust campaign from October 9. It includes measures such as the installation of dust control equipment at all sites exceeding 500 square metres, with real-time monitoring available through a web portal.

Kejriwal shared that 591 teams have been set up to ensure strict compliance with dust control norms, with 530 water sprinklers and 258 mobile anti-smog guns deployed to combat dust pollution. To tackle vehicular pollution, 385 teams have been formed to check Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates and enforce the ban on 10-year-old diesel and 15-year-old petrol vehicles.

The city government has identified 90 congested roads where teams will be deployed to manage traffic and inform commuters of alternative routes.

The government will also deploy 611 teams to prevent the open burning of waste. An additional 66 teams will ensure that industrial units do not use unauthorised or non-compliant fuels.

Starting from October 3, a "Green War Room" will be operational 24x7 to monitor environmental



indicators. A nine-member expert team has been assigned to analyse reports and plan future actions based on the gathered data.

Kejriwal encouraged people to download and use the Green Delhi mobile application, which has played a crucial role in facilitating communication between the public and the authorities on environmental violations.

"Over the past three years, the app received 70,470 complaints, with a 90 per cent resolution rate," he said. Similar to previous years, Delhi will continue to regulate the production, storage and the sale of fireworks within the city, including for online deliv-

eries. The residents are urged to celebrate Diwali with minimal firecrackers, Kejriwal emphasised.

This year, Delhi has set a target to plant 52 lakh trees and plants under the tree planting campaign. In the first phase, about 75 per cent, or 39.48 lakh trees and plants, have already been planted. The second phase of will commence on October 15. Additionally, the New Delhi Municipal Council aims to plant 50 lakh trees, he added. The chief minister announced that e-waste generated in Delhi will be collected and processed in 20 identified zones. After proper disposal, all electronic waste in Delhi will be scientifically processed. The Delhi government will also organise a "Run Against Pollution" to raise environmental awareness among the people and campaigns to check vehicular pollution and the burning of firecrackers. The BJP, however, blasted the Kejriwal government over the action plan, calling it a "copy-paste" job.

Virendra Sachdeva, chief of the party's Delhi unit, said, "Arvind Kejriwal's winter action plan is just a show. Kejriwal did not do anything about pollution control. The winter action plan presented today is a copy-paste of the plan they presented last year."

Speaking at a press conference, he said before the

AAP assumed power in Punjab, it held the northern state responsible for the pollution in Delhi.

"But now, Kejriwal is mum on Punjab," he added.

However, when asked about the stubble burning situation in Punjab, Kejriwal said, "Last year, (after) our government was formed, we got six to seven months. But government data shows that last year there was 30 per cent less stubble burning as compared to the previous year."

This year, several steps are being taken, including the diversification of crops under which farmers have been asked to grow crops other than paddy, he said.

"This will lead to saving of water as well as less stubble (generation)," the AAP chief added.

Kejriwal said the farmers in Punjab are being encouraged to grow short-term varieties of rice, which will lead to less stubble generation and ensure more time to dispose those.

"We are getting good response. There are many companies that have come forward to adopt districts. They will take the stubble of the entire district and convert it into manure or electricity. Many other steps are being taken. It is difficult to cite the exact data on how much stubble burning will happen but I think it will be reduced," he said. (PTI)



# Farmers' stir in Punjab: Train movement hit, some farmers block Chandigarh-Ambala NH

**CHANDIGARH/HOSHIARPUR, Sept 29:** Farmers squatted on railway tracks and blocked the Chandigarh-Ambala-Delhi national highway on Friday, demanding compensation for crop damage in the recent floods, a legal guarantee on MSP and a sweeping debt waiver.

Farmers taking part in the three-day 'rail roko' squatted on the Amritsar-Delhi railway track in Devidas Pura while, in Hoshiarpur, members of the Azad Kisan Committee, Doaba, sat on a dharna at the local railway station.

Railway officials said while some trains were cancelled, routes of several trains have been diverted. Some trains are being short terminated due to the agitation.

The stir is underway at 17 places in Punjab, including in Moga, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Tarn Taran, Sangrur, Patiala, Ferozepur, Bathinda and Amritsar.

A group of farmers owing allegiance to Bharti Kisan Union (Sidhupur) squatted on the Chandigarh-Ambala-Delhi national highway near Lalru in Punjab. The farmers also parked their tractors alongside the highway.

A Punjab Police official said both sides of the highway have been blocked and traffic diverted through alternative routes.

Harpal Singh Sangha, state chief of the Azad Kisan Committee, Doaba, said the agitation will continue till Saturday.



If the demands are not met by that time, the next course of action will be decided, he said.

The stir has left many rail passengers stranded in Punjab and Haryana.

"The matter is between the Centre and the farmers. Why should passengers face harassment. Since yesterday (Thursday), we have been waiting at the railway station but there is no surety when our train will arrive," said an elderly passenger waiting to travel to Patna at the Ludhiana railway station.

Late on Thursday, hundreds of railway passengers travelling to various destinations, including Delhi, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, were stranded at the Ambala Cantonment station in Haryana as rail movement was hit in Punjab.

A large number of passengers, many of them pilgrims, were also stranded at Jammu and Katra railway stations of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday as seven trains were cancelled and 13 diverted due to the agitation.

The agitation has directly affected the Ambala and the Firozpur railway divisions, a railway official said.

Several farmer groups, including the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee; Bharti Kisan Union (Krantikari); Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Azaad); Azaad Kisan Committee, Doaba; Bharti Kisan Union (Behramke); Bharti Kisan Union (Shaheed Bhagat Singh) and the Bharti Kisan Union (Chottu Ram), are participating in the protest.

Their demands include a financial package for the flood-affected people in north India, a legal guarantee for minimum support (MSP) price for all crops and a debt waiver for farmers.

The farmers want a ₹ 50,000-crore flood relief package for north Indian states and MSP according to the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission report, farmer leader Gurbachan Singh said in Amritsar on Thursday.

He demanded waiver of the entire debt of farmers and labourers, and ₹ 10 lakh and a government job in compensation to the kin of each farmer who died during the agitation against the now-repealed three farm laws. (PTI)

# Court directs DRI to revise raid guidelines after detainee dies by suicide

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** A Delhi metropolitan court, while taking cognisance of various offences against four Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) officers, including abduction and abetment of suicide, has directed the agency to revise the guidelines to be followed by its officers during a raid.

Chief metropolitan magistrate Shivani Chauhan was hearing a case where a suspect was allegedly driven to end his life by suicide due to illegal detention, and physical and mental abuse by four DRI officers. According to the case details, the central agency conducted a raid at the office, shop and residence of victim Gaurav Gupta on April 24, 2018. The raid continued till the next morning, and after the victim and his father were taken to DRI office, Gupta ended his life by jumping out of a window.

An FIR was initially registered for the offence of murder. After investigation, however, a cancellation report was filed, and the Investigating Officer (IO) concluded that it was a case of suicide. The court, in an order passed on September 25, said it was "prima facie" a case of suicide but it had to see whether the victim took his life of his own volition or something happened at the DRI office which drove him to take the extreme step.

