

6
WORLD

8
NATION

US: McCarthy becomes first speaker ever to be ousted from job in House vote

Russia says it has foiled a major Ukrainian drone attack as concerns grow about weapons supplies

Security concerns extend way beyond preservation of territorial integrity: Prez

PM Modi to launch multiple development projects in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh

HT BRIEFS**Lovlina settles for Silver**

HANGZHOU: Tokyo Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain put up a lacklustre display to settle for a Silver as Indian boxers signed off with a haul of five medals at the Asian Games here on Wednesday. Borgohain's defensive performance cost her the Gold as she was out-punched in the lop-sided final. The reigning world champion was thrashed by home favourite and two-time Olympic medallist Li Qian in the 75kg final. With Borgohain's loss, India's campaign came to an end. The country's boxers thus signed off with five medals, including one silver and four bronze. In the last edition, India had won a gold and a bronze. (Details on Page-12)

Former ABMSU**president joins UPPL**

KOKRAJHAR: Ashraf Islam, the former president of the All Bodoland Minority Students' Union (ABMSU), officially became a member of the ruling United People's Party Liberal (UPPL). This momentous occasion took place in the presence of Pramod Boro, chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and President of UPPL, along with Ranjit Basumaty, party secretary and executive member of BTR. Ashraf Islam, along with nearly 50 of his followers from various areas in the Parbatjhora district, decided to join UPPL and pledged their support to the party. Their entry was marked by a warm welcome and traditional Arona and muffers. CEM Boro expressed his enthusiasm for the new members, emphasizing the dedication of the BTR government to the welfare and development of society since its inception. He assured that UPPL and the BTR government remain fully committed to the comprehensive development of its citizens. Ashraf Islam stated that he and his followers have joined UPPL to provide their cooperation and support to the ruling party's endeavors.

Cloudburst-triggered flash flood wreaks havoc in Sikkim

Eight dead, 23 army men among 49 missing

GANGTOK, Oct 4: At least eight people died and 49 others, including 23 army personnel, went missing on Wednesday after a cloudburst over Lhonak Lake in north Sikkim triggered a flash flood in the Teesta River basin, officials said.

Three of the dead were washed up in north Bengal, they said.

The flood in Sikkim that started around 1.30 am was made worse by the release of water from Chungthang dam, the officials said. "Five bodies have been recovered from Golitar and Singtam region," Gangtok Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Mahendra Chettri said.

Another official said besides the 23 army personnel, 26 civilians were also missing, while 45 people were rescued, including 18 injured.

"A steel bridge at Singtam, known as Indreni bridge, 30 km



from the state capital Gangtok has been completely washed away by Teesta river water early Wednesday," the official said.

The Sikkim government, in a notification, said the natural calamity has been declared as a disaster.

The release of water from the

Chungthang dam led to a sudden increase in water levels up to 15-20 feet high downstream, defence spokesperson Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said.

"Twenty-three Army personnel have been reported missing and 41 vehicles submerged under the slush," he said.

PM takes stock of situation

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Sikkim chief minister Prem Singh Tamang on Wednesday to take stock of the situation in the state following flash flood in the Teesta river, and assured him of all possible support. "Spoke to Sikkim CM Shri @PSTamangGolay and took stock of the situation in the wake of (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

The spokesperson said the identity of the missing personnel is yet to be ascertained due to a breakdown in communication.

Rajeev Bhattacharya, 25, a tourist from Kolkata who was on a trek from Gangtok towards Singtam, told PTI over phone: "We saw a huge wave of water rushing

at great speed through the valley and mangled remains of structures being swept away. Luckily, my friends and I were on high ground and not affected by the flash flood. We are now making our way back to Gangtok."

Several towns, including Dikchu, Singtam and Rangpo located in the Teesta basin, have also been flooded with the upsurge in the river.

Meanwhile, all schools located in Mangan, Gangtok, Pakyong and Namchi districts will remain closed till October 8, the education department said in a circular.

Parts of National Highway-10, the main link between Sikkim and the rest of the country, were washed away, the officials said, adding, a flood alert has been issued for North Bengal and Bangladesh through which the Teesta flows. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Rima Das bags nomination at APSA

MUMBAI, Oct 4: National Award-winning filmmaker Rima Das has been nominated in the best director category for her film "Tora's Husband" at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA) 2023 alongside "Past Lives" filmmaker Celine Song.

Filmmakers Darkhan Tulegenov ("Brothers") and Liang Ming ("Carefree Days") are also nominated in the segment.

Das, known for Assamese films such as "Bulbul Can Sing" and "Village Rockstars", is also part of the 2023 APSA Youth, Animation, Documentary International jury along with Hikaru Toda (Japan), chaired by Midi Z (Taiwan). "I am honoured to be part of the esteemed APSA Youth, Animation, Documentary International jury and look forward (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Double anti-corruption arrests in state

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 4: In a significant crackdown on corruption, the Directorate of Vigilance & Anti-Corruption in Assam has made two arrests involving public servants of the government of Assam.

First, a junior assistant from the Public Health Engineering Department's Nalbari Division was apprehended for initially demanding ₹ 10,000 as a bribe from a complainant, later reducing it to ₹ 5,000. However, she was caught red-handed accepting ₹ 3,000 as part of the demanded bribe. The tainted money was swiftly seized, and a case has been registered against her under Section 7(a) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018).

In a parallel incident, a sub-inspector of police (UB) in Lakhimpur district, identified as Merafat Ali, was also caught accepting a bribe. He had initially demanded ₹ 5,000 but later reduced it to ₹ 4,000. He was apprehended after accepting ₹ 2,000 as part of the bribe. A case has been registered against him under the same legal provisions. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

DRIVE AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE

915 arrested, 710 cases registered in phase-2: DGP

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 4: In a continued effort to combat child marriage in Assam, the police have arrested 915 individuals out of 1,100 allegedly involved in such practices during the second phase of the campaign, announced DGP GP Singh on Wednesday.

During the ongoing second phase, a total of 710 cases have been registered since it commenced on Monday evening, according to the DGP. Among the arrested individuals, 546 are husbands of girls who were married off as children, 353 are relatives, and 16 are solemnizers of marriages.

The DGP highlighted that a field study revealed a considerable decline in child marriages compared to the situation before the crackdown in the first phase conducted in

February this year. In the first phase, 4,515 cases were registered, leading to the arrest of 3,483 individuals, with 95.5% of those cases already having been chargesheeted.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had reported on Tuesday that 1,039 people were arrested during the second phase, and the numbers were expected to increase as the campaign continued.

The highest number of arrests, 192, occurred in Dhubri district, followed by 143 in Barpeta, and 50 in Kamrup. In the three districts of Karimganj, Hailakandi, and Cachar in Barak Valley, 47, 40, and 34 arrests were recorded, respectively.

The chief minister has given specific instructions to continue this drive until the menace of child marriage is entirely eradicated from the state. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Canadian allegations against India 'serious': US

WASHINGTON, Oct 4: The Canadian allegations regarding India's involvement in the killing of a pro-Khalistan separatist are "serious" and need to be investigated fully, the White House has said.

Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the chief of the banned Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF), was killed in Surrey, British Columbia on June 18. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020.

Tensions flared between India and Canada last month following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar. India has angrily rejected the allegations as "absurd" and "motivated".

The claims made by Canada were discussed when visiting External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met here last week. John Kirby, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House told reporters at a news conference here.

"The issue was discussed. We'll certainly leave it to those two countries to talk about their bilateral relationship," Kirby said in response to a question.

"We've been clear, these allegations are serious, they need to be fully investigated and of course, as we've said before, we urge India to participate actively in that investigation," Kirby said.

Jaishankar, who also met his counterpart Antony Blinken during his visit, told journalists in Washington last week that the governments of India and Canada

will have to talk to each other and see how they resolve their differences over the issue and underlined that the larger issue of "permissiveness" must be flagged and addressed.

State Department's Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel told reporters at a separate news conference that it's critical that Canada's investigation proceeds and the perpetrators are brought to justice.

"We also have, as we've previously said publicly and privately, urged the Indian government to cooperate in the Canadian investigation and cooperate in those efforts," he said. The US, he said, has seen the reports on the diplomatic staffing levels for the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi.

"But I don't have anything further to offer on those reports and certainly don't want to get into hypotheticals and take this process one step at a time. As it relates to our Indo-Pacific strategy and the focus that we continue to place on the region, that effort and that line of work is going to continue," he said.

"With India, we are partners with them in the Quad and in many others, and we continue to work with them and other countries in the region on a number of important issues.

"But as I said, we take these allegations very seriously and we continue to not just work closely with our Canadian partners but have publicly and privately urged the Indian government to cooperate with Canada," Patel said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Governor urges strengthening tourism for economic growth

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 4: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria conducted a briefing session with key officials from the Assam Tourism Department, in the presence of minister Jayanta Mallabarua, at the Raj Bhavan

conference hall on Wednesday. During the meeting, the tourism minister updated the Governor on the various initiatives taken by the department, underscoring their commitment to accelerate transformative changes within the state's tourism sector. He emphasised the substantial progress made since 2016-2017 and expressed the intention to bring about significant improvements with the guidance of the Governor and the chief minister.

Dr JB Ekka, principal secretary of the Tourism Department, presented an overview of the department's activities. He highlighted aspects such as branding and promotion, infrastructure development, policy enhancement, and festivals and events aimed at promoting tourism.

The Governor emphasised that Assam serves as the gateway to South East Asian Nations and is a treasure trove of tourism opportunities. He noted the enormous potential of the tourism industry, which could benefit sectors like hospitality, skill development, handloom and handicrafts, and culture, while creating employment opportunities. Furthermore, the Governor stressed that the tourism sector plays a pivotal role in boosting Assam's GDP. He also highlighted Assam's rich natural beauty and historical significance, suggesting that both the Tourism and



Cultural departments collaborate to showcase the state's cultural tourism.

The Governor called for the creation of a detailed brochure containing information about all tourist destinations in the state, to be made available on digital platforms. He also urged efforts to attract foreign tourists, the establishment of tourist kiosks at all airports, and the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

CBI recovers missing mobile phones

JUNMONI DEATH CASE**HT Correspondent**

NAGAON, Oct 4: In a significant development in the investigation into the mysterious death of SI Junmoni Rabha on May 15 last year, a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team revisited the accident site on Wednesday and conducted a demonstration involving a container truck and an S-Presso car to analyze the enigmatic road mishap that claimed her life.

During this thorough examination, the CBI team also scrutinized SI Junmoni Rabha's personal vehicle, where her body was discovered, a total of six times on Wednesday. Remarkably, during these examinations, the CBI team successfully located two mobile phones that had been missing since her untimely demise.

Sources disclosed that a team of twelve CBI personnel visited the location near Sorubhogia, under Jakhlabandha PS, meticulously examining every aspect of the suspected incident.

It is worth noting that despite multiple previous examinations of SI Junmoni Rabha's personal vehicle, the lost mobile phones had remained elusive. Therefore, the unexpected recovery of the missing mobile phones on Wednesday has raised numerous questions among the local community.

Protest in Diphu against alleged land compensation irregularities

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Oct 4: The Nakgarik Suraksha Manch (NSM) staged a 'sit-in protest' at Semson Sing Ingti Memorial Park in Diphu, expressing their concerns over alleged irregularities in the distribution of compensation for land acquisition related to the construction of the Four Lane highway from Parokhuwa to Lahorjan in Karbi Anglong.

