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## One billion hungry stomachs to 2 billion skilled hands: PM hails India's progress

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** A week before he hosts world leaders at the G20 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asserted that the 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' model can be the guiding principle for the welfare of a world shifting from a "GDP-centric approach" to a "human-centric one". "Irrespective of the size of the GDP, every voice matters," Modi told PTI in an exclusive interview late last week at his Lok Kalyan Marg residence.

US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Saudi Arabia's King Mohammed bin Salman and other leaders will gather at the newly-constructed Bharat Mandapam conference hall on September 9-10 for the pre-eminent

annual meeting of developing and developed countries.

"Many positive impacts are coming out of India's G20 Presidency. Some of them are very close to my heart," Modi said in the 80-minute interview, focused on G20 and related issues, with three senior staff of PTI including Editor-in-Chief Vijay Joshi.

G20 accounts for 85 per cent of the global GDP, 75 per cent of international trade and 65 per cent of the world population. India took over the G-20's presidency from Indonesia last November, and will hand it over to Brazil in December. Modi said that while it is true G20 is an influential grouping in terms of its combined economic might, "a GDP-centric view of the

world is now changing to a human-centric one", and just as a new world order was seen after World War 2, a new world order is taking shape post-Covid.

"The shift to a human-centric approach has begun globally and we are playing the role of a catalyst. India's G20 Presidency has also sowed the seeds of confidence in the countries of the so-called Third World," he said. "The Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas model that has shown the way in India can also be a guiding principle for the welfare of the world."

While the interview was meant to be focused on G20, Modi also spoke about India's economic progress, its growing stature on the world stage, cyber-security, debt trap, bio-fuel policy, UN re-

forms, climate change and his vision of what India will be like in 2047.

"For a long time, India was perceived as a nation of over one billion hungry stomachs. But now, India is being seen as a nation of over one billion aspirational minds, more than two billion skilled hands, and hundreds of millions of young people," Modi said.

"The period till 2047 is a huge opportunity. Indians who are living in this era have a great chance to lay a foundation for growth that will be remembered for the next 1,000 years!" he added. "By 2047, I am sure that our country will be among the developed countries. Our poor people will comprehensively win the battle against poverty. Health, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## No substitute to merit for govt jobs: CM

514 new recruits receive appointment letters ● Advertisement for another 22,000 vacancies to be released shortly

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 3:** Taking another step towards fulfilment of the promise to provide as many as 1 lakh permanent jobs under the payroll of the state government to unemployed youths of the state, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday attended the ceremonial distribution of appointment letters to a total of 514 candidates of the last Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE) to fill up vacancies in Class-III and Class-IV posts.

These 514 candidates had appeared in the last Assam Direct Recruitment Examination and had secured marks equivalent to the cut-off marks in their respective categories but didn't qualify for recruitment earlier owing to the rule that states that in case of two candidates securing equal marks, the one with higher age would get primacy over the other.

Speaking at the event held at the Srimanta Sankardev International Auditorium, the chief minister said that the decision to offer 1 lakh-plus jobs to unemployed youths of the state was ratified by the state



cabinet in its very first meeting after the current government assumed power in 2021 but owing to the second and third waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, the entire process got delayed.

By the second anniversary celebration of the current dispensation in the state, around 86,000 job seekers received appointment letters, he stated.

The chief minister said it was observed that in the last round of recruitments to Class-III and Class-IV posts made through

ADRE, around 835 candidates were found to have secured marks equivalent to the cut-off marks of the last selected candidate but the former didn't qualify for final selection to the age criteria.

The chief minister Sarma said after proper scrutiny, a total of 514 vacancies were found to have remained unfilled and therefore, it was decided that an equal number from the list of 835 candidates would be invited for appointments by the government.

He added that around 300 could-

n't make it to the final list of Sunday owing to them being younger in age as compared to the last candidate selected in their respective categories.

Addressing the 514 candidates who were handed the appointment letters on Sunday, chief minister Sarma said along with merit, a certain amount of luck also played in their favour, adding that like in the first list, age criteria was followed in Sunday's selection too.

Referring to the transparent process of recruitment to government services under the current regime in the state, Sarma exuded confidence the 514 newly recruited government servants would render services with all honesty which in turn would bring a perceptible change in the work culture in the government departments.

Sarma appealed to the 514 new recruits to maintain a lifestyle that is commensurate with their monthly remuneration.

With Sunday's appointment letters distributed to 514, the total number of appointment letters distributed till (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Money demanding case in Bajali: ASP among 7 held

**GUWAHATI, Sept 3:** Seven people, including a police officer, her husband and four other policemen have been arrested for allegedly demanding money in Bajali district of Assam, an official said on Sunday. The then additional superintendent of police (ASP) of Bajali and her husband, along with another civilian, were apprehended since late Saturday night, he said.

The other four policemen were apprehended on Saturday, the official said. All the seven arrested persons are currently in police remand, the official said.

The arrests were made in connection with a CID case registered on Thursday initially against seven police personnel of Bajali, including a deputy superintendent of police and two sub-inspectors.

Director general of police GP Singh had on Friday written on X, formerly Twitter, that the "case was registered after receiving a complaint of demand for money by some personnel of Bajali district" in the first week of August.

Though the directorate of vigilance and anti-corruption unit could not succeed in laying a trap, the case was filed after it was found that "the complaint was true prima facie", he said.



A sub-inspector, who is in charge of the Bhawanipur outpost under Patancharkuchi Police Station, two drivers of Bajali superintendent (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## ₹ 270 crore allocated for Brahmaputra erosion control in Desangmukh: Pijush



**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, Sept 3:** The state water resources minister, Pijush Hazarika, paid a visit to the Brahmaputra erosion sites in Desangmukh and Aphala on Sunday, announcing an allocation of ₹ 270 crore for protective measures. He stated that the work would commence during the winter months.

Hazarika also mentioned that this marked his second visit to Aphala within a year and that minor repair work, covering a span of 600 meters in Aphala, would be initiated to safeguard the village.

Commenting on the issue of 'One nation, One election,' the minister expressed his willingness

to sacrifice the remainder of his tenure as an MLA or minister to see it come to fruition. He emphasised the potential cost savings and efficiency benefits for the nation.

The minister was accompanied by his political critic in the Assembly, Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi, Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain, and various BJP activists and officials from the Water Resource Department. In response to the minister's announcement of ₹ 270 crore for erosion control in Sivasagar, Akhil Gogoi, while addressing the media later, criticised the BJP's 'One nation, One election' campaign, describing it as autocratic and (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Huge stash of cannabis seized

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 3:** The state's Karimganj Police made a significant discovery on Sunday, intercepting a tanker entering the state from a neighboring region at the Churaibari checkpoint. Acting on credible information, the police uncovered an extensive stash of 1,420 kilograms of cannabis concealed within the vehicle's tank in the Karimganj district. In connection with this case, one individual has been apprehended.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, deeply impressed by the Assam Police's swift action, lauded their efforts on the microblogging platform 'X', stating, "Based on reliable inputs, @karimganjpolice intercepted a tanker coming from a neighbouring State at Churaibari checkpoint & recovered 71 packets of Ganja weighing 1,420 kg from its tank in Karimganj district. One person has been arrested in this regard. Great job @assampolice!"

In June, on the occasion of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, Karimganj district police, in coordination with the Assam administration, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## National convention addresses OBC reservation demand for Chauhan (Nonia) community



**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Sept 3:** The 4th national convention of Rachnatmak Nonia Sanyukta Sanga (RNSS) took place at the Bihutoli Playground in Hojai on Sunday. The primary focus of the convention was to address the denial of OBC reservation to the Chauhan (Nonia) community.

Meghalaya Governor Phagu Chauhan graced the event as the chief guest. He expressed his concern that the Chauhan (Nonia) community in Assam is not receiving

the reservation benefits that are provided in the rest of the country. The Governor also assured those present that he would advocate for the rights of the Nonia community as outlined in the Constitution of India. The RNSS also presented a memorandum to Governor Phagu Chauhan on this issue during the event. The convention was attended by various dignitaries, including former deputy chief minister of Bihar Renu Devi, Bihar cabinet minister Anita Devi, RNSS president (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Drug bust in KA: 2 arrested

**HT Correspondent**  
**BOKAJAN, Sept 3:** The police in Karbi Anglong carried out a successful drug bust operation on Saturday, leading to the arrest of two individuals. Acting on a tip-off, the police apprehended two men at Lahorijan Bagan, within the jurisdiction of the Khatkhati police station, along with a stash of drugs. The seizure included 11 plastic tobacco containers containing 74 grams of heroin and 172 Samplex+ tablets, all of which had been concealed under a bush at Lahorijan Bagan. The arrested individuals have been identified as Md Gajibur Rahman (19), the son of Md Hashan Ali, residing in Vill- Moirabari Salkhati Pathar, Morigaon police station, Morigaon district, and Md Ayjul Islam (19), the son of Md Mujibur Rahman, residing in Vill- Laharijan Tila Basti, Khatkhati police station, Karbi Anglong district.

## AASAA seeks school devp in KA

**HT Correspondent**  
**BOKAJAN, Sept 3:** A delegation from the All Adivasi Students Association of Assam (AASAA) visited Richard Tokbi, executive member (EM) of Education at the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), to submit a memorandum regarding the development of a school.

Led by Joseph Kujur, president of the Dolamara Regional Committee, and Suraj Gour, secretary, the delegation met with EM Tokbi at his residence in Diphu. They requested earth-filling work at the proposed site for the Tea Estate Model School in Dolamara, emphasising (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

## Assam doctor alleges threats from family for embracing Hinduism; family claims kidnap

**GUWAHATI, Sept 3:** A doctor in Assam has allegedly been threatened by her family for converting to Hinduism, forcing her to go into hiding, while her brother has claimed that she has been kidnapped.

Even as the family sought police help in tracing her, a video by the doctor has emerged in which she claimed to be safe and voluntarily staying away for her safety.

As the matter was brought to the notice of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday, he directed the DGP to probe the issue.

"Take action as per Law after a proper enquiry @gpsinghps," Sarma wrote on X, sharing a post with the doctor's video.

In the video, the doctor claimed that she had irked her family by converting to Hinduism and they had threatened to kill her, leading her to go into hiding.

She also claimed that her family wanted to marry her off to an elderly maulvi as they believe it will lead her to 'jannat' (heaven) in the afterlife.

The video was shot at an airport, the doctor said, adding that she is completely safe though she didn't disclose her location.

The doctor's brother, Wakil Khan, had earlier sought police help in tracing her. In a post on X to the director general of police GP Singh, Khan maintained that his elder sister had gone missing from August 17 from Hajian primary health centre in Tinsukia, where she was posted.

Responding to the post, Singh wrote, "She has posted a video online indicating that she faces death threat from her family. Please be advised that any such threat is unlawful and would attract penal action."

Khan, replying to Singh, said they have received a demand for Rs nine lakh and dismissed the video as 'totally baseless'.

He maintained that his sister could be in 'some distress condition' and requested the DGP to locate her.

Singh later said that the matter is being investigated. (PTI)

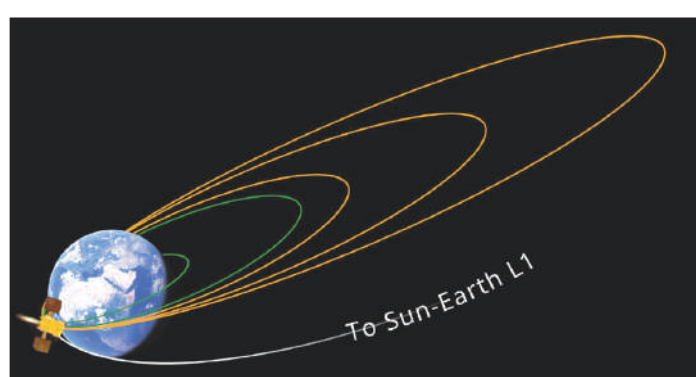
The next manoeuvre is scheduled for tomorrow around 3:00 am

## First earth-bound manoeuvre of Aditya L1 performed successfully: ISRO

**BENGALURU, Sept 3:** ISRO on Sunday said it has successfully performed the first earth-bound manoeuvre of the country's maiden solar mission, Aditya L1, from IS-TRAC here.

The space agency also said the satellite is healthy and operating nominally. The next manoeuvre is scheduled for September 5, 2023, around 03:00 Hrs IST.

"Aditya-L1 Mission: The satellite is healthy and operating nominally. The first Earth-bound manoeuvre (EBN#1) is performed successfully from ISTRAC, Bengaluru. The new orbit attained is 245km x 22459 km. The next manoeuvre (EBN#2) is scheduled for



September 5, 2023, around 03:00 Hrs. IST," ISRO said in an update on 'X', formerly Twitter.

Aditya L1 was launched on Sat-

urday from Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. The mission aims to study the outer atmosphere of the sun by placing India's first solar observ-

tory at the Sun-Earth L1 point.

L1 stands for Lagrange point 1, where the spacecraft would be stationed. The satellite started generating power after the solar panels were deployed.

According to ISRO, Aditya-L1 will stay approximately 1.5 million km away from Earth, directed towards the Sun, which is about one per cent of the earth-sun distance. It will neither land on the Sun nor approach the Sun any closer.

Meanwhile, Union minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1 are the outcomes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's progressive policy decisions, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



# GDP share of 6 new members being added to BRICS to be just 11%: Report

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** GDP share of the six new members, being added to the five-member BRICS grouping of emerging economies from January, will be just 11 per cent, with Saudi Arabia's contribution the highest at 4 per cent, an analysis shows.

The proposed addition of Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to the five-member BRICS, or Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, will also see the grouping's share in the global GDP rising to 30 per cent from 26 per cent now and that of the population to 46 per cent, according to an analysis by the SBI Research.

The expansion decision, effective January 1, 2024, was announced at the recent BRICS summit held in Johannesburg.

Currently China contributes 70 per cent of the BRICS' GDP, which will decline to 62 per cent, while India chips in with 13 per cent now that will inch down to 12 per cent. Russia contributes 8 per cent, Brazil is at 7 per cent and South Africa contributes a paltry 2 per cent, giving combined 26 per cent of global economic output.

Russia's share will fall 7 per cent, while that of South Africa will halve to 1 per cent but Brazil's share will remain unchanged after the expansion, the report said sans offering a reason for the exception of Brazil.

Among these six economies, with ₹ 6,81,259 crore in bilateral



trade in FY23 the UAE is the largest trading partner for India, followed by Saudi at ₹ 4,23,834 crore, Egypt at ₹ 48,792 crore, Argentina at ₹ 39,100 crore, Iran at ₹ 18,680 crore and Ethiopia at ₹ 5,154 crore, said Soumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economic adviser at State Bank of India.

Among the new members, Saudi Arabia will be the biggest economy chipping in with 4 per cent GDP contribution, followed by Argentina, the UAE and Egypt with 2 per cent each, and Iran adding 1 per cent incremental to the GDP with Ethiopia's addition making practically no impact to the grouping's economy.

The Saudi economy was about USD 1.1 trillion in 2022 (already a G20 member), Argentina's at USD 632 billion, the UAE's at USD 507 billion, Egypt at USD 477 billion, Iranian economy stood at USD 388

billion and that of Ethiopia at USD 127 billion, according to the available data.

These six economies will add 11 per cent to the current GDP of the BRICS, Ghosh said in the report, which is 4 per cent of the global GDP in 2022 terms and will help boost the BRICS+6's share to 30 per cent, he added.

Even after the new addition, China (USD 18.1 trillion in 2022) and India (USD 3.75 trillion) will continue to contribute 74 per cent of the overall GDP of the grouping, down from 83 per cent of the USD 26.2 trillion economy pre-expansion.

Russian economy was USD 2.2 trillion in 2022, while Brazil's was USD 1.8 trillion and South Africa's was at USD 468 billion.

BRICS+6 and G20 (Group of 20 largest economies) have their share in the global population at 3.7 bil-

lion and 5.1 billion, while that of GDP share is USD 29.2 trillion and USD 70.4 trillion, and forex reserves at USD 5.5 trillion and USD 9.4 trillion, respectively now.

Currently, the five-member grouping is home to 40 per cent of the world's population, which controls 26 per cent of the global GDP. But with the six new members (BRICS+6), their GDP share will jump to 30 per cent and share of population will go up to 46 per cent.

However, the biggest impact will be on the share of global oil production that will increase to 40 per cent from the current 18 per cent, while their oil intake share will jump from 27 per cent to 36 per cent, according to the note.

Similarly, their share in global merchandise trade will rise from 20 per cent to 25 per cent, and that of global services trade will increase to 15 per cent from 12 per cent, the note said, adding that their share in the global forex reserves will increase by 600 basis points to 45 per cent.

On the massive increase in the share of oil trade -- Saudi has the second largest oil reserves after Russia -- the oil math will be the potential game changer for payment system and price discovery, says the report.

The acronym BRICS was originally coined in 2001 by Goldman Sachs economists led by Jim O'Neill. Later in December 2010, South Africa was added as the fifth member. (PTI)

# SEBI to curb finfluencers to help investors get accurate, unbiased info

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** The rise of financial influencers or finfluencers, who charge as high as ₹ 7.5 lakh for a post on social media, introduced a new way for people to access and interpret financial information, and now they will soon come under the regulatory purview as SEBI proposed measures to curb their mushrooming numbers.

The proposed move by Sebi not only ensures that investors receive accurate and unbiased information but also helps in preserving authenticity and reducing fraud, Anand Rathi Wealth Deputy CEO Feroz Azeez told PTI. Under the proposal, finfluencers need to be registered with Sebi and adhere to specific guidelines. Also, it has been proposed to ban unregistered finfluencers from partnering with mutual funds and stockbrokers for promotional activities.

While many finfluencers provide valuable insights, there has been a growing concern over the potential risks associated with unregulated finfluencers who might offer biased or misleading advice. They usually work on a commission-based model.

"Finfluencers charge as little as ₹ 10,000 to as much as ₹ 7.5 lakh for an individual post, excluding tax. Influencer marketing agencies quote as much as ₹ 20 lakh for a campaign, plus taxes, to entice their followers," Azeez said.

In addition, many of them make money from referral fees or profit sharing for promoting the product, channel, platform, or services or get compensation directly from social media and other platforms.

To address the risk associated with finfluencers, Sebi floated a consultation paper late last month proposing to restrict the association of registered intermediaries or regulated entities with unregistered influencers. In an era where financial advice is increasingly disseminated through social media, the line between credible advice and misleading information can become blurred.

By requiring finfluencers to register with Sebi and adhere to specific guidelines, the regulator is setting a standard for accountability and expertise in the sector, Sonam Srivastava, Founder and Fund Manager at Wright Research, PMS, said.

"The regulatory move to address the role of finan-



cial influencers, or finfluencers in the financial sector is undoubtedly significant in enhancing investor protection and promoting transparency in the industry," Anand Rathi Wealth's Azeez said.

Also, the capital markets regulator has proposed measures on disrupting the revenue model for unregistered finfluencers and ensuring that they adhere to proper disclosure and disclaimer practices. This will help create a more accountable and reliable environment for investors seeking financial guidance, he said.

Finfluencers have significantly impacted their followers' financial decisions in the last few years and thus Sebi's proposed regulatory framework can make them accountable and responsible for the advice they provide, Tejas Khoday, Co-founder and CEO of FYERS, said.

Further, finfluencers registered with Sebi or stock exchanges or AMFI are expected to display their appropriate registration number, contact details, and investor grievance redressal helpline, and make appropriate disclosure and disclaimer on any posts.

Khoday said that the new regulations could help prevent conflict of interest and recommendation bias, which usually overlooks their followers' risk profiles. However, it is also essential to balance regulation and innovation.

"The proposed rules should harness the power of digital media to increase the overall financial awareness of the population fairly and transparently without compromising the far-reaching social media penetration so far," he added. (PTI)

# Debt crisis matter of great concern for world: PM Modi ahead of G20 Summit

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** Stressing the need for financial discipline, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reiterated that "irresponsible" financial policies and populist measures may give political results in the short term but will extract a "great social and economic price" in the long term.

Modi made these remarks in an interview to PTI late last week while answering a question about the global debt crisis -- which, he noted, is "a matter of great concern for the world, especially (for) developing countries". In remarks that came ahead of the G20 summit here, the prime minister said countries that are going through debt crisis or have gone through it, have begun to give greater importance to financial discipline.

Modi said he has urged state governments to be conscious about financial discipline. "Whether it is in the National Conference of Chief Secretaries or any such platform, I have said that irresponsible financial policies and populism may give political results in the short term but will extract a great social and economic price in the long term," Modi said, as he cautioned against politics based on populist measures.

"Those who suffer the consequences the most are often the poorest and the most vulnerable," Modi also spoke about how the political stability seen in India in the last nine years has led to several reforms in economy, education, banking and financial sectors, saying growth was its "natural by-product", as he outlined his vision for the country for the next two decades. With his government approaching the end of its second term, the prime minister said before 2014, the country saw many governments that were unstable and therefore, unable to get much done. "But in the last few years, the people have given a decisive mandate, which has led to a stable government, predictable policies and clarity in the overall direction," Modi said. "By 2047, I am sure that our country will be among the developed countries. Our economy will be even more inclusive and innovative. Our poor people will comprehensively win the battle against poverty. Health, education and social sector outcomes will be among the best in the world. Corruption, casteism and communalism will have no place in our national life." Modi also noted that the rapid and sustained progress made by India has evoked interest across the world.

Many countries have been watching our growth story very closely and are convinced that this progress is not an accident but is happening as a result of a clear, action-oriented roadmap of "Reform, Perform, Transform", he said. For a long time in world history, India was one of the top economies of the world but later, due to the impact of colonisation of various kinds, our global footprint was reduced, he added. "But now, India is again on the rise. The speed with which we jumped five spots, from the 10th largest economy to the fifth largest in less than a decade has conveyed the fact that India means business!" he added. Emphasising that the period till 2047 is a "huge opportunity", he said Indians living in this era have a great chance to lay a foundation for growth that will be remembered for the next 1,000 years! Modi also asserted that the quality of life of Indians would be on par with the best countries of the world and "most importantly, we will achieve all of this while caring for both nature and culture". (PTI)

# Punjab & Sind Bank plans to raise ₹ 250 cr via QIP in third quarter

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** State-owned Punjab & Sind Bank plans to raise ₹ 250 crore through share sale to institutional investors in the third quarter of the current fiscal.