It said the victim's father categorically stated that during the raid at his residence, a DRI officer pointed a revolver at the victim, and four members of the raiding

team slapped and misbehaved with them. At the DRI office, he could hear his son being beaten in the adjoining room, the court noted.

It said the victim and his father were detained without following the due procedure. "There is nothing on record to show that the raiding party had the authority to detain these two persons without formal arrest and interrogate them at their office at that time. The victim was not given a chance to speak with his family members or advocates after the conclusion of the raid. The victim was not given adequate opportunity to rest... Rather he was straightaway and illegally taken to the office of DRI, beaten and abused during further interrogation which deteriorated the mental condition of the victim to such an extent that he was driven to commit suicide," the court said.

It said there was sufficient material on record to take cognisance of offences against the four officers—Parminder, Nishant, Mukesh and Ravinder—under IPC sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (wrongful restraint) 166 (public servant disobeying law with intent to cause injury to a person) 352 (punishment for assault or criminal force otherwise than on grave provocation), 362 (abduction), 348 (wrongful confinement to extort confession), 306 (abetment of suicide), 330 (voluntarily causing hurt to extort confession) and 34 (common intention). (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Company's general meeting held

Autonomous Council authority for grants. The Chairman of the company in his speech proposed lending rotating loans among the shareholders to get some profits. He requested all not to ask for donations for any program from Lamps. The company reported a net profit of Rs 1,57,800 as compared to last year.

## 1 killed, 3 attacked by

one among the jumbos broke apart and attacked Kalita despite firing in the air by forest personnel. The others managed to flee. Kalita was rushed to a hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead. Three other members of the forest team including Rajib Gohain were injured and are being treated in the hospital.

It may be mentioned that the man-elephant conflict in areas under Mariani Range has resulted in loss of human lives. Several elephants have also lost their lives during train accidents since the last two decades. Herds of elephants often stray out from the Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary and enter human habitation.

## India-Canada issue discussed

Jaishankar said. A lot of "our tensions with Canada which well preceded what Mr. Trudeau said, I actually come out of that. And today, I'm actually in a situation where my diplomats are unsafe going to the embassy or to the consulates in Canada," he said. On September 21, India suspended visa services for Canadian citizens in view of "security threats" faced by the Indian High Commission and consulates in Canada.

Jaishankar noted that Indian diplomats in Canada were publicly intimidated. "That has actually compelled me to temporarily suspend even visa operations in Canada. So, as I said, you know, often countries look very different depending on how you see them and what your interests are, but I have this problem in Canada," he added. (PTI)

## Situation in Imphal valley

The officers were apprised of the unfortunate injuries of students as well as security personnel," the state police said on X. The forces discussed on using minimum force in dealing with the public, especially students.

Appealing to the students to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in maintaining peace and bringing normalcy back early, police said, "Any miscreants taking advantage of the current situation will be firmly dealt with by police."

A fresh bout of violence broke out in the state capital on Tuesday, a day after photos of the bodies of two youths, a man and a girl, who had gone missing in July went viral on social media. A CBI team is currently investigating the killing in the northeastern state which has been witnessing ethnic strife for nearly five months. (PTI)

## KAAC CEM challenges

Federation (ALF) under Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi Day, National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) and Assam State Urban Livelihoods Mission (ASULM) at Tatalangso, Ward No. 9 in Diphu town.

The Meri Maati Mera Desh programme is celebrated to commemorate the nation's journey of freedom and progress. It is to instill a sense of national pride and inspire future generations to protect India and cherish its heritage. Soil was collected from Tatalangso in an earthen pot, which was brought to the CEM bungalow and was handed to officials of the Diphu Municipal Board.

## Small tea growers play

are the unsung heroes of this story. 'They have not only managed to carve a niche for themselves, but have also greatly contributed to the overall tea production in India. Their dedication, often amidst daunting challenges, is a testament to their commitment to the industry', he said. CISTA chairman Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty emphasized the need for sustainable development of the tea industry and for empowering small growers with the knowledge and resources required to produce high-quality tea.

The stakeholders called for addressing the key challenges such as maintaining economic threshold limits for sustainable tea production, the knowledge gap among growers, and climate adaptation. They also emphasized the need for quality improvement in tea production to ensure the industry's long-term viability, tackling issues of oversupply, rising production costs, and supply-demand dynamics.

The programme was organized with the support of All Assam Small Tea Growers Association, All Bodoland Small Tea Growers Association, Jalpaiguri District Small Tea Growers Association, and Small Tea Growers Association of South India. (PTI)

## Age of consent: Law panel

there is tacit approval, though not consent in law, on part of the child aged between 16 and 18 years. The proposed changes aim to provide greater discretion to special courts in cases where the child involved in the offence is aged 16 or above and has had an intimate relationship with the accused. The commission has highlighted various factors that should be considered when determining the sentence in such cases.

Under the recommended amendments, special courts would be allowed to impose a lesser sentence than the minimum prescribed under sub-section (1) of the POCSO Act. The decision would be based on a thorough evaluation of the facts and circumstances surrounding each case. Special courts would consider various factors when determining the sentence, including whether there was tacit approval from the child, though not consent in law, for the acts leading to the offence.

They would also assess the age difference between the accused and the child, ensuring it is not more than three years. Moreover, the court would evaluate the accused's criminal history, conduct after the offence, and confirm the absence of undue influence, fraud, misrepresentation, coercion, force, violence, or deceit perpetrated on the child, according to the law panel recommendation.

Additionally, the court would verify that the accused was not in a dominating position to intimidate the child, parents, relatives, or witnesses, and that there is no evidence of child trafficking or manipulation of the child's social or cultural background.

Importantly, the court would ensure that the child was not used by the accused for pornographic purposes or any illegal or immoral activity, the commission said. (PTI)

## Noted Tiwa writer to speak

experience of attending school despite opposition from his parents. He also wrote Amsai Pinunge Khamrenem, a book on festival and rituals of the Tiwa, Tuphi Tora, a collection of articles and Sangar, a book on Tiwa Proverbs. Currently, Maslai is working on a book on an Anglo-Tiwa - Assamese Trilingual Dictionary.

## DONER minister inaugurates

in the emerging 5G technology landscape', he added. Assam Electronics Development Corporation (AMTRON) spearheaded the implementation of this ambitious project, collaborating with key stakeholders, including the ministry of DoNER, department of telecommunications, Telecom Sector Skill Council, School of Planning and Architecture (New Delhi), Vardhman Mahavir Medical College and Safdarjung Hospital (New Delhi), Design Innovation Center (UIET, Panjab University), and ALIMCO (a PSU under the union ministry of social justice and development. The NEC has provided essential guidance and coordination for the project, he said. A remarkable achievement was the completion of this project in a record time of around 75 days, setting a precedent for swift and effective execution under the policy of 'Act First & Fast for North East', Reddy added. AMTRON chairman Ramendra Narayan Kalita, who was present at the centre, said the region is moving ahead in technology and trying to match the footsteps of other technology-enriched states.