President of NSM, Mahajan Kro, who participated in the protest, voiced his grievances, stating, "Compensation against land acquisition was provided in the name of the Revenue in-charge Executive Member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Amar Sing Tisso, and his late mother in Package 5. They jointly own land in approximately 15 locations, raising questions about how these properties were acquired due to the increased land prices brought about by the Four Lane road construction."



Kro demanded a CBI inquiry into the matter and called for the removal of Amar Sing Tisso, the Revenue in-charge Executive Member of KAAC, alleging his involvement in the scandal. He also emphasized the need to prevent further irregularities, especially with the construction of Assam Mala and two-lane NH 27 projects underway. Kro claimed to possess evidence

of significant wrongdoings in the land compensation process. He pointed out that joint secretary of KAAC, Revenue, Tensing Rongpi, and Mandar, Tarun Rongpi, had received substantial compensation for land along the Four Lane highway in Karbi Anglong.

According to Kro, Tarun Rongpi acquired approximately 50 plots along the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Trio wins Nobel Prize in chemistry for work on quantum dots, used in electronics and medical imaging

STOCKHOLM, Oct 4: Three scientists in the United States won the Nobel Prize in chemistry Wednesday for their work on quantum dots — particles just a few atoms in diameter that can release very bright colored light and whose applications in everyday life include electronics and medical imaging.

Moungi Bawendi, of MIT; Louis Brus, of Columbia University; and Alexei Ekimov, of Nanocrystals Technology Inc., were honoured for their work with the tiny particles that "have unique properties and now spread their light from television screens and LED lamps", according to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, which announced the award in Stockholm. "Why does it matter, right, that we can make tiny particles that nobody can see, but they have colours?" Pernilla Witting



Moungi G. Bawendi

Louis E. Brus

Alexei I. Ekimov

Stafshede, a member of Nobel committee that awarded the prize.

"This is actually used today both in medicine and technology...We have displays on TVs, in your cell-

phone, that use quantum dots inside to make just brighter colours."

The suspense surrounding the academy's decision took an unusual turn when Swedish media reported

the names of the winners several hours before the prize was announced. The advance notice apparently came from a news release sent out early by mistake.

What discovery won the Nobel Prize in chemistry?

Quantum dots' electrons have constrained movement, which affects how they absorb and release visible light, allowing for very bright colours. The dots are nanoparticles that glow blue, red, or green when illuminated or exposed to light. The colour they emit depends on the size of the particles. Larger dots shine red, and smaller dots shine blue. The colour change is due to how electrons act in more or less confined spaces. While physicists had predicted these colour-change properties as early as the 1930s, creating quantum dots of specific controlled sizes was not possible in the lab for another five decades.

Ekimov, 78, and Brus, 80, were early pioneers of the technology, while Bawendi, 62, is credited with revolutionising the production of quantum dots "resulting in almost perfect particles. This high quality was necessary for them to be utilised in applications," the academy said.

"The community realised the implications in the mid-90s, that there could potentially be some real-world applications," he said. Judy Giordan, president of the American Chemical Society, said she was thrilled at the selection of the winners.

"What we care about a lot in chemistry is being able to make and tailor novel structures and architectures to solve problems that help people and the planet," Giordan said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Air Force acquires first LCA Tejas twin-seater aircraft

BENGALURU, Oct 4: Hindustan Aeronautics Limited on Wednesday handed over the first LCA Tejas twin-seater aircraft to the Indian Air Force. The Bengaluru-headquartered company said the twin-seater variant has all the capabilities to support training requirements of IAF and augments itself to the role of fighter as well, when necessary.

The LCA Tejas twin-seater is a light-weight all-weather multi-role 4.5 generation aircraft.

It is an amalgamation of contemporary concepts and technologies such as relaxed static stability, quadruplex fly-by-wire flight control, carefree manoeuvring, advanced glass cockpit, integrated digital avionics systems and advanced composite materials for the airframe, HAL said.

This adds India to the list of "very few" elite countries, which have created such capability and have them operational in their defence forces, it said, adding that it's another feather in the cap of the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative of the Government of India.

"This historic event today will mark the achievement of a key milestone of producing LCA twin-seater which is designed with a strategic intent of graduating the budding pilots from the twin-seater variants to fighter Pilots," HAL said. HAL has an order of 18 twin-seaters from IAF and is planning to deliver eight of them during 2023-24. The remaining 10 would be delivered progressively by 2026-27. More orders are also expected from IAF, the company said. Union (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Govt sets up National Turmeric Board; exports may touch USD 1 bn by 2030

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The government on Wednesday set up National Turmeric Board with a view to promoting production of the herb having medicinal value and increase its exports to USD 1 billion or ₹ 8,400 crore by 2030.

"With the focused activities of the board, it is expected that turmeric exports will reach USD 1 billion by 2030," a commerce ministry statement said.

According to the statement, the Centre on Wednesday notified the constitution of National Turmeric Board.

The board will focus on development and growth of turmeric and turmeric products in the country, it added.

Briefing media about the issue, Union Minister Kishan Reddy said the decision fulfils the long-pending demand of farmers of Telangana.

He said the board will not only help farmers of Telangana but also of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Mizoram, Assam, Gujarat, Odisha and West Bengal.

He also said farmers in Telangana did not wear slippers or shoes for the past 15 years to press for their demand of setting up of a dedicated board for turmeric.

"Our cadres have distributed slippers to the farmers of Telangana after this announcement," he said.

The government has chalked out a plan to increase turmeric exports to ₹ 8,400 crore, or USD 1 billion, per annum (by 2030) from the existing ₹ 1,600 crore, said Union Min-



ister Anurag Thakur, while briefing the media about the Union Cabinet decision in its meeting on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced setting up of the board on Tuesday at a function in Telangana and the Centre notified the proposal on Wednesday, he said.

The board will have a chairperson to be appointed by the central government. Its members will be from Ministry of AYUSH, Departments of Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Commerce and Industry of the Union Government, senior state government representatives from three

states (on rotation basis), select national/state institutions involved in research, representatives of turmeric farmers and exporters. It will have a secretary to be appointed by Department of Commerce. India has more than 62 per cent share in world trade of turmeric.

During 2022-23, 1,534 lakh tonne of turmeric and turmeric products valued at USD 207.45 million was exported by more than 380 exporters.

The leading export markets for Indian turmeric are Bangladesh, the UAE, the US and Malaysia.

The board will provide leadership on turmeric related matters, augment the efforts, and facilitate greater coordination with Spices Board and other government agencies in development and growth of the turmeric sector.

The world has significant interest in the health and wellness benefits of turmeric, which the board will leverage to further increase awareness and consumption, develop new markets internationally to increase exports, promote research and development into new products, and develop the traditional knowledge for value-added turmeric products.

It will especially focus on capacity building and skill development of turmeric growers for harnessing greater benefits out of value addition.

The board will also promote quality and food safety standards and adherence to such standards. It will also take steps to further safeguard and usefully exploit turmeric's full potential for humanity. India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of turmeric in the world.

In 2022-23, an area of 3.24 lakh hectare was under turmeric cultivation in India with a production of 11.61 lakh tonne (over 75 per cent of global turmeric production).

More than 30 varieties of turmeric are grown in India and it is grown in over 20 states in the country.

The largest producing states of turmeric are Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. (PTI)

LPG subsidy for Ujjwala beneficiaries hiked to ₹ 300

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The government on Wednesday raised the subsidy provided to poor women, who got free cooking gas connections under the Ujjwala Yojana, to ₹ 300 per cylinder as it looked to blunt opposition criticism of high fuel prices.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs raised the subsidy from ₹ 200 per 14.2-kg cylinders for up to 12 refills per year to ₹ 300 per bottle, Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur told reporters here. The move will benefit 9.6 crore families.

Ahead of assembly elections in five states, including Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the government had in late August cut cooking gas price by ₹ 200 per cylinder. After this, LPG cylinder price came down to ₹ 903. For Ujjwala beneficiaries, the price was ₹ 703 after considering the ₹ 200 per cylinder subsidy, which is directly paid into the bank accounts of connection holders. After the increase in subsidy, a 14.2-kg LPG cylinder will now cost ₹603 for Ujjwala beneficiaries.

The move follows criticism by opposition parties of high LPG price. Parties like Congress are promising LPG cylinder at ₹ 500 if voted to power. The hike in subsidy is being seen as an attempt to blunt that criticism. Thakur did not say how much additional subsidy outgo the move would entail. For 2022-23, ₹ 6,100 crore was provided for the Ujjwala subsidy, which increased to ₹ 7,680 crore in the current 2023-24 fiscal (April 2023 to March 2024). The subsidy is credited directly to the bank accounts of eligible beneficiaries.

The targeted support to Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) consumers encourages them for continuous use of LPG.

The average LPG consumption of PMUY consumers increased 20 per cent from 3.01 refills in 2019-20 to 3.68 in 2021-22.

All PMUY beneficiaries are eligible for the targeted subsidy.

To make Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), a clean cooking fuel, available to rural and deprived poor households, the government launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana in May 2016, to provide deposit-free LPG connections to adult women of poor households. (PTI)

IITG, TimesPro celebrate graduation of 3rd Batch in AI & Deep Learning

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 4: The Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, in collaboration with TimesPro, recently hosted the convocation ceremony for the third graduating batch of the Post Graduate Certificate Programme in Artificial Intelligence & Deep Learning.

This momentous event took place during an immersive campus session, which also featured a hackathon focusing on 'Ligament Tear Classification'. Spanning five days, the immersion session for the Post Graduate Certificate Programme in Artificial Intelligence & Deep Learning featured enlightening lectures by professor Arghyadip on the topic of 'Multi-armed Bandit' and professor Suresh Sundaram's insights into 'Handwritten Based Biometrics'.

The culmination of this session came with the announcement of results and the formal presentation of certificates on the last day.

During the convocation, professor Parameswar Krishnan Iyer, officiating director of the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati,

expressed his delight and stated, "We are pleased to announce the successful completion of the third batch of the Post Graduate Certificate Programme in Artificial Intelligence & Deep Learning. The campus immersion and the outcomes of the hackathon were highly productive, providing our learners with valuable insights through interactions with faculty and guest sessions. This programme will empower our graduates to lead their organisations' AI strategies, creating new products and services to enhance efficiency and productivity."

Mohankumar Silaparasetty, head of technology programmes at TimesPro, remarked, "The learners have acquired essential knowledge of AI & DL tools, enabling them to make informed decisions by implementing automated processes and data analysis. This programme has honed their critical thinking abilities to solve complex problems and thrive in an ever-evolving ecosystem. We extend our best wishes to them in their future endeavors."

Rupee falls 3 paise to close at 83.23 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Oct 4: The rupee depreciated 3 paise to settle at 83.23 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, as a muted trend in domestic equities and sustained foreign fund outflows weighed on investor sentiments.

Forex traders said the strength of the American currency in the overseas market further dented investor sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.22 against the US dollar and moved in a range of 83.27 to 83.19.

The rupee finally settled at 83.23 (provisional) against the US dollar, down 3 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee had settled at 83.20 against the dollar.