"The bank has got approvals for capital raising of ₹ 250 crore via Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) in the next quarter," Punjab & Sind Bank managing director Swarup Kumar Saha told PTI.

It will help achieve the twin objective of capital raising and dilution of the government's holding in the bank, he said. Government of India holds a 98.25 per cent stake in the bank which was listed on the stock exchanges in 2010.

He said that the government's nod is also in place for the capital raising. The bank had written to the Centre seeking its approval for capital raising in May this year.

As part of a strategy to increase touch points and brand visibility, Saha said the bank is aiming for 2,000 branches and as many ATMs in the country in the next three years. The addition of branches would help mobilise low-cost deposits and also increase penetration of loan products, he said. (PTI)

# BSE changes Jio Financial Services stock price band to 20% from 5%

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** Leading stock exchange BSE has revised the circuit limit of Jio Financial Services, the demerged non-banking financial services unit of Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance group, to 20 per cent from the existing 5 per cent.

The new limits will be effective from Monday, September 4, according to a notification issued by BSE.

The move would ensure stock prices do not fluctuate beyond a prescribed level during a session.

Further, market experts believe that the stock will be out of the trade-to-trade segment next week.

Apart from Jio Financial, the price band for nine companies, including RailTel and India Pesticides, has been revised to 10 per cent.

A circuit filter mechanism is used by BSE to keep in check excessive volatility in a scrip. It is the maximum fluctuation that is allowed in a stock in a day.

Additionally, the stock of Jio Financial was removed from all the BSE Indices, including the benchmark Sensex, on September 1.

Shares of Jio Financial got listed on the stock exchanges on August 21 due to its spin-off from parent Reliance Industries.

Earlier, the stock was slated to be removed from the indices on August 24. Later it was postponed to August 29. However, the exclusion was delayed by exchanges as it continued to be locked in the lower circuit.

In the past three trading sessions, the stock has gained, touching upper circuits and avoiding lower circuits. This indicated its imminent removal from the indices.

During the Annual General Meeting (AGM) last month, Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani announced that Jio Financial will enter the insurance segment to offer life, general, and health insurance products.

It will leverage the 450 million mobile phone subscribers' base of the telecom arm, Jio, to sell its products, including payment services, he had stated. (PTI)

# IKEA enters 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of growth in India, to expand retail operations

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** Swedish furniture maker Ikea is looking for omnichannel expansion with diverse retail formats besides kicking off online operations in Delhi-NCR by the end of 2024 as it enters the second phase of growth in the Indian market.

According to company India CEO Susanne Pulverer, Ikea is now planning to expand its operations by adding more stores to its network and considering new locations such as Pune and Chennai and increasing local sourcing making products more affordable here.

Ikea, which has completed five years of retail operations after opening its first store in Hyderabad on August 9, 2018, plans to increase its employee count to 10,000 from 3,000 in the coming years.

Besides, the company which sources from India for its global retail operation, is expanding its scope and looking into a big category with wood-based products here. "Our next growth phase in India looks very promising and full of opportunities. IKEA is committed to India and here for the long term. We are looking at an omnichannel expansion in India with diverse retail formats to come closer to the many people in India," Pulverer told PTI.

She further said: "We have already booked an investment of ₹ 10,500 crores in building five stores in India, apart from announcing investments in two large shopping centres in Gurugram and Noida with integrated IKEA stores." In the second phase, Ikea is "looking at a faster expansion than the first five years". It expects an "accelerated expansion" based on the learnings from the first



phase. Ikea has opened stores in cities such as Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Bengaluru cities and has an online presence in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, and Pune under the first phase. "Delhi NCR is our next big market. We are planning to start online operations in Delhi by the end of 2024 followed by the Ingka Centres Gurugram project opening in 2025," she added.

After Delhi, Ikea is "looking at what are the next markets as well. Pune and Chennai are interesting. Of course, we are exploring more opportunities, but it is important to penetrate each market in a good way, with a good omni-channel setup". It is important to penetrate India with good omni-channel support, Pulverer added.

"What we have learned is that our full-size stores, flagship stores of IKEA work very well in India. So that's the base and then to complement we will have a different format services fulfilment set up to support it," she said.

Over investments, Pulverer hinted that it would not be limited to ₹ 10,500 crore but would be expanded further in the long term.

"We are only in the beginning of reaching people in India. So we

will have to invest much more this is as we say we are here for the long term. We have started with these investments and we are looking into the next phase based on what we have learned," she said.

"We will go to many more cities, one by one and really reach more people," she added.

The company also plans to grow local sourcing share in India in the coming years, which will help IKEA become more affordable.

"As we diversify into newer categories to manufacture IKEA products in India, we are also exploring the possibility of manufacturing wooden products in India," she added. On Ikea's five years of operation here, IKEA India CEO Susanne Pulverer said the company has learned during the pandemic about managing the supply chains, which will help them "into the future". Ikea is also celebrating 40 years of sourcing from India for its global operations. "We started with textile and carpets, but that has also expanded into other categories plastic and metal and mixed materials, decorating items, fibre natural fibres, mattresses and we are now looking into a big category with a wood," she said. (PTI)

# Tata Steel in advanced talks to secure funds for UK plant: Reports

**LONDON, Sept 3:** Tata Steel is in advanced talks with the UK government to agree around GBP 500 million in state-backed funding to secure the future of its Port Talbot plant in South Wales, according to UK media reports this weekend.

The Indian steel major has been in long-drawn discussions related to the critical green transition of the UK's largest steelworks, involving thousands of jobs in the country's steel industry.

According to a Sky News' report on Saturday, both sides are now close to agreeing a deal that would commit millions to the future of the Port Talbot steelworks.

"Tata Steel is continuing to discuss with the UK government a framework for continuity and decarbonisation of steel making in the UK amidst very challenging underlying business conditions given that several of its heavy end assets are approaching end of life, a Tata Steel spokesperson told PTI, when asked about the development. "Given the financially constrained position of our UK



business, any significant change is only possible with government investment and support, as also seen in other steel making countries in Europe where governments are actively supporting companies in decarbonisation initiatives, the spokesperson said.

According to UK media reports, the draft plans close to being finalised include the UK government committing around GBP 500 million of funding and the Tata

Businesses can claim input tax credit on items, like gold coins and white goods, procured for distribution to dealers upon achieving pre-specified sales targets as part of promotional schemes, a GST advance ruling authority has ruled. The Karnataka-bench of the AAR (Authority for Advance Ruling) ruled that ITC can be availed on taxes paid for procurement of white goods or gold coins for the purpose of incentive to dealer as it is a supply.

Orient Cement Ltd had approached the AAR seeking ruling in whether ITC can be claimed on distribution of gold coins and white goods to its dealers upon achieving a specified target fixed under the scheme.

The company also offers various promotional schemes "Monthly/ Quarterly Quantity Discount Scheme", etc. The said sales promotion scheme helps the company in achieving their sales and collection targets.

The AAR noted that the applicant is issuing these gold coins and white goods so procured as incentives as per the agreement reached between himself and the recipients. It is only issued subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions and stipulations. "Gift is something which is given without any conditions and stipulations and hence the same cannot be covered under the scope of 'gift'," it said.

The applicant's obligation to issue gold coins and white goods to the dealers/ customers upon achieving the stipulated lifting of the material/purchase target during

the scheme period would not be regarded as "goods disposed of by way of gift" and input tax credit would not be restricted, the AAR said in its order dated August 24.

EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said in the matter of Orient Cement Ltd, the Advance Ruling Authority of Karnataka has held that the credit on inputs received for promotional expenses, such as distributing of gold coins, Godrej digital safe lockers etc., to dealers should not be categorized as gifts as it is associated with certain conditions and not voluntary. Furthermore, it clarifies that the distribution of promotional materials should be considered a supply, even if done without any consideration, falling under Schedule 1 i.e. permanent transfer or disposal of business assets when input tax credit has been claimed on those assets.

"This ruling contradicts with previous judgments and industry should awaits further clarification from the GST Council on this matter," Agarwal said.

KPMG Partner and National Head, Indirect Taxes, Abhishek Jain said this ruling upholds distinction of target driven promotional products qua gifts and accordingly, allows input tax credit on such gifts.

"Separately, with contrary Advance Rulings (where it has been held as gift and ITC has been disallowed) and different on ground positions by adjudication authorities, the government could consider issuing a proactive clarification on the said issue to avoid unwarranted disputes," Jain added. (PTI)

fully involved and workforce must support the plan".

"Steel is a strategic industry that underpins our entire economy. It provides tens of thousands of highly skilled jobs, it's vital for our national security, and it's key to achieving net zero. Failure to invest in our steel industry would be the very definition of a false economy, he tweeted. The unions, meanwhile, have expressed concerns over reports that a few thousand job losses are expected as part of the negotiations at the Tata-owned Port Talbot steelworks, which employs around 4,000 workers.

"We continue to support a solution that will maintain blast furnace production and safeguard the future for all the UK plants. We are ready to use all means at our disposal to protect jobs and our vital strategic industry, said the Community steelworkers union.

The UK government has not commented on the latest reports, but any support package is expected to be dependent on pledges of investment into the future from the Indian steel giant. (PTI)



# Magsaysay award winning oncologist's mission to provide affordable cancer care to poor

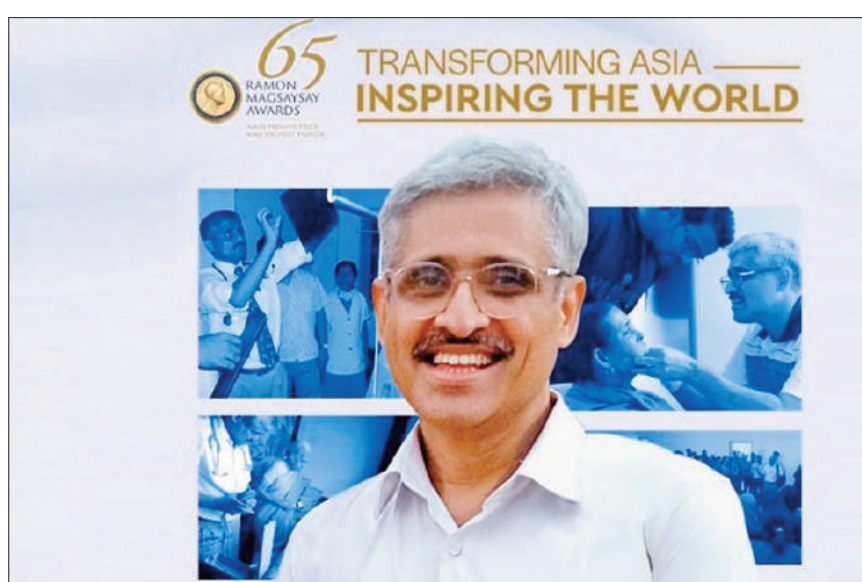
**SILCHAR, Sept 3:** It was 23 years ago that this year's Magsaysay award winning oncologist Dr R Ravi Kannan left a lucrative career in Chennai to move to the Cachar Cancer Care Hospital and Research Centre (CCHRC) here with a mission to deliver affordable and accessible cancer care to the poor. Located at Meherpur on the outskirts of Assam's Silchar town in Barak Valley, the hospital was set up as a nonprofit on a plot provided by the state government in 1996.

With cancer cases high in the Valley, primarily due to lifestyle issues, and the nearest cancer hospital 350 km away in Guwahati, citizens of Cachar district felt that there was an imperative need to set up the hospital. "To deliver inclusive cancer care, we must have in place a package that is accessible, affordable, respectful and hassle-free," the 59-year-old awardee said.

He had received a call from the then director, Dr Chinmoy Choudhury, in December 2006 who invited the oncologist, then working at the Adyar Cancer Institute in Chennai, to join and head the CCHRC. "It was then that I and my wife Seetha arrived in Silchar to explore the possibility and when we saw the prevailing cancer care scenario here, I knew this was my calling," Kannan said on his journey of providing cancer care here from 2007.

It was his wife who took the final decision as she felt that they were needed here more. She continues to volunteer along with a team of over 450 colleagues who are committed to make people aware of cancer, adopt preventive measures and seek early detection.

"How a society takes care of its sick is an important parameter to judge how civilised the society is. Since the initial days of the hospital, the focus was on pro-active poor



branding with low cost services, treatment subsidy, no separate dual pricing for poor and rich patients, providing boarding and lodging along with active counselling for patients and caregivers," he said. Around 80 per cent of the patients are daily wage earners, tea garden and agricultural workers with 59 per cent of them having an income of ₹ 10,000 or less.

The cost of treatment since the very beginning was very nominal and this was followed by subsidising the treatment but "what became a challenge was that after the initial visit, patients did not return for follow-up treatment," he said. "Cancer treatment is a long-drawn process. Chemotherapy is for six months, radiation for two months, followed by surgery and by

the time the treatment is over, a year is gone," he pointed out.

Again, by the time the side-effects and fatigue wears off, another six months is gone and as the bread-winner keeps coming back to the hospital, the family starves and after a while they stop coming as they feel that the "individual will have to die so that the others can live."

A policy decision was, therefore, taken to provide food and ad hoc employment to attendants of the patients on the hospital campus to offset their daily wages. "We conducted an audit following this decision and found that 55 per cent of the patients are completing the prescribed treatment but for me this was a poor track record as 45 per cent are not returning for follow-up," Kan-

nan said. It was then decided to provide free home visits and "we now see 900 patients annually at their homes which has improved the compliance rate of treatment to 80 per cent," the oncologist said.

The hospital now has a footfall of over 4,000 new patients and over 25,000 follow up visits of patients annually. It was also decided that CCHRC will introduce satellite hospitals to improve accessibility of affordable cancer care in remote locations and save travel costs for patients, Kannan said.

"Along the way, we also realised that we will have to work with the community, particularly for early detection and palliative care," he said.

Radiation, surgical and medical oncology has to be institution-based but even more important is prevention, early detection, palliative care, providing support and rehabilitation of patients, Kannan said.

"We entered into a programme with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the state government to train ASHA workers for creating awareness and early detection. They are doing a remarkable job," he said. The North East Alliance Against Cancer was also formed to link all stakeholders of the community to a common platform "to empower them to do better and involve them to take care of their own," Kannan said.

On winning the award, the oncologist had said the award is not about him but for all who have contributed to cancer care in the community and that he was just one of the many faces involved in this effort. "Offering inclusive health care or inclusive education are activities that are as patriotic as those of our soldiers standing at the border of our nation defending and protecting us," the Magsaysay award winner said. (PTI)

## Sivasagar celebrates Bhogeswar Baruah's 86th birthday



**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, Sept 3:** The 86th birthday of 'Arjun' Bhogeswar Baruah was celebrated in Sivasagar, where he is revered as a legendary runner. The day, known as Abhiruchi Day, saw a significant gathering of prominent sports personalities, sports organisers, students, and sports enthusiasts at the Rangpurjyoti Club premises.

Several former national players, including Rajani Chetia, Mina Saikia, Pranab Das, Sunni Barua, and Prasanna Das, participated in lighting the ceremonial Olympic flame. The marathon was flagged off by Aswini Kumar Doley, CEO, Sivasagar Zila

Parishad, and it concluded at the massive statue of Bhogeswar Baruah on the banks of the Sivasagar Borphukhuri.

Many notable individuals from the town, such as Punam Mili, Babul Khan, Rana Khan, Manoj Kr Borthakur, Dhananjay Saikia, Inamul Hazzarika, Jayanta Rajkumar, Dharani Chetia, Somesh Deka, Govin Bora, Jayjyoti Gogoi, Bhoirab Munda, along with representatives from various clubs, participated in the marathon.

Mina Baruah, during the celebration, ceremonially cut the birthday cake in honour of 'Arjun' Bhogeswar Baruah's 86th birth anniversary.

## Kajali Teej celebrated with religious zeal in Hojai

**HT Correspondent**  
**HOJAI, Sept 3:** The town of Hojai reverberated with religious fervour as the Kajali Teej festival was joyously celebrated. Kajali Teej is one of the three significant Teej festivals observed by Hindus in India.

Hariyali Teej, Kajali Teej, and Hartalika Teej hold special importance among women and are celebrated during the Sawan and Bhadrapada months of the Hindu calendar. Kajali Teej, also known as 'Kajari' or Badi Teej, follows fifteen days after Hariyali Teej. Typically, Teej falls three days after Raksha Bandhan and five days before Krishna Janmashtami. In North India, it falls during Krishna Paksha of Bhadrapada, while in South India, it falls during Krishna Paksha of Shrawana. In both calendars, Kajali Teej is celebrated on the same day.

On the auspicious occasion of Satudi Teej, married women, especially from the Maheshwari and Daima communities, fervently prayed for the well-being and longevity of their husbands. This year, the festival fell on September 2. The women gathered to offer prayers to Goddess Parvati and seek her blessings for a blissful married life. Dressed as newlywed brides, they worshipped the neem tree and performed puja rituals. Women observed a fast from dawn until evening and broke it after sighting and worshipping the moon, partaking in prasadam. Kajali hymns echoed through the festivities, and women adorned their hands with intricate mehendi designs, symbolising good fortune.

## 40th Abhiruchi Sports Day celebrated in Sootea

**HT Correspondent**  
**BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 3:** The 40th edition of the Abhiruchi Sports Day was celebrated in style by Istantik, a prominent socio-cultural and literary organisation in Sootea. The day-long program featured various engaging activities, and the celebrations mirrored those taking place throughout the state.

The festivities kicked off with a mass cycle rally organised by Istantik. Notable figures from Sootea and students from different educational institutions came together to participate. Shyamal Jyoti Saikia, the officer in charge of Sootea PS, inaugurated the cycle rally, which began at the Istantik Club's office, proceeded to Nagsankar, and concluded back at the Istantik Club. In the afternoon, a meeting took place in the conference hall of the Istantik Club, presided over by Lochan Bora, the club's president. Pankaj Jyoti Bhuyan, a distinguished dramatist and senior club member, served as the guest speaker. He shed light on the life and contributions of Arjun Bhogeswar Baruah and briefly explained the significance of Abhiruchi Day.

To commemorate this special day, the event organisers extended warm felicitations to senior players from the Sootea area, including Purna Katakya, Rishav Saikia, and Dwipen Barua, recognising their valuable contributions to sports.

## RPF recovers stolen passenger belongings worth ₹1.74 lakhs

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 3:** The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of NF Railway conducted regular checks and drives from August 29 to 31, resulting in the apprehension of 11 individuals involved in thefts of passenger belongings. These operations took place at various stations and trains, leading to the successful recovery of valuables worth approximately ₹1,74,600 at railway stations in Katihar, Lumding, New Hailong, and Guwahati. On August 29, the RPF CPDS (Crime Prevention & Detection Squad) team in Katihar, along with GRP/Katihar, apprehended three individuals during a routine check at Katihar railway station. They recovered three mobile phones stolen from passengers, with an estimated value of ₹ 32,000. Subsequently, the recovered mobile phones and the apprehended individuals were handed over to the officer-in-charge of GRP/Katihar for further proceedings. On August 31, the RPF team in Guwahati conducted a checking drive at Guwahati railway station and apprehended one person in possession of a bag containing a gold chain, a gold ring, one mobile phone, and other valuables valued at around ₹ 60,600. These items had been stolen from a passenger on Train no 13175 (Sealdah - Silchar) Kanchanjunga Express. The recovered items and the apprehended person were subsequently handed over to the officer-in-charge of GRP/Guwahati for further necessary actions.

## AVACreations and Ministry of Textiles celebrate success of Samarth Scheme

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 3:** AVACreations Social Impact Foundation, in partnership with the ministry of Textiles, government of India, achieved a significant milestone with the successful organisation of the 'Rozgar Mela cum Certificate Distribution Ceremony' for the Samarth Scheme on Saturday. The event witnessed the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including Kumar Nityanand, deputy secretary of the ministry of Textiles, government of India, who graced the occasion as the chief guest. Dr Kartik Neog, director of the Muga Eri Silk Worm Seed Organisation, Central Silk Board, Guwahati, and Dr Siddique Ali Ahmed also honoured the event as the guest of honour and special guest, respectively.

The Samarth Scheme, a flagship initiative by the ministry of Textiles, is dedicated to skilling, training, and empowering youth with employable skills in the textile sector. Focused on creating sustainable livelihoods, this scheme has played a pivotal role in strengthening the textile industry and providing employment opportunities in rural and semi-urban areas. The 'Rozgar Mela cum Certificate Distribution Ceremony' served as a testament to the success and impact of this initiative.

During the ceremony, a total of 107 trainees were presented with training certificates, acknowledging their dedication, hard work, and commitment to learning and upskilling. These trainees underwent rigorous training programs in various sectors of the textile industry, including silk handloom weaving. The event not only celebrated their achievements but also served as a platform to connect them with potential employers, facilitating their entry into the workforce.

Kumar Nityanand, in his address, commended the trainees for their perseverance and highlighted the government's unwavering support



for skill development programs. He emphasised the pivotal role of the textile industry in creating employment opportunities and fostering economic growth, especially in rural areas. The chief guest also lauded the efforts of AVACreations Social Impact Foundation and encouraged more organisations to collaborate in similar endeavours.

Dr Kartik Neog, the guest of honour, underscored the significance of sustainable textile practices and the promotion of indigenous silk varieties like Muga Eri. He encouraged the trainees to utilise their skills to contribute to the preservation of traditional crafts and become change agents in the industry.

Dr Siddique Ali Ahmed, as the special guest, applauded the inclusive approach of the Samarth Scheme, empowering individuals from marginalised communities and providing them with equal opportunities. He stressed the transformative impact of such initiatives on the lives of beneficiaries and expressed his support for ongoing efforts in the field of skill development.

The 'Rozgar Mela cum Certificate Distribution Ceremony' of the Samarth Scheme at AVACreations Social Impact Foundation was an outstanding success, marking a significant milestone in bridging the skill gap in the textile industry.

## Dibrugarh Airport granted DGCA approval for runway restoration

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIBRUGARH, Sept 3:** Dibrugarh Airport, situated in Mohanbari, has been granted approval by the director general of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to restore the runway 05 threshold and the declared distances of the runway.

The threshold had previously been displaced by 150 meters to facilitate the completion of the runway merging project, which had resulted in the withdrawal of the Instrument Landing System (ILS) facility. With the completion of the extended runway merging, the original runway length of 1830 meters will be reinstated, and the ILS facility will be made operational once again.