"The 5G technology as envisaged will offer a wide range of benefits to the common people. It will not only help in providing seamless coverage, high data rate, low latency, and highly reliable communications but will also increase energy efficiency, spectrum efficiency and network efficiency," Kalita said. With the help of 5G, children even from the remotest schools in villages of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram or any other northeastern states will be able to learn new things in the new age classroom with top experts.

"We hope that the 5G Experience Centre will be able to provide the platform for students to avail online open courses through 5G high-speed connectivity at a mass scale and help them in securing employment as well," Kalita added. Union minister of state for DoNER, B L Verma and senior officials of DONER, NEC, AMTRON and the state governments of the region were also present on the occasion. (PTI)

## Women's reservation bill gets Prez's assent

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** President Droupadi Murmu has given her assent to the women's reservation bill which seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

According to a law ministry notification issued on Friday, the president gave her assent on Thursday. Now, it will be officially known as the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act.

According to its provision, "It shall come into force on such date as the central government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint."

During a special session of Parliament earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had described the law as "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam".

The Constitution amendment bill was passed by the Lok Sabha with near unanimity and the Rajya Sabha with unanimity.

The law will take some time before being implemented as the next census and the subsequent delimitation exercise - redrawing of Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies - will ascertain the particular seats being earmarked for women.

The quota for women in the Lok Sabha and assemblies will continue for 15 years and Parliament can later extend the benefit period.

While there is quota within quota for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) women, the opposition had demanded that the benefit be extended to Other Backward Classes. (PTI)

## Bidhuri remarks row: Danish Ali writes to PM, calls for 'suitable punishment' to BJP MP

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** Amid a row over Ramesh Bidhuri's derogatory remarks in the Lok Sabha against him, BSP MP Danish Ali on Friday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make a public statement condemning Bidhuri's behaviour and ensure "suitable punishment" to the BJP MP.

In a letter to the prime minister, Ali also demanded that he be provided enhanced security in view of an "escalation of threats" against him. The recent incident during the special session of Parliament was not just an attack on him as an individual but an attack on the "very essence of democracy," Ali said.

Expressing grave concern as a Member of Parliament over the "recent shameful events" that occurred on the floor of the House, the BSP leader called on the prime minister, as the Leader of the House, to take note of the incident.

"As you must be aware, the situation has significantly worsened since September 21, 2023, and it has cast a shadow over the parliamentary decorum and democratic functioning of our esteemed House of which I am privileged to be a member," Ali said in his letter which he released to the media.

"In your capacity as the Leader of the House and the Prime Minister of our great nation, I trust that you would find it deeply concerning that MP Ramesh Bidhuri resorted to using unparliamentary and abusive language," Ali said.

Noting that the Modi was not present in the House, Ali claimed that

Bidhuri used "inappropriate language" when referring to the prime minister during his address.

"I raised an objection to the use of such language in relation to the Prime Minister, even if it was in a quotation. It is evident from the House proceedings that none of the members from the ruling party objected to my stance against the use of unparliamentary language directed at you," Ali said.

"However, when I rose and pointed out to Bidhuri's use of unparliamentary language towards you, he got rattled and reacted strongly, possibly realising his mistake. He began making highly offensive attacks against me on the floor of the House to divert the attention of the House," the BSP MP said.

Ali then pointed out some of the objectionable and derogatory words Bidhuri had used against him, saying that the BJP MP displayed a complete disregard for the high decorum of the House and claimed that he verbally threatened him.

"While the incident in question received condemnation from most House members, including some from the BJP, there has been a continuous effort to damage my reputation and perpetuate false claims since September 21. Despite the events on the floor of the House being evident to everyone, certain members have chosen to spread falsehoods about my behaviour," he said. They have "attributed statements to me that were never spoken by me" during any parliamentary session, he said.

Ali said that members like BJP MP Nishikant Dubey have even gone as

far as to disseminate "absolute falsehoods" against him by asserting that he made certain remarks which provoked Bidhuri when it is clear that those remarks were made by the BJP lawmaker himself during his address.

"The threat issued by Mr Bidhuri and the subsequent spread of inaccurate information about my conduct have raised substantial apprehensions regarding my personal safety and security," he said.

"In addition to Bidhuri's threat of confronting me outside Parliament, in a manner more akin to a street altercation than a parliamentary setting, certain unknown individuals are persistently sending me threatening and menacing messages," Ali said in his letter to the prime minister. Ali said he believes that as the Leader of the House in Lok Sabha, it is the PM's responsibility to ensure free speech and well-being of all Members of Parliament, irrespective of political affiliations.

In his letter, Ali made a series of demands of the prime minister, including that he make a public statement from his office condemning such behaviour and reaffirming the commitment towards maintaining highest standards of parliamentary proceedings.

"I urge you to remind all Members of Parliament of the importance of upholding the highest standards of decorum and conduct within the House as the whole world looks upon us as a torchbearer of parliamentary democracy. Such indecent incidents should have no place in our democracy," Ali said. (PTI)

## Rich nations exploiting Paris Agreement clause to deny essential fossil fuel development in developing countries: India

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** It is unfair that some developed countries are using an article in the Paris Agreement to restrict fossil fuel development in developing nations while they continue to invest in fossil fuels themselves, India has said.

In a submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) outlining its expectations from the Global Stocktake, India said developed countries are viewing Article 2.1(c) of the Paris Agreement in isolation and ignoring all other provisions on climate finance in an attempt to move away from their commitments to provide money to developing countries.

Global Stocktake is a two-year UN review to evaluate collective global progress towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. This process will conclude at the end of COP28 in Dubai.

Article 2.1(c) reads: "Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development." It talks about making sure money for climate action supports clean and resilient development.

India said some developed countries are focusing too much on this and not providing enough money for other important climate goals. "This is unacceptable, as it seriously undermines the obligation and efforts to mobilise climate finance by developed countries to developing countries," India said.

It would mean no more support for fossil fuels, a push for net-zero emissions, and a focus on private sector financing, among other things, India said while stressing that climate finance should meet the actual needs of developing countries.

"Paris Agreement aligned finance flows", as being read under



Article 2.1 (c), is not the same as the commitment and obligation of developed countries to provide climate finance under the UNFCCC and under Article 9 of its Paris Agreement.

"The singling out of 'messages on finance flows' does not address concerns of public finance and provision of support by developed countries to developing countries to achieve the pathway towards low GHG emissions and climate-resilient development," it said.

India emphasised that some developed countries are using Article 2.1(c) to stop supporting fossil fuel development in developing countries and force them to reduce emissions quickly.

"Implementation of Article 2.1(c) is being used to deny essential fossil fuel development for developing countries, even though these have serious consequences for their economies and their population. On the other hand, developed countries are continuing their profligate investment in fossil fuel infrastructure and production," India's submission to the UNFCCC read.