"The Indian rupee declined on weak domestic markets and further selling by FIIs. However, softening of US dollar cushioned the downside," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

Choudhary further said that the US dollar eased from a near 11-month high as investors are likely to narrow their positions ahead of US non-farm payrolls data later this week.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias amid risk aversion in global markets and a hawkish tone of most Federal Reserve officials," Choudhary said.

However, softening of crude oil prices may cushion the downside. "Any intervention by the RBI may also support rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from Services PMI, ADP non-farm employment and factory orders from the US," he said.

Market participants may remain cautious ahead of the Reserve Bank's monetary policy decision later this week.

The RBI governor-headed six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) started its three-day meeting on Wednesday. Governor Shaktikanta Das will announce the decision on Friday (October 6).

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell by 0.21 per cent to 106.77.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.95 per cent to USD 90.06 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 286.06 points or 0.44 per cent lower at 65,226.04. (PTI)

Markets fall for 2nd day on unabated foreign fund outflows

MUMBAI, Oct 4: Equity benchmark indices ended lower by 286.06 points on Wednesday, extending their previous day's fall, due to unabated foreign fund outflows and weak trends in the US and Asian markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex went lower by 286.06 points, or 0.44 per cent, to settle at 65,226.04. During the day, it plunged 633.33 points, or 0.96 per cent, to 64,878.77.

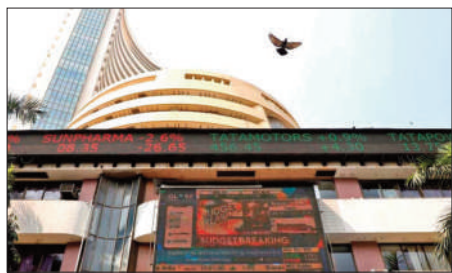
The Nifty declined 92.65 points, or 0.47 per cent, to end at 19,436.10.

Among the Sensex firms, Axis Bank fell over 4.38 per cent, emerging as the biggest laggard. State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, Maruti, and Larsen & Toubro were the other major laggards.

Nestle, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies, and Asian Paints were among the gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge fell 1.52 per cent and smallcap index declined 0.96 per cent.

Among the indices, metal tumbled 1.98 per cent, realty declined 1.83 per cent, utilities (1.42



per cent), capital goods (1.33 per cent), industrials (1.22 per cent), services (1.02 per cent), commodities (1 per cent), and oil & gas (0.87 per cent).

FMCG, IT and tech were the gainers.

"Overseas investors are pulling out funds from the Indian equity markets as the current rally in US dollar and bond yields is making emerging market assets less attractive," Shrikant Chouhan, head of research (retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

"Despite our strong macroeconomic growth performance, India is not insulated from global problems, and hence any correction in global markets due to worries over further rate hikes

would have a rub-off effect here," he said.

"Strong US jobs data is reinforcing Fed's hawkish stance and multi-year high US bond yields is signalling an impending interest rate hike. Globally, investors are adopting a risk-averse strategies due to inflation concerns and the strengthening US dollar," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

"In India, despite a robust economy, premium valuations of midcaps and recent rally is augmenting consolidation," he added.

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

European markets were trading mostly in the green. The US markets ended with over 1 per cent fall on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 2,034.14 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.91 per cent to USD 90.09 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark had declined 316.31 points, or 0.48 per cent, to settle at 65,512.10 on Tuesday. The Nifty fell 109.55 points, or 0.56 per cent, to end at 19,528.75. (PTI)

Asian shares are sharply lower, tracking a rates-driven tumble on Wall Street

BANGKOK, Oct 4: Asian markets were sharply lower on Wednesday after Wall Street tumbled as it focused on the downside of a surprisingly strong job market: the likelihood that interest rates will stay high. US futures and oil prices edged lower.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index sank 2.2 per cent to 30,551.85 and the Kospi in South Korea dropped 2.3 per cent to 2,408.68. Hong Kong's Hang Seng skidded 1 per cent to 17,151.61. Troubled property developer China Evergrande was down 8.5 per cent after plunging 28 per cent on Tuesday.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 1 per cent to 6,873.90. In Bangkok, the SET fell 0.2 per cent.

On Tuesday, the S&P 500 lost 1.4 per cent to 4,229.45. The Dow sank 1.3 per cent to 33,002.38, wiping out the last of its gains for the year so far. The Nasdaq composite led the market lower with a 1.9 per cent drop to 13,059.47 as Big Tech stocks were among the market's biggest losers. Amazon fell 3.7 per cent, Microsoft dropped 2.6 per cent and Nvidia lost 2.8 per cent. The Dow is down 0.4 per cent for the year so far, after being up nearly 8 per cent at the start of August.

The S&P 500, which is the index more 401(k) investments are benchmarked against, has sliced its gain for the year so far to 10.2 per cent.

Stocks fell after a report showed US employers have many more job openings than expected. Expectations that interest rates will stay high are pressuring stocks as Treasury yields rise in the bond market.

Such weight has been the main reason the S&P 500 has lost more than 40 per cent of its value since the end of July, after charging higher for much of the year.

The 10-year Treasury yield climbed Tuesday to 4.79 per cent from 4.69 per cent late Monday and from just 0.50 per cent early in the pandemic. It touched its highest level since 2007.

When bonds are paying so much more in interest, they pull investment dollars away from stocks and

other investments prone to bigger price swings than bonds. High yields also make borrowing more expensive for companies and households across the economy, which can hurt corporate profits.

Investors increasingly are taking the Federal Reserve at its word that it will keep its main interest rate high for a long time in order to drive down inflation. The Fed has already yanked its federal funds rate to the highest level since 2001, and it indicated last month it may keep the rate higher in 2024 than it earlier expected. Fed Gov. Michelle Bowman said in a speech Monday that she expects it will likely be appropriate to raise rates further and hold them at a restrictive level for some time. Tuesday's report showed employers were advertising 9.6 million job openings in late August, much higher than the 8.9 million economists expected. That could keep upward pressure on wages to attract employees.

Several other challenges are also tugging at Wall Street besides higher yields. The resumption of student-loan repayments could drag on spending by US households, which has been strong enough to help keep the economy out of a recession despite high interest rates. Higher oil prices are threatening to worsen inflation, and economies around the world look shaky.

Oil prices ticked higher a day after slumping sharply to trim their big gains since the summer.

A barrel of benchmark US crude lost 8 cents to USD 89.15 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It rose 41 cents to settle at USD 89.23 on Tuesday. Brent crude, the international standard, gave up 9 cents to USD 90.83 per barrel. The dollar rose to 149.26 Japanese yen from 149.04 yen. The yen's weakness against the dollar has drawn protests from Japanese officials, and analysts said they believed regulators had intervened Tuesday to prevent the dollar from surpassing the 150 yen level. (AP)

NESFB receives RBI's approval for merger with GIPL (slice)

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 4: North East Small Finance Bank (NESFB) has achieved a significant milestone by securing a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the proposed merger with GIPL (slice), a prominent fintech unicorn. NESFB, a local small finance bank headquartered in Guwahati, Assam, sees this merger as a groundbreaking move to advance their shared vision of expanding tech-enabled financial accessibility, not only in the North East but also across other states in the country. In the coming months, NESFB will diligently work towards obtaining approvals from other regulatory bodies, including NCLT, SEBI, and more, to finalize the merger.

On this historic occasion, Rupali Kalita, MD & CEO of NESFB, expressed her enthusiasm, stating, "The NOC for the proposed

merger of GIPL (slice) with NESFB will significantly enhance our bank's technological capabilities, strengthening our foundation for grassroots banking and improving customer experiences across our 230 dedicated branches in the North East. This development will advance our mission of financial inclusion through digital means, with a strong commitment to expanding our reach at the grassroots level, leveraging modern risk architecture, and ultimately becoming a leader in the banking industry." Kalita also acknowledged the dedicated efforts of both teams over the past year, highlighting the establishment of essential business synergies. She emphasized that this achievement reflects the unwavering commitment and tireless dedication of all staff involved in steering this project.

NESFB will continue to serve North East India, including the

Myntra unveils Big Fashion Festival

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 4: Myntra, a prominent player in the e-commerce fashion industry, is gearing up to host its grandest festive fashion extravaganza — the Big Fashion Festival (BFF). This marks the fourth edition of the festival, and it promises to be nothing short of spectacular. With an impressive repertoire of over 23 lakh styles representing more than 6000 brands, Myntra's BFF aims to deliver an unparalleled assortment of selections across fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. Anticipating a surge of enthusiastic shoppers, the platform expects over 8 million customers to participate in this festive carnival, which is scheduled to kick off on the October 7.

more than 675 million people, is one of TikTok's biggest markets in terms of user numbers, generating more than 325 million visitors to the app every month.

TikTok, owned by China's ByteDance, is also facing scrutiny from some governments and regulators because of concerns that Beijing could use the app to harvest user data or advance its interests.

Countries including the United States, Britain and New Zealand have banned the app on government phones, despite TikTok repeatedly denying that it has ever shared data with the Chinese government and would not do so if asked. (AP)

TikTok ends retail business in Indonesia after ban on social media shopping

JAKARTA, Oct 4: TikTok said it will halt its online retail operation in Indonesia on Wednesday to comply with the country's decision to ban e-commerce transactions on social media platforms — a big blow to the video platform's fastest-growing market.

The Indonesian government announced the new regulation, which prohibits social media companies from facilitating sales of products on their platforms, on Sept 28 in a bid to protect small businesses from e-commerce competition, accusing the popular apps and websites of predatory pricing.

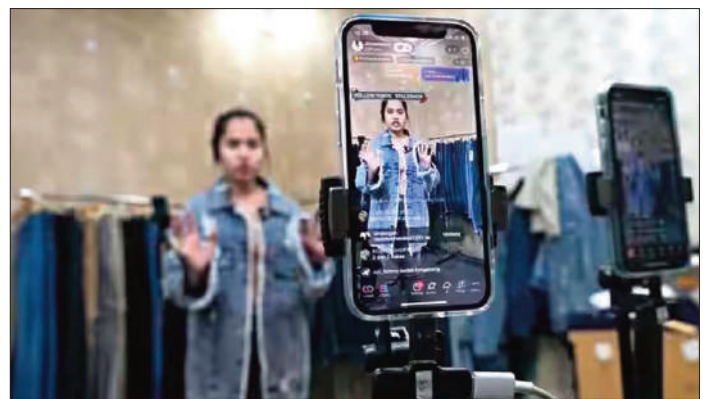
The Chinese-owned video sharing app said in a statement it will stop facilitating e-commerce sales

in TikTok Shop Indonesia by 5 pm Wednesday.

"Our priority is to remain compliant with local laws and regulations," said the statement released Tuesday on its website.

Indonesia's Trade Minister Zulkifli Hasan said the ban aims to "prevent the domination of the algorithm and prevent the use of personal data in business interests" and "create a fair, healthy and beneficial electronic commerce ecosystem," according to a statement released by the Trade Ministry when the ban was announced. It said marketplaces and sellers can only offer or promote goods and services.