It's worth noting that the Airports Authority of India

(AAI) is in the process of providing a new and upgraded ILS facility, corresponding to a runway length of 2290 meters, for which most of the infrastructure work has already been completed. The installation, testing, optimisation, and commissioning of this system are expected to be finalised by March 2024. After this, the extended runway length of 2290 meters will be operational, along with the new ILS and Category I approach lighting system. Following a meeting with stakeholders, the Airport Authority of India, Dibrugarh, has decided to proceed with the restoration of runway 05 on the night

between Monday, September 4, and Tuesday, September 5, 2023.



## State government acquires Ginger Hotel for Silsako Beel reservoir development

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Sept 3:** The Assam govt announced its decision on Sunday to acquire the Ginger hotel and its associated land for the development of Silsako Beel as a reservoir, according to an official order.

"In exercise of the powers conferred on me under section 3(1) of the Assam Land Requisition and Acquisition Act, 1954 (A XV of 1964) under Notification No. RLA81/93/5-A dated Dispur, the 15 of July 1993, 1, Pallav Gopal Jha, IAS, Deputy Commissioner & Collector, Kamrup Metropolitan District, Guwahati, do hereby requisition under Section 3(1) of the Assam Land (Requisition and Acquisition) Act, 1964, the land described in the Schedule below along with building standing over the land with effect from the date of this order, for the purpose of development of Silsako Beel as a reservoir and facilitate the mitigation of Urban

flooding in pursuance of Department of Housing & Urban Affairs," the order read. The govt had initiated an eviction drive in the Chachal area of Guwahati on May 13, 2022. Another eviction drive took place, clearing 100 meters from both sides of the Silsako Canal on Feb 27 and 28, 2023, and again on March 2 and 3, 2023, affecting 150 bighas and around 500 families. Locals have raised concerns that the administration is conducting these drives without prior notice or proper rehabilitation and resettlement measures. According to the state govt, the area was occupied by illegal settlements, contributing to flooding in Guwahati city. They also claimed that the area fell under the Water Bodies Act 2008.

However, locals argue that in 2008, the previous government (Congress) passed a water body preservation act without properly demarcating the affected areas, leading to the current situation.

## Fulbright-Nehru Fellowship awarded to Dr Parikshit Gogoi

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Sept 3:** Dr Parikshit Gogoi, a distinguished faculty member at Nowgong College (Autonomous), has received the prestigious Fulbright-Nehru Academic & Professional Excellence Research Fellowship for the year 2023-24. As an assistant professor of Chemistry, Dr Gogoi will commence his research work under this fellowship starting from September 15, 2023.

He will collaborate with Dr Jaemin Kim from the Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, USA. Dr Kim is recognised as an outstanding material scientist with a research focus on catalytic materials, particularly in sustainable energy technologies.

Dr Gogoi has previously been honoured with several awards, including the INSA Summer Research Fellowship for Teachers in 2014 from

the Indian National Academy of Science, Bangalore, the Raman Fellowship in 2016 for Post-Doctoral Research at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, USA, awarded by the University Grants Commission. He also received the Dulal Ch Goswami Memorial Research Award in 2021 from Nowgong College (Autonomous).

During his Fulbright-Nehru Research Fellowship, Dr Gogoi's research will centre on the catalytic conversion of biomass and lignin bio-oils into aromatics and fuel range hydrocarbons using polyoxometalate catalysts.

His primary goal is to develop catalyst systems capable of achieving biomass conversions at lower temperatures and moderate hydrogen pressure. This innovative approach promises to offer new insights into the effective utilisation of lignin within a biorefinery, benefiting its overall economic sustainability.



## Efforts to revive abandoned hospital in KA

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Sept 3:** Executive Members (EM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Amar Sing Tisso and Surya Rongphar, along with officials, conducted a visit to an abandoned 5-bed hospital located in Longnit, approximately 22 kilometers from Diphu.

EM Tisso is actively considering the revival of this hospital, recognising the potential benefits it can bring to the residents of Singhason and Dhansiri. The initiative has received support from Tillotomma Hasnu, a Member of the Autonomous Council of Dhansiri, who also accompanied the EMs during the visit.

## NAME CORRECTION

Md. Fokhar Uddin Laskar And Md. Fakhar Uddin Laskar both two name is one man name but correct name is Md. Fakhar Uddin Laskar.

Vill-Pachim Nilbagan PS- Hojai PO- Nilbagan Dist- Hojai (Assam)

## Rampage erupts in Nagaon town as frequent loadshedding sparks public outrage

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Sept 3:** Amidst the state government's promise of 24x7 power supply, Nagaon town has been grappling with acute power shortages and frequent load shedding for over a fortnight. Frustrated by the sweltering heat and extended power cuts, a furious crowd of local residents went on a rampage last night, surrounding the Haibargaon power substation for several hours.

During the protest, the enraged mob chanted slogans against the officials of Nagaon APDCL (Assam Power Distribution Company Limited) and the newly appointed chief executive officer of Nagaon APDCL.

The angry demonstrators accused the on-duty substation official of neglecting his responsibilities. They alleged that he frequently disrupted power supply for extended periods while inebriated and often failed to restore power to the affected areas promptly, causing panic among the local residents. Some members of the mob claimed that attempts to contact the newly appointed CEO of Nagaon APDCL to file complaints had been met with indifference, alleging that the CEO consistently evaded their concerns.

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## QUOTE OF THE DAY

Remember upon the conduct of each depends the fate of all.  
- Alexander the Great

## 'Shock and awe' over simultaneous poll move

The recent flurry of activity within the Narendra Modi government has raised eyebrows and stirred the political pot. With the unexpected convening of an out-of-turn parliamentary session and the formation of a panel led by former President Ram Nath Kovind to explore the feasibility of implementing a one-nation policy, one can't help but wonder if this is more about "shock and awe" politics than a genuine intent to introduce such a contentious proposal. These bold moves are widely perceived as a prelude to positioning for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, yet their practicality remains questionable. The timing, strategically synchronised with the Mumbai session of the INDIA bloc of opposition parties, is undoubtedly designed to disrupt the steady progress of opposition unity - a development that has been causing unease for Prime Minister Modi and his ruling party. The term "shock and awe" may have originated in the military realm but seems aptly applicable here. It was famously used by former US defense secretary Ronald Rumsfeld during the American invasion of Afghanistan, a move that triggered a series of events reshaping contemporary world history, albeit not for the better. The consequences were dire, destabilizing nations and creating fertile ground for terrorism. Whether the Modi government's "awe and shock" strategy will lead to similar consequences remains to be seen, but the intent is clear: sow confusion and chaos to disrupt opposition unity. In response, the Mumbai session has had to adjust its agenda, prioritizing seat-sharing negotiations ahead of less critical matters, such as selecting a national convener and a common PM candidate. Thus far, the shock-and-awe tactics seem to be working.

However, the odds are stacked against swift adoption of a one-nation, one-election policy. The limited timeframe, coupled with the extensive deliberations and legislative processes required, make significant progress in the special session nearly impossible, except for generating noise. The ruling party could choose not to wait for the current Lok Sabha's full term to expire, but achieving simultaneous elections, even in several states, would entail extending or abbreviating some state assembly tenures - a process requiring constitutional amendments ratified by at least half the states. This appears impractical. Still, it's plausible that elections might be synchronised in a group of states to coincide with the parliamentary elections, although nationwide simultaneous elections seem far from reality. Elections are scheduled for five state assemblies this year, while seven more will see their tenures end next year, concurrent with the Lok Sabha. Some of these states, such as Maharashtra, Haryana, and Arunachal Pradesh, are governed by the BJP, while Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have parties open to cooperation with the BJP. The Law Commission had previously proposed aligning all states with elections in the same year. Yet, the political landscape has evolved since the era of simultaneous elections up to 1967, marked by Cong dominance both at the Centre and in the states. Today, powerful regional parties with divergent interests often clash with the ruling party at the Centre, creating instability and thwarting consensus. The shift towards regional politics has shattered any hope of uniform state assembly tenures. One positive aspect of these discussions is the proposal to link traditional no-confidence motions with resolutions expressing confidence in a new govt, mitigating the risk of premature dissolution. While legislators typically resist shortened tenures due to their financial implications, the prospect of a new govt assuming office without dissolving the incumbent one could foster stability, particularly at the state level.

# Will India be able to deal with Google's advertisement tech monopoly?

Alphabet Inc.'s digital giant Google has established itself as the largest digital advertising platform in India and accumulated around ₹ 25,000 crores in ad revenue in 2022. However, the underlying phenomena behind such success lies within the monopolisation of advertisement technology (adtech) by Google.

The tech giant is under attack in various jurisdictions, such as the European Union (EU), UK and US, for holding a dominant position in the advertising sector. There have been instances of questioning Google's practices in India as well. However, no report has been filed against the actions of the company yet. Monopolisation of adtech poses an immense threat to the viability of the current digital advertising mechanism.

Indian media houses and publishers are losing revenue due to Google's monopoly. The present competition regime in India, along with the Digital Competition Act, seem inadequate to address the issue. Publishers and advertisers across the world primarily utilise three main adtech services to facilitate their ads: publisher ad servers (to manage ad spaces), ad buying tools (to buy ads), and ad exchanges (wherein the supply and demand converge).

Google acquired prominent service providers in these categories, namely: DoubleClick (2008), AdX (2008), and AdMeld (2011) and other nascent competitors, to position itself as a tech giant which could "control and manipulate" selling and buying of digital ads. This merger led to the creation of Google's own "AdTech stack", which includes publisher ad server as Google Ad Manager, ad exchange as AdX, and two buying services: DV360 and Google Ads.

Concretisation of such power was pursued through various contentious tactics such as prioritisation of Google's own transactions through ad-exchange, and pressurising news outlets in adopting alternative webpage format. Consequently, Google now controls the digital tools which are utilised by every prominent publisher to sell and buy ads on their websites, and the advertising exchange technology to connect buyers and sellers.

Post these acquisitions, Google continued to grow into the adtech monopoly that it is today. Google generated US \$54.5 billion in ad revenue from July through September 2022 alone, an increase of 2.5 percent from the same quarter of 2021.

The casualties of such a dominant position are the newspapers, media houses and local businesses that also depend on digital advertisements. The precarious relationship between Google and these other businesses is evident, as Google quintupled its earnings in the past decade, the annual advertising revenue of US newspapers collectively decreased from US \$49.4 billion in 2005 to US \$9.6 billion in 2020.

The continual decrease in ad revenue of newspapers and small businesses is due to the lack of options and coercion into choosing Google's ad services, which allows Google to take nearly 35 percent of the earnings from digital advertisers. This leads to excessive revenue cuts, exacerbating layoffs in the industry, and readers having to face paywalls due to businesses facing diminishing yields. Major publishers have stated that it is very difficult or nearly impossible to buy or sell advertising without utilising Google's ad services.

Moreover, the advertisers and ad agencies in India have so far abstained from



lodging complaints against the giant, as they are heavily dependent on it due to a lack of other opportunities. Further, the Advertising Agencies Association of India (AAAI) has not yet intervened in the matter to protect the newspapers and other advertising agencies being affected by Google's monopolisation.

Google's monopolisation has led to an anti-competitive environment within the advertising sphere, as the nascent adtech competitors are subverted, preventing improvisation of marketing in creative ways. Further, the holding of such a dominant position by Google also leads to a collection of unnecessary personal data of users in the use of micro-targeted advertising tactics.

In summation, Google's anti-competitive behaviour has led to acquisition of competitors, forced adoption of Google's tools, distortion in auction competition, and auction manipulation. Ironically, Google's own AI-powered chatbot, 'Bard', in one of its responses, stated that Google has a "monopoly on the digital advertising market", which has allowed the company to engage "in anti-competitive behaviour".

The adverse effects of the present adtech monopoly upon the news media and small businesses are enormous. Three studies have shown that nearly 50 percent of spendings in digital media go to intermediaries such as Google, rather than the publishers displaying the advertise-

ments.

Although Google claims that it does not take more than 30 percent of the amount of money spent on ads, the company has faced backlash over the past few months due to lack of transparency in transactions.

An Indian STEP and Business Incubator

Association (ISBA) (STEP: Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Parks) study revealed that 15 cents of the amount spent on ads could not be accounted for.

Thus, multiple antitrust investigations have scrutinised such behaviour and EU's competition regulator fined Google US \$10 billion for the unaccounted expenditure, followed by fines in the US, Australia, France, Germany and the UK. Furthermore, Google took undue advantage of its position - as in a 2018 deal with Facebook, Google gave Facebook a leg up in their online advertising auctions, leading to unfair advantages when Facebook used Google's advertising exchange.

Google's adtech dominance is a global phenomenon. The first probe started in 2020, when the UK Competition and Market Authority reported that Google "has more than a 90 percent share of the £7.3 billion search advertising market in the UK", and a class action lawsuit was filed before the UK's Competition Appeal Tribunal

against Google.

In 2021, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission concluded that Google had abused its dominant position to favour its own adtech services. In the same year, the EU initiated a similar investigation and found that it had violated Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), resulting in a €220 million fine by the French authority.

Pursuant to this, the European Union passed the Digital Markets Act, to prevent platforms from favouring their own services over their competitors'. The EU also suggested that divestment of Google's adtech monopoly is the only viable solution.

In June, 2023, Gannett, a prominent US publisher, sued Google for monopolising the advertising technology sector. Indian media houses and newspaper outlets have benefitted from the exposure gained through Google's ongoing monopolisation of the adtech sector, yet they have suffered heavy losses in ad revenues due to Google's monopolistic dominance. The advertisers and publishers are, thus, heavily dependent on Google for anything they can earn from the ad revenue.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) had fined Google ₹1,300 crore for abusing its dominant

position with regards to android mobile devices. However, the CCI is yet to address the issue pertaining to the unfair revenue sharing terms. Furthermore, India is ill-equipped to address such technological issues in future as the current competition regime as well as proposed Digital Competition Act fail to recognise and effectively address this issue.

India can implement some necessary changes into its regime by incorporating provisions from the US' new anti-trust legislation, which directs companies to sell "portions of their operations" if their digital ad transactions surpass US \$20 billion. Furthermore, India can incorporate measures for companies to disclose their source of revenue if the ad transactions surpass a certain threshold.

Companies which simultaneously act as sellers, buyers and regulators, must be divided into small structures to prevent monopolies that stifle innovation and transparency. Lastly, the new changes must include limitations on the user data being collected for advertising.

Google's monopolistic tactics have been lucrative in the past decade but at the expense of publishers' and news media's unequal share in ad revenue. Various countries have recognised the threat of such anti-competitive measures and taken action against the tech giant with an aim to divest the monopoly in the sector. Furthermore, India's recognition of the dominant position of Google in the recent Android case, calls for CCI to take action against the giant in respect of the ad tech monopoly.

Lastly, the Indian competition regime requires amendments to address such niche technological issues and ensure healthy competition in the market. (IPA Service)

## India's UNSC quest: Diplomatic drive for permanent seat before G20

By: Dipak Kurmi

During an event at Delhi University on Thursday, August 31st, India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, emphasized the crucial importance of India being granted permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). He likened the current situation to the five permanent members, who hold veto power, as passengers in the front row of a bus unwilling to relinquish their seats.

Jaishankar's statement comes just ahead of the G20 Summit scheduled for September 9-10 in New Delhi, underscoring India's proactive efforts to secure a permanent seat in the UN body. This move is strategically timed to make a compelling case for India's inclusion in the UNSC as a permanent member during the upcoming G20 Summit, which will gather representatives from member and guest nations in New Delhi.

Given the context, it is evident that Prime Minister Narendra Modi intends to leverage the forthcoming bilateral discussions with numerous global leaders on the sidelines of the G20 Summit. These meetings will serve as a platform for India to advocate strongly for its permanent membership in the UNSC. By addressing the UNSC issue, Jaishankar's remarks have indicated India's readiness to redirect the G20 bloc's attention towards United Nations reforms.

India's assertive diplomatic efforts have notably influenced the BRICS group, comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, to emphasize the necessity for a reevaluation of UNSC memberships, signaling a broader push for UN reform.

India's stance on its potential inclusion in the UN Security Council has received a significant boost, and the Indian government is understandably pleased with this development. The 15th BRICS summit, recently held in Johannesburg, South Africa, concluded with a final declaration that expressed support for increased representation of developing nations in the UN Security Council. The statement specifically endorsed the aspirations of Brazil, India, and South Africa to assume a more prominent role in the UNSC.

The joint statement emphasized the need for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council, with the aim of making it more democratic, representative, effective, and efficient. The

BRICS nations underscored the importance of addressing global challenges and supporting the legitimate aspirations of emerging and developing countries from regions like Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For India's mission to secure permanent membership in the UNSC, this declaration from BRICS served as a significant vote of confidence.

India's confidence in its pursuit of UNSC permanent membership was evident in the words of External Affairs Minister Jaishankar himself. He noted that BRICS had, for the first time, acknowledged the need for a change in UNSC memberships. Jaishankar's statement hinted at China as a key obstacle hindering India's aspirations in this regard. Just a month prior, during his visit to France, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had strongly advocated for India's rightful place in the UNSC. He questioned the legitimacy of the UNSC as a primary global organ when large continents like Africa and Latin America remained under-represented.

Modi highlighted the irony of the world body claiming to speak for the globe while India, the most populous country and a vibrant democracy, was not a permanent member. With Jaishankar's renewed call for India's inclusion as a permanent UNSC member, it is clear that during the upcoming G20 Summit, Prime Minister Modi will seize every opportunity to reaffirm India's claim to a permanent seat on the global stage.

What bodes well for India is the strong support it has garnered from four out of the five permanent members of the 15-nation UN Security Council. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia have all endorsed India's bid for a permanent seat in the UN body. Notably, the lone holdout against India's aspirations has been China, which has not backed India's quest for permanent membership. India seeks to expand its support base beyond the BRICS nations, especially among newly included members, and rally the global community to exert pressure on Beijing to reconsider its stance.

In a positive turn of events, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also voiced his support for reforming the UNSC while addressing the BRICS summit. This added endorsement aligns with the growing international call for comprehensive reforms within the UN Security Council. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewsline@gmail.com)

## Investors shun East, Northeast despite contrary claims by govts

By: Ashis Biswas

Two East and Northeast Indian states - Assam and West Bengal - have largely failed to secure significant investments from domestic or foreign private sector in recent years. Assam is ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) while in neighbouring Bengal, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) was re-elected to power for the third term in 2021.

Their obvious political differences apart, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma shares with his Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee a remarkable gift of making stunning public claims of administrative achievements and success that are not always factually correct. For all Sarma's talk of transforming Assam into a dynamic economy in the Northeast region through unprecedented levels of infrastructural investments, courtesy the BJP-led NDA Government, the state has failed to secure even 1% of recent investments in India!

As for Mamata Banerjee's similar claims about unorthodox job creation as a 'major administrative achievement' of the Bengal TMC Government, Kolkata-based media channels reported that last week alone, from Mizoram to Delhi, at least 30 people - all jobless youths from Bengal - had been killed in industrial 'accidents'! Almost to the last man, the victims hailed mostly from Murshidabad, Malda and Nadia districts. The exact number of migrant workers from Bengal working in other states, beginning from a trickle in the 80s and swelling to a mighty torrent by the 2020s, has never been officially registered. The reason for not keeping an official record was political: Left or non-Left, no ruling dispensation wished to advertise its failure in reducing domestic unemployment.

As for the districts themselves, Murshidabad (a former capital of undivided Bengal during the Mughal rule) and Malda are Muslim-majority areas, with significantly poor indices of human resource development in recent times. The decline of Murshidabad



from the capital of a once flourishing region to Bengal's present-day crime capital, not to mention its present tag as India's poorest district, has been very pathetic indeed. The transition also attests to the abysmal failure of Bengal's political/cultural establishment in the post-Independence period to provide any leadership in crisis management.

A current estimate provides an indication of the extent of the present economic crisis plaguing especially rural Bengal: the Left-affiliated Centre of Indian trade Unions (CITU) has launched a detailed study of the problem of domestic joblessness. Its most crucial finding so far: between 4 million and 5 million jobless youths, mostly from rural Bengal, are currently working in the road building or real estate sector projects in other States.

Most are barely literate, unskilled and school dropouts, but the exodus also includes hundreds of graduates. From power projects in Kochi to Jammu to working for the Railways in the remotest areas of the NE, their chief objective is to earn ₹ 400 to ₹ 750 daily, so that they can send some money back to dependent relatives at home!

It needs stressing that the going daily wage rate for workers in Bengal has remained stagnant in the ₹ 250/350 range for over a decade, according to TU circles. At present most workers are engaged in real es-

tate-related work. Further, mafia-type of labour leaders, mostly enjoying TMC support, collect a daily cut of ₹ 30/40 from each worker!

"This never happens in Odisha or Kerala", says Sudeep Mandal (25), who has worked in both States and is currently visiting his home at Dankuni, Hooghly.

Both Chief Minister Banerjee and her Chief Adviser former Finance Minister Dr Amit Mitra proudly claim that during the TMC's 12-year long tenure, there has occurred no industrial strike in Bengal.

"It would be nearer the truth to say that there is hardly any industry left here - the reduction in the number of industrial workers by several lakhs during the past decade in Bengal is a fact confirmed by numerous surveys conducted by the labour department itself, NGOs and researchers", says an INTUC leader.

Dr. Mitra's recent claims made in Mumbai about Bengal's immense potential as Eastern India's emerging economic powerhouse, has evoked little interest though considerable local merriment in West Bengal.

'People in Bengal have been hearing of lakhs of new jobs in these projects for over a decade, from the Chief Minister herself. Very little has changed at the ground level. There has been no land acquisition for years, and hardly any organised upskilling of young unemployed youths. At this rate, the state Gov-

ernment will make such claims for another 30 years if things continue like this,' said Sanatan Nandi, a jobless youth of Howrah.

For Assam, according to recent Reserve Bank of India figures, official efforts to attract major investments in the 2020s have failed miserably. Just as West Bengal's much vaunted but mostly ineffective annual jamborees, inviting industrialists to work in the state, had flopped, Assam's ambitious 'Advantage Assam' programme and similar moves have also come a cropper.

From 2016 onwards, apart from leading Indian industrialists, many foreign delegates and dignitaries had been invited to consider setting up projects in the NE region -- to little apparent effect. All over India, according to RBI and other stats, altogether ₹ 1,41,000 crore had been invested in 401 projects in 2021-22. Assam-based media further reported that in 2022-23, the figures respectively rose to ₹ 2,66,000 crore for 547 projects.