While some developed countries are increasingly focusing on Article 2.1(c), they are ignoring all other provisions

of the Paris Agreement on climate finance. The use of Article 2.1(c) to restrict official development assistance (ODA) for essential fossil fuel development and force a high rate of mitigation on developing countries needs to be discussed in detail, the country said.

Indrajit Bose, Global Policy Lead at Climate Action Network-International, told PTI, "India has hit the nail on the head. Article 2.1(c) is often used to divert attention from the much-needed core public finance provision responsibilities of developed countries, which India is right in calling out."

He said "making finance flows consistent" must translate to urgently scaling up additional finance for climate action in a form that does not undermine the ability of recipient countries to address climate impacts as part of a broader focus on low-carbon and climate-resilient development.

"Besides, progress on Article 2.1(c) cannot be pursued as a standalone goal but is required alongside and complementary to significant progress on Article 9.1, which mandates developed countries to provide financing to developing countries," Bose said. (PTI)

### NOTIFICATION

No.SSA/PM POSHAN/Engagement of Staff/19/2023/7517  
On account of unavoidable circumstances, the job advertisement for engagement against different vacancies under Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman, Assam (earlier known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme) issued vide No. SSA/MDM/MDM Employees/12/2018/7472 Dated 02.11.2021 is hereby cancelled.

Sd/-Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha & State Nodal Officer, PM POSHAN, Assam

Janasanyog /DF/1535/23/30-Sep-23



# I'M DOING 'BATTLE FOR BITTORA' NEXT YEAR, SAYS SONAM KAPOOR

## LOVE WORKING WITH SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI BECAUSE HE IS RELENTLESS: RICHA CHADHA

**MUMBAI, Sept 29:** Bollywood actor Sonam Kapoor says she will start working on her next feature film, an adaptation of Anuja Chauhan's novel "Battle of Bittora", in 2024.

Sonam's sister, producer Rhea Kapoor, had bought rights to the 2010 book of the same name. The film will be made under their banner Anil Kapoor Films Company.

Published in 2010, "Battle for Bittora" follows the story of an animation expert, who finds herself contesting elections in Bittora opposite an ex-royal.

"I'm going to do 'Battle for Bittora' next year, finally. That's a beloved character but I feel a lot of girls might have read the book. I feel a lot of girls, maybe of our generation know (about the book), but I don't think the younger generation knows the character as much. So, we have the advantage of that," Sonam told PTI on the sidelines of Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival's market initiative 'Word to Screen'.

Pakistani actor Fawad Khan, who starred with Sonam in 2014's "Khoobsurat", was initially set to play the male lead in the story. Fawad last appeared in Hindi film "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil" which ran into trouble over his identity as a Pakistani actor. Sonam said the team is looking for another actor as well as a director to helm the project. (PTI)



**MUMBAI, Sept 29:** Actor Richa Chadha says she enjoys working with filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali as he is "relentless" in his pursuit of bringing his vision to the screen. Chadha, who first collaborated with Bhansali on the 2013 hit "Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela," has reunited with the filmmaker for his upcoming OTT debut series "Heeramandi."

"I've worked with him in 'Ram-Leela.' We have had a ten-year gap, but we picked up from where we left off. I love working with him because he is relentless. When you work with him, even your toe is important. I feel very challenged on his sets because you can't do anything half-heartedly. From body language to hair, all of these things are important to him. He is very particular in terms of aesthetics. So, you can't miss out on these things," the actor told PTI.

According to the makers, the Netflix series explores the cultural reality of 'Heeramandi,' a dazzling district, through the stories of courtesans and their patrons set against the tumultuous backdrop of the Indian freedom struggle of the 1940s.

The 36-year-old actor described the experience of working on the show as "difficult." "You are told to wear a 30 kg lehenga, take four rounds, and on the beat, just pause, and a drop of tear should fall from your left eye because the light is coming from that side. It is a meditation level of concentration. For me, it was very challenging to do, especially in a commercial space," she added.

Best recognized for her roles in "Gangs of Wasseypur," "Masaan," and "Fukrey," Chadha said she looks forward to the challenges that filmmakers like Bhansali bring. (PTI)

## PRABHAS' 'SALAAR' LOCKS DEC 22 RELEASE, TO CLASH WITH SRK'S 'DUNKI'



**MUMBAI, Sept 29:** First part of Prabhas-led action film series "Salaar" will hit the theatres on December 22, the makers announced Friday, setting up stage for a box office clash with superstar Shah Rukh Khan's "Dunki" releasing on the same day.

Producer Hombale Films shared the release date of the much-anticipated film, titled "Salaar Part 1: Ceasefire", on the banner's official page on X.

"#SalaarCeaseFire Worldwide Release On Dec 22, 2023," the post read.

The movie was originally scheduled to premiere on September 28 but earlier this month the release was pushed by the makers due to "unforeseen circumstances".

The first part of the pan-India film series is billed as a big-budget action adventure. It is directed by Prashanth Neel of the "KGF" franchise fame and produced by Vijay Kiragandur.

The film will also feature Prithviraj Sukumaran, Shruti Haasan, Eshwari Rao, Jagapathi Babu and Sriya Reddy. "Dunki" is directed by Rajkumar Hirani from a script he co-wrote with Abhijat Joshi and Kanika Dhillon. (PTI)

## Actor Vishal alleges corruption in CBFC's Mumbai office, I&B orders inquiry

**NEW DELHI, Sept 29:** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Friday ordered an immediate inquiry into Tamil actor Vishal's allegations that he had to pay Rs 6.5 lakh to the CBFC's Mumbai office for the screening and certification of the Hindi version of his film "Mark Antony".

Vishal levelled the allegations of corruption against the Mumbai office of CBFC in a post on microblogging site X on Thursday. In a post on Friday, the ministry said the government had zero tolerance for corruption.

"The issue of corruption in CBFC brought forth by actor @VishalKOfficial is extremely unfortunate. The government has zero tolerance for corruption and strictest action will be taken against anyone found involved."

"A senior officer from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has been deputed to Mumbai to conduct an inquiry today itself," the I&B ministry tweeted on Friday.

The ministry also urged people to co-operate and share information about "any other instance of harassment by

CBFC". Official sources said Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur has directed maximising use of technology to ensure transparency in slotting and implementation of faceless systems wherever possible.

Vishal's sci-fi film "Mark Antony", directed by Adhik Ravichandran, was released in Hindi on Thursday. The movie also features S J Suryah, Ritu Varma, Sunil, Selvaraghavan and Abhinaya. In his post on X, Vishal made an appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to investigate the "scam" that transpired at the CBFC's Mumbai office. "Due to some technical issues, we applied for the Hindi censor certificate online at the last minute. But we were taken aback by what happened at the CBFC office in Mumbai."

"On Monday, when my person visited the office, there was an option given to us -- to pay Rs. 6.5 lakh for the certification the same day. We were left with no other option. We were asked to pay Rs 3 lakhs first, just for the screening. The rest Rs 3.5 lakh were for the certi-

cate," the actor had claimed.