A week before the ban was an-



nounced, Southeast Asia's largest wholesale market, Tanah Abang, came under inspection. Sellers at the market in the capital, Jakarta, were experiencing a more than 50% loss of profits because they could not compete with imported products sold online at much lower

ENGINEERING WORK UNDER TINSUKIA DIVISION
E-TENDER NOTICE NO. TSK/Engg/87 of 2023; dated 29-09-2023.
E-tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work.
Item No.1; Brief Description of item: P-way Maintenance works under jurisdiction of SSE/P-way/IC/Dirugargh for a period of 2 years. (Km 0/7 to Km 17/2 Chalkhoa-Dhamalgao section KM 0/0 to KM 25/9 Moranhat-Dhamalgao section, 51/9-KM 52/3 Moranhat Yard & KM 0/0- KM 0/5 Dirugargh-Dirugargh North Cabin). Tender Value: ₹2,67,51,960/-; Earnest Money: ₹2,63,800/-
Item No.2; Brief Description of item: P-way Maintenance works under jurisdiction of SSE/P-way/IC/Pantola for a period of 2 years. Tender Value: ₹2,92,79,837/-; Earnest Money: ₹2,96,400/-
E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 20-10-2023 and opened at 16:00 hrs. on 20-10-2023. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 20-10-2023 in website www.irops.gov.in
DRM (Work)/Tinsukia NORTH EAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

AFFIDAVIT
I'm Apama Santikari Das. But my name in the birth certificate of my son Aditya Das vide registration no 1463/2007 has been recorded as Apama Das. Hence, through a notary affidavit, I have declared that Apama Das and Apama Santikari Das is one and the same person.

Apama Santikari Das
Sangat Bazar, MID, Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal.

Guardian minister Ashok Singhal reviews key initiatives in Kokrajhar

The minister evaluated the progress of important schemes, including Jal Jeevan Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, PM SVANidhi, MGNREGA, Amrit Sarovar, PM Kisan, Khel Maharan, and others

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Oct 4: Ashok Singhal, minister for housing & urban affairs and irrigation, also serving as the guardian minister of Kokrajhar, started his two-day visit with a comprehensive review at the BTC Secretariat.

He met with top officials from all council departments, joined by the respective department heads responsible for overseeing various Assam government initiatives in the BTC area.

BTC chief Pramod Boro and deputy CEM Govind Basumatari were also in attendance. During the meeting, Minister Singhal evaluated the progress of important schemes, including Jal Jeevan Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, PM SVANidhi, MGNREGA, Amrit Sarovar, PM Kisan, Khel Maharan, and others across the five districts under the council.

He issued directives on urban street lighting, solid waste man-



agement, BTC development block restructuring, paddy procurement etc.

Minister Singhal reiterated that the welfare of BTR residents remains his top priority as Kokrajhar district's guardian minister. He praised the council government's

department to expedite toilet construction in all BTR schools. Additionally, the food and civil supplies and consumer affairs departments were tasked with launching a comprehensive campaign, mirroring the successful Mission 100 percent ration card implementation in Dhekiajuli LAC, to distribute ration cards to all eligible BTR beneficiaries.

Minister Singhal also conducted separate meetings with various organisations of BTR region at the Bodoland Guest House in Kokrajhar to address key issues. These organisations included ABSU, AKRSU, AASAA, AGSU, BTR Gorkha Samaj, All Assam Bengali Federation, All BTR Bengali Federation, Rabha Students Union, All BTR Scheduled Caste Students Union, Ex BTF Welfare Committee, All Assam Santhal Students Union and Akhil Hindi Bikash Parishad, among others.

He instructed the education department to expedite toilet construction in all BTR schools. Additionally, the food and civil supplies and consumer affairs departments were tasked with launching a comprehensive campaign, mirroring the successful Mission 100 percent ration card implementation in Dhekiajuli LAC, to distribute ration cards to all eligible BTR beneficiaries.

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Head teacher commits suicide due to pressure from extortionists

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Oct 4: Rajkapur Panika (50), the head teacher of Kishan Primary School in Rajmai Demow, committed suicide by jumping into the tank at the back of his house in Rajmai Pakhimura on Tuesday morning.

Not finding him in his room, the family members found his clothes on the bank of the tank. Police and SDRF jawans later recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem in Sivasagar Civil Hospital.

In the suicide note recovered in his room, addressed to his assistant teacher Madhusmita Borgohain, the deceased mentioned the names of two persons who harassed him for giving ₹ 1 lakh over a month for which he had been undergoing severe mental stress.

The persons were Sanjay Prasad Shah, a portal reporter, and one Santosh Karmakar of Attabari village. When the news reporters arrived at Panika's residence yesterday, the family members and some local youths vented their ire against the portal reporter Shah and thrashed him badly in front of the camera persons. However, the reporter was rescued by other re-



porters present and was sent for treatment in a Dibrugarh hospital by Demow police. Rati Panika, wife of Rajkapur Panika lodged an FIR in Demwo PS demanding action against the two.

According to local media persons, Sanjay Pd Shah was associated earlier with a Guwahati news channel and when the phone call demanding money from the teacher went viral two months ago, he was sacked by the channel management. After that he had been working as a web reporter on his own, earning

a lot more disrepute than services to the people. Rajkishore Bhumi, president, ATTSA Sivasagar District Committee, Dipankar Konwar, executive member, Asom Rajyik Prathamik Sikhyak Sammilani, Bimal Chandra Gogoi, president of the sub-divisional committee of the Sammilani, Demow Press Club, and the local citizens in Demow have demanded a probe into the tragic incident and rigorous punishment for the two for inducing the teacher to commit suicide.

ICSSR sponsored national seminar at Nowgong College

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 4: Department of history in association with IQAC is going to organise an ICSSR sponsored national seminar on 'Cultural heritage of the North Eastern Region for self-reliance India: challenges and opportunities' on November 3 and 4, 2023.

The organising committee has invited research papers from academicians, researchers, professionals and students on various sub-themes of the conference from various disciplines. For the details of the sub-themes, one can visit the college website. The event will be attended by eminent academicians and researchers from esteemed institutions across the country.

Intending participants can submit their abstracts on or before 10th October through online submission <https://forms.gle/EN2AroctPdAo5ir9> or may contact Dr Arani Saikia (7002687102), convener & organising secretary of the organising committee. The last date of submission of full paper will be October 15, 2023 also stated in a press release.

31st Bn SSB Gossaigaon organises vocational training on tailoring

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Oct 4: The 31st Bn SSB Gossaigaon launched 15-day vocational training on tailoring on Wednesday on its premises.

The training has been aimed at imparting professional skills to girls residing adjacent to border areas of AOR.

The 15-day vocational training programme on tailoring was formally inaugurated by LN Singh, deputy commandant, SSB Gossaigaon. A total of 20 females participated in the vocational training programme on tailoring organised by SSB.

In the opening ceremony, deputy commandant LN Singh apprised that during these 15 days of vocational training on tailoring course the trainers from SSB will impart their knowledge and expertise equipping all the participants with the tools. He again said that this 15-day course on tailoring is a testament to their commitment to empower women in AOR border communities with valuable skills and opportunities for self-reliance.

High school teachers extend support to Karmachari Parishad's protest programme

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Oct 4: On demand of introduction of old pension system curbing the NPS, the All Assam employee's organisation Sadou Asam Karmachari Parishad will launch a series of protest programme from October 7 which will be registered in every district headquarter, sub-district and sub division of the state.

Stating government should be serious about the dignity related issue of the employees of different departments across the state. The All Assam High School Teachers Association in a press note mentioned that the frontline teacher's body would extend their full support to the programme for fulfillment of its longstanding demands.

President and joint secretary of the organisation respectively Sunanda Kalita, Tarun Chandra Nath and Ramen Duwora urged all the employees to make the programme successful to be held on October 7 with their cooperation and active participation.

Bodoland Mushroom Mela concludes

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Oct 4: A two-day Bodoland Mushroom Mela 2023 was concluded on Wednesday at Gandhi Nwgr Field in Gossaigaon of Kokrajhar with a colourful programme.

Nearly 50 stalls from different districts of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) participated and showcased their products in the mela which was organised by the Bodoland Mushroom Mission, government of BTR. Notably, the Bodoland Mushroom Mission is a flagship programme of BTR government to promote the mushroom farming activities and upliftment of farmers commercially in the field of agriculture. During the occasion, several mushroom farmers and self help groups (SHG) were given away cheques of ₹ 10000 each as financial support and kit tools from the Bodoland Mushroom Mission, Govt of BTR. Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region graced the occasion as chief guest and handed over the mushroom kits amongst the farmers.

He said that the BTR government has been taking strong initiative for sustainable development in Bodoland region, and subsequently extended cooperation and support to the farmers.

He has urged the farmers to render massive services towards upliftment of the mushroom sector.

Excise raid in Margherita

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Oct 4: An excise search, patrolling and raid was conducted by Margherita and Digboi excise party from last 3 days under the supervision of Prasanta Dutta DSE Margherita at various places.

The raids were conducted at Ledo, Ledo kalpara, road side dhaba of Itakhola, Lalpahar, Jagun, Lakla, Tokupani, Karpunpuli, Margherita Town, Digboi Town, Tingrai, Golai, Tingrai Bazar, Benganabari and 3 number Borbil which falls under the Lekhapani, Margherita and Digboi police station of Tinsukia district.

Total 19 cases were detected and the excise team seized and destroyed 4770 liters of fermented wash and 8 DA sets.

During the raid 2 persons were apprehended under section 61(B)(a) of Assam Excise Act (2000) as amended.

DC sets deadline for disbursement of bonus to tea workers

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 4: A special meeting to review the issue of payment of bonus to tea garden workers for the year 2022-23 was held at the conference hall of DC, Nagaon on Wednesday. The meeting was chaired by Narendra Kumar Shah, district commissioner. During the meeting, additional district commissioner Lakshyayoti Das highlighted the primary agenda of the meeting which is to discuss the matters related to the timely payment of bonus to tea garden workers under Nagaon district in view of the upcoming Durga Puja.

The assistant labour commissioner Naresh Das apprised the members of the meeting regarding the technical issues related to bonus payment as per norms and asked the representatives of tea garden management to work things out with the respective workers as

well as labour unions and reach an amicable settlement regarding bonus percentage and disbursement.

The district commissioner enquired each representative of the tea gardens under Nagaon district to give a brief of their current status and action plan regarding bonus payment. The district administration directed the tea garden management to disburse bonus latest by October 10, 2023 and added that tea gardens managed under Assam Tea Corporation Limited (ATCL) will follow the government directives.

The district commissioner also wished everyone present for the upcoming festival season and hoped for a peaceful celebration of the same. He additionally asked the tea garden management to disburse the bonus money preferable in a planned and phased manner to

avoid any untoward rush and incident. Additional superintendent of police Pranab Jyoti Kalita urged the tea garden management to inform the concerned law enforcement authority well ahead of time regarding their decided date of collection, transit and disbursement of bonus and to preferably disburse the money before sunset.

Sub-divisional police officer Rup Jyoti Dutta, circle officers of Sadar, Samaguri, Kaliabor, Kamrup and Raha revenue circles, District information and public relations officer of Nagaon, managers and management representatives of tea gardens under Nagaon the district, members of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha and other associations and organisations of tea garden along with other concerned stakeholders and officials of the labour department were present in the meeting, a press note stated here.

Awareness campaign on Dengue held

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 4: An awareness rally on pertaining issue related to dengue was organised by the medical department of Dima Hasao in collaboration with Haflong Municipal Board in Haflong town area starting from Haflong Municipal Board field (Lal field) which ended at ASTC counter, Bolidura on Wednesday.