Uttar Pradesh bagged the highest share of these investments, at 16% of the total, in 2022-23. It was followed by other well-performing states like Karnataka, Odisha and Maharashtra. As for Assam, it secured only 0.7% of the total!

Opposition parties in Bengal and Assam cite different and contrasting reasons for the relative failure of both Sarma and Mamata Banerjee to secure the confidence of top industrialists in India. Poor governance might have been the main cause.

In post-Singur Bengal as well as Assam (to a lesser extent), the volatile law and order situation and recurrence of violence affecting different communities have been common in recent times. Both Chief Ministers have been more adept in pandering to narrow vote bank interests than attending to their economic priorities. Widespread corruption has been a common feature of governance in both states. No wonder such trends have not exactly encouraged investors, foreign or home-grown, to repose confidence in their words or announcements. (IPA Service)



# 13 early signs of Parkinson's disease

By: Jamie Eske

Parkinson's disease is a nervous system disorder that affects around 1 percent of people aged 65 years and older. Symptoms usually develop slowly over several years. They may be subtle at first, so early signs are easy to miss.

If someone notices symptoms of Parkinson's disease, they should consider contacting their doctor for more information. Early treatment can improve the condition's long-term outcome.

In this article, we cover 13 early signs of Parkinson's disease.

## 1. Tremors

Many healthcare professionals consider tremors to be a key characteristic sign of Parkinson's disease. Tremors involve a persistent twitching or shaking of the hands, legs, or chin.

Tremors associated with Parkinson's disease are called "rest tremors." This means that the tremors stop when a person uses the affected body part. Tremors are very subtle when they first appear. At this stage, the person experiencing the tremors is usually the only one who notices them. Tremors will gradually worsen as the disease progresses. Tremors typically appear on one side of the body and then spread to other parts of the body later on.

## 2. Difficulty walking

Subtle changes in a person's walking pattern could be an early sign of Parkinson's disease.

Someone who has Parkinson's disease might walk slowly or drag their feet as they walk. Many refer to this as a "shuffling gait."

The person might walk at an irregular pace, suddenly walking faster or slower or changing the length of their stride.

## 3. Cramped or small handwriting

Micrographia is a disorder that involves abnormally small or cramped handwriting.

Doctors associate micrographia with medical conditions that affect the nervous system, or neurodegenerative disorders, such as Parkinson's disease.

## 4. Loss of smell

Hyposmia occurs when someone loses their ability to smell. This is also called olfactory dysfunction. A loss of smell is a relatively common symptom, affecting 70-90 percent of people with Parkinson's disease.

Loss of smell is one of the most noticeable symptoms of Parkinson's disease that is not related to movement. It can appear several years before the disease affects a person's movement.

People who have hyposmia as a symptom of Parkinson's disease might experience:

- a dulled sense of smell
- difficulty detecting odors
- difficulty identifying odors
- difficulty telling the difference between odors

Doctors use smell identification tests to diagnose hyposmia, but the accuracy of these tests varies widely.



Having hyposmia does not always mean that someone has Parkinson's disease. A person's sense of smell can change for many reasons, such as age, smoking, or exposure to harsh chemicals. Hyposmia is also a symptom of other medical conditions, including Alzheimer's disease and Huntington's disease.

## 5. Sleep problems

Parkinson's disease can severely affect a person's ability to sleep. People who have Parkinson's disease may experience a wide range of sleep-related symptoms, including:

- insomnia
- excessive daytime fatigue
- narcolepsy
- sleep apnea
- nightmares
- uncontrolled or sporadic movements while asleep

## 6. Poor balance

Parkinson's disease specifically targets nerve cells called basal ganglia, which reside deep within the brain. Basal ganglia nerves control balance and flexi-

bility, so any damage to these nerves can impair a person's balance.

Doctors use a test called the pull test to assess a person's balance. The pull test involves a healthcare professional gently pulling a person's shoulders backward until they lose their balance and recording how long it takes them to regain it.

Healthy individuals recover after one or two steps, while people with Parkinson's disease may take a higher number of smaller steps to fully balance themselves.

## 7. Bradykinesia

Bradykinesia is a term that means slowness or absence of movement.

Bradykinesia causes a variety of symptoms, such as stiffness of the limbs and slow movements. A person who has bradykinesia might walk slower or have difficulty starting a movement.

Some people who have this symptom might misinterpret it as muscle weakness. However, this symptom does not affect muscle

strength.

## 8. Facial masking

Facial expressions involve many subtle, complex muscle movements. People with Parkinson's disease often have a reduced ability to make facial expressions. This is called facial masking.

Facial masking is related to bradykinesia. The facial muscles move more slowly or rigidly than usual. People who have facial masking may appear blank or emotionless, though their ability to feel emotions is not impaired. Facial masking can also cause someone to blink their eyes slower.

A person with facial masking might have difficulty communicating with others because changes in their facial expressions are less noticeable than usual.

## 9. Vocal changes

Changes in the volume and quality of a person's voice is another early sign of Parkinson's disease. Vocal changes may involve speaking in a softer tone, or starting to speak at a usual volume and then the voice becomes softer or fades away.

In other cases, a person might lose the usual variation in the volume and tone of their voice, so that the voice appears monotonous.

## 10. Stooping or hunched posture

People who have Parkinson's disease may notice changes in their posture due to other symptoms of the disease, such as mus-

cle rigidity.

People naturally stand so that their weight is evenly distributed over their feet. However, people who have Parkinson's disease may start bending forward, making them appear hunched or stooped over.

## 11. Constipation

Constipation is a common problem that can have a wide range of causes. Constipation is one of the most common non-motor symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease. Nearly 25 percent of people with the condition experience constipation before they develop motor symptoms.

Parkinson's disease can severely affect a person's psychological well-being. The disease lowers the body's natural levels of dopamine, which can cause changes in mood and behaviour. Some psychological symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease include:

- depression
- anxiety
- psychosis
- dementia
- confusion
- difficulty making plans or staying organized
- reduced problem-solving ability

## 13. Weight loss

People with Parkinson's disease might experience mild to moderate weight loss for several reasons.

Tremors and other motor symptoms associated with

Parkinson's may increase the body's natural energy requirements. Non-motor symptoms, such as loss of smell, depression, or digestive issues, might cause people to eat less, which may result in weight loss.

Parkinson's disease is difficult to diagnose, especially in the earlier stages. This is because the symptoms are subtler and more sporadic. However, knowing what symptoms to look for may encourage people to seek medical attention before they progress.

Early symptoms of Parkinson's disease include:

- tremors
- difficulty walking
- cramped or small handwriting
- loss of smell
- sleep problems
- poor balance
- bradykinesia
- facial masking
- voice changes
- stooping or hunched posture
- constipation
- psychological symptoms
- weight loss

Having these symptoms does not always mean that a person has Parkinson's disease. People over the age of 60 should consider speaking with their healthcare provider if they experience any of the symptoms listed above.

Early diagnosis leads to earlier treatment, which can improve a person's overall quality of life. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

# Bipolar disorder isn't the same for everyone. So people should have more say in how they're treated



By: Gordon Parker

Imagine you, or someone you know, is diagnosed with bipolar disorder. One drug is prescribed, but you have heard another drug is better. What are your next steps? Do you seek evidence? And if so, what type of evidence would you consider?

Around 2 per cent of the adult population have a bipolar disorder. It can create high levels of suffering, carry suicide risks, and persist for decades. Management options vary, and if you search for information online, it's easy to become overwhelmed by the many different views and interpretations of "the evidence" obtained from clinical trials. Some medications can be extremely helpful for stabilising mood, but they can often have side effects. Certain medications may be more beneficial for certain types of bipolar disorder, but how do you know which "type" you or a loved one has?

Clinical specialists, including psychiatrists, often rely on guidelines authored by professional organisations to evaluate the evidence for treatments. However, there is minimal agreement between many of the current guidelines. A new approach is needed that places emphasis on "real-world" effectiveness and respects the observations of people with bipolar disorder.

## Two types of bipolar disorder

As far back as Hippocrates, bipolar disorder has been known to the medical community. Originally called "manic-depressive psychosis", it is now known as bipolar I disorder. In the mid-1990s, bipolar II disorder was defined. Although this second "sibling" has always existed, it was previously viewed as more of a personality style, and frequently given the label of "cyclothymia".

Both bipolar I and bipolar II are marked by pronounced mood swings. During "highs", individuals feel energised and "wired". They talk more, spend more, and require less sleep but don't feel tired. They might experience a heightened sex drive; feel more creative, or so "bulletproof" they take more risks. Anxiety seems to melt away.

During "lows", depression rolls in like a fog. Sufferers may lie in bed for days, lacking any energy. They can't derive any pleasure in life. Cheerless and battling impaired cognitive capacity, they can be at greater risk of suicide. The key distinguishing feature between the two bipolar conditions is the presence of psychotic features (delusions and/or hallucinations) in those with bipolar I.

## Current treatments

Medication is the main way bipolar disorders are managed. Melbourne psychiatrist John Cade discovered the effectiveness of lithium as a treatment for manic depression in 1949. This landmark

research ushered in the era of condition-specific psychopharmacology.

Psychiatry can proudly claim its status as an evidence-based discipline. Practitioners refer to research-based guidelines to determine the best medications to help stabilise a bipolar disorder. Options now include lithium, three anti-epileptic drugs, multiple antipsychotic drugs and antidepressants. While most guidelines rate lithium highly for both bipolar types, we personally favour lithium as the first choice medication only for bipolar I, and the anti-seizure drug lamotrigine for bipolar II.

## But evidence isn't everything

In 2017, our research group examined 11 guidelines published by professional organisations. All were "evidence-based", but we found minimal agreement between them, thus raising questions about their validity. New guidelines have been published since then but the trend for minimal agreement continues.

Assessing a psychiatric evidence base is difficult. For medical trials, the treatment being tested is compared against a treatment in common use, and/or against a placebo. Results from multiple trials are aggregated to compare their overall impact.

But the way study participants are selected to participate in trials presents a problem. Recruitment is generally limited to those with milder conditions, those without co-existing disorders, or those taking limited medications.

Participants might also sign up to obtain medication at no cost, which may affect their motivation and reporting. Finally, the observations made by managing doctors commonly differ from those made by the patients about the benefits and side effect impact of the drugs given.

So there is a strong argument for the need for "real-world" studies prioritising the views of patients with a bipolar disorder, instead of judging drugs via clinical trials and external raters.

## Accounting for side effects

In addition to evaluating the effectiveness of any drug, we need to assess the side-effects. For instance, lithium can be the right medication for some with a bipolar disorder and, as noted, it is the most frequently recommended medication across clinical guidelines. However, it has multiple side effects.

Our 2021 efficacy study compared lithium and lamotrigine in a small sample of patients with bipolar II. For the 28 patients who completed the study, the benefits were similar for the two medications. But 50 per cent of the completers receiving lithium experienced distinctive cognitive impairment — side effects that affected their thinking and reasoning. This is of particular concern because bipolar disorders are known to be over-represented in creative people and high achievers. We suspect, from clinical observation, that lithium is not the best option for bipolar II, and the first author has long observed it is more cognitively "toxic" for those individuals with a bipolar II condition.

Many of the antipsychotic drugs nominated in guidelines also have major side effects, including weight gain and diabetes. People who are stable while taking these medications without major side effects should not be alarmed. But these risks support a push for more tailored treatments based on real-life costs and benefits, informed by people's experiences. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

# Short naps are good for health, say researchers – but be mindful of these potential drawbacks

By: Steven Bender

Napping during the day is an ancient custom that is practiced worldwide. While some people view napping as a luxurious indulgence, others see it as a way to maintain alertness and well-being. But napping can come with drawbacks as well as benefits.

As an orofacial pain specialist, I have extensive education in sleep medicine and how sleep impacts wellness, due mostly to the relationship between sleep and painful conditions such as headaches and facial pain. My training involved all aspects of sleep, especially sleep breathing disorders, insomnia and sleep-related movement disorders. As such, I'm aware of the complex nature of napping, and why a short nap—that is, a nap during the daytime that lasts from 20 to 30 minutes—may be beneficial in myriad ways.

## An abundance of health benefits

Research shows that there are many benefits to napping. Short naps can boost mental functioning and memory, as well as improve alertness, attention and reaction time. Short naps are also linked to increased productivity and creativity. Because napping seems to improve creative thinking, some companies have attempted to harness this by introducing napping rooms into the workplace.

What's more, it appears the brain uses nap time to process information gathered throughout the day, which appears to enhance problem-solving abilities. One small study revealed that people who took short naps were less frustrated and impulsive, which resulted in better focus and efficiency when performing work-related tasks.

Napping may even lead to an improved ability to learn new motor skills, such as a golf swing or the playing of a musical instrument.

This is because these memories or skills become consolidated in the brain during sleep, whether at night or while napping. Napping can also reduce stress. One study found that naps of approximately 20 minutes improved the overall mood of participants. However, longer naps lasting more than 30 minutes are not typically associated with improved mood and increased feelings of well-being.

Short naps may also be associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular diseases. If we are awake more than we should be, we tend to have a buildup of the "fight or flight" chemicals in our bodies. Studies show that more consistent sleep will help lower these chemicals, resulting in a normalization of blood pressure and heart rates. Napping appears to help this process for some people.

But just as in nighttime sleep, some people may have trouble drifting off for a nap, especially when they have limited time. Progressive muscle relaxation techniques have been shown to be beneficial for both nighttime sleep and napping. Other non-specific relaxation techniques, like listening to relaxing music, appear to also be beneficial for falling asleep. Interestingly, many people overestimate their time awake when trying to sleep and underestimate the time they actually spend sleeping.

## Napping can have drawbacks

One condition associated with napping longer than 30 minutes is sleep inertia—the grogginess and disorientation that people sometimes experience after waking from a longer nap. Usually, the longer the nap, the more sleep inertia there is to overcome. This can impair cognitive function from several minutes up to half an hour. In many cases, these effects can be minimised by consuming caffeine directly after the nap.

But it is important to note that caffeine is not a substitute for sleep. Caffeine acts



to temporarily block the action of a chemical known as adenosine, a sleep-promoting agent that builds up during waking hours. If you are habitually dependent on caffeine consumption to keep you awake and alert, it may suggest that there is an underlying sleep disorder such as insomnia or sleep apnea, in which a person temporarily stops breathing during sleep.

Long or late afternoon naps can also interfere with nighttime sleep, either by leading to difficulties falling asleep or staying asleep during the night. This disruption of the regular sleep-wake cycle can result in overall sleep deprivation, which can have numerous negative health effects. What's more, for those age 60 and up, longer naps—beyond 30 minutes—may increase the risk for cardiovascular problems. Researchers found that older adults taking naps for more than one hour per day have a higher incidence of increased blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels, sometimes known as metabolic syndrome.

The reason for this phenomenon is mostly unknown. Older individuals tend to nap more frequently than younger adults partly due to more disturbed sleep during

the night. This could be related to more pain or other health factors that will interfere with sleep, sleep altering medications and altered sleep rhythms seen with aging.

## Best practices

So, to maximise benefits while reducing risks, here are some tips: Keep naps short to avoid sleep inertia and nighttime sleep disruptions. Nap in the early afternoon, as that aligns with a decrease in energy levels after lunch and with the body's natural circadian dip, which is an increase in sleepiness similar to what occurs at dusk.

Avoid late afternoon naps, finish naps at least four to six hours before bedtime, and create the right environment by napping in a quiet, comfortable and dimly lit space. If you're struggling with daytime sleepiness, it's best to address the root cause rather than relying solely on napping. Reducing caffeine consumption, maintaining a regular sleep schedule and getting adequate nighttime sleep are essential steps to reduce daytime sleepiness.

Ultimately, napping should complement a healthy sleep routine, not serve as a substitute for sufficient nighttime rest. A balanced approach to napping can contribute to a more energised, focused and resilient life. (Courtesy: Scrollin)

# Advancements in neuro and spine care: A minimally invasive approach

By: Dr Satnam Singh Chhabra

In the realm of medical science, the complexities of neurology and spine-related ailments have long been a formidable challenge.

The burden of these conditions affecting the brain and spinal cord has been on a constant rise, warranting a concerted effort to raise awareness and address the escalating incidence of these issues, particularly in tier II and III cities. It is imperative that we shed light on the surging cases of neurological disorders spanning across all age groups, and the recent advancements that have revolutionized treatment approaches.

At a recent session on neurology and spine health, our focus was squarely on the burgeoning cases of brain and spine complications that have taken an alarming toll on public health. The objective was clear—to educate and inform the public about the avail-

ability of advanced minimally invasive treatment options, a ray of hope for those grappling with these intricate disorders.

Patients frequently present with a range of distressing symptoms, from persistent headaches and migraines to sudden bouts of dizziness or unconsciousness, impaired mobility, balance issues, sensory and coordination problems, and even difficulties with speech and swallowing. An accurate diagnosis is the cornerstone of effective intervention, guiding us in addressing conditions such as brain tumors, low backache, and spinal diseases.

One of the most remarkable developments in the field of neurosurgery is the advent of Keyhole Surgery, an innovative and less invasive alternative that offers a multitude of benefits. This approach ensures minimal scarring, reduced blood loss, quicker recovery times, and shorter hospital stays. The cosmetic advantages are un-

deniable, as this technique preserves bone and muscle integrity, minimizing trauma and promoting a speedier return to normalcy.

The landscape of neurosciences has witnessed rapid advancements, particularly in the realm of minimally invasive surgeries. This paradigm shift has revolutionized the treatment landscape, even for the most intricate and complex brain and spinal ailments. While the specter of open and traditional surgeries has long cast a shadow of fear on patients, recent progress has rendered neurosurgeries minimally invasive, boasting an impeccable safety record with minimal blood loss and swift recuperation.

Beyond the cosmetic appeal, the advantages of minimally invasive procedures extend to preserving bone and muscle structures, allowing patients to regain their physical contours with minimal disruption. The recovery process, too, is significantly expedited when

compared to traditional open surgeries, further enhancing the appeal of these advanced techniques.

Minimally invasive neuro-endoscopic procedures have emerged as a triumph in the surgical field, particularly in the context of complex, hard-to-access tumors. Even the most intricate cases can now be addressed with a remarkably low risk profile and positive outcomes. An encouraging fact is that around half of brain tumors are non-cancerous, and with proper treatment, patients can often reclaim their normal lives.

Conventional open surgeries, while still an option, harbor the specter of blood loss, cosmetic implications, and even permanent paralysis or disability. In cases where conventional surgery may pose undue risks, minimally invasive approaches shine with their minimal pain, precise intervention, and cosmetic advantages.

A significant byproduct of technological progress in

Neuro Surgery is the vastly improved post-operative quality of life. This underlines the importance of planned surgeries, where meticulous collaboration among a multidisciplinary team ensures precision in outcomes, rather than leaving anything to chance.

In a world where medical advancements are rapidly shaping our approach to even the most intricate ailments, the realm of neurology and spine care stands out as a beacon of progress. By embracing minimally invasive techniques, we are not only redefining treatment paradigms but also offering patients a new lease on life—one that is characterized by lesser pain, quicker recovery, and enhanced outcomes. The future of neuro and spine care looks promising, where precision and innovation converge to alleviate suffering and restore hope. (The author is the HOD, Neurosurgery at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, New Delhi)



# Pak's special court postpones hearing of post-arrest bail applications by Imran Khan, Qureshi

ISLAMABAD, Sept 3: A special Pakistani court has postponed the hearing of post-arrest bail applications of former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his close aide Shah Mahmood Qureshi in a case related to the alleged disclosure of state secrets till the Islamabad High Court decides a plea challenging the court's jurisdiction.

The purported cipher (secret diplomatic cable) contained an account of a meeting between US State Department officials, including Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu, and Pakistani envoy Asad Majeed Khan last year.

Of late, Khan has come under increased scrutiny following the publication of a purported copy of the secret cable by the US media outlet The Intercept, with many in the previous government led by Shehbaz Sharif pointing fingers at the PTI chief for being the source of the leak.

Qureshi, 67-year-old former foreign minister and Pakistan



Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's Vice Chairman was arrested on August 19 under the Official Secrets Act for violating the secrecy of the official cable sent by the Pakistani embassy in the US to the foreign office when he was the foreign minister.

A special court here has postponed the hearing of post-arrest

bail applications submitted by Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his close aide Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the diplomatic cipher case till the IHC decides a plea challenging the court's jurisdiction, the Express Tribune reported.

Meanwhile, the Lahore High Court (LHC) will address petitions

on Monday filed by 70-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Khan against the rejection of his pre-arrest bail applications in seven different cases.

Khan, who served as the country's prime minister until April last year, currently faces around 180 cases. These cases primarily stem from incidents that occurred following the sacking of the Lahore corps commander's house on May 9. In these petitions, presented by Barrister Salman Safdar, Khan has also named the Attock jail superintendent as a respondent.

He argues that his bail applications were dismissed due to his non-appearance in court after being convicted in the Toshakhana case on August 5. The cricketer-turned-politician seeks a fair consideration of his bail applications on their merits.

During an in-camera hearing, Judge Abul Hasnat Muhammad Zulqarnain of the Islamabad ATC-1, who was recently appointed as a judge of a special court handling cases under the Official Secrets

Act, 1923, was informed by the prosecution that Khan had challenged both the special court's jurisdiction and his jail trial in the IHC.

The court advised PTI lawyers to await the IHC's decision and consider bail matters thereafter. It further recommended withdrawing the bail applications and re-filing them after the IHC's ruling. A hearing on both defendants' bail requests is scheduled for Monday.

Additionally, an ATC in Lahore has directed authorities to include Khan's sisters, Aleema Khan and Uzma Khan, in an investigation into four different cases filed against them following incidents on May 9.

Aleema and Uzma appeared in the ATC of Judge Abher Gul after their interim bail expired. They had been requesting inclusion in the investigation for three months, and the judge ordered the investigating officers to do so promptly, expressing a desire to conclude the case and receive the investigation report. (PTI)

# Netanyahu demands Eritrean migrants to be deported immediately



TEL AVIV, Sept 3: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday he wants Eritrean migrants involved in a violent clash in Tel Aviv to be deported immediately and has ordered a plan to remove all of the country's African migrants.