Vishal also claimed that a woman official told their team that it was a common practice at the CBFC where filmmakers would pay money for receiving censor clearance.

"Those who want the certificate in 15 days, they have to pay Rs 4 lakh. We had no other option, so we paid the money in two instalments and I got the certificate. Today, my film was released in north India. But this is very saddening."

"If this is the case in government offices, I really request higher authorities to look into this matter," the actor claimed. In a statement, Indian Film and Television Directors' Association (IFTDA) expressed concern over the allegations made against CBFC officials and demanded a CBI enquiry.

"If any official is found guilty serious action should be taken against the perpetrator of this crime of extortion... This is a dangerous trend which will be the reason for bringing bad name to CBFC," IFTDA president Ashoke Pandit wrote in a letter to Thakur. (PTI)

## Rajkummar Rao, Manushi Chhillar and Saiyami Kher join Juhu beach clean up drive post visarjan



**MUMBAI, Sept 29:** Bollywood stars Rajkummar Rao, Manushi Chhillar and Saiyami Kher brought some celebrity heft to the Juhu beach clean-up drive here on Friday, a day after hundreds of Ganesh idols were immersed in the sea.

The Cleanathon 2.0 2023 Ocean Waste Management event, organised by Divyaa and Bhamla Foundations, saw celebrities joining volunteers and locals to collect debris littered across the vast expanse of the famous waterfront. "This is a very important initiative. I come here for walks, so it feels very nice to be greeted by a clean beach. Today,

I got an opportunity to participate in it myself," Rao told PTI.

The "Newton" actor also praised PM Modi for initiating the 'Swachh Bharat' campaign. "It's a very important initiative and I'd want us all to participate in it," he added.

Former Miss Universe Manushi Chhillar, who was last seen in 'The Great Indian Family', said movie sets are becoming more eco-friendly nowadays.

"It's changed a lot over time. We shot 'The Great Indian Family' during the pandemic, between two lockdowns -- it was wonderful to see that with all the masks people were using, all the

precautions being taken, everything was still properly organized, where we made sure we weren't leaving waste around. "Whatever had to be recycled was being separated with things that were compostable. These little changes are coming in the film industry, and I hope they come even more," she said.

Actor Saiyami Kher said participating in the drive in the morning was the least anyone could do to keep the beach clean after the visarjan.

"It must not be easy for Ganapati Bappa to see the litter either, so waking up at 7 in the morning is the least of our difficulties. It's

our responsibility, and I'm happy to not only see us (Bollywood actors and politicians), but so many people who've shown up for the beach cleanup -- it feels very, very good," she said.

"I'm happy to see so many people who showed up for the beach clean up and it's very good," she added.

Producer Jacky Bhagnani said, "I always feel it strange when people point out that you've come to clean something or students have come to do it as nobody's doing a favour to anyone -- you're doing it for yourself and your future generations." (PTI)



## ASIAN GAMES: BADMINTON

# INDIAN MEN ASSURE OF MEDAL, WOMEN'S TEAM BOWS OUT

HANGZHOU, Sept 29: India thrashed lowly Nepal 3-0 in the quarterfinals to secure a historic medal after 37 years in the men's team badminton event at the Asian Games here on Friday.

Taking the court first, Lakshya Sen defeated Prince Dahal 21-5 21-8 before Kidambi Srikanth beat Sunil Joshi 21-4 21-13 in the second match.

In the third match, Mithun Manjunath edged past Bishnu Katuwal 21-2 21-17 to clinch the tie.

The Indian men, who are assured of at least a bronze, will now face the winner of the match between Indonesia and Korea in semifinal for a spot in the gold medal clash.

However, it was disappointment for the Indian women's team.

The women's team, led by PV Sindhu, failed to put up a fight against Thailand, going down 0-3 in the quarterfinals to crash out of the Asian Games.

It was always going to be a tall task for India to tame the Thai, who boast the likes of former world champion Ratchanok Intanon, world no. 12 Pornpawee Chochuwong and world no. 17 Supanida Katethong in their ranks.

However, India couldn't produce a fight with two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu being the only one to take a game off during her 21-14 15-21 14-21 loss



against Chochuwong in the opening women's singles match.

After the opening reversal, the onus fell on World number 17 Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand to bring India back in contention but the duo lost steam, losing 19-21 5-21 to Jongkolphan Kittitharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai, ranked 10th, in women's doubles.

The left-handed Ashmita Chahila was then humbled by Busanan

Ongbarmrunphan 9-21, 16-21 in the third match to shut the door on India's medal hopes.

The women's team had won a bronze medal in the 2014 edition in Incheon.

Later in the day, the men's team, led by HS Prannoy, will look to seal India's first badminton medal in the 19th edition when they face Nepal in the quarterfinals.

Starting the proceedings,

Sindhu made a strong start as she led 4-1 before managing a four-point lead at the halfway mark in the opening game.

The former world champion kept the pressure on the Thai to move ahead to 17-10 before grabbing seven game points and converting it without much ado.

Chochuwong, however, made a roaring comeback in the second game.

The Thai eked out a narrow 7-

6 after an initial battle and then started dominating the rallies after the interval, gaining a 12-9 and then 18-14 lead to eventually bounce back.

In the decider, Sindhu had an early 4-3 lead but Chochuwong soon turned the tables, leading 8-6. The Thai shuttler extended her advantage to 13-8, before moving to 18-11, a gap which proved too much in the end for the Indian. (PTI)

## Aditi stays T-2, women's team third; Lahiri ninth in men's section at Asian Games

HANGZHOU, Sept 29: Indian golfer Aditi Ashok continued to stay in medal contention in the individual event as she was just one shot behind the leader at tied second in the Asian Games here on Friday.

In the process, she also kept the Indian women's team in the race for another medal at the West Lake International course.

Aditi (67-66) was one behind Thailand's Arpichaya Yubol (67-65) while the Indian women's team is lying third behind China and Thailand.

India has never won an Asian Games medal in the women's section. Pranavi Urs added a fine 68 to her first round 71 to improve to T-10 at 5-under, while amateur Avani Prashanth (72-69) was T-15. Things did not go as well for the men, as Anirban Lahiri (65-67) was still T-9, while Shubhankar Sharma (68-65) rose one



places to T-21. SSP Chawrasia (67-72) slipped 10 places to T-19 alongside Khalin Joshi (70-69) who rose two places.

The men are placed T-6 in the team standings, which is led by Korea, followed by Hong Kong and Japan.

The fourth-place finisher at the Tokyo Olympics, Aditi improved

upon her first round 67 by one shot to add a 66, that included five birdies, an eagle on a Par-4 and just one bogey.

Yubol had rounds of 67-65 for a total of 12-under 133. Yubol was bogey free in the second round.

Aditi had a superb start with birdies on the first and the second holes and then eagled the Par-4

fifth hole to get to 4-under.