The programme was participated by the medical officials, doctors, nurses and departmental officials. Medical in-charge Samuel Changan also participated in the rally. After the rally leaflets were also distributed among the participants.

As per the decision taken in the emergent meeting chaired by CEM Debolal Gorlosa along with the executive member i/c medical, Samuel Changan, executive members, MACs of the council and team of medical department at CEM Conference Hall, DHAC Haflong on Wednesday the CEM directed all the persons concerned to conduct an awareness campaign.

Accordingly, all the autonomous constituencies have been organising an awareness campaign on dengue in Dima Hasao.

Body to prevent cruelty to animals comes into force in Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Oct 4: The District Committee for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) came into being in Morigaon to ensure the welfare of animals and protection from any form of cruelty on Wednesday.

The district commissioner has been appointed as the chairman, superintendent of police as vice-chairman.

The district animal husbandry and veterinary officer has been appointed as the member secretary.

The committee also included the chairman, forest officer and chief executive officer of Zila Parishads.

The district commissioner said that cruelty against animals is a very sensitive issue currently. He said the committee should work together in the future to reduce such incidents in Morigaon.

He also directed the member secretary of the committee to hold monthly meetings. The meeting was attended by Milind Dutta, a prominent animal protection activist currently residing in the United States who has been working for the protection of the environment and animals.

He said the police must always cooperate in preventing cruelty against street dogs and other animals. He said it was very important to register a case against the person who brought the case and the details of the case should be recorded with the district committee for the prevention of cruelty to animals. He also called for a 24-hour helpline number to prevent such incidents. He said the municipality should take measures to sterilize 70-80 per cent of both male and female dogs on the roads from time to time. He added that dogs should be released at the place from which they are taken for sterilisation. He was particularly concerned about the illegal trafficking of street dogs. Morigaon Municipal Board has always paid attention to the protection of animals in the municipal area. He said the municipality has been quickly removing carcasses when animals are reported dying. The meeting was attended by the member secretary of the committee and district veterinary officer Dr Nilotpal Kakati. He also explained the significance of the day on the occasion of World Animal Welfare Day.

Northeast Half Marathon to showcase Bogibeel Bridge on world stage

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Oct 4: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is going to organise Northeast Half Marathon at Bogibeel Bridge in Dibrugarh to showcase the longest rail cum road bridge of India in world platform.

The Half Marathon will be organised on October 29 in three categories- 21.1 km, 10 km and 5 km. Talking to media persons, Captain Rahul Sudesh Bali, curator NE Half Marathon said, "The main objective of the Half Marathon is to showcase the Bogibeel Bridge to the world. In three categories, the Half Marathon will be organised where international sports persons will participate", Bali said.

"Earlier, we have organised NE Half Marathon in Darjeeling and Guwahati. In Guwahati, we have got 7000 participants. We are positive and hopeful for the event and expect more participants. The event will help in growth of the area in terms of tourism and business. Bogibeel is one of the iconic bridges built over Brahmaputra River and which will showcase the beauty of the area," Bali said.

He further added, "Participants from Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia are enquiring about this event. The development of Northeast region and Dibrugarh will get much priority through this event."

Union minister of state for petroleum and natural gas Rameswar Teli said, "Under PM Narendra Modi's Fit India movement, the half marathon will be organised in Dibrugarh and the venue is Bogibeel Bridge. Through this event the area will get wider promotion internationally. NF Railways is organising this event and the department of petroleum and natural gas is the associating partner of the event."

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- Assam State Bird - Deo Hans
- Indian Eastern Himalayan region
- Dense tropical evergreen forest - Nameri Tiger Reserve and Dehing Patkai National Park
- Inhabits inaccessible swampy areas formed by numerous rivers, streams
- Crepuscular bird as it is most active at dusk and dawn
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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Life is a dream for the wise, a game for the fool, a comedy for the rich, a tragedy for the poor.- Sholom Aleichem

Caste census vs action against scribes

It will take a couple of days more to unravel the truth whether it was a coincidence or a well-designed plan of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah to detain dozens of journalists to deflect the attention of the nation and its people from the impact the report of Bihar caste survey would have on the future of BJP and the politics of India. Arrests of the journalists just a day after placing the report in the public domain has created a huge ripple in the political circle. While the constituents of INDIA block were in a celebratory mood, after the caste census survey on Bihar was out, the BJP and RSS leaders were in a state of shock and plunged into deep despair. Some BJP leaders tried to find temporary solace by asserting that it did not reflect the real picture prevailing at the ground level. They held that the total population of upper caste people was more than 16 per cent as reported by the survey. It is significant that the operation was carried out the very next day after the release of the finding of the caste survey in Bihar. It also coincided with the declaration of the Odisha government to make public its report on caste survey. The population figures for the OBC and especially for the EBC make certain that the focus of the future politics would shift on EBC and will force not only Bihar but other states to revise the reservation policy to increase the quota for Backward Classes.

Confident that mainstream media would lash out at the report, as being divisive and detrimental to the national security and integrity, RSS, Modi and Shah zeroed in on the independent journalists as they have been acting as the conscience of the people and putting question to the rulers. RSS, Modi and Shah nursed the view that this section of journalists would prove to be source for their embarrassment. Obviously, a police action against the journalists was the only intrigue to refrain them from disseminating people's views on the report. The trustworthiness and integrity of the Delhi police which in recent years has touched nadir due to its anti-people actions and is also being perceived as the most communalised police force in the country has nevertheless tried to justify its action by saying that it was looking into the Chinese financial support to News Click. But this is absolutely a dishonest ploy to hide the real intentions.

If the Delhi police is really sincere and true to its public claim of enforcing transparency, one will certainly expect that it would clarify its stand about two very prominent faces of the country, Modi and Adani, who have received Chinese funds; one for PM Care Fund and other for his business. What is most intriguing is neither the Home Minister nor his ministry, under whose command the Delhi police operates, have uttered a single word on the detention and arrests of the journalists. In fact, it would be naïve to expect a word from the minister or his ministry, as the operation could not have been undertaken without their consent.

Indian Science Award: A unified approach for excellence and inclusivity



By: Dipak Kurmi

India's government is giving a makeover to its science awards, consolidating various ministry awards into a unified identity. Under the new plan, there's a streamlining of awards. Previously, the Department of Science and Technology distributed 207 awards, featuring four of national importance. Furthermore, there were 97 private endowments and 56 internal awards. The Department of Biotechnology also awarded six fellowships as part of its recognition program.

The Department of Atomic Energy has allocated 25 performance-based honors and 13 awards in non-core domains. With the exception of the internal award named after Homi Jehangir Bhabha, all other internal awards from the Department of Atomic Energy have been discontinued. The revamped 'Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar' will now feature 56 prizes across four categories: Vigyan Ratna, Vigyan Shri, Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, and Vigyan Team. The Vigyan Ratna Award will celebrate the lifelong achievements of scientists, while the Vigyan Shri Award will recognize significant contributions in a specific field. The Vigyan Yuva Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award is designed to motivate young scientists who have showcased outstanding contributions in their respective domains. The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar will be presented in 13 disciplines, spanning Physics, Chemistry, Biological Sciences, Mathematics and Computer Science, Earth Science, Medicine, Engineering Sciences, Agricultural Science, Environmental Science, Technology and Innovation, Atomic Energy, Space Science and Technology, and more. These awards are open to all Indian citizens and individuals of Indian origin working abroad. However, there are limitations on the number of people of Indian origin eligible for consideration. Out of the total 3 awards in the Vigyan Ratna category, only 1 can be considered for individuals

of Indian origin. In the case of Vigyan Shri and Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, it's 3 out of 25 awards. The Vigyan Team award is exclusively reserved for individuals working within India. Similarly, exceptions apply except for.

There's no upper age limit for applying to Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (VY-SSB). However, for VY-SSB, the upper age limit is set at 45.

In the previous iteration of the award, which was adhered to for numerous years, only individuals employed in government sectors were eligible. The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar now welcomes researchers from all backgrounds, regardless of their organizational affiliation. Even those operating beyond the realm of any specific organization are eligible to apply for these awards. This inclusive approach aims to provide a platform for thousands of exceptional researchers engaged in various NGOs across the country to spotlight their scientific prowess.

A panel led by the Principal Scientific Adviser will be in charge of selecting the awardees. The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar Committee will include secretaries from all six science departments, four presidents chosen from science and engineering academies, and six distinguished scientists and technologists representing various domains of science. Nominations for these awards will be accepted annually from January 14 to February 28, aligning with National Science Day. A notable change in the new award system is the provision for self-nominations, a feature absent in the earlier version. The shift from the traditional nomination culture, often associated with malpractices and unethical conduct in science, aims to rationalize the awards, offering equal opportunities to individuals working across all scientific spheres. This approach intends to identify and celebrate the country's most exceptional scientific talents. *(The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)*

A number that irks Bangladesh authorities

Bangladesh authorities were pissed off with Odhikar, a human rights organisation, its boss Adilur Rahman Khan and its Director Nasir Uddin Elan for the last several years.

The government was angry because Odhikar was frequently quoted by the United Nations, the United States and the European Union for its authoritative research, monitoring and documentation on extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of opposition, critics, dissidents, human rights defenders and even journalists were victims.

Some of the victims have returned, but maintained dead silence over their captivity. A significant number were found dead and the rest have disappeared forever. Each year, the family members grieve in silence about the disappearances of their loved one, the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances is organised by Mayer Dak on 30 August each year.

Mayer Dak, a network of family members believed to have been forcibly disappeared by state and non-state actors. The Mayer Dak is taken from Argentina's popular platform Mothers' Call. Its defiant coordinator Sanjida Islam is also harassed and intimidated by state security apparatus and law enforcement agencies.

The government officials, the governing Awami League have a scripted message, playing the same record again and again. The content of the message is a mix of denial. A conspiracy theory to overthrow the democratically elected regime of Sheikh Hasina and to undermine the massive development of the country.

The government is too sensitive to the use of "enforced disappearances" and instead likes to say "missing" persons. Then who is responsible for the "missing" persons? In this regard, the government again prefers to remain silent and dumb. Many top ministers said most of the "missing" persons are due to the inability to repay loans from lenders, family disputes over properties, secret multiple marriages, and migrants missing on dangerous journeys in the sea.

The apologetic officials do not understand that such an explanation is shirring responsibility for the disappeared persons. The sincerity of the government in international media and rights groups were questioned, as the authorities refused credible probes. Such attitude of the government has encouraged the police stations to refuse to register cases of disappearances, missing or kidnapped persons by their immediate family members.

This has encouraged criminal gangs to kidnap victims for ransom, as they very well know the police will not accept complaints and will not launch a hunt for the missing persons.

The Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) published a study by Ali Riaz, a distinguished professor at Illinois State University, USA which stated that as many as 86 per cent of the Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in small towns and grassroots are intermittently faced obstacles in their work from the state and governing party.

The CGS study "Who Defends the Defenders" said the obstacles the HRDs face come from law enforcement agencies, state intelligence agencies, and government officials have been identified by 42.3 per cent of the respondents. While 23.7 per cent of ruling party activists were identified as troublemakers. Threats, harassment, intimidation or persecution forced 28.6 per cent of respondents to scale down their work and 10.7 per cent have relocated in fear of harassment, said Ali Riaz quoting the findings of the research.