The remarks came a day after bloody protests by rival groups of Eritreans in south Tel Aviv left dozens of people injured.

Eritreans, supporters and opponents of Eritrea's government, faced off with construction lumber, pieces of metal and rocks, smashing shop windows and police cars.

Israeli police in riot gear shot tear gas, stun grenades and live rounds while officers on horseback tried to control the protesters.

The violence on Saturday returned to the fore the issue of migrants, which has long divided Israel.

Its resurgence comes as Israel is torn over Netanyahu's judicial overhaul plan, and supporters cite the migrant issue as a reason why the courts should be reined in, saying they have stood in the way of pushing the migrants out.

"We want harsh measures against the rioters, including the immediate deportation of those who took part," Netanyahu said in a special ministerial meeting called to deal with the aftermath of the violence.

He requested that the ministers present him with plans "for the removal of all the other illegal infiltrators," and noted in his remarks that the Supreme Court struck down some measures meant to coerce the migrants to leave.

About 25,000 African migrants live in Israel, mainly from Sudan and Eritrea, who say they fled conflict or repression. Israel recognizes very few as asylum seekers,

seeing them overwhelmingly as economic migrants, and says it has no legal obligation to keep them.

The country has tried a variety of tactics to force them out, including sending some to a remote prison, holding part of their wages until after they agree to leave the country or offering cash payments to those who agree to move to another country, somewhere in Africa.

Critics accuse the government of trying to coerce the migrants into leaving. Under international law, Israel cannot forcibly send migrants back to a country where their life or liberty may be at risk.

Netanyahu said Sunday he didn't think deporting supporters of the Eritrean government would be a problem.

Migrants' supporters say Israel, a country founded upon the ashes of the Holocaust and built up by Jewish refugees, should welcome those seeking asylum. Opponents claim migrants have brought crime to the low-income southern Tel Aviv neighbourhoods where they have settled.

The clashes came as Eritrean government supporters marked the 30th anniversary of the current ruler's rise to power, an event held near the Eritrean embassy in south Tel Aviv. Eritrea has one of the world's worst human rights records and migrants in Israel and elsewhere say they fear death if they were to return.

Critics see Netanyahu's judicial overhaul plan as a power grab meant to weaken the courts and limit judicial oversight on government decisions and legislation. Supporters say it is meant to restore power to elected legislators and rein in what they say is an interventionist and liberal-leaning justice system. (AP)

# Pakistan's interim PM Kakar terms May 9 violence 'attempted coup'



ISLAMABAD, Sept 3: Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has termed the May 9 violence by supporters of former premier Imran Khan "an attempted coup and civil war" that targeted Army chief Gen Asim Munir and his team, a media report said on Sunday. Kakar, however, denied that revenge was a motive behind taking legal action against the perpetrators of the violence.

Dozens of military installations and government buildings, including the army headquarters in Rawalpindi, were attacked during the May 9 violence following the arrest of 70-year-old Khan by paramilitary Rangers.

"The vandalism and arson on May 9 were witnessed by the whole world and international newspapers reported the tragedy. This kind of manipulation is not acceptable in any form of government," Kakar said in an interview with Geo news channel. The May 9 violence was "an attempted coup and civil war, the target of which was the serving army chief and his team in the military," he said. Kakar said the government does not want to create an impression that revenge is being taken against the accused of May 9 violence.

However, he added, if legal action is not taken against those who violated the country's laws and resorted to violence, then "we will be seen as a party to the matter".

The interim premier maintained no political party had the right to throw stones at others, abuse them, and burn buildings. Hundreds of Khan's supporters have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the May 9 violence. Khan, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman, is also facing numerous cases related to attacks on military installations. Currently, he is facing over 150 cases related to terrorism, murder and blasphemy. He is currently lodged in Attock jail. His party claims that its members were not involved in the attacks, but the govt and military say they have "irrefutable evidence" of their involvement. (AP)

# Taiwan suspends work, transport and classes as Typhoon Haikui slams into the island

BEIJING, Sept 3: Taiwan suspended flights, rail transport and ferry services along with classes and outdoor events and urged workers to stay home on Sunday as Typhoon Haikui churned around the southern part of the island.

The typhoon made landfall in Taitung county on the Pacific-facing east coast around 3 pm (0700 GMT) Sunday, bringing sustained winds of 155 kph (96 mph) and gusts of 190 kph (120 mph).

The winds and driving rains forced in unsecured doors, uprooted trees — at least one of which crushed a parked minivan — and caused flooding in some low-lying areas. There had been no mass evacuations, although dozens sheltered in school gymnasiums and public meeting halls.

There appeared to be little serious damage, and some shops remained open, partly to dispose of locally grown fruits and vegetables that would otherwise go to waste.

Haikui's arrival came as Typhoon Saola continued to weaken while swirling along the Chinese coast, where 900,000 people and 80,000 fishing vessels had been moved to safety.

Most of Hong Kong and parts of the coastal mainland had suspended business, transport and classes. Damage appeared to be minimal, however, and restrictions had largely been lifted by



Sunday. On Saturday night, the Hong Kong Observatory had canceled all warnings.

Among events cancelled in Taiwan were a hot air balloon festival in the central Taichung region, several outdoor concerts, art events and a baseball game. National parks and treacherous roads in the island's mountainous center were also closed.

Haikui was expected to continue toward China after crossing over Taiwan, and authorities in the Chinese city of Shantou in Guangdong province were advising residents to take precautions.

Because of the previous Typhoon Saola,

workers in a number of Chinese cities stayed at home and students saw the start of their school year postponed from Friday to Monday. Trading on Hong Kong's stock market was suspended Friday and hundreds of people were stranded at the airport after about 460 flights were canceled in the key regional business and travel hub.

The cross-border bridge connecting Hong Kong, the gambling hub of Macao and manufacturing center of Zhuhai was closed at one point, with Macao leader Ho Iat Seng ordering a halt to casino operations.

In recent months, China has experienced some of its heaviest rains and deadliest flooding in years. Dozens of people have been killed, including in outlying mountainous parts of the capital, Beijing.

Despite the twin storms, China's military continued to conduct operations meant to intimidate Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy that Beijing seeks to bring under Chinese sovereignty by force if necessary.

Taiwan's Defense Ministry said it was monitoring the movements of Chinese military aircraft and navy ships near the island. However, it said there were no indications any had crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait or entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone as they frequently do. (AP)

# 'Your nation has your back': Biden tells Idalia's Florida victims

LIVE OAK, Sept 3: President Joe Biden on Saturday saw from the sky Hurricane Idalia's impact across a swath of Florida before he set out on a walking tour of a city recovering from the storm. Notably absent was Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican presidential candidate who declined to join Biden after he suggested that the Democrat's presence could hinder disaster response efforts.

Biden, when asked about his rival's absence, said he was not disappointed by the turn of events, but welcomed the presence of Rick Scott, one of the state's two Republican U.S. senators.

He pledged the federal government's total support for Floridians.

"I'm here today to deliver a clear message to the people of Florida and throughout the Southeast," Biden said after the walking tour. He spoke out doors near a church that had parts of its sheet metal roof peeled back by Idalia's powerful winds and a home half crushed by a fallen tree.

"As I've told your governor, if there's anything your state needs, I'm ready to mobilize that support," he continued. "Anything they need related to these storms. Your nation has your back and we'll be with you until the job is done."

Earlier, the mayor of Live Oak, which is about 80 miles east of Tallahassee, the state capital, thanked Biden and first lady Jill Biden for coming and "showing us that we're important to you."

"Everybody thinks Florida is rich, but this is not one of the richest counties in the state and there are people who are suffering," said Frank Davis, adding he knew of no loss of life or serious injury. At Suwannee Pineview Elementary School, where the Bidens were briefed on the storm damage, local officials offered praise for early disaster declarations by the White House and the quick flow of federal aid. "What the federal government is doing ... is a big deal," Scott said.

Helping Floridians and their communities get back on their feet was the emphasis at the briefing on response and recovery efforts, with DeSantis' conspicuous absence seemingly not a concern for residents and officials.

Deanne Criswell, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, told reporters as the president flew from Washington that her team and the governor's team had "worked collectively" to determine that Biden would visit Live Oak. She said her teams "have heard no concerns over any impact to the communities that we're going to visit today."

On Friday, hours after Biden said he would be meeting with DeSantis, the governor's office issued a statement saying there were no plans for that. "In these rural communities, and so soon after impact, the security preparations alone that would go into setting up such a meeting would shut down ongoing recovery ef-

orts," DeSantis spokesman Jeremy Redfern said in a statement.

DeSantis' office said his public schedule Saturday included stops in Keaton Beach, about 60 miles southwest of Live Oak, and Horseshoe Beach, about 75 miles away, with the last event beginning at 1:45 p.m. Criswell said aboard the flight that power is being restored and the roads are all open in the area where Biden was going. "Access is not being hindered," she said, adding that her team had been in "close coordination" with the governor's staff.

Idalia made landfall Wednesday morning along Florida's sparsely populated Big Bend region as a Category 3 storm, causing widespread flooding and damage before moving north to drench Georgia and the Carolinas.

As Biden left Washington on Saturday morning, reporters asked what happened with the meeting. "I don't know. He's not going to be there," the president said of DeSantis.

The political disconnect between both sides is a break from the recent past, since Biden and DeSantis met when the president toured Florida after Hurricane Ian hit the state last year, and following the Surfside condo collapse in Miami Beach in summer 2021. But DeSantis is now running to unseat Biden, and he only left the Republican presidential primary trail with Idalia barreling toward his state. Putting aside political rivalries

following natural disasters can be tricky, meanwhile.

Another 2024 presidential candidate, former Republican New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, has long been widely criticized in GOP circles for embracing then-President Barack Obama during a tour of damage 2012's Hurricane Sandy did to his state. Christie was even asked about the incident last month, during the first Republican presidential debate.

Both Biden and DeSantis at first suggested that helping storm victims would outweigh partisan differences. But the governor began suggesting that a presidential trip would complicate response logistics as the week wore on.

"There's a time and a place to have political season," the governor said before Idalia made landfall. "But then there's a time and a place to say that this is something that's life threatening, this is something that could potentially cost somebody their life, it could cost them their livelihood." By Friday, the governor was telling reporters of Biden, "one thing I did mention to him on the phone" was "it would be very disruptive to have the whole security apparatus that goes" with the president "because there are only so many ways to get into" many of the hardest hit areas. "What we want to do is make sure that the power restoration continues and the relief efforts continue and we don't have any interruption in that," DeSantis said. (AP)

# Russia attacks Ukrainian port before key grain deal

KYIV, Sept 3: Two people were hospitalised following a 3½-hour Russian drone barrage against port infrastructure in Ukraine's Odesa region on Sunday, officials said.

The attack comes a day before Russian President Vladimir Putin is due to meet with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss the resumption of food shipments from Ukraine under a Black Sea grain agreement that Moscow broke off from in July. Russian forces fired 25 Iranian-made Shahed drones along the Danube River in the early hours of Sunday, 22 of which were shot down by air defenses, the Ukrainian air force said on Telegram.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, described the assault as part of a Russian drive "to provoke a food crisis and hunger in the world." Moscow hasn't commented on the attack.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, two people were killed and two others were wounded during Russian shelling Sunday on the village of Vuhledar in the Donetsk area.

Artillery fire hit eight settlements across the region, Ukraine's National Police wrote on Telegram.

Ukrainian prosecutors also announced Sunday that they had opened a war crimes investigation into the death of a police officer killed by Russian shelling on the town of Seredyna-Buda on Saturday afternoon.

Two other police officers and one civilian were wounded during the attack, which hit Ukraine's north-eastern Sumy region. (AP)

# Pope joins shamans and evangelicals to highlight Mongolia's faith diversity

ULAANBAATAR, Sept 3: With China's crackdown on religious minorities as a backdrop, Pope Francis joined Mongolian shamans, Buddhist monks and a Russian Orthodox priest Sunday to highlight the role that religions can play in forging world peace, as he presided over an interfaith meeting highlighting Mongolia's tradition of religious tolerance. Francis listened intently as a dozen faith leaders — Jewish, Muslim, Bahai, Hindu, Shinto and evangelical Christian among them — described their beliefs and their relationship with heaven. Several said the traditional Mongolian ger, or round-shaped yurt, was a potent symbol of harmony with the divine — a warm place of family unity, open to the heavens, where strangers are welcome. The interfaith event, held at a theater in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, came midway through Francis' four-day visit to Mongolia, the first by a pope. He is in Mongolia to minister to one of the world's smallest and newest Catholic communities and highlight Mongolia's tradition of tolerance in a region where the Holy See's relations with neighbouring China and Russia are often strained. According to statistics by the Catholic nonprofit group Aid to the Church in Need, Mongolia is 53% Buddhist, 39% atheist, 3% Muslim, 3% Shaman and 2% Christian. Later Sunday, Francis was to preside over a Mass in the capital's sports stadium that the Vatican had said would also be attended by pilgrims from China. One small group of Chinese faithful from Xinjiang attended his meeting at the city's cathedral Saturday. (AP)

# Plans for permanent memorial to UK's Queen Elizabeth II to be unveiled in 2026

LONDON, Sept 3: The plans for a permanent memorial to the late Queen Elizabeth II will be unveiled by an independent body chaired by her former Private Secretary in 2026, the year that would have marked the monarch's 100th birthday, the UK government announced in London on Sunday.

Queen Elizabeth II died aged 96 at Balmoral Castle in Scotland on September 8 last year before being laid to rest at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle in a State Funeral on September 19.

As the one-year anniversary of her passing approaches this month, the Cabinet Office unveiled plans for a "fitting tribute" to be finalised by a new Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee to be chaired by Lord Robin Janvrin.

The committee will be responsi-

ble for considering and recommending proposals for a memorial to Queen Elizabeth II, jointly supported by the UK government and the Royal Household.

It will develop proposals for both a permanent memorial and a national legacy programme that will allow everyone in the UK to commemorate Queen Elizabeth's life of service, the Cabinet Office said.

"It is an honour to be asked to chair the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee. It will be a unique challenge to try to capture for future generations Her Late Majesty's extraordinary contribution to our national life throughout her very long reign," said Lord Janvrin.

The UK government said it will support the proposals and will con-



sider funding options as the proposals develop.

"Queen Elizabeth II was our longest reigning Monarch and greatest public servant. Lord Janvrin will now begin the important

work of designing a fitting tribute to her legacy of service to our nation and the Commonwealth," said Oliver Dowden, Cabinet Office minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

The Queen Elizabeth Memorial Committee will consider the late Queen's public service throughout her 70-year reign as the longest-serving British monarch and the causes she supported. It will also engage with the public to ensure ideas and suggestions from across the UK are captured, the Cabinet Office said.

"The plans will be unveiled to coincide with what would have been Her Late Majesty's hundredth birthday year in 2026," it added.

A range of senior figures and experts will be appointed to develop ideas and bring recommendations to the late monarch's son and heir, King Charles III, and the Prime Minister.

The further appointments to the committee are to be announced over time. (PTI)



## Campaigning for bypolls in Tripura ends

AGARTALA, Sept 3: Campaigning for the September 5 bypolls in Dhanpur and Boxanagar assembly seats in Tripura's Sepahijala district ended on Sunday.

In both the constituencies, BJP organised mega rallies, road shows, motorbike rallies and door-to-door campaigns to reach out to voters.

Chief minister Manik Saha led the party's campaign from the front while ministers, MLAs and leaders joined the campaign trail in the last couple of days.

CPI(M) politburo member Manik Sarkar and party's state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury along with leaders campaigned for its candidates, but Tipra Motha, the main opposition, and Congress stayed away from campaigning making the electoral battle an one-on-one contest.

BJP's Tajfajal Hussain, who unsuccessfully contested the Assembly election in February, will take on CPI(M)'s Mizan Hussain in minority-dominated Boxanagar constituency, still considered the Left party's stronghold.

Despite efforts by the BJP, the CPI(M) had managed to retain the seat by a margin of 4,849 votes. Of the total 43,087 voters, electors from the minority community count for around 55 per cent, which is seen as a major vote bank for the CPI(M).

Dhanpur, once a strong bastion of the communists, is heading for direct fight between BJP's Bindu Debnath and CPI(M)'s Kaushik Debnath. According to political analysts, two independent candidates who are in the battle are unlikely to make any impact.

In the 2023 Assembly elections, the BJP won by a margin of 3,500 votes and the Tipra Motha nominee had polled over 8,000 votes, which ensured the saffron party's victory after 25 five years. Mizan is the son of Boxanagar CPI(M) MLA Samsol Haque who passed away in July causing a vacancy. The bypoll in Dhanpur was necessitated after Union minister Pratima Bhounik resigned from the assembly days after her election.

"The campaign for the bypolls in two Assembly constituencies came to an end on Sunday without any trouble. All steps have been taken to ensure free, fair and peaceful bypolls on September 5", Sepahijala district magistrate told PTI.

## Kuki chiefs' request to Assam Rifles

IMPHAL, Sept 3: A prominent Kuki organisation has requested the Assam Rifles not to deploy its unit under the command of a Meitei officer at Sehlon in Manipur's Chandel district "in the interest of peace and security."

In a letter to the director general of Assam Rifles, the Kuki Chiefs' Association (KCA) of Khengioi subdivision in Chandel district said the law and order situation in Manipur is still unstable and it can aggravate with a little misadventure and miscalculation on the part of the security establishments.

"We have no intention to interfere in the routine movement of Assam Rifles battalions, but leaving the charge of a unit to a Meitei officer at this time and place will not serve the interest of the public of the area," it said.

"We want to maintain cordial relations with the Assam Rifles as usual. We wish our goodwill gesture is reciprocated accordingly," the letter, signed by the association president, T Sheithang Haokip, added. (PTI)

# Manipur: Last of 10 Kuki families in Imphal shifted to Kangpokpi

IMPHAL, Sept 3: The Manipur government has shifted the last of 10 Kuki families comprising 24 members from Imphal's New Lambulane area where they had been living for decades and did not move elsewhere even after the ethnic violence broke out in Manipur four months ago.

These families were taken to the Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi district on the northern side of Imphal Valley early on Saturday, as they had become "vulnerable targets", an official said.

The last of 10 Kuki families were provided "safe passage" to Motbung, in Kangpokpi district, some 25 km from Imphal, he said.

But Kuki families alleged that they were forcibly evicted from their residences in the New Lambulane area to Motbung.

S Prim Vaiphei, one of the volunteers guarding the Kuki locality in the heart of Imphal, said that a "team of uniformed armed personnel claiming to be acting under directions from the home department



came to New Lambulane, Imphal in the intervening night of September 1 and 2 and forcibly evicted the last remaining residents of the Kuki locality in Imphal from their homes".

Around 300 tribal families, who were living in the New Lambulane area, had earlier left the place in phases since the ethnic violence began on May 3.

"Twenty-four of us were not given time to even pack our belongings and we were herded into vehicles with only the clothes we were wearing," Vaiphei said in a statement.

Expressing strong displeasure over the "forcible eviction", Kuki Inpi Manipur, the apex body of the Kuki tribes, in two statements, said, they stood "aghast at the das-

tardly attack against the last of the Kuki Zo volunteers (numbering about 24 men) who have been guarding the houses and properties of the Kukis at New Lambulane. The volunteers were later escorted by security personnel".

The Kuki body reiterated its demand for a separate administration. "There is now total separation of the Meiteis and Kukis, it is imperative that the central govt should constitutionally recognise this separation at the earliest," it said.

More than 160 people lost their lives and several hundreds were injured since the ethnic clashes broke out in Manipur in early May, after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals — Nagas and Kukis — constitute little over 40 per cent and reside in the hill districts. (PTI)

## 'Ethnic cleansing complete' in Imphal valley: Chidambaram

NEW DELHI, Sept 3: Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Sunday alleged that "ethnic cleansing is complete" in Manipur's Imphal Valley and said there can be nothing more "shameful" than this development.

The former home minister cited a media report which claimed that the last five Kuki families in Imphal were "forcibly removed" from their homes by the authorities.

"This means that 'ethnic cleansing' is complete in the Imphal Valley that is dominated by the Meitei people," he said in a post on X.

"A state government presides over 'ethnic cleansing' and the central government claims that the government of the state is being

carried on in accordance with the Constitution," Chidambaram said. There can be nothing more shameful than this development, he said.

"It marks a new low in India's descent into lawlessness," Chidambaram said.

More than 160 people lost their lives and several hundreds were injured since the ethnic clashes broke out in Manipur in early May after a Tribal Solidarity March was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Nagas and Kukis constitute little over 40 per cent and reside in the hill districts. (PTI)



## Tripura ex-CM criticises 'one nation, one election' panel



AGARTALA, Sept 3: Former Tripura chief minister and CPI(M) leader Manik Sarkar has slammed the Centre for the formation of a panel to explore the feasibility of 'one nation, one election' and calling a special Parliament session this month, stating that the BJP is "scared" of the opposition bloc INDIA. Sarkar, the CPI(M) politburo member, claimed that the "Centre is reportedly planning to bring a new bill in the Lok Sabha to implement 'one nation, one election' idea".

"The Narendra Modi government has convened a special session of Parliament without unfolding the agenda just a few days after the conclusion of the Monsoon session. "In a democracy, the government

can convene such a special session but what is the motive? The Centre is reportedly planning to bring a new bill to implement the 'one nation, one election' idea," he said on Saturday during an election rally at Maniapatgarh under the Dhanpur Assembly constituency in Sepahijala district.

Bypolls to Dhanpur and Boxanagar Assembly seats in Sepahijala district will be held on September 5.

Sarkar also claimed that the BJP is "apprehensive" about the electoral outcome in the upcoming assembly polls in five states and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"They are scared of the opposition alliance INDIA. It will be tough for the BJP to return to Delhi if the saffron party faces defeat in the upcoming assembly elections in five states. That's the reason, it contemplates to push one nation one idea before the next general elections," the CPI(M) leader said.

The Centre has constituted the committee headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind to explore the possibility of 'one nation, one election'.

The move comes after the government called a special session of Parliament between September 18 and 22, the agenda for which is under wraps.

In Tripura, the BJP's vote share has reduced from 51 per cent in 2018 to 39 per cent in the 2023 Assembly elections and its seat count has also slipped from 46 to 33 during the period, Sarkar added. (PTI)

## Vote for INDIA candidates in Tripura bypolls: Cong



AGARTALA, Sept 3: The Tripura Pradesh Congress on Sunday urged people to vote for opposition bloc INDIA candidates in the Dhanpur and Boxanagar assembly bypolls. The bypolls are scheduled on September 5.