The putter cooled off after that and she turned in 4-under. On the back nine, she birdied 11th, 15th and 17th, but dropped her first bogey of the week on the par-3 16th.

Pranavi added a bogey-free 68 to her first round 71 to improve to T-10 at 5-under, while amateur Avani Prashanth (72-69) was T-15.

Avani had one birdie and one bogey on the front nine but had an action-filled back nine with four birdies against two bogeys.

Tied with Aditi is Yin Ruoning, the first Chinese player to win on the LPGA who later became the first Major winner from her country.

Yin, a bronze medallist from 2018 Asian Games and World No. 1 till last week, has not dropped any bogeys in her rounds of 67-66. (PTI)

## Medal-winning shooters hope Karni Singh Range will be upgraded now

NEW DELHI, Sept 29: The Asian Games' medal-winning shooters have expressed hope that their long-standing wish to see an upgraded Karni Singh Shooting Range will be fulfilled after their impressive performance at the showpiece in Hangzhou. With two more days of shooting events left, the Indians have already produced their best-ever performance in the Asian Games, surpassing the 14 medals they had won in Doha in 2006.

The Indian shooters have so far clinched 18 medals, including six gold, seven silver and five bronze, from the ongoing Games.

The shooters now want the best of the facility at the national capital's Karni Singh Range where they train for a better part of the year, to help them replicate their performance in Hangzhou at next year's Paris Olympics.

"The Karni Singh Range was made before 2010 Commonwealth Games, so the same range is quite functional but now we

have made better ranges which are there in Bhopal and other places. So we had requested the minister to put on similar kind of range here," Asian Games gold medal-winning shooter Rudransh Patil told PTI. "It doesn't make that much of a difference but it is always good to have better quality as most of the time we train in Karni Singh. "It is always good to have better quality because most of the time we are training in Karni Singh, it's the best option to have the best equipment

there on the spot," he added. Rudransh, who had already secured an Olympic quota for the country, won the team gold in 10m air rifle event at the Asian Games, pairing up with Divyansh Panwar and Aishwarya Singh Tomar. Another Asian Games medal winning shooter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, echoed the same feeling. "We were just requesting the minister to upgrade the facilities of the new hostel made in Karni Singh Shooting Range." (PTI)



along well with each other. Babar Azam, Shaheen Afridi and Harris Rauf were left overwhelmed with the welcome at Hyderabad airport.

Ashraf is expected to attend the blockbuster India-Pakistan clash in Ahmedabad on October 14.

"Chairman Management Committee also emphasised that cricket between Pakistan and India have always been the centre of global

attention which is why cricket between the two countries is considered more significant than the other contests in this sport."

The statement also mentioned about starting bilateral ties once again but India's next five-year FTP calendar doesn't have space for a series with next door neighbours. "He (Ashraf) expressed his desire for the restoration of bilat-

## Ramkumar-Myneni pair takes silver in men's doubles; Bopanna-Bhosale in mixed doubles final



HANGZHOU, Sept 29: Ramkumar Ramanathan and Saketh Myneni settled for the men's doubles silver medal at the Asian Games after being edged by Chinese Taipei's Hsu Yu-Hsiou and Jason Jung but India's hopes of winning a gold from the tennis courts is still alive with the mixed team reaching the title clash, here on Friday.

The Taipei team was unseeded but both Hsu (182) and Jung (231) were better-ranked singles players and it showed in their ground strokes and the way they went about their business in a 6-4 6-4 victory against the second-seeded Indians in the title clash.

Hsu was solid from the baseline with his strong serve, while Jung complimented him with his lightning fast hands at the net.

It is Ramkumar's first Asian Games medal and third for Myneni, who had won a men's doubles silver with Sanam Singh and a gold with Sania Mirza in the mixed doubles in the 2014 Incheon edition.

"It is my first Asian Games medal, I always wanted to win a medal for India. It was one of my goals and that too coming with Saki (Saketh), very happy about it," Ramanathan said.

"We tried our best every match, every single point and extremely happy that we could finish with a silver. "Asian Games is huge and obviously, it's a huge thing to win a medal. But every tournament for us is as huge as the Asian Games. This is a profession, we do this for a living, and we enjoy what we do. Hopefully, we can get more medals for the country the next time," added Ramkumar, who has endured a tough 2023 season.

The duo of Rohan Bopanna and Rutuja Bhosale outplayed the Chinese Taipei combine of Chan Hao-ching and Yu-Hsiou Hsu 6-1 3-6 10-4 in the mixed double semifinal. In the men's doubles gold medal match, no team lost a point in the first three games. It was only when Jung double-faulted in the fourth game that a team scored a point on the rival's serve. It was 2-2 with all four players holding their serves as

some high-quality serving was on display.

Ramkumar's serve was under pressure when Hsu found a stunning forehand winner to go up 30-0. It was 30-all when Jung hit a service return winner to earn the first breakpoint of the match.

The Taipei team got the break with Jung finding a volley winner. Hsu consolidated the break for a 4-2 lead as he hit deep returns from the baseline and the Indians committed a few unforced errors. Jung struggled a bit with his first serve but his partner was terrific at the net.

Coming out to serve for staying in the set, Ramkumar began with a double fault but made up for that with a couple of aces.

The Taipei team closed the set in their favour with Hsu maintaining his serving rhythm.

In the second set too, it was Ramkumar's serve that came under pressure. At 15-30 in the third game, he served a double fault to hand the Taipei team two break chances but saved both to hold.

Ramkumar's forehand return sailed over the baseline when Myneni served at 15-all in the ninth game and the following forehand service return winner from Hsu gave the Taipei players two break chances.

They saved the first but Jung smashed a backhand volley winner on a feeble Myneni return to grab the chance.

Ramkumar's wide forehand gave three match points to the Taipei team which triumphed when Myneni's backhand flew over the baseline.

"Unfortunately we came one short but very happy with whatever we played this week. I think we played some good tennis, and credit to Chinese Taipei today in the final. So very happy with the contribution with the medal to the Indian contingent," Myneni said.

"It's a privilege to play for a country and wear the tri-colour and compete. I think very few times we do that in a year. So it's a great competition, a great event. So glad we could make a contribution." (PTI)

## Tracking Palak's journey from shooting for fun to winning at Asian Games

HANGZHOU, Sept 29: Initially, Palak Gulia would shoot only to break the ennui while studying. But then, pastime gave way to habit and habit to an obsession to excel at the sport, leading to medals at Asian Games.

Hailing from Jhajjar district in Haryana, the 17-year-old Palak took up the sport seriously only after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I was studying in St Xavier School in Gurgaon when I got to know about the sport of shooting. After that we used to have a one-hour session from 6:30 to 7:30 in the morning. I started shooting randomly for another one and half years," Palak said after clinching her individual gold here on Friday.

"I continued doing that just for fun till 2019. After the COVID-19 pandemic was over, I started taking shooting seriously."