After the publication of the HRD study, CGS is often harassed and intimidated. The government has been harassing and intimidating the rights organisation Odhikar for the past 12 years. The two rights defenders were under surveillance, their phones were tapped and bank accounts were scrutinised.

The government cancelled Odhikar's NGO registration and permission to receive foreign funds.

Rights organisations Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) and BLAST (Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust) were harassed by the NGO Affairs Bureau (under the Prime Minister's Office) causing immense delays in approval of their projects and sometimes denied. The government seems allergic to rights organisations and human rights defenders. What do the authorities want to hide?

In a glaring example of an orchestrated campaign against the HRD, on 14 December 2022, the American Ambassador Peter Haas visited the home of Sanjida Islam, coordinator of Mayer Dak to hear the agony and trauma of the family whose loved ones became victims of enforced disappearances. Barely 30 minutes of the discussion. Due to security concerns, suddenly the meeting was cut short and security staff hurriedly escorted the ambassador to his vehicle. The crowd of pro-government 'Mayer Kanna' (Cry of Mothers) and local Awami League supporters was swelling in front of the residence of Islam making hue and cry. The crowd mobbed the Ambassador and wanted to hand down a statement, which was declined. His security whisked the envoy safely from the area.

Commenting on the incident a US embassy spokesperson Jeff Ridenour said, "We have raised this matter at the highest levels of the Bangladeshi government, as well as with the Bangladesh embassy in Washington, D.C." Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen expressed his annoyance and said that 'Mayer Kanna' went against the [diplomatic] norm by trying to submit a memorandum [statement] to the US ambassador. "Our country does not have the culture to stop a foreign ambassador on the road to submit a memorandum," he remarked.

Despite all odds, Odhikar did not cease monitoring despite the government's sensitivity to the issue, the extra-judicial deaths and enforced disappearances. The data with sensitive information

was uploaded and updated on Odhikar's website in both English and Bangla, which was also annoying for the regime.

The information was used by major international media, rights groups and human rights annual country documents of American and European governments.

Such sensitive information in the public domain caused outrage among bureaucrats, political leaders, and policymakers, which had dented the government's international reputation. Despite the global outcry, the authorities did not bother to investigate the wrongdoings of the state actors and non-state actors.

Instead blamed Odhikar for disseminating disinformation, misinformation, fake news, hoax news, mal-information, and rumour and of course fake news.

Coming to the issue of numbers, Odhikar has been banned and two leaders of the organisation were sentenced to two years in prison in September.

The crime of Adilur Rahman Khan and Nasir Uddin Elan was that ten years ago Odhikar published a number of people killed on 5 and 6 May 2013. The mid-night police crackdown brutally suppressed the Islamist protest.

Thousands of members of a hardline Sunni Muslim organisation, Hefazat-e-Islam (Defender of Islam) occupied downtown Motijheel Commercial Area unless the government accepted their demands to declare Bangladesh an Islamic Republic, scrap the secular constitution, and change the national flag and the national anthem. Also implement Shariah laws and a host of other Islamic dogma, which incidentally match with the Wahabi creeds advocated by the Taliban and Islamic State (ISIS).

The Human Rights Watch said at least 58 people were killed in police action. Amnesty International put the figure at 44. It said 3 members of law enforcement and 41 civilians were killed in the violence on May police mayhem.

Well, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and Home Affairs Ministry contradicted each other. Police said the figure was only 11, while the Home Ministry said 28 dead. Both DMP and the min-

istry never published the names of the dead people.

Odhikar, several times changed the figure and finally concluded that the death stood at 61. The organisation never published the names of the victims and their addresses. Khan defending himself in the court said it's a moral obligation that the privacy of the immediate family members be protected from the wrath of law enforcement agencies.

He said that Odhikar did not publish the names and addresses for fear of being harassed and intimidated by law enforcement agencies in forcing the victim's families to sign a paper stating that the person is living in the Gulf countries or another story.

In a 'white paper' published by the "People's Commission" formed by Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmla Committee (committee against the collaborators of 1971) challenged the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Hefazat-e-Islam's claim that thousands of people have been killed, which were exaggerated and incomplete.

The "People's Commission" got a list of 79 names from Hefazat-e-Islam.

"Awami League leadership and Bangladesh authorities mock victims and routinely obstruct investigations, making clear that the government has no intention of meaningfully addressing enforced disappearances by its security forces," said Brad Adams, Asia Director, Human Rights Watch. Bangladesh has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The curious question arises, why did the government target Odhikar? Why did authorities not list Hefazat-e-Islam, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International for disseminating misinformation or disinformation? The question is left to the readers to respond. *(The author is an award-winning independent journalist and media rights defender based in Bangladesh. A recipient of the prestigious Ashoka Fellowship and Hellman-Hammett Award. He could be reached at saleemsamad@hotmail.com)*

Drama of fooling in the name of OBC

By: Dr Satyavan Saurabh

Communalism and reservation have stunted the mental and political development of a large number of youth and has made them frustrated. Their need has ended because they are cut off from the mainstream of social justice. Because of these two hatreds, the need has ended. You should understand the importance of reservation. Don't separate yourself from the mainstream in its name. Eradicate caste hatred within yourself. If you try a little, you will get freedom from this hatred. You will feel better.

People of all societies should understand that opportunities do not end because of reservation. Opportunities disappear because of other policies. Due to laying a web of economic policies to keep the capital of the four capitalists increasing, opportunities are being lost. People do not understand that reservation is not a hindrance in their job. There is a lack of opportunity. Opportunities have been lost due to the foolish actions of the government. Be it private or government sector. This has not happened because of reservation. Since you are not able to understand the complex game of the economic world, you again resort to reservation that because of this you are not getting a job. Whereas those who have reservations are also not getting jobs.

Now coming to OBC, if we simply add up the vacant posts of teachers in central government institutions, we will find that forty to sixty percent of the OBC posts are vacant. The loss of 16000 medical seats of the OBC quota is no less than a crime. According to a UGC report, only 09 OBC professors are teaching in central universities across the country whereas the sanctioned posts are 304, hence OBCs are also not getting their due rights. Even OBCs are not getting jobs under the rule of OBC leaders. Otherwise, several thousand OBC youth would have become lecturers in central universities alone. What a huge social change that would have been. If there is

restoration on these posts then all the youth would also get benefited. Reservation also means representation. This representation has gradually been extended to women, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Disabled, and recently also to economically backward communities. Now reservation has been implemented but the responsibility of bringing it on the ground was on the shoulders of all those who were suffering from casteist mentality and believed in non-equality. This is the reason that even today the reserved category has not been given representation anywhere except Class IV. Are reserved category candidates not available for suitable posts or is this category not being included due to mental illness?

In the last several years, OBC reserved category seats were not filled in central and state universities across the country. In many universities of the country, it was written on most of the posts that we did not find any suitable candidate in the OBC reserved category. Therefore, all the posts were kept vacant so that later they could be filled from the general category. Now you may wonder with what intention an attempt has been made to belittle the reserved category by writing 'not appropriate'. If you look, you will find that the condition of OBC people is the same in all the institutions across the country. NFS (no suitable candidate found) has been imposed on most of the OBC seats.

Today there is a lot of anger among the reserved classes across the country regarding NFS. Now the question arises whether NFS being given to backward class candidates is not a reflection of the casteist mentality of some people. Do these people use their discretion for dishonesty? If this continues, then one day this problem will become severe.

If we study the data, we will find that in the total central universities of the country, there are only 5 Vice-Chancellors from Other Backward Classes. If we look at the registrar, there are

three from backward communities. Only 4.5 percent of the reserved professor seats in the country's central universities have been filled. Generally, the situation is similar among associate and assistant professors. Along with seats remaining vacant, they are being left with nowhere by playing the dirty game of creamy layer with OBCs due to which even their caste certificates are being snatched away. By restricting the rights of OBCs with a nominal limit of Rs 6 or 8 lakhs, the coming generations are being crippled, while there is neither any creamy layer nor any other compulsion among the other reserved categories? Due to this, the children of senior officers of these classes will also be able to avail the benefits of reservation for generations. If we look, the largest part of the total population in India comes from the OBC reserved category, but the condition of this category does not seem very good. The way the game of being eligible and ineligible based on caste is played in prestigious institutions is shameful.

However, this fraud done to OBC candidates is not new. Last year i.e. in 2022, the Education Ministry had told the Rajya Sabha, the country's upper house, in a written reply that 3,669 reserved category teaching posts, including the posts of 880 professors, are vacant in central universities.

In this, 1761 posts are vacant for OBC. When a large society of the country has to fight for the rights given in the Constitution, then how will India become a strong nation? Along with everyone's development, it is also important to have everyone's trust. There is undoubtedly some restlessness and dissatisfaction within a large section of the country on the question of share in the country, the solution for which lies only with the government. We cannot empower our country by leaving the larger society behind. Is it not appropriate to say that despite knowing all the facts, the OBC category is being cheated by the government?

BJP wooing smaller parties after rupture with AIADMK in Tamil Nadu

By: Kalyani Shankar

Can the split between the AIADMK and BJP be permanent? If so, this could hurt the BJP's chances of winning in Tamil Nadu since the AIADMK had supported them since J Jayalalithaa's passing away in 2016. The decision to end its partnership with the NDA on a national and state level may put the BJP at a disadvantage.

The future political landscape could have an impact on the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It could cause a shift in power among Tamil Nadu parties and their alliances. This may result in the AIADMK losing the support of the Modi government, which has acted as a powerful ally.

According to experts, the separation between the BJP and AIADMK is expected to be temporary. The leaders of both parties have advised their members to refrain from making negative comments about each other. The BJP seeks more support in the Southern region and hopes to secure additional seats through partnerships.

Last week, former AIADMK minister Munuswamy announced that his party is severing ties with the BJP and NDA. He accused the BJP state chief, Annamalai, of deliberately tarnishing the reputation of respected party members, including former Chief Ministers C.N. Annadurai and Jayalalithaa. For the BJP, the loss is more significant.

Despite earnest efforts, it has not established a substantial presence in Tamil Nadu—the power switches between the DMK and AIADMK since 1967. The AIADMK has ruled 30 out of their 50 years.

Tamil Nadu has two main political parties: AIADMK and DMK. AIADMK is a popular party with a large membership of two crore people, and it offers an alternative to DMK. The DMK and AIADMK, the two main Dravidian parties, have both supported the BJP at different times.

For decades, the BJP has faced a tough challenge in winning over voters in Tamil Nadu. The Dravidian movement started by

E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker has taken deep roots in the form of DMK and AIADMK parties. The party only secured 3% of the vote in the last Lok Sabha elections. In comparison, the two Dravidian parties had a solid 25% base each. The BJP's attempt to win over voters in Tamil Nadu failed due to differing ideologies. The upcoming Lok Sabha elections are significant for the BJP, while the AIADMK focuses on the 2026 Assembly polls. The outcome will largely depend on the coalitions formed by the two Dravidian parties. Prime Minister Modi is determined to secure a third term in the 2024 elections.

Insiders suggest that Annamalai's behaviour was not the main reason for the split. Despite numerous complaints, AIADMK is unhappy that the BJP has not taken action against Annamalai. There is a more significant disagreement over seat sharing. Both parties failed to win seats in Tamil Nadu in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections due to a lack of shared ideology. Annamalai has suggested running independently in the election, and some BJP members are considering the idea. Annamalai wants to form a coalition with smaller parties.