"The party's rank and file will have to strengthen the organisation as only the Congress can keep the country united. Now, the party is giving a lead at national politics. We must work hard to connect the organisation with the masses," Congress MLA Sudip

Roy Barman said while speaking at a meeting of Sonamura district Congress committee in the poll-bound subdivision in Sepahijala district.

Referring to Congress working president Billal Miah's switching over to BJP days before the bypolls, Roy Barman said Billal wanted to contest as the party candidate from Boxanagar.

"When he (Billal) told me about his aspiration to contest from Boxanagar with CPI(M) support, I told him that CPI(M) candidate Samsul Haque won the election just five-and-a-half months ago. It will not be wise for the Congress to put up a candidate in the seat. After three days, he joined the BJP. I wish him luck," he said. Recently, chief minister Manik Saha welcomed Billal Miah along with 8,000 voters to the BJP.

Roy Barman appealed to people to vote for Haque as the Congress did not field a candidate. The CPI(M), part of the INDIA alliance, is contesting in both Assembly seats while the main opposition party, Tipra Motha, has opted out of the election process. Earlier, the Congress had organised a rally where 209 voters of BJP and Trinamool Congress joined the party and vowed to work for it.

On Saturday, Tripura Yuba Trinamool Congress vice-president Nil Kamal Saha along with another leader joined the Congress in presence of PCC president Asish Kumar Saha at the Congress headquarters. (PTI)

## Nagaland opposing UCC, FCA a welcome step: RPP



DIMAPUR, Sept 3: The Rising People's Party (RPP) said on Sunday that the decision of the Nagaland state government to oppose/repudiate UCC and FCA in a special session of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly is most welcome.

The Nagaland based political party also said almost every political party, civil society organisation and the church had opposed either FCA or the UCC, and the NDPP-BJP coalition has done the right thing in opposing these two contentious matters without any reservation.

On the two contentious issues, the RPP said almost every Naga had opposed the FCA and the UCC, "and the unity of purpose

shown gives rise to the hope that despite our differences Naga people can live together without being divisive and destructive".

The RPP then congratulated all the "tribal hohos" and the churches for voicing their opinion on the two issues at hand.

In the meantime, the state government is further advised to take the opinion of all the political parties in the state when it comes to prominent issues involving the state as a whole.

"While differences certainly exists on matters of principle and governance, every political party in the state is working for the welfare of the people, and the RPP is no exception," it added. (NNN)

## HNLC expresses resentment over summoning of its leader

### Meghalaya court summons HNLC general secretary

SHILLONG, Sept 3: The proscribed Hyniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) has expressed its displeasure on Sunday about the government's decision to summon its general secretary Sainkupar Nongtraw despite the ongoing peace talks.

The outfit also demanded that the government drops all charges against all its leaders and to immediately offer general amnesty failing which it may have to withdraw from the ongoing peace talks.

"The HNLC vehemently condemns the recent actions taken by the government, specifically the notice publicly summoning Sainkupar Nongtraw, general secretary of HNLC, to court amidst the ongoing formal talks," HNLC said in a statement.

It also said this is not the first instance where HNLC leaders, including the chairman and the finance secretary of the outfit, have been summoned during informal discussions.

"Such actions not only undermine our trust in the government but also have the potential to hinder and disrupt the efforts towards achieving a lasting resolution," the statement also said.

Stating that the HNLC remains committed to the peace process and has actively engaged in negotiations with the state government, the statement said, "However, we are deeply concerned about the double standard exhibited by the government."

"The state government demanded my attendance at a meeting with a strict deadline of September 30, while the MMA, on the other hand, specifically targets all senior leaders of HNLC to appear in person," it further said.

The HNLC also emphasized that all leaders and



cadres will not come out openly unless and until its political demands are met. It also urged the government to hold talks with the delegation authorized by the HNLC central executive committee and led by the vice chairman.

To ensure the success of the peace process, the HNLC said, "We demand that the charges against HNLC leaders be dropped and a general amnesty be offered. Without these essential steps, our key leader will not actively participate in the ongoing negotiations. While we have authorised the vice chairman and their delegation to represent us in talks, the lack of seriousness displayed by the government is becoming increasingly evident. If this attitude persists, we will be left with no option but to withdraw from the negotiations entirely."

"HNLC remains steadfast in its commitment to achieve lasting peace and a political solution. We hope that the government will reassess its actions and work collaboratively towards a mutually agreeable solution," it added.

On the other hand, the HNLC said that practi-

cally, none of the peace accords in Northeast India have materialized, except for the Mizo Accord.

"Even the instrument of accession, which your government forced upon our nation 76 years ago, has not been implemented in letter and spirit. Additionally, the standstill agreement signed between the Indian government and Federation of Khasi States was violated," the HNLC said.

"Given these circumstances, can you expect us to trust your government repeatedly? If your government demonstrates a willingness to meet our political demand, which is similar to the Indian government's public stance on the division of Jammu and Kashmir, then we would consider placing our trust in your administration. On August 5, 2019, the Indian parliament announced the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir. After 86 days, on the midnight of October 31, 2019, Kashmir was officially bifurcated. If your government shows the same determination in dividing Meghalaya and declaring Hyniewtrep as a separate and equal state with a specific timeline, just as they did with Kashmir, then we would be more inclined to trust your governance," the HNLC added.

In such a scenario, it said, "We would not require any financial assistance or what you refer to as 'rehabilitation packages' for the HNLC. The repeated singling out of HNLC leaders through posted notices is deserving of strong criticism. Nonetheless, we want to make it clear that we do not fear oppressive laws or even death, and we will persist in our fight without compromising our principles. Fear has never been a part of our policy, and our political armed struggle holds a significant place in the history of our movement." (NNN)

## Arunachal small traders seek resumption of operation in Indo-Myanmar border haat

NAMPONG, Sept 3: The Covid-19 pandemic came as a bolt from the blue for Khingwom Mossang and many of her peers as their source of income from trading activities at Pangsau Pass in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, along the India-Myanmar border, came to a grinding halt in 2020.

Not only Mossang but over 100 small traders have been facing difficulties after the border trade with Myanmar stopped with the outbreak of the pandemic.

Two years on, they are still running from pillar to post to sustain their families and pleading with the government for early resumption of border trade, which began in 2000.

For 46-year-old Mossang, the sudden halt in trading activities at



Pangsau Pass came as a "shock" as she and her husband are now facing a tough time running their family.

"We are passing through a hard phase of life. We are finding difficul-

ties in meeting our day-to-day necessities, including electricity bills and others. Our income from other activities is not sufficient," Mossang said.

She and her husband were engaged

in border trade after 2000, and trading was their only source of income.

They earned an average of ₹ 1-1.5 lakh per month.

"We could not even recover our money as we supplied commodities to the traders of Myanmar on credit," Mossang, who used to sell vegetables, grocery items and utensils, said, while appealing to the government to initiate measures to re-open border trade.

Tenya Mossang (47), another trader from Nampong, has a similar story to tell.

"The economic conditions of many families, who were dependent on the border trade, became worse. They are now facing difficulties to survive," Tenya, who owns a small shop in Nampong town, said.

"Earlier, I earned an average of ₹

40,000 monthly by selling cosmetic products and food items through border trade. But now I am hardly able to earn ₹ 5,000 a month, which is not enough to fulfil the needs of my family," she added.

Wichak Morang (36) from Theremkan Village near Nampong is now working as a daily wage earner after the border trade activities stopped.

"We are now in a very bad condition with no income source. Whatever I earn from daily work is not sufficient. I hope the government will soon reopen the border trade keeping in view the interest of small traders like us," said Morang, who earlier managed an earning of ₹ 20,000 per month by selling bakery products and vegetables. (PTI)

## Security forces recover explosives from Imphal East

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Sept 3: Combined team of Manipur police and security forces have recovered 2 explosives from Imphal East district during a search operation conducted in the last 24 hours.

The combined team also conducted search operations in the fringe and vulnerable areas of Churachandpur, Kakching, Thoubal, Imphal West districts.

Movement of 318 vehicles along NH-37 with essential items have also been ensured while strict security measures have been taken up in all vulnerable locations and security convoy are also provided in sensitive stretches in order to ensure free and safe movement of the vehi-

cles. During the last 24 hours, a total of 130 checkpoints were installed in different districts of Manipur, both in the hill and the valley and Manipur police also detained 1343 persons in connection with violations in different districts of the State.

Manipur police also appealed to the general public not to believe in rumours and to be aware of false videos. Any circulations of unfounded videos etc. may be confirmed from the rumour free number - 9233522822 of Central Control room. Further, appeal is made to public to return the looted arms, ammunition and explosives to the police or nearest security forces immediately, said Police Control Room of Manipur police in a press release.



# Dhupguri bypoll in North Bengal puts INDIA opposition bloc's unity to test

*The counting of votes will take place on September 8*

**KOLKATA, Sept 3:** The INDIA opposition bloc faces a crucial test in the upcoming bypoll in Dhupguri assembly segment as its important constituents, TMC and Congress-CPI(M) alliance, fight it out against each other to wrest the rural seat in North Bengal from the BJP.

The bypoll on September 5 is also a litmus test for all three political outfits, with the BJP hoping to check its erosion in its vote share and retain the seat, the TMC aiming to wrest the tribal-dominated assembly segment and the CPI(M)-Congress alliance hoping to regain its traditional seat.

The bypoll was necessitated following the death of its sitting BJP MLA Bishu Pada Ray earlier this year.

Dotted by tea gardens, the seat in Jalpaiguri district is an agricultural settlement with a considerable population of Rajbanshis and Matua communities, who voted for the saffron camp in the 2021 assembly polls. The constituency also has around 15 per cent minority population.

CPI(M) state secretary Mohammed Salim and Congress president Adhir Rajan Chowdhury held a massive rally in Dhupguri, hitting out at both the TMC and the BJP, as their central leadership was holding brainstorming session with the TMC and other anti-BJP parties at the third INDIA opposition meet to discuss the strategy to defeat the saffron camp in 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Although the CPI(M), Congress and TMC have dubbed it as local elections, with no bearings on opposition unity efforts, the BJP has gone hammer and tongs pointing at the frictions in the INDIA camp.

## Drugs worth ₹19.05 cr seized in Navi Mumbai; 7 Nigerians arrested

**THANE, Sept 3:** Seven Nigerian nationals have been arrested and drugs worth ₹19.05 crore seized from them after a major crackdown against drug peddlers in Maharashtra's Navi Mumbai township, a senior police official said on Sunday.

The contraband seizure and arrests were made following raids on Friday in residential localities in Kharghar area, Navi Mumbai Police Commissioner Milind Bharambe said.

The police had received a tip-off that some Nigerians had stocked drugs and were selling them, he said.

The seized drugs included cocaine, MDMA and tablets of tramadol hydrochloride, a psychotropic substance, the official said.

The seven arrested persons were booked under provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, the official said. The police were trying to find out from where the accused got the drugs and to whom they were selling them, he added. (PTI)



"It is a local election and has nothing to do with the INDIA opposition bloc. At the local level, we are fighting our own battle," state Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said.

CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty said the fight in Bengal is against both the communal BJP and the misrule of the TMC, and the battle in Dhupguri, a seat which had been a bastion of the Left from 1977-2011, is no exception.

The CPI(M) has fielded Ishwar Chandra Roy, a teacher by profession, from the seat.

The TMC, which had repeatedly accused the CPI(M) and Congress of helping the BJP in West Bengal, has negated saffron camp's allegations of disunity in the INDIA bloc.

"What is happening in Dhupguri has no bearing on the efforts of the INDIA opposition

bloc at the national level. But it is true that in Bengal, at times, the role of the CPI(M) and Congress is helping the BJP. We are steadfast in our fight against the BJP," TMC MP Santanu Sen said.

The TMC has pulled all the stops to wrest back the seat, which it had won twice since 2011, and has promised to make Dhupguri a "sub-division by the end of this year."

TMC's national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee has been leading the campaign in the area.

The TMC has also fielded a teacher, Nirmal Chandra Roy, from this seat.

BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar said even before the opposition bloc has taken off, cracks are visible in it.

"Dhupguri is a classic example of how brit-

tle this opposition front is; even before it started, cracks are visible. Now, the people will decide accordingly," he said.

The BJP, which has been struggling to keep its flock together in West Bengal following defections of its MLAs and rapidly declining vote share, is putting all efforts to retain the seat and change the norm of losing all the by-elections since its defeat in the 2021 assembly polls.

The BJP had won the seat in the last assembly polls bagging 45.65 per cent of the votes, whereas the TMC had bagged 43.5 per cent.

The saffron camp this time has fielded Tapasi Roy, the widow of a CRPF jawan, who died fighting terrorists in Kashmir a few years ago.

Leader of the opposition Suwendu Adhikari, who has been leading the BJP's campaign from the front, has appealed to people to vote against the misrule and corruption of the TMC.

Political analyst Biswanath Chakraborty said the bypoll has interesting facets as it has been seen how the Left-Congress, which has been regaining its ground after its bypoll victory in Sagardighi earlier this year, manages to retain its upward rise given the fact that they are sharing dais with the TMC at the national level.

"The Left-Congress was gaining as anti-TMC votes shifted from the BJP to them. Now, after the opposition INDIA bloc meeting where it thrice shared the dais with the TMC, it has to be seen how they manage those contradictions at the ground level," he said.

The counting of votes will take place on September 8. (PTI)

## Top law ministry officials brief panel chairman Kovind on simultaneous polls

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** Top officials of the Union Law Ministry on Sunday held a preparatory briefing for former president Ram Nath Kovind who heads the high-level committee to examine and make recommendations for holding simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies. The government had on Saturday notified the eight-member committee. People aware of the development said, Law Secretary Niten Chandra, Legislative Secretary Reeta Vasishtha and others met Kovind Sunday afternoon to understand how he would like to go about the agenda before the committee.

While Chandra is also the secretary to the high-level committee, Vasishtha's department deals with the issue of elections, the Representation of the People Act and related rules.

Responding to a question on why the government issued a 'resolution' ('sankalp' in Hindi) to announce the names of the members of the high-level committee, an official explained that the ministry was following precedents. The Indrajit Gupta Committee on state funding of elections was constituted through a resolution. The law commission is also reconstituted every three years by a resolution adopted by the Union Cabinet. According to the resolution issued Saturday, elections to the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies were mostly held simultaneously from 1951-52 to 1967 after which this cycle got broken and now, elections are held almost every year and within a year too at different times, which result in massive expenditure by the government and other stakeholders.

Asynchronous elections also lead to

diversion of security forces and other electoral officers from their primary duties for significantly prolonged periods, it said.

The resolution said in the "national interest" it is "desirable" to have simultaneous elections in the country. Frequent polls, it said, disrupt developmental work on account of prolonged application of the Model Code of Conduct. It cited reports of the law commission and parliamentary panels that had supported the idea of simultaneous polls to Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

"Now, therefore, in view of the above and that in the national interest it is desirable to have simultaneous elections in the country, the Government of India hereby constitutes a high-level committee to examine the issue of simultaneous elections and make recommendations for holding simultaneous elections in the country," the resolution said. According to former Union law secretary P.K. Malhotra, the executive decisions of the government are generally brought to public notice by means of communication named as notification, order or resolution.

Notification is generally issued in exercise of some statutory power and invariably published in the official gazette. Orders are generally commands for carrying out its obligations like making appointments to a post in the government or giving certain mandatory directives. A decision is generally named as a resolution when the government, as a matter of policy decision, decides to do something not necessarily in the exercise of statutory power but conveying its policy decision to the public at large on certain proposals under its consideration. (PTI)

## Amit Shah accuses INDIA bloc parties of insulting 'Sanatan dharma' for votebank

**DUNGARPUR (RAJASTHAN), Sept 3:** Home minister Amit Shah on Sunday lashed out at opposition INDIA coalition parties over DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin's remarks against 'Sanatan dharma', accusing them of insulting 'Sanatan dharma' for vote-bank and appeasement politics.

Alleging that 'Sanatan dharma' is against equality and social justice, Tamil Nadu Youth Welfare Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin has said it should be eradicated.

Shah said DMK leaders, including the son of Tamil Nadu chief minister, are saying that 'Sanatan dharma' should be abolished.

"These people have talked about 'Sanatan dharma' for vote-bank appeasement. They have insulted ('Sanatan dharma')," BJP leader Shah said at a public rally in Dungarpur on the launch of the Parivartan Yatra in poll-bound

Rajasthan.

Dubbing the INDIA alliance as "ghamandiya gathbandhan", Shah said the alliance can go to any extent for votebank politics but "the more they talk against 'Sanatan dharma', the less they will be visible".

"They say that if Modi wins, 'Sanatan' rule will come. 'Sanatan' is ruling the hearts of the people. Modi has said the country will run on the basis of the Constitution," Shah said, adding that the prime minister has worked to secure the nation.

On the Ram temple, he alleged that the Congress blocked the temple for years but after the Supreme Court order, "Modi did bhumi puja and a grand temple is going to be ready in January on the same land where Ram was born".

"The INDIA alliance cannot stop it," he said. (PTI)

## Udhayanidhi Stalin alleges Sanatana Dharma 'against social justice, must be destroyed'

**CHENNAI, Sept 3:** Alleging that Sanatana Dharma is against equality and social justice, DMK youth wing secretary and Tamil Nadu Youth Welfare Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin has said it should be eradicated. Likening Sanatana Dharma to coronavirus, malaria, fever caused by dengue virus and mosquito, he said such things should not be opposed but destroyed. Udhayanidhi referred to Sanatana Dharma as 'Sanatanam' in his address in Tamil at a meet of Tamil Nadu Progressive Writers and Artists Association here on Saturday.

He lauded the organisers for picking the theme of "Sanatan elimination" rather than choosing "opposition to Sanatan."

Udhayanidhi, son of chief minister M.K. Stalin said certain things cannot be opposed but must be only done away with.

"What is Sanatanam? The very name is only from Sanskrit. Sanatan is against equality and social justice



and nothing else."

"What is the meaning of Sanatan? It is eternal, that is, it cannot be changed; no one could pose any question and that is the meaning," Stalin divided people on the basis of caste, he alleged. Dealing a severe blow to Sanatan, late chief minister and DMK patriarch M. Karunanidhi established

equality neighbourhoods (Samathuvapuram) and settled people belonging to all communities in a single place.

"Our Kalaignar (Karunanidhi) brought a law enabling people belonging to all castes to become archakas (temple priests), our chief minister (Stalin) has appointed people

who have completed archaka training as priests in temples; this is the Dravidian model."

Udhayanidhi, who also holds the sports development portfolio, alleged that while Sanatan enslaved women and did not allow them to step out of their homes, they are today making achievements in sports and a chunk of women are also financially independent.

"What did Sanatan do to women? It pushed women, who lost their husbands into fire (the erstwhile practice of Sati), it tansured the heads of widows and made them wear white saris, child marriages too happened."

"What did the Dravidian (the Dravidian ideology followed by DMK regime) do? It gave fare-free travel for women in buses, gave ₹1,000 monthly assistance to girl students for their college education." From September 15, women beneficiaries would be getting ₹1,000 monthly assistance (basic income scheme). (PTI)

## 'Darwaze pe dastak', food vigil by mess workers: Kota police's new attempt at checking student suicides

**KOTA (RAJN), Sept 3:** Rocked by a spate of student suicides, the coaching hub of Kota is roping in wardens, mess workers and tiffin service providers to look for any signs of depression or stress among the students staying in hostels and PG accommodations.

While the wardens are being encouraged to participate actively in the 'Darwaze pe dastak' (knock on door) campaign, the city police has urged the mess workers and tiffin providers to report if a student is repetitively absent from the mess and skipping meals or anyone's tiffin is found unconsumed.

"We have launched a campaign called 'Darwaze pe dastak' where we are encouraging wardens to make it a routine to knock on each students' door at around 11 pm, ask them if they are okay, notice their activities, and keep a vigil just to ensure that there are no signs of stress, depression or abnormal activity."

"After coaching, the students spend maximum time in hostels, and hence wardens should be the first one to notice the signs," Chandrasheel Thakur, ASP, Kota told PTI.

Over 2.5 lakh students move to Kota annually to prepare for competitive exams such as the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) for engineering and the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to medical colleges.

The year 2023 saw the highest number of student suicides -- 22 so far -- with two ending their lives in a gap of a few hours on August 27. Last year, the figure was 15.

Packed schedule, cut-throat competition, constant pressure to do better, burden of parents' expectations and homesickness are the common struggles of the students here.

Psychologists have been warning that there are always signs that go undetected before any child takes the extreme step.

"The idea is to detect these early signs. If any student is repetitively missing classes or skipping meals, there has to be something. We want to identify these children, get them counselled before they get pushed to the brim. We have launched a dedicated number on which wardens, mess workers and tiffin providers can give us this information," he

added.

Naveen Mittal, president, Kota Hostel Association said there are 3,500 hostels and 25,000 paying guest (PG) accommodations in Kota. Garima Singh, warden, Amratangali Girls Residency said she knocks on the doors of children regularly.

"The idea is not to disturb them, but to keep a check if they are fine. If someone is sleeping for unusual hours, I discuss with them if they are just tired or unwell. I check their mess logbooks too. If someone has not eaten meals in the mess, I ask if he or she did not like the food or is it because of some stress," she said.

The district administration recently directed the coaching institutes to stop conducting routine tests for students preparing for NEET and other competitive exams for the next two months in the wake of the latest suicides.

Gagendra Soni, warden of a boys hostel said, "Some boys opt for tiffin service rather than mess food. We notice sometimes that the tiffin is lying outside the room. We take it very seriously now and try to strike a conversation." (PTI)

## My govt committed to providing reservation to Maratha community: CM Shinde

**MUMBAI, Sept 3:** In the wake of violence in Maharashtra's Jalna district over the Maratha quota demand, chief minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday said his government was committed to providing reservation to this community in education and government jobs. Talking to reporters after attending a state function in Buldhana district, around 450 km from here, he also said that there was no misunderstanding between him and two deputy chief ministers in the state and that all of them were working as a good team.

"My government is committed to giving reservation to the Maratha community in the state. We will not sit quiet until the community get its due reservation," Shinde said.