Her businessman father, Joginder Gulia, initiated her to the sport but only to give her some break from studies. "We have no shooting background in the family, I am the first one. I was more into study and academics. Before taking up shooting, I used to do other sports like athletics and swimming. Even after starting shooting I used to do other sports as well."

"I used to do shooting in my free time, in the break time after studies, my father said if I can do something good in the break that will be helpful for me. That is

when we came to know about shooting. We have a shooting range in the school, so we started morning sessions."

Now that she is into serious shooting, Palak follows routine drills before competitions and during camps. "Since our sport is a psychological sport, two days before the match we prepare an entire routine, we follow that routine till the match. Sleep is very important in our sport, we need eight hours of sleep. It plays a vital role."

"Another thing if you do not rush, take it slow. Even if you are walking, do not rush, take it slow because you need to keep your heart beat calm. You need to be calm whatever you do. We have breathing sessions two or three times a week. Mental health is very important in shooting."

Palak also shed light on the 'war room' simulation training to prepare for the finals, introduced by Indian shooting high performance director Pierre Beauchamp.

"We have a war room where we do simulation for finals. We play music (like in actual competition) and we think of ourselves playing in the finals. "In that, we measure our pulse rate, breathing pattern which helps to analyse if we are hyper or we are relaxed, which stage should we always be in during the finals. We have had a lot of sessions like that." (PTI)

## Ashraf does volte-face on controversial 'Dushman Mulk' comment, calls Indian reception 'fantastic'

HYDERABAD, Sept 29: The roaring welcome that Pakistan cricket team received upon its arrival in India reflects the love fans on either side of the border have for the players, said PCB supremo Zaka Ashraf in his desperate bid to do damage control after indirectly terming India "enemy nation".

Pakistan arrived in Hyderabad on Wednesday, marking their first visit to India in seven years.

On the same day, the PCB announced a pay hike for its players. Following that, Ashraf had said the raise in the central contracts will provide extra motivation to the players going into the World Cup in an "enemy country".

The millionaire banker's loose comments went viral and it certainly didn't go down well with the bigwigs of BCCI and on Friday, he clarified his stance.

"Chairman PCB's Management

Committee, Zaka Ashraf, has stated that the fantastic reception of the Pakistan men's cricket team in India for the World Cup proves how much love the people of both countries have for each other's players," the PCB said in a statement. Sensing that his "enemy nation" comments could have deeper implications, Ashraf was quick to distance himself from his earlier comment.

"This love was evident by the reception arranged at the Hyderabad airport. Zaka Ashraf personally congratulated the Indians over arranging a reception of this kind. He mentioned that whenever India and Pakistan step onto the cricket field, they emerge as traditional rivals but not as enemies," it stated.

The two teams play each other in ICC events and Asia Cup due to the tense relations with the two countries. The players however get

attention which is why cricket between the two countries is considered more significant than the other contests in this sport."

The statement also mentioned about starting bilateral ties once again but India's next five-year FTP calendar doesn't have space for a series with next door neighbours. "He (Ashraf) expressed his desire for the restoration of bilat-

eral cricketing relations between the two countries, allowing millions of cricket fans from both nations the opportunity to watch these players perform live."

Ashraf concluded with expectation that Indian team will travel to Pakistan soon.

"He concluded by expressing his hope that the Indian cricket team would also visit Pakistan soon, enabling Pakistan to reciprocate the warmth and love shown by India to the Pakistan cricket team," the statement added.



# Indian shooters sizzle, record best-ever medals haul at Asian Games

**HANGZHOU, Sept 29:** The young Indian shooting brigade sizzled at the Asian Games, steam-rolling the rivals to win two gold and three silver on Friday and record their best-ever medal haul in the continental showpiece.

The grand success of the shooters over the last six days has seen them amass 18 medals so far, including six gold and seven silver, surpassing the 14 they had won during the 2006 Doha Asian Games in an era dominated by the likes of the legendary Jaspal Rana.

Palak Gulia and Esha Singh made it a one-two in individual 10m air pistol, while the trio of Esha, Palak and Divya won the country a team silver in the event, before the triumvirate of Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Swapnil Kusale and Akhil Sheoran added another team gold in 50m rifle 3 positions.

The baby-faced 22-year-old Aishwary added another individual silver in rifle 3 positions, fighting an early elimination before finishing second best to a Chinese marksman, who set an Asian Games record. Two teenage dreamy-eyed shooters, Palak Gulia and Esha Singh, set ablaze the shooting range by powering to a gold-silver finish in 10m air pistol event.

In one of the most trailblazing efforts seen by

the Indians, the young duo challenged each other for the top podium finish until 17-year-old Palak clinched the gold medal and Esha the silver.

"There's no rivalry with anybody. My biggest competitor has always been me. I'm always fighting with myself," Palak said later.

Palak had a score of 9.1 in her first shot in the finals but recovered remarkably well.

"My first shot was 9.1, a totally outer shot. I was a bit nervous after that, thinking obviously like what I hit. But I then said it's not over, it's the first shot, you have 23 more shots to go.

"So, it's not over until you win. It's all right, it's just one shot and because of this you cannot let you impact the rest of the shots," said the 17-year-old from Jhajjar district in Haryana.

"For an athlete, your quality is how you come back from your bad shots or how well you can come back. So I was only focusing on the process, like no matter what happened, I still had so much to do." Esha said she would give her performance nine out of 10 points.

"It was good, the initial start was very nice. I was able to maintain my focus for as long as possible. There were certain times where it was not working out, but I'm glad that at the end, it did.

"I had a bit of nerves, and I couldn't trigger

well. I instantly realised, and I'm grateful that I did. So then I paid more attention towards my triggering. Technically, I have noted down a few things for my next competition to improve."

Palak, who took up shooting in a school in Gurgaon, said she was not satisfied with her qualification score. "I had a 577, which was enough to qualify but it wasn't up to the mark. I'm always looking at a 580-plus. That's what I want to achieve in the coming events."

Pakistan's Talat Kishmala settled for a bronze after giving a tough fight to Esha.

This is the first major senior individual medal for Palak in an international competition after she gave notice of her precocious talent just last year. She shot 242.1 in the finals for a Games record.

Esha, who had won the individual silver in 25m pistol on Wednesday and was part of the trio that won the 10m air pistol team silver along with Palak and Divya TS earlier on Friday, settled for silver, scoring 239.7. It marked the first time that two Indian shooters have finished one-two on the podium at the Asian Games. The unprecedented success of Indian marksmen continued in the 50m rifle arena as well with the men's 3-positions team, comprising the young trio of Aishwary (591), Swapnil (591) and Sheoran (587), overcoming the

Chinese challenge with a world record score of 1769 to grab the top podium finish. Hosts China were a clear six points adrift with 1763 points, while South Korea were a distant third with 1748 points. The men's trio smashed the world record by a whopping eight points.