AIADMK chief Edappadi Palaniswamy has successfully united the party and worked with senior leaders to prevent the re-entry of Sasikala, TTV Dinakaran, and former Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam. It is a no-no for him even if the BJP provides them seats under its quota. Palaniswamy was able to remove them from AIADMK and now holds complete control. He apprehends that once they entered, his authority would diminish.

The upcoming Lok Sabha elections are crucial for the DMK, AIADMK, Congress and BJP. Among them, the BJP stands to gain or lose the most. Factors such as caste, financial resources, and political influence will also play a significant role in the election. The BJP needs to perform well in the five States Assembly polls. The saffron face a formidable task in Tamil Nadu in next Lok Sabha elections. *(IPA Service)*

Sikkim at risk of devastating floods from glacial lake outbursts

By Soma Basu

Surrounded by potentially dangerous glacial lakes that can burst and cause floods any time, Sikkim is a ticking time bomb. Worse, Sikkim's disaster management authority and meteorological office are dragging their feet over installing early warning systems for flash floods despite the National Disaster Management guidelines on floods setting 2009 as the deadline.

Glacial lakes are formed by melting glaciers and sudden discharge of large volumes of water and debris from them is termed glacial lake outburst flood or GLOF. The inventory of glacial lakes in Sikkim Himalaya, prepared using temporal satellite data, shows the presence of 320 glacial lakes. Analysis of satellite data has also revealed that a lake has formed at the snout of South Lhonak glacier, that is at a height of about 7,000 metres.

The lake, bound only by loose soil and debris called moraine, could cause havoc downstream if it ruptures, according to scientists Babu Govindha Raj and his colleagues at the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) in Hyderabad. A sudden outburst "can create devastating floods downstream," they warn, adding that the probability of this happening "is very high". The glacial lake hazard vulnerability studied in Shako Chhu lake in Sikkim Himalaya shows a high risk of GLOF.

Earthquakes could trigger GLOFs

Due to increase in the rate of melting of the glaciers, lakes are

increasing in the area and so is their stored water capacity. Sikkim falls in Zone-IV of the Indian seismic chart and earthquakes may trigger GLOF. An earthquake of magnitude 4.9 of September 21, 1991 was reported near the parent glacier feeding the South Lhonak Lake and earthquake of magnitude 6.9 approximately 70 km from the lake was recorded on September 18, 2011.

A V Kulkarni, expert on Himalayan glaciers and visiting scientist of Indian Institute of Science, says investigations in Indian Himalaya suggest that most of the glaciers are retreating and also losing mass. This consistent shrinkage in mass and extent can affect stream runoff over a long term. In addition, this process can be further influenced if more glacial lakes are formed due to increase in debris cover and if black carbon (soot) is transported in accumulation areas of the glaciers. Therefore, continuous monitoring is needed to understand changing dynamics of Himalayan glaciers.

"However, there is lack of ground base investigation of such potentially dangerous lakes," he says, adding that even though an exhaustive inventory of glacial lakes exists with International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), updated information is hard to come by.

Studies confirm that many glaciers of the Sikkim Himalaya are forming glacial lakes with increasing intensity, which in fact is corroborated with the intermediate effects of long-term climate change by majority of scientists. According to Binay Kumar and



T S Murugesh Prabhu of Pune-based Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), monitoring and tracking of the lakes in west and north Sikkim has revealed that quite a few of them are expanding due to accelerated glacial retreat and melting due to climate change impacts.

The lakes have been increasing in size and volume since 1965. Their area has increased significantly in about 45 years and this indicates the lakes are important from the disaster point of view and also in view of climatic variations in the past three decades. In addition, new lakes have also developed due to glacier retreat and melting. As they retreat, glaciers leave behind moraines (accumulation of boulders, stones or other debris) in the valley.

Field observations give an impression of a past GLOF event in the Sebu Chhu valley in north Sikkim. The wide spread of moraines in the valley might

have been carried downstream by the flood waters from the Sebu Chhu, which appears to have breached in the past. Local information also supports the occurrence of a flash flood in the Sebu Chhu valley.

The National Disaster Management guidelines on floods, published in 2008, had set deadline for establishing flash floods forecasting and warning systems using Doppler radars by India Meteorological Department by September 2009. Gopi Nath Raha, IMD in-charge (Sikkim), says that the state meteorological centre has no such mechanism in place.

It is only recently that the Sikkim state government has formally taken a policy decision to establish a Himalayan Institute of Disaster Management and Climate Change in Pakyong in the next two years. The decision was taken in light of the September 18, 2011 earthquake. The state is still struggling to formulate disaster management plans at the state, district and city levels.

The main glaciers of Sikkim are Zemu glacier, Rathong glacier and Lhonak glacier. The East Rathong glacier is one of the glaciers affected by climate change. It has retreated significantly since 1965 and a marked shift in its snout position has been observed. A glacial lake is in formation behind the terminal moraines due to blockage of the melt.

The Indian Himalayan region is home to over 7,000 glaciers, covering an area of 8,500 km. They play a crucial role in shaping and influencing the environmental conditions in India. Siachen, Gangotri, Zemu, Milam, Bhagirath Kharak and Satopanth are some of the important glaciers located in the Indian Himalayan region. Approximately 968 glaciers drain into the Ganga basin in Uttarakhand and over 4,660 glaciers feed the Indus, Shyok, Jhelum and Chenab river systems. The Ravi, Beas, Chenab and Sutlej river systems are fed by 1,375 glaciers and 611 glaciers drain into the Tista and Brahmaputra basins and contribute between 50 – 70 per cent of the annual discharge.

The ICIMOD inventory of glaciers, glacial lakes and identification of potential GLOFs affected by global warming in the mountains of India, Pakistan and China/Tibet Autonomous Region, states that Teesta River basin has 285 glaciers with the glacier area of about 576 sq km. There are 266 glacial lakes and 14 of them are potentially dangerous. Though the area is comparatively very small, but the number of lakes and potential

GLOF is very high compared to other study region.

In the Indian Himalayan region the first GLOF event was reported when the 1926 flood released by the Shyok glacier, Jammu and Kashmir, destroyed Abudan village and the surrounding land which were at a distance of 400 km from the outburst. Another report by Sangekar et al, shows sudden emptying of some of the moraine-dammed lakes of Shaune Garang glacier, Himachal Pradesh in 1981 and 1988, based on high discharge measured downstream. In the Indian Himalayan region GLOF studies are limited and not well understood, the report by NRSC scientists stated.

Expanding numbers and size
The area of one of the lakes in the Gurudongmar Chho complex has increased nearly four times between 1965 and 1989 (see table). The Khanchung Chho, origin of the River Teesta is another moraine dammed lake which has grown noticeably over past few years. Its area has increased nearly 1.5 times between 1965 and 1989 and approximately one-tenth of its size in 1989 between 1989 and 2010. The Chho Lhamo, a glacial lake that has grown in size significantly is located near the border of Sikkim and Tibet Autonomous Region and feeds the Teesta river.

In 1989, its area has increased by 1.5 times its size in 1965. Since then its area has remained almost same till 2010. The increase in area of the Lhonak and South Lhonak glacial lakes over the last 45 years is significant. Both these lakes have grown in

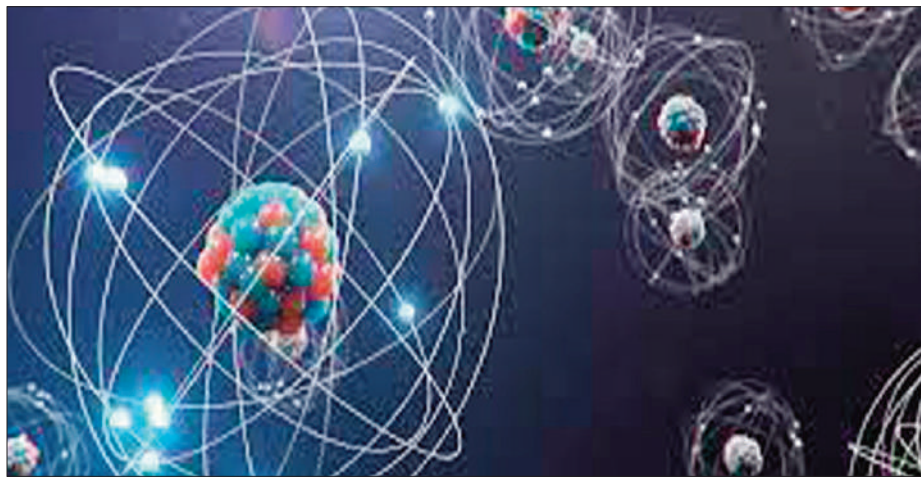
area by two times between 1965 and 1989. Lhonak has grown nearly 1.5 times and South Lhonak nearly 2.5 times their initial size in 1989. The increase in size is not the only factor that lists this lake as a potential GLOF source.

The moraine dammed lake feeding Tikip Chhu in west Sikkim has increased noticeably by nearly five times since 1965. This lake is newly formed due to glacier retreat and is not present in Survey of India topographic sheets. The moraine dammed lake feeding Shako Chhu has increased by nearly two times between 1965 and 1989 and the area remains almost same thereafter till 2010.

Another lake in west Sikkim is Green Lake (Tikuchia Pokhari), which is a moraine dammed lake, has formed due to the retreat of glacier near Goecha La. Field observation shows that the lake is surrounded by moraines and there is considerable seepage of water from the southern part of lake. D P Dobhal, senior scientist with Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, says that formation of glacial lakes is not always dangerous, though; lakes in the eastern Himalayas are emerging to be risky.

Another report by Chandrashekar V Sangewar of Geological Survey of India shows sudden emptying of some of the moraine-dammed lakes of Shaune Garang glacier, Himachal Pradesh in 1981 and 1988 based on high discharge measured downstream. In the Indian Himalayan region GLOF studies are limited and not well understood. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Nuclear fusion and the future of clean energy



By: Prateek Tripathi

Ever since their conception in the 1970s, fusion reactors have remained a long-elusive goal for humankind. With the ever-growing scarcity of fossil fuels, coupled with their propensity for greenhouse gas emissions, fusion reactor technology offered a way out and came to be viewed as the holy grail for clean energy production. However, it faced significant obstacles along the way and, for a while, it seemed as if humanity had reached an impasse. The recent breakthrough at the National Ignition Facility (NIF) has rejuvenated the hope of achieving this long-sought goal, and may hold the key to finally achieving a reliable source of clean energy in the times to come.

What is nuclear fusion?

Nuclear fusion is the process employed by nature to harness energy within stars such as the Sun. It is the most efficient known form of energy production in the universe, producing four times more energy than a standard Uranium-based fission reaction, minus the radioactive waste.

A fusion reaction occurs when two atoms with lighter nuclei combine to form an atom with a heavier nucleus. The mass of the resulting atom is slightly lower than the combined mass of the constituent atoms, and this lost mass is released in the form of energy as per Einstein's mass-energy equivalence relation ($E=mc^2$). Typically, the two lighter atoms are slightly bulky variants (isotopes) of the Hydrogen atom i.e. Deuterium (D) and Tritium (T), with a Helium atom being the end product.

For a fusion reaction to be viable for energy production, it has to be carried out in a controlled and sustainable manner, so that the energy released can be used to say, rotate a turbine which would subsequently generate electricity.