"Till the Maratha community gets reservation, the government schemes that are already in place will continue and deserving people from the Maratha community will benefit from it," he added. Reservation in jobs and education provided by the state government to the Maratha community was quashed by the Supreme Court in May 2021, citing the 50 per cent ceiling on total reservations among other grounds.

An agitation seeking reservation for the Marathas turned violent at Antarwali Sarathi village in Jalna on Friday, leading to several people, including dozens of police personnel, getting injured. Police resorted to lathi-charge and lobbed tear gas shells to disperse a violent mob that allegedly re-



fused to let authorities shift a man on a hunger strike as part of the quota stir to the hospital. Police registered a case against more than 360 people in connection with the violence, officials said.

When asked why deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, who along with eight other Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) MLAs joined his government two months ago, was not present at the event, CM Shinde said, "Ajit Pawar informed me that he is unwell. He is down with fever, while Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis is in Ladakh to attend a military event." (PTI)

## Congress to hold yatras at district level to mark first anniversary of Bharat Jodo Yatra: Sources

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** The Congress is set to hold yatras at the district level to commemorate the Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir Bharat Jodo Yatra, which was launched on September 7 last year, sources said on Sunday.

The party is planning to mark in a big way the beginning of the cross-country march that saw Rahul Gandhi, along with several party leaders, traverse over 4,000 kilometres and interact with a cross-section of society.

The sources said yatras will be held at the district level to mark the one-year anniversary of the beginning of the Bharat Jodo Yatra on September 7 last year.

They said the modalities of how long the yatras will be and other details are being worked out.

Gandhi launched the yatra on September 7, 2022, in Kanyakumari. It ended on January 30 this

year as Gandhi capped his ambitious 145-day journey in Srinagar.

"I have not done this (yatra) for myself or for the Congress but for the people of the country. Our aim is to stand against the ideology that wants to destroy the foundation of this country," Gandhi had said at the Sher-e-Kashmir Cricket Stadium in Srinagar at a rally marking the grand finale of the cross-country march.

During the course of the yatra, Gandhi addressed 12 public meetings, over 100 corner meetings and 13 press conferences. He had over 275 planned walking interactions and more than 100 sitting interactions. Many experts had said a big takeaway from the yatra for the Congress had been Gandhi's image transformation -- from a reluctant and part-time politician to one who is mature and taken seriously by opponents.

Jairam Ramesh, the Congress

general secretary, considered the brain behind the yatra along with party colleague Digvijaya Singh, had said back then that the transformation of Gandhi's image was not the cause of the yatra but a consequence of it.

Asserting that the Congress made huge gains from the yatra, Ramesh had said the party succeeded in conveying the messages of the march -- the threats to the republic from economic inequalities, social polarisation and political dictatorship.

With over 4,000 kilometres under his belt, Gandhi had managed to catch the attention of his supporters as well as detractors and the march saw participation from a cross-section of society, including film and TV celebrities such as Kamal Haasan, Pooja Bhatt, Riya Sen, Sushant Singh, Swara Bhasker, Rashami Desai, Akanksha Puri and Amol Palekar. (PTI)

## Stray dogs picked up in illegal, cruel fashion in the wake of G20 Summit: PFA

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has started picking up stray dogs, mostly sterilised in "illegal" manner and without any written orders, in the wake of the G20 Summit scheduled on September 8-10, People For Animals claimed in a statement on Sunday.

The People For Animals (PFA) was reached out by air travellers at Terminal 2 who spotted "screaming and yelping" dogs being "dragged by neck" using wires by "what looked like class 4 untrained workers" before being bundled into vehicles, the statement said.

Another stray dog feeder also approached the PFA saying that a lactating mother with tiny pups was picked up from Pragati Maidan and "no one knows if all the pups have been taken or some carelessly left behind".

The animal rights group said after the hasty withdrawal of its "ill-thought out order dated August 3" to remove stray dogs across 47 locations in the city, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has chosen to avoid sharing any plans or orders, and simply gone ahead to pick up dogs randomly.

The statement said on September 1, catching



teams swooped down on two locations -- Pragati Maidan where the long suffering dogs had been picked just over a month ago, and the Airport terminal-2 area.

"Having got wind of their intentions, the animal welfare community had actually offered its help towards the safe collection and keeping of dogs by involving local feeders in the exercise. Spurning the offer, MCD went ahead to blatantly and illegally pick up mostly sterilised dogs," it said.

PFA said the airport area from where dogs have never been previously picked was targeted by three teams.

"Some 60 harmless, sterilised and mostly very old dogs were caught and incarcerated at ill-equipped centres that have neither fans nor adequate staff nor even food. Only dry kibble was provided at one centre which street dogs do not eat," the group said.

Ambika Shukla, trustee of PFA, said there is no need to remove friendly, gentle and sterilised dogs and if you are going to do it, do it properly.

"The animal welfare community actually reached out to MCD to help towards collecting the dogs kindly and safely. Had local caretakers been involved in the process as we suggested, there would have been no cruelty, chasing or missing dogs," she said. Shukla said like other fields where experts are roped in, animal welfare people must be involved in issues dealing with stray animals.

"Rough, untrained Class 4 staff cannot be expected to handle dogs humanely. Why not take those who can? Every holding unit needs to be open to feeders and caretakers towards the best care for the dogs during their stay," she said. (PTI)



- PM MODI'S PRE-G20 INTERVIEW -

## BJP leaders hail visionary leadership, oppn raises questions on price rise, unemployment

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** The BJP and the opposition traded barbs on Sunday over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks in an interview to PTI ahead of the G20 summit, with the ruling party leaders hailing his vision for the country and INDIA bloc parties raising questions on "rising" prices and unemployment.

In the interview, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted that the 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' model can be the guiding principle for the welfare of a world shifting from a GDP-centric approach to a human-centric one.

Irrespective of the size of the GDP, every voice matters, Modi told PTI in an exclusive interview conducted late last week at his Lok Kalyan Marg residence.

Prime Minister Modi said that India's economic growth is a natural by-product of his nine-year-old government's political stability, as he expressed optimism that it will be a developed nation by 2047 with "corruption, casteism and communalism" having no place in our national life.

His remarks evoked contrasting reactions from the ruling party and opposition leaders.

"There is no doubt in anyone's mind that India under PM Modi over the last nine years and India's G20 presidency are big milestones in the country's rise on the global stage," Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Prime Minister Modi's 'India soon to be in top three world economies' remark.

Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan said PM Modi has transformed the talent pool to the advantage of a rising nation of 140 crore people.



Reacting to Modi's remark that 'India will be a developed nation by 2047', BJP leader Anil Antony, who had switched from the Congress, said much more has happened in India in the last nine years than in 67 years since Independence.

Leaders of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), however, hit out at the prime minister over his remarks and questioned the government's track record in reining in unemployment and prices of essential commodities.

Attacking the prime minister, Congress MP Ranjeet Ranjan said roads are being beautified in view of the upcoming G20 Summit but India's youth "is asking about employment."

"People want their answers on scams and inflation," she said.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh claimed that under PM Modi, unemployment reached its highest level in 42 years and prices of fuel and medicines increased considerably.

Congress leader Shobha Oza alleged that under the current government, the lives of common

people have been made difficult due to inflation and unemployment.

"There have been atrocities on women, Dalits and tribals," she alleged.

On Modi's remarks about his government providing political stability, DMK leader TKS Elangovan said there is no political stability and equanimity in this country at present.

RJD MP and spokesperson Manoj Jha took a swipe at the BJP over Prime Minister Modi's remarks in the interview about tackling the menace of fake news, saying the "BJP will collapse like a pack of cards if fake news is reined in".

Jammu and Kashmir Congress Committee president Vikar Rasool claimed that there has not been any positive change in the country under the BJP and only inflation and unemployment have risen.

However, BJP leaders hailed the prime minister for his visionary leadership.

"PM Modi works with a vision for the next 25-50 years. When India will complete 100 years of its

independence in 2047, India will be a developed and self-reliant country," BJP MP Subrat Pathak said.

BJP leader Jaiveer Shergill said PM Modi's report card is "solid". "He has laid the vision for the next 40-50 years," he added.

In the interview, Prime Minister Modi said his government's decision to host G-20 events across the country is an investment in capacity-building among people, cities and institutions.

He also took a jibe at previous governments, saying they lacked confidence in people's abilities to hold mega events outside the capital, in smaller places.

Modi said he had always had a great belief in people as he cited his organisational background to assert that he learnt a lot from many experiences during that phase of his life.

"Many positive impacts are coming out of India's G20 Presidency. Some of them are very close to my heart," Modi said in the 80-minute interview, focused on G20 and related issues, with three senior staff of PTI including Editor-in-Chief Vijay Joshi.

Modi said that while it is true G20 is an influential grouping in terms of its combined economic might, a GDP-centric view of the world is now changing to a human-centric one, and just as a new world order was seen after World War 2, a new world order is taking shape post-Covid.

The shift to a human-centric approach has begun globally and we are playing the role of a catalyst. India's G20 Presidency has also sowed the seeds of confidence in the countries of the so-called Third World, he said. (PTI)

## Corruption, casteism and communalism will have no place in national life by 2047: PM

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** Corruption, casteism and communalism will have no place in national life by 2047 and the poor will comprehensively win the battle against poverty, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, outlining his vision for the country for the next two decades.

"We have democracy, demography and diversity with us and now a fourth D is getting added to it — development," Prime Minister Modi said in an exclusive interview to PTI.

The prime minister said before 2014, the country saw many governments that were unstable and, therefore, unable to get much done. "But in the last few years, the people have given a decisive mandate, which has led to a stable government, predictable policies and clarity in the overall direction," Modi, who is seeking a third term as Prime Minister, said. "By 2047, I am sure that our country will be among the developed countries."

"Our economy will be even more inclusive and innovative. Our poor people will comprehensively win the battle against poverty. Health, education and social sector outcomes will be among the best in the world."

"Corruption, casteism and communalism will have no place in our national life," he said.

He asserted that the quality of life of Indians would be at par with the best countries of the world and "most importantly, we will achieve all of this while caring for both nature and culture".

He also noted that the rapid and sustained progress made by India has evoked interest across the world.

"Many countries have been watching our growth story very closely and they are convinced that this progress is not an accident but is happening as a result of a clear, action-oriented roadmap of 'Reform, Perform, Transform'," he said. During his more than an hour-long interview with PTI late last week, the prime minister also touched upon issues of irresponsible financial policies and populism and how they may give political results in the short term but will extract a great social and economic price in the long term. For a long time in world history, India was one of the top economies of the world but later, due to the impact of colonisation of various kinds, our global footprint was reduced, he said. "But now, India is again on the rise. The speed with which we jumped five spots, from the 10th largest economy to the 5th largest in less than a decade has conveyed the fact that India means business!" he added. (PTI)

## Krishna Janmasthan Temple decked up for Janmashtami, celebrations dedicated to Chandrayaan-3 success

**MATHURA (UP), Sept 3:** The upcoming Janmashtami celebrations at the Sri Krishna Janmasthan temple here will be dedicated to ISRO scientists who brought laurels to the country with the successful Chandrayaan-3 mission, members of the temple trust said on Sunday, Kapil Sharma, a member of the Sri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sansthan, said. "The improvised abode of the deity has been named 'Somnath Pushp Bangla' to highlight the efforts of ISRO chief S Somnath." He added that on the occasion of Janmashtami, the Krishna idol in the temple will be dressed in a special attire, which has been named 'Pragyan Prabhas' after the 'Pragyan' rover.

Members of the temple trust said that elaborate arrangements have been made at the Sri Krishna Jan-

asthan Temple here for celebration of the Janmashtami festival on September 7, with cloakroom facilities, medical camps and free food for the devotees.

In view of the heavy inflow of devotees expected on the occasion, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Rapid Action Force (RAF) would be deployed at the temple, SP (security) Anand Kumar said, adding that additional force from the Agra range would also be brought in for the festival.

"In order to facilitate those visiting the temple to pay their obeisance to the deity, the portals of the temple will remain open from 5.30 am (on Thursday) till 1.30 am the next day," Kapil Sharma, secretary of the temple trust, said. To cater to the lakhs of devotees expected to visit the temple on Janmashtami,

the festival celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna, the temple authorities are busy preparing 'prasadam' with non-perishable items. Final touches are also being given to the special attire of the idol at the temple, members of the temple trust said, adding that the temple is being decked up with flowers and lights of multiple hues. Sharma said the festival will begin with the blowing of 'shehnai' (clarinet) and beating of drums in the temple. "We have arranged makeshift cloakroom facilities for the devotees at three points leading to Sri Krishna Janmasthan. The people, however, have been advised not to carry expensive belongings or electronic items, and leave them behind where they are put up before starting for the Sri Krishna Janmasthan," he added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Kharge convenes meeting of INDIA bloc MPs on tomorrow

**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** Opposition MPs of the INDIA bloc will meet on September 5 to discuss their joint strategy for the upcoming special session of Parliament, the agenda for which is still under wraps.

Sources said MPs of the opposition alliance in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will meet to chalk out their joint strategy for the session from September 18 to 22. The meeting has been convened by Kharge at his Rajaji Marg residence here, they added. Congress GS, Organisation, K C Venugopal said party president Kharge has called a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Strategy group on September 5. "Kharge ji has also called a meeting of MPs of like-minded opposition parties," he told reporters adding that the agenda for the upcoming session would be discussed in the meeting. Congress MP Rahul Gandhi met Kharge at the latter's residence to discuss organisational issues and the current political situation.

The opposition INDIA alliance is working in cohesion with each other and is planning to take on the BJP unitedly on various fronts as well as the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It functioned in unison during the recent Monsoon session of Parliament too. (PTI)

## J'khand bypolls: INDIA bloc, NDA lock horns over Dumri assembly seat

**RANCHI, Sept 3:** Campaigning for the September 5 bypolls to Jharkhand's Dumri assembly seat ended on Sunday with INDIA bloc candidate Bebi Devi locked in a direct contest with NDA candidate Yashoda Devi.

The seat has turned out to be a prestigious one for both alliances amid Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) claiming that the INDIA bloc will begin its victory journey from Dumri, while the NDA exuded confidence that it is all set to snatch the seat from JMM.

The bypoll was necessitated following the death of JMM MLA Jagannath Mahto, former education minister, in April. Mahto had been representing the seat since 2004.

The JMM has fielded Mahto's wife Bebi Devi as the INDIA bloc nominee, while AJSU Party has nominated Yashoda Devi as the NDA candidate.

In a bid to retain the seat, top leaders of ruling partners including JMM, Congress and RJD camped in the constituency since beginning of the campaigning on August 21.

Chief minister Hemant Soren, who did several rallies including a road show, appealed the people to vote for INDIA candidate, which will be a true tribute to Mahto.

In his rallies, Soren reminded voters about Mahto's contribution for development of the con-



stituency.

The NDA leaders, meanwhile, left no stone unturned to ensure its candidate's victory in Dumri.

Top BJP leaders including two Union ministers Arjun Munda and Annapurna Devi, two former chief ministers Babulal Marandi, who is also the BJP state president, and Raghubar Das, and others campaigned to ensure victory of the NDA candidate.

AJSU Party chief Sudesh Mahto has been campaigning in the constituency to garner people's support.

The BJP and AJSU Party had raised the alleged failures of the current JMM-led government including corruption and deteriorating law and order.

"It failed to fulfill the promises like implementation of 1932 Khatiyani (land settlement) based employment policy or 27 per cent to OBC," the AJSU Party chief

said.

He said they are confident about the victory of their candidate. "This time, people will vote for the candidate who will fulfill their aspirations," he said.

As many as six candidates including three independents are in the fray.

The AIMIM has fielded Md Abdul Mobin Rizvi. However, the AIMIM candidate is facing an FIR for alleged "pro-Pakistan" slogan raised during party chief Asaduddin Owaisi's public rally in Giridih on Wednesday.

Dumri sub-divisional magistrate Md Shazad Parwez, who is returning officer for the election, said, "The polling for the byelection to the Dumri assembly constituency will be held on September 5 at 373 polling booths, and the votes will be counted on September 8."

In the 2019 assembly elections, Jagannath Mahto defeated AJSU Party's Yashoda Devi by a margin of 34,288 votes. AIMIM's Rizvi was in fourth position with 24,132 votes.

In the 81-member Jharkhand House, the ruling UPA currently has 47 MLAs -- JMM 29, Congress 17 and RJD one. The BJP has 26 members and AJSU Party three. The NCP and CPI (ML) have one lawmaker each, apart from two Independents. (PTI)

## One billion hungry stomachs

education and social sector outcomes will be among the best in the world. Corruption, casteism and communalism will have no place in our national life," he said. G20 was born at the end of the last century when the major economies of the world got together with a vision of a collective and coordinated response to economic crises. Its salience grew even more during the global economic crisis in the first decade of the 21st century.

But when the Covid pandemic struck, the world understood that in addition to the economic challenges, there were also other important and immediate challenges impacting humanity, Modi said.

By this time, the prime minister said, the world was already taking note of "India's human-centric model of development" in economic growth, technological progress, institutional delivery and social infrastructure.

"There was greater awareness of these massive strides being taken by India. It was acknowledged that the country which used to be seen just as a large market had become a part of the solutions to the global challenges," he said. "By the time India became the president of G20, our words and vision for the world were not being taken merely as ideas but as a roadmap for the future."

In a new dimension to the G20, its ministerial and other meetings were held not just in the capital New Delhi but in all parts of the country, including second and third-tier cities such as Indore and Varanasi. More than one lakh delegates met for some 200 sectoral meetings, many in tourist destinations such as Hampi, Kerala, Goa and Kashmir.

"They have been going to different regions, witnessing our demography, democracy and diversity. They are also seeing how a fourth D, development, has been empowering the people over the last decade. There is a growing understanding that many of the solutions that the world needs are already being successfully implemented in our country, with speed and scale," Modi said. While answering a question about the global debt crisis -- which he noted is "a matter of great concern, especially (for) developing countries" -- Modi took a dig at freebies given by some state governments in India, and stressed on the need for financial discipline.

"Populism may give political results in the short term but will extract a great social and economic price in the long term. Those who suffer the consequences the most are often the poorest and the most vulnerable," he said. The Prime Minister also made a strong pitch for United Nations reforms in line with the changing realities of the world and to ensure representation of voices that matter, saying a mid-20th century approach cannot serve the world in the 21st century.

Modi also said that India backs inclusion of the African Union as a full member of the G20 as no plan for the future of the planet can be successful without the representation and recognition of all voices. (PTI)

## No substitute to merit

date during his term as the chief minister stands at 87,402, he said. Within a month or two, advertisements for recruitments to fill another 22,000 vacancies would be published, he said, adding that would take the total number of recruitments to well above the 1-lakh promised earlier. The chief minister said in a day or two, a major scheme aimed at facilitating self-employment among 2 lakh youths of the state would be unveiled. Sunday's event was also attended by minister of power Nandita Gorlosa, Member of Parliament Pallab Lochan Das, chief secretary Paban Kumar Borthakur, director general of police GP Singh, principal chief conservator of forests MK Yadav, along with a host of other senior officers of the government.

## Money demanding case in

of police and a personal security officer of the then-ASP (HQ), Bajali are among those arrested in the case, the official said. The superintendent of police of Bajali was also transferred. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said that the DGP has been given full authority to act against any personnel found to be abusing the public in any manner. (PTI)

## ₹ 270 crore allocated for Brahmaputra

stating that it would face staunch resistance from the entire Indian opposition. Gogoi also interpreted minister Pijush Hazarika's criticism of the Congress party's Tea Estate visits as a sign of growing anxiety about losing the Tea Tribes' votes.

## Flood situation improves

damage to other infrastructure was reported in Darrang and Morigaon. Massive erosions were also reported from Bongaigaon, Dhubri, and Tinsukia. Fortunately, there were no reports of fatalities on Sunday, providing some relief amid the ongoing flood situation.

## AASAA seeks school devp

the need for land reclamation as the site currently consists of undulating terrain with swamps. EM Tokbi assured the delegation that he would look into the matter.

## First earth-bound manoeuvre

asserting that ISRO now has the capacity to compete with NASA and Roscosmos in space expeditions. The lander module of Chandrayaan-3 -- the third mission in the Chandrayaan programme developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) -- touched down on the lunar surface on August 23, making India only the fourth country to accomplish the feat. It is also the first to reach the uncharted south pole of Earth's only natural satellite. The recently launched Aditya-L1 is a coronagraphy spacecraft to study the solar atmosphere. Singh, the Union minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office, said, "Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1 spearhead India's 'Amrit Kaal' growth journey over the next 25 years ... this era has rightfully (been) called as 'Modi's Era' and the world has hailed Modi for his progressive policy decisions. Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1 are its outcomes." (PTI)

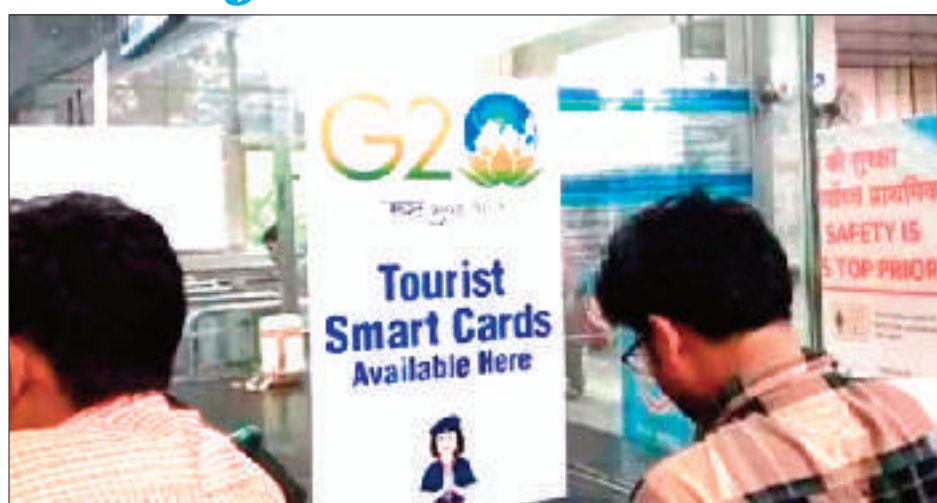
## Huge stash of cannabis

publicly incinerated a substantial quantity of seized drugs with an estimated value of Rs 225 crore.