Aishwary and Swapnil shot superbly to make the individual finals as well. They were placed first and second after the qualification round, something never seen before in a sport dominated by the Chinese at the Asian level. The third Indian in the competition, Akhil, despite finishing fifth with 587 in qualification, missed out on the eight-team finals as only two shooters per country are allowed in the individual medal round.

Swapnil, a strong medal prospect at next year's Paris Olympic Games, was firing on all cylinders, shooting down the qualification Asian and Asian Games record on way to a superb 591.

Not to be left behind, Aishwary too shot an identical score to be tied with Swapnil but entered the finals, and was placed second because of fewer shots closer to the bulls eye (inner 10s). Swapnil had 33 inner 10s, while Aishwary had 27.

The two Chinese who made it to the finals -- Du Linshu and Tian Jiaming -- were placed third and fourth respectively behind the two young Indians.

Both Swapnil and Aishwary shot an average of 9.850 out of a maximum score of 10 on each of the shots in the qualification round in all three positions -- kneeling, prone and standing, an incredible achievement, considering the pressure from the relentless Chinese.

In fact, Swapnil had a 199/200 in prone, while Aishwary had an identical score in kneeling position. The finals though was a bit of an anti-climax, with both Swapnil and Aishwary missing the gold medal. Aishwary signed off with a silver after China's Du Linshu created an Asian Games record score of 460.6 to deny the 22-year-old Indian the top podium spot.

Aishwary had a final score of 459.7, while home team marksman Tian Jiaming took the third place behind the Indian with a score of 448.3.

The biggest setback, though, was for marksman Swapnil, who was gunning for a sure-shot gold after leading for a major part of the finals, but a rank poor shot of 7.6 saw the 28-year-old take a mighty tumble from No.1 position to fifth in the standing position.

That virtually eliminated him from medal contention. Though he shot 10.5 and 10.1 in his last two shots, Swapnil could only manage a fourth-place finish. (PTI)

## Palak, Esha gold-silver feat makes it a historic day for India at Asian Games

**HANGZHOU, Sept 29:** Two teenaged dreamy-eyed shooters, Palak Gulia and Esha Singh, set ablaze the shooting range by powering to a gold-silver finish in 10m air pistol event for India at the Asian Games here on Friday.

In one of the most trailblazing efforts seen by Indian shooters, the duo challenged each other for the top podium finish until 17-year-old Palak clinched the gold medal and Esha the silver to swell the country's tally in the sport to 17 -- six of them gold. Pakistan's Talat Kishmala settled for a bronze after giving a tough fight to Esha.

This is the first major individual medal for Palak in an international competition after she came on the shooting scene just last year. She shot 242.1 in the finals for an Asian Games record.

Esha, who had won the individual silver in 25m pistol on Wednesday and was part of the triumvirate that won the 10m air pistol team silver along with Palak and Divya TS earlier on Friday, settled for silver, scoring 239.7.

The unprecedented success of Indian marksmen continued in the 50m rifle arena as well with the men's 3-positions team, comprising the young trio of Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar (591), Swapnil Kusale (591) and Akhil Sheoran (587), overcoming the Chinese challenge with a world record score of 1769 to take the top podium finish. Hosts China were a clear six points adrift with 1763 points, while South Korea were a distant third with 1748 points.

The men's trio smashed the world record by a whopping eight points. Aishwary and Swapnil shot superbly to make the individual finals as well and are placed first and second after the qualification round, something never ever seen before in a sport dominated by the Chinese at the Asian level.

The third Indian in the competition, Akhil, despite finishing fifth with 587 in qualification, will miss out on the eight-team finals as only two shooters per country are allowed in the individual medal round. Swapnil, one of the medal



prospects at next year's Olympic Games in Paris, was firing on all cylinders, shooting down the qualification Asian and Asian Games record on way to a superb 591.

Not to be left behind, Aishwary too shot an identical score to be tied with Swapnil but entered the finals, placed second because of fewer shots closer to the bulls eye (inner-10s). Swapnil had 33 'inner-

10s', while Aishwary had 27. The two Chinese who made it to the finals -- Du Linshu and Tian Jiaming -- were placed third and fourth respectively behind the two young Indians.

Both Swapnil and Aishwary shot an average of 9.850 out of a maximum score of 10 on each of the shots in the qualification round in all three positions -- kneeling,

prone and standing, an incredible achievement, considering the pressure from the relentless Chinese.

In fact, Swapnil had a 199/200 in prone, while Aishwary had an identical score in kneeling position. Teenager Esha led from the front as she guided the Indian women's 10m air pistol team to a silver medal. The trio of 18-year-old Esha (579), Palak (577) and Divya TS (575) aggregated 1731 points for their silver medal, while China took the gold with a total of 1736, which is an Asian Games record. Chinese Taipei finished with a bronze, totalling 1723.

The scores in the qualification round decide the team medallists, while eight top-scoring shooters move into the finals to win individual glory. Esha had also claimed a silver medal in the women's individual 25m pistol event on Wednesday, while the trio of Manu Bhaker, Esha and Rhythm Sangwan had fired in tandem to shoot the gold medal in the women's 25m pistol team event on the same day. (PTI)

### Squash at Asian Games

## Indian women's team signs off with Bronze

**HANGZHOU, Sept 29:** The Indian women's squash team signed off with a bronze medal after going down fighting to Hong Kong in the semi-finals at the Asian Games here on Friday.

The trio of veteran Joshna Chinappa, Anahat Singh and Tanvi Khanna went down 1-2 to Hong Kong.

Joshna was the only Indian who won her match as she defeated world number 24 Tze Lok Ho 3-2 (7-11, 11-7, 9-11, 11-6, 11-8) to level the tie after Tanvi went down meekly (3-0) to Sin Yuk Chan in the opener.

"Sometimes it's just about hanging in there and fighting through. There were moments where that's exactly what I did. I didn't think too much about having a plan or a strategy. I knew today no matter what happens I had to keep fighting through," Joshna said.

Playing against high-ranked and experienced opponent in Lee Ka Yi, the 15-year-old Anahat then tried her best but was undone by her inexperience. The teenager saved eight match points as she went from 10-2 to 10-10 in the third game but eventually lost the final (0-3) 8-11, 7-11, 10-12 and the tie. India had finished with a silver in the previous edition. They had lost to Hong Kong in the final at the 2018 Jakarta Games.

"It was 1-1 (in matches) and my match was a really important match, and if we had won that we would have gone to the finals. I feel like it could have gone better and I could have won it. They were really pushing me and hoping I would win the match and we would get a better medal," Anahat said.

Joshna, who was a part of the silver winning side in 2018, was left a "little disappointed that they couldn't get over the finish line".

"We came in and we gave our best I'm just happy to have that fighting spirit on court. That's who I am as a player. "I was really happy I could play at a big stage for my country. Playing for India always brings out the best in me. I'm just glad I could do it today." (PTI)



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- **Unite for Change:** On 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2023, from 10 AM to 11 AM, join in the actual cleaning activities of public places and make a finite difference in Assam's cleanliness in your own districts
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**JAN ANDOLAN**

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