The efficiency of a fusion reaction is given by a quantity called the Gain defined as: The objective is to achieve a gain greater than 1. However, this has been notoriously difficult to implement practically. This is primarily because to achieve fusion, the two constituent nuclei must first combine, which requires overcoming their mutual electrostatic repulsion stemming from the fact that they are both positively charged. This has given rise to different approaches to achieving fusion.

Types of fusion reactors

In the case of the Sun, the atoms get stripped of their electrons and converted

into positively charged ions due to extremely high temperatures, resulting in a dense soup of ions and electrons called a plasma. In these conditions, it is possible for the ions to acquire a high enough velocity (kinetic energy) to overcome their electrostatic repulsion and allow fusion to occur. This is essentially the process used in fusion reactors, with the difference being that now the extreme temperatures must be created artificially. There are two primary ways of achieving this.

Magnetic confinement

Magnetic Confinement Fusion (MCF) uses a magnetic field to contain the plasma, which prevents the particles from hitting the reactor walls which would otherwise cause them to slow down. The most effective shape for such reactors turns out to be that of a doughnut or toroid. Tokamaks and Stellarators are some examples of such toroidal reactors. Most of the reactors in the past were based on this technology.

Inertial confinement

In Inertial Confinement Fusion, high-energy laser beams are focused onto a pellet of the fuel (D-T), which creates the extreme temperatures required for fusion inside it. The outer mass of the pellet explodes and is responsible for confining the reaction, in place of the magnetic field in case of MCF.

The breakthrough at NIF

Despite devising some ingenious methods to overcome the practical limitations of achieving fusion, the hopes of reaching a net gain remained fleeting. In December 2022, however, the NIF at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory was finally able to achieve "breakeven," or a net positive energy gain.

Later, in July 2023, it was able to replicate its efforts, but now with an even bigger gain. In both cases, inertial confinement was employed, in which laser beams were fired at D-T pellets. This has turned out to be a truly monumental achievement and it has reinvigorated interest in a technology that was perceived to be lying stagnant for a long time.

According to the Fusion Industry Association's 2023 Global Fusion Industry Report, global investment in the fusion industry has risen to US\$6.2 billion, which is US\$1.4 billion more than the previous year. The US Department of Energy has also recently announced an investment of US\$46 million into eight startups developing nuclear fusion power plants. It can thus be concluded that the

development at NIF has bolstered investment in the field.

While this is certainly cause for celebration, it also comes with a huge caveat. The energy gain cited here only refers to the gain strictly from the reaction itself. It does not account for the input energy required to operate the laser nor for the other equipment being used to carry out the reaction. When all these factors are accounted for, we get the "total gain," which, as it turns out, is still significantly lower than 1. To be viable for commercial operation, the NIF needs to raise its output by at least 100,000 percent. So, while this is most definitely a breakthrough in fusion reactor technology, there are still significant practical hurdles on the way to commercially feasible power generation.

Indian scenario

India has emerged as a major player in fusion technology and has been one of the pioneers in its development. The Plasma Physics Programme was initiated by the Government of India in 1982 to conduct research on MCF, which later evolved into the Institute for Plasma Research (IPR) in 1986 and led to the creation of India's own indigenous tokamak [1], ADITYA, in 1989. Subsequently, it also developed a larger semi-indigenous tokamak called the Steady State Superconducting Tokamak (SST-1) which was fully commissioned in 2013. IPR has also revealed its plans for a successor, the SST-2, due in 2027.

In 2005, India became the seventh member to join the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, a global initiative attempting to build the world's largest tokamak reactor. ITER-India has been set up under the supervision of IPR and is responsible for fulfilling India's commitments to the project. It has already provided the world's largest cryostat, a vacuum application stainless steel vessel, to house the reactor, along with a host of other equipment.

Private investment is the key area where India lags behind, owing to the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, which puts the brunt of developing and running nuclear power stations on the government. Domestic private companies are allowed only as "junior equity partners," with their role being limited to supplying components and construction. However, a government panel recently convened by the NITI Aayog has recommended overturning the ban on foreign investment in the nuclear power industry and allowing greater participation by domestic private firms.

A golden opportunity for India

The commercial production of energy via fusion reactors may be at least a decade off, however, it provides India with a golden opportunity to take advantage of the novelty of the situation. The NIF experiment has opened up a new avenue for achieving nuclear fusion through the means of inertial confinement and it would be fruitful for India to take notice and invest in this technology since it is clear that this is where its future lies. It would not only offer a reliable substitute for fossil fuels in the future but also ensure it reaches its goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070 well ahead of time. (Courtesy: ORF)

Was the freak storm that devastated Libya a Glimpse of North Africa's future?

By: Mike Rogerson, Belkasesm Alkharvany and Mahjoor Lone

Storm Daniel landed on the Libyan coastal town of Toukrah in the early hours of September 10 and started moving east. Soon the wind was rising and heavy rain falling, forcing people to stay indoors. By afternoon the rain was clearly out of the ordinary.

Albaya city on the coast would receive 80% of its annual rain before midnight, according to records from a local weather station that we have accessed. In less than 24 hours, thousands of people were dead, hundreds of thousands were missing, and towns and villages across Jebel Akhdar (the Green Mountain) in north-eastern Libya resembled a Hollywood disaster movie.

Storm Daniel was a Mediterranean cyclone or hurricane (a so-called medicane) which struck Greece, Bulgaria, Libya, Egypt and Turkey over the course of a week. Medicanes are not rare. Such large storms happen in this part of the world every few years. But Daniel has proved to be the deadliest.

At the time of writing, the World Health Organization estimates that at least 3,958 people have died across Libya as a result of the floods, with more than 9,000 people still missing.

Daniel was not an exceptionally big storm though. The medicane with the highest wind speeds was medicane Ianos in September 2020, which killed around four people and caused more than €224 million (£193 million) of damage. So what made Storm Daniel different?

Less frequent, but stronger

Like tropical cyclones, medicanes form in hot conditions at the end of summer. Most medicanes form to the west of the islands of Corsica and Sardinia. As they tend to strike the same regions each time, the people living in the western Mediterranean, southern Italy and western Greece, have built structures to deal with these storms and the occasional downpours they



bring.

Daniel formed relatively far to the east and struck north-eastern Libya, which is rare. Dozens of people were killed in communities across Cyrenaica, the eastern portion of the country.

In the mountain gorge above the city of Derna, two dams failed in the middle of the night. Thousands of people, most of whom were asleep, are thought to have perished when the wave of water and debris swept down to the coast, destroying a quarter of the city.

Since medicanes are formed in part by excess heat, events like this are highly sensitive to climate change. A rapid attribution study suggested greenhouse gas emissions made Daniel 50 times more likely.

Despite this, the sixth assessment report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that medicanes are becoming less frequent but larger. Storm Daniel suggests where medicanes form and make landfall might be more important than their frequency and size.

So does Libya need to brace itself for more of these events in the future than it has in the past, even if they affect the western Mediterranean less often?

Clues from the past

An important clue might lie deep underground, inside caves within north-eastern Libya. Although the caves are often dry today, they contain stalagmites which formed when rain passed through the

soil, into the rock and dripped into the cave below thousands of years ago.

These rock formations attest to times in the past when this region was considerably wetter. The caves in Libya – and in Tunisia and Egypt too – form these stalagmites when the global climate is warm.

These bygone warm periods are not quite the same as the warm periods IPCC forecasts suggest modern climate change will usher in. But the way a hot world, a relatively ice-free Europe and North America and a wet northern Africa have regularly coincided in the past is striking. Striking and difficult to understand.

That's because the experiments that suggest medicanes will become less frequent as the climate warms belong to a pattern described by IPCC climate assessments, in which wet parts of the world are expected to get wetter and dry parts drier. So it is hard to understand why stalagmites tell us warmer periods in the past involved wetter conditions across the northern margin of the Sahara – one of the driest regions on Earth. Fortunately, scientists can learn more from the way stalagmites sometimes grow imperfectly, leaving tiny blobs of water trapped between the crystals.

The stalagmite we recovered from Susah Cave on the outskirts of Libya's Susah city, which was severely damaged in the storm, had quite a lot of water in it from wet periods dating to 70,000 to

30,000 years ago. The oxygen and hydrogen isotopes in this water are suggestive of rain drawn from the Mediterranean. This could indicate more medicanes were hitting the Libyan coast then.

Our finding that more rain was falling above Susah Cave during warm periods suggests we should get more storms hitting eastern Libya as the climate warms. This is not quite what the IPCC forecasts, with their prediction of fewer but larger storms, show.

But storm strength is measured in wind speed, not rainfall. The caves could well be recording an important detail of past storminess which we're not yet able to forecast.

Are stalagmites warning us that North Africa must prepare for future medicanes shifting further east? Our ongoing research aims to answer that question.

The pattern of ancient desert margins receiving more rain during warm periods despite the "dry gets drier" pattern of global climate models is not unique to northern Africa but found around the world. Over millions of years, globally warm periods almost always correspond with smaller deserts in Africa, Arabia, Asia and Australia.

This "dryland climate paradox" is important to unravel. Understanding the differences between climate models and studies of ancient rain will be key to navigating the future as safely as possible. (Courtesy: The Wire)

5 people, aged 18 to 22, wounded in shooting on campus of Morgan State University in Baltimore

BALTIMORE, Oct 4: Five people were wounded, none critically, in a shooting outside a residence hall at Morgan State University in Baltimore on Tuesday, according to authorities, who urged students to take shelter on the campus of the historically Black college.

The Baltimore Police Department initially said officers were on the scene for an "active shooter situation" around 9:30 p.m. Police kept the campus on lockdown for hours and provided little information about their investigation. The gunfire shattered windows at a residential building that's on the same block as a city police station.

Police Commissioner Richard Worley said the five victims, four males and one female, are between the ages of 18 and 22. Their injuries are non-life-threatening, he told reporters at a late night news conference.

Morgan State Police Chief Lance Hatcher said four of the victims are students at the university.

No arrests were announced and police did not release information about a suspect or suspects.

After the gunfire erupted, authorities asked people to stay indoors and avoid the area. Police later said it was no longer an active shooter situation and the shelter-in-place order was lifted around 12:30 a.m.

City Council member Ryan Dorsey said on X that "it's believed there were three shooters firing into the crowd."

Worley declined to answer questions about how many shooters police believe were involved.

The shooting happened amid a week of activities ahead of the school's homecoming game on Saturday. The coronation of Mister & Miss Morgan State was scheduled for Tuesday night at the Murphy Fine Arts Centre.

Shortly after midnight, dozens of students wearing gowns and suits started trickling out of the arts centre, where they had been sheltering. Many were trying to process the traumatic turn of events that turned an evening of celebration into chaos and fear.

Konnor Crowder, a sophomore from Baltimore, said he and his friends had been waiting for the

coronation ball to start when they saw people running across the campus.

"First I was wondering what they were running for, then I was wondering where we should go," he said.

Orange evidence markers were visible on the ground in front of a building next to the dorm where the shooting occurred. Yellow crime tape encircled the area as officers used flashlights to search for evidence.

Parents gathered at a media staging area outside the south entrance to campus. James Willoughby, a Morgan State alum whose daughter is a freshman, said he wasn't leaving until he laid eyes on her. "I'm gonna be here until I can physically see her," he said.

Glenmore Blackwood came to the campus after