## National convention addresses

Dr Manish Kumar Roushan, and others. Approximately 20,000 people from across the nation participated in the convention, which featured performances by renowned Indian Bhojpur playback singers Shilpi Raj and Vijay Chauhan.

## Delhi Metro to sell 'Tourist Smart Cards' through dedicated counters from today



**NEW DELHI, Sept 3:** Anticipating increased passenger footfall for the G20 Summit, the Delhi Metro will sell 'Tourist Smart Cards' through dedicated counters at 36 stations from September 4-13, officials said.

These cards will be available in two categories -- one-day and three-day validity -- offering "unlimited rides" in the metro network.

The Tourist Smart Cards are available on regular days too but, in view of the G20 Summit, dedicated counters have been opened to sell these cards for a period of 10 days from Monday, a senior official said.

The G20 Leaders' Summit is slated to take

place in New Delhi from September 9-10.

The dedicated counters have been provided to "facilitate G20 delegates and international visitors who might be interested in exploring the prominent tourist places of the capital city as they arrive in Delhi, owing to the upcoming G20 Summit," the official said.

The one-day card will be available for ₹ 200 while the three-day card will cost ₹ 500. This amount also includes a refundable security deposit of ₹ 50, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) said.

The 36 stations where these cards will be sold through dedicated counters include Kashmere

Gate, Chandni Chowk, Chawri Bazar, New Delhi, Rajiv Chowk, Patel Chowk, Central Secretariat, Udyog Bhawan, Lok Kalyan Marg, Supreme Court, ITO, Hauz Khas, Nehru Place, Kalkaji Mandir, Akshardham and Terminal 1 IGI Airport. Besides unlimited rides, these cards are of great benefit to tourists as they can seamlessly travel in the entire network from the first train to the last service available for the day, the officials said.

"There are no penalties or surcharge levied on the use of Tourist Smart Cards on account of instances like entry or exit mismatch, overstay in system, overstepping etc," the DMRC said.

Delhi Metro, India's largest metro network, ranked among one of the largest metro systems in the world is well connected to almost all the prominent tourist destinations in the city such as Red Fort, Jama Masjid, Akshardham Temple, Kalkaji Temple, Qutub Minar, to name a few.

Tourists can seamlessly reach these tourist places by travelling on various corridors of the Delhi Metro by using these cards. Tourists can also download the 'Delhi Metro Rail' app for more details on the network to plan their journeys. The app also includes a dedicated section on the home page under 'Tour Guide' where they can find the list of all stations and tourist places nearby, the officials said.

Tourist Smart Cards are also available at all metro stations (except Airport Express Line) across the network. Anyone wanting to explore the city can avail of these cards from the stations at any time during the day, they said. (PTI)





## NOT EASY TO MAKE MASS ENTERTAINERS: 'GADAR 2' DIRECTOR ANIL SHARMA

**MUMBAI, Sept 3:** Creating a mass entertainer that is an amalgamation of real and fiction is a daunting task, says "Gadar 2" director Anil Sharma as the film inches closer to ₹ 500 crore mark at the box office.

Directed by Sharma, the film is a sequel to his 2001 blockbuster "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha". It features Sunny Deol as his iconic character Tara Singh along with Ameesha Patel as Sakeena and Utkarsh Sharma as their son Charanjeet Singh.

The movie, which released on August 11, is still running in the theatres and has earned ₹ 493.37 crore till now, emerging as one of the biggest box office success after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It is not easy make a mass entertainer. It is difficult because you have to show this larger-than-life hero in a way that whatever he does seems real yet entertaining. While making a realistic movie you can talk to the person and others on whom the story is based, but to add heroism in a film is challenging," Sharma told PTI in an interview.

Referring to the popular the hand-pump scene from "Gadar", the filmmaker said it is hard to create a situation which makes the hero's actions believable.

"The key is to make things convincing, which is a challenge in terms of writing and shooting," he added.

Set in 1971, "Gadar 2" follows Tara

Singh's journey to Pakistan to rescue his son, Charanjeet Singh from the Pakistani Army. A section of the audience has called out the film for its "anti-Pakistan" tone, but according to Sharma he is not trying to target Pakistan or an community.

"In the film, we have rather said, 'Hindustan Musalmano ka hai', then how come we are bashing them? We have rather shown that the country belongs to everyone irrespective of one's religion," he added.

"Gadar 2" also features Manish Wadhwa and Gaurav Chopra. (PTI)

## 'JAWAN' REFLECTS UPON HOW WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE THAT WE WANT AROUND US: SHAH RUKH KHAN

**MUMBAI, Sept 3:** Superstar Shah Rukh Khan on Sunday said his much-anticipated film "Jawan" is about empowering women and fighting for the right.

Directed by Tamil filmmaker Atlee, "Jawan" outlines the emotional journey of a man who is set to rectify the wrongs in the society. The high-octane action thriller is set to arrive in theatres on September 7.

During an #AskSRK session with his fans on X, formerly known as Twitter, Shah Rukh was asked about the message he is trying to convey through "Jawan".

"The movie reflects upon how we as people can make a change that we want around us. Empower women and fight for the right," he wrote.

A Red Chillies Entertainment presentation, "Jawan" is produced by Gauri Khan and co-produced by Gaurav Verma. It also features Vijay Sethupathi and Nayanthara in pivotal roles as well as Deepika Padukone in a special appearance.

Actors Sanya Malhotra, Priyamani, Girija Oak, Sanjeeta Bhattacharya, Lehar Khan, Aaliyah Qureshi, Ridhi

Dogra, Sunil Grover and Mukesh Chhabra round out the cast.

Asked how he would define his character in the film, Shah Rukh said: "Upright, honest and patriotic."

The 58-year-old superstar described the film as a "mix of mass and international class in terms of action. With some really cool background music!"

Popular music composer Anirudh Ravichander has created the soundtrack for the film.

Shah Rukh said the film is a product of three years of immense hardwork and now he is "excited that #Jawan will entertain as many as possible in the theatres!"

Advance booking for "Jawan" opened on Friday.

Talking about his biggest learning in life, the superstar said one can achieve anything they believe in with hard work and prayers.

"I have learnt this in my life... if the mind can conceive it, the heart can believe it... then you can achieve it. Work always like that and don't forget to pray!" he wrote.

Shah Rukh said he is happy that audiences are returning to the theatres for the community watching experience.

"I feel blessed by the love of so many people! My family and I are eternally grateful to all for this immense love," he said.

When one of the fans asked him about his childhood memories of visiting his grandparents in Hyderabad, the superstar recalled going to Charminar and eating delicious food at home.

He also shared that Rajkumar Hirani, the director of his next film "Dunki", loved the trailer of "Jawan" and has been supportive.

"Raju sir loved it!! First one to send me a message and I have shown him parts of the film too and he really likes it. He has been very supportive," SRK wrote.

The film star recently visited Chennai for a pre-release event of "Jawan", attended by the cast and crew, and a host of talented actors and musicians from the Tamil industry.

Shah Rukh said he met screen icons Rajinikanth and Thalapa- thy Vijay on his short trip and would like to meet Ajith on his next visit to the city. (PTI)



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2

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3

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### Note

- Owners of such tax defaulting vehicles can also avail the ongoing One Time Settlement scheme with reduced late fees for delayed fitness certificate renewal, effective for 2 months from 15th July 2023
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**MBSG CLINCHED THE TITLE FOR FIRST TIME AFTER 23 YEARS**

# Mohun Bagan beat East Bengal 1-0 to win Durand Cup title

**KOLKATA, Sept 3:** A moment of sheer brilliance from Dimitri Petratos proved decisive as 10-man Mohun Bagan Super Giant beat arch-rivals East Bengal 1-0 in a fiercely contested final to clinch Durand Cup title for the first time after 23 years here on Sunday.

Mohun Bagan were one-man down after Anirudh Thapa was sent off in the 62nd minute, but they still scored the decisive goal through a brilliant solo effort from Petratos in the 71st minute.

In a swift counter-attacking move, the Australian player skilfully weaved past the East Bengal defence, before unleashing a powerful strike from 25 yards out. East Bengal goalkeeper Prabhsukhan Singh Gill was left a mute spectator.

This was Mohun Bagan's 17th Durand Cup title. They last won the title in 2000 when they beat Mahindra United via a golden goal.

As the clock ticked away, East Bengal coach Carles Cuadrat made three changes, bringing in Nishu Kumar, VP Suhair and Edwin Vanspaul in the last 10 minutes in a bid to restore parity.

His Mohun Bagan counterpart Juan Ferrando pressed eight players into his defence with Anwar Ali rock solid in the middle.

In a heated exchange, East Bengal's assistant coach Dimas Delgado got into a war of words with Ferrando, and after a scuffle, the former received a red card in the second-half extra



time.

In the 86th minute, Edwin Vanspaul attempted a shot on target from outside the box, but Anwar Ali was quick to react, making a timely block to deny East Bengal any chance of an equaliser.

Mohun Bagan thus avenged their 2004 Durand Cup final defeat to East Bengal when they had lost 1-2.

In this phase, Mohun Bagan

had lost three Durand Cup finals, the last being against Gokulam Kerala (1-2) in 2019.

From East Bengal's perspective, a national-level title continued to elude them for more than 11 years now. Their last title at senior-level remains the Federation Cup in 2012.

Both sides came close to scoring but none could make use of their chances to see a goal-less first 45 minutes.

Sahal Abdul Samad got the ball at the edge of the box. Since he was surrounded, he got it to Petratos in front of him with a straight pass and the Australian tried a shot. But the ball flies just over the cross-piece in the first-half injury time.

Just before that, last derby hero Nandhakumar Sekar and Siverio failed to strike from two back-to-back chances after East

Bengal attacked on the counter with Rakip and Borja combining on the right flank.

At the hour mark, Mohun Bagan missed a sitter with Hugo Boumous fluffing it in front of the goal post.

Petratos delivered a high ball to Manvir on the right, as the second-half substitute who replaced an off-color Ashish Rai, set it up perfectly for Hugo inside the box. (PTI)

## Asia Cup matches likely to be shifted out of Colombo after heavy rains

**PALLEKELE (SRI LANKA), Sept 3:** The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) is mulling a change in the venue for the Super Four matches of the Asia Cup in the wake of the heavy rains that have been lashing in Colombo.

Five Super Four matches and the final have been scheduled in Colombo from September 9 onwards, but there are hardly any signs of the weather relenting.

In that context, the ACC is currently engaged in a discussion with the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) and tournament host Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) about the possible change of venue. The PTI has been informed that three venues are under consideration – Pallekele, Dambulla and Hambantota.

The six participating teams have also been intimidated about the possible change in venue.

Pallekele is currently hosting the Asia Cup league matches, but the possibility of rain in this hill town is also on the higher side.

Dambulla is about 70 kilometers from Pallekele, and the chances of rain are much less in the former city.

However, a SLC official said the Rangiri International Cricket Stadium at Dambulla might not be ready to host so many matches at a short notice.

The weather in Hambantota is predicted to be the brightest in Sri Lanka at this moment, and the ACC is keenly evaluating the readiness of Mahinda Rajapaksa International Cricket Stadium to host the Asia Cup matches.

The ACC has another couple of days to take a final call, considering the Colombo leg starts only on September 9, but the Sri Lankan board did not want to leave the event to the mercy of elements.

"The tournament will be hosted in a hybrid model with four matches being held in Pakistan, and the remaining nine matches being played in Sri Lanka," the ACC had stated in June. (PTI)

## 40<sup>th</sup> edition of Abhiruchi Sports Day celebrated in Demow

**HT Correspondent**  
**DEMOW, Sept 3:** The 40th edition of Abhiruchi Sports Day was celebrated in Demow under the patronage of the Demow Handball Club and in association with the Demow Sports Association. This event, held on the birthday of Assam's first Arjun award winner, Bhogeswar Barua, took place at the Demow Public Playground with a day-long program on Sunday.

The programme commenced with a mass run on Sunday morning, flagged off by Nabajyoti Saharia, Demow Circle Office. Subsequently, Sushanta Borgohain, MLA of 107 No Thowra Constituency, raised the Abhiruchi Day flag, while Arup Kumar Dutta, president of

Demow Handball Club, hoisted the Demow Handball Club flag. Damaru Phukan, a player and sports organizer from Demow, and Niranjan Handique, a player and sports organizer from Nitaipukhuri, were honored during the event. The Demow Handball Club bestowed them with phulam gamosa and citations. During Sunday afternoon, Boys and Girls' Handball Competitions were organized, followed by a prize distribution ceremony for the winning teams. Jadab Changmai, a retired teacher, Satyakam Panday, Umesh Chetia, President of Demow Press Club, Biswanath Nag, Secretary of ATTSA, Demow Branch, along with other dignitaries, graced the occasion.

## Nagaon adjudged best team in inter district yoga c'ship

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Sept 3:** Nagaon district achieved the best team award in the 26th Inter District sub-junior and junior Yogasana organised at Sivasagar district from August 25 to August 27, 2023. The event was organised by Sivasagar district yoga sangstha in collaboration with Asom Yoga Sangstha. The event was inaugurated by Arjun Bhogeswar Boruah in presence of retired IAS Gokul Mohan Hazarika, Ram Mohan Hazarika Pradul Hazarika etc. During the opening session, Asom Yoga Sangstha presented the founder secretary of Asom Yoga Sangstha Pratik Chandra Sarma memorial award 'Krida Jyoti' to Arjun Bhogeswar Boruah too. Besides, the organization also awarded three prominent individuals like

Manjula Laskar, Nalin Nath and Achyut Kashyap for their tremendous contribution towards the field of state sports and games.

In a press note signed by Prabhat Ch Bora, general secretary, Asom Yoga Sangstha, headquarter, Nagaon here stated that in the event Sonitpur district bagged the 2nd best team while Darang district and Sivasagar district achieved jointly the 3rd best team. Besides, Majuli district achieved the best discipline team in the event. Sandeep Sharma (Brajali) in sub junior (boys), Rishika Kaur (Nagaon) in sub junior (girls), Priyam Bora (Nagaon) in junior (boys) and Udit Rani Bora in junior (girls) bagged the best award in the entire event, the release added.

## Former Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak dies



**HARARE, Sept 3:** Former Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak died on Sunday at the age of 49, his family confirmed on social media.

Streak, who played 65 Tests and 189 ODIs for Zimbabwe from 1993-2005, was battling liver cancer for a long time.

"In the early hours of this morning, Sunday the 3rd of September 2023, the greatest love of my life and the father of my beautiful children, was carried to be with the Angels from his home where he wished to spend his last days surrounded by his family and closest loved ones," wrote Streak's wife Nadine on Facebook. "He was covered in love and peace and did not walk off the Park alone. Our souls are joined for eternity Streaky. Till I hold you again," Nadine added.

A few days ago, former Zimbabwe fast bowler Henry

Olonga announced the demise of Streak on social media, only to deny it hours later after a message from his captain, but by then condolence messages had surfaced.

"RIP Streaky," Olunga wrote on X, formerly Twitter, on Sunday.

In Test cricket, Streak claimed 216 wickets and scored one century and 11 half-centuries for Zimbabwe. In 189 ODIs, he bagged 239 wickets and made 2,943 runs with 13 fifties. He is the highest wicket-taker for Zimbabwe by a long margin in both Tests and ODIs.

In 68 ODIs as captain, he led Zimbabwe to win in 18 and lost 47 while three finished without any result. In 21 Tests, Streak captained Zimbabwe to wins in four while they lost 11 and drew six. (PTI)

## Centuries by Hasan and Shanto power Bangladesh to 334/5 against Afghanistan

**LAHORE, Sept 3:** Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Najmul Hossain Shanto showcased their batting prowess with thrilling centuries as they took Bangladesh to a commanding 334 for 5 in their must-win Asia Cup match against Afghanistan here on Sunday.

While Hasan amassed 112 runs off 119 deliveries, Shanto picked up where he left off in the previous game, with a 105-ball 104. The duo together hit the ball 16 times to the fence and five times over it as they looked in command at the Gaddafi Stadium. After an underwhelming batting display in their tournament opener, the Bangladesh batting unit gave a good account of itself.

Afghanistan bowlers were guilty of leaking runs, especially left-arm medium pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi (0/53 in 6 overs), as skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi struggled to find answers. Even star spinner Rashid Khan (0/66 in 10 overs) was ineffective as he remained wicketless. Playing in the scorching heat, Hasan put up a 60-run opening stand with Mohammad Naim (28) to give Bangladesh a strong start.

However, Afghanistan put Bangladesh in a spot of bother



by claiming two wickets in quick succession.

Off-spinner Muejib Ur Rahman (1/62 in 10 overs) gave Afghanistan the first breakthrough as he cleaned up Naim with a perfect googly.

Medium pacer Gulbadin Naib (0/59 in 8 overs) then induced an outside edge to send Towhid Hridoy packing without opening his account.

Hasan then began the rebuilding act with Shanto. The

two stitched a 215-run partnership. The way both Shanto and Mehidy batted, it looked unlikely that any of the Afghan bowlers would be able to snare their wickets and that's what exactly happened.

Hasan retired hurt in the 43rd over due to cramps in his left hand. A few overs later, Shanto attempted a reverse sweep but slipped as he set off to take a run, putting an end to his spectacular innings. (PTI)



## Eyeing Super Four berth, India face greenhorns Nepal

**PALLEKELE (SRI LANKA), Sept 3:** Coming off a washout, India would hope they only have greenhorns Nepal to tackle and not rain as the heavyweights eye a berth in the Super Four of the Asia Cup here on Monday.

From Group A, Pakistan have already qualified to the Super Four with 3 points, and India have one point from the washed-out game against their arch-rivals on Saturday. Even in the event of another rain-marred match on the morrow, India can advance to the Super Four with two points, but Rohit Sharma's men will certainly not want it that way.

India received some encourag-

ing signals from their match against Pakistan, and they would want to build on them ahead of the business end of this tournament and much sterner assays in the waiting.

Pakistan pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf had reduced India to 66 for 4 by the 15th over. At that point, India's worries might have been accentuated by the fact that they have a jelly middle-order.

Ishan Kishan was playing the first match of his career at No. 5 in ODIs and Hardik Pandya never really fitted the bill of a firefighter.

However, both Kishan and Pandya overcame their personal predicaments to amass 138 runs

for the fifth wicket, cornerstone of India's eventual 266.

Kishan was particularly impressive, as his forte is being a dashing top-order batsman.

So, there was that hint of doubt whether Kishan would be able to make the necessary adjustments to his batting and approach to suit the No. 5 slot.

He excelled on both the counts. As a top-order batter Kishan was susceptible to pacers who could move the ball around.

Instead of trusting his defence, Kishan's method to get out of the cage was being aggressive. But here he had to be defensive.

Rauf, Afridi and Naseem Shah

tested his fortitude but for once Kishan showed that he can offer a scratch.

Nepal do not have the quality of Pakistan, but Kishan would like to have a go at them and add some more runs under his belt to boost his new profile.

Similarly, the management will also welcome the composure Pandya showed while playing second fiddle to Kishan, and the seamless shifting of gears the all-rounder did after the left-hander's dismissal. The adaptability and the no-egotistical methods of Pandya would have pleased the think-tank no end. Even though the stuttering effort of their top four – Rohit

Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer – against Pakistan pacers could be treated as an aberration, the management would want them to get into ODI mode at the earliest.

Rohit and Kohli were rested for the ODIs against the West Indies, while Shreyas Iyer is making his return after an injury lay-off.

Nepal might just give the trio the perfect opposition to earn some valuable game time and runs.

However, the team top brass might be a tad disappointed because the bowlers never got a chance to test their skills against a quality opponent in Pakistan. (PTI)





Government of Assam

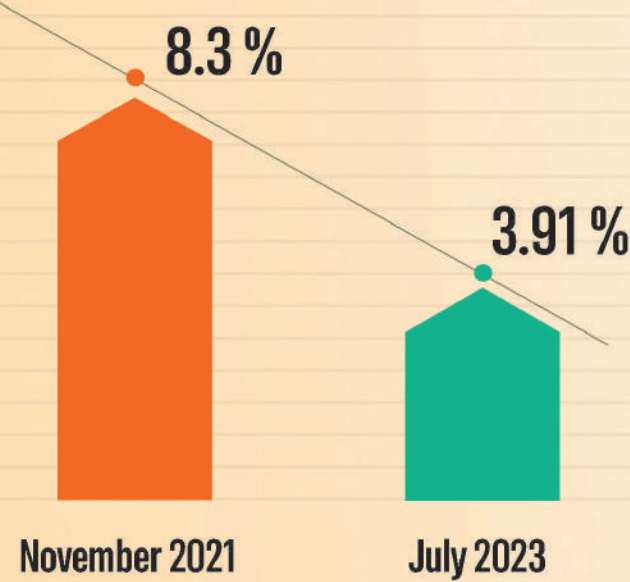


## Assam achieves significant milestone Ranks among States with lowest retail inflation rates

Demand and supply-side policy measures of Union and State Governments have significantly reduced inflation in Assam. Timely and decisive policy interventions of State Government have ensured stable commodity prices



Rate of inflation



**“**  
We are committed to keep inflation under control and provide relief to the people  
**”**

**Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
Chief Minister, Assam

### Empowering people through anti-inflationary measures

Increased cash transfers to women and farmers through Orunodoi and PM Kisan schemes



Cashless health insurance and free ration to every household



Lowering transportation costs by record investments in roads, railways and airports



Increased productivity via crop diversification policies



Fall in fuel prices

Decrease in electricity tariffs



### Fuel and electricity prices of Assam compared to other States

#### Petrol

Assam	₹98.03
Bihar	₹107.24
Chattisgarh	₹102.45
West Bengal	₹106.03
Karnataka	₹101.94
Kerala	₹109.73
Rajasthan	₹108.48
Tamil Nadu	₹102.63
Jharkhand	₹99.84

#### Diesel

Assam	₹90.33
Bihar	₹94.04
Chattisgarh	₹95.44
West Bengal	₹92.76
Kerala	₹98.53
Rajasthan	₹93.72
Tamil Nadu	₹94.24
Jharkhand	₹94.65

As per information on 30 August 2023 by Department of Price Determination, Indian Oil Corporation

#### Per unit price

(3 kW per household, monthly 500 units)

Assam	₹7.60
Bihar	₹9.96
Kerala	₹8.76
Rajasthan	₹8.13

As per information for 2023-24 on website of REC Ltd, under Ministry of Power, Government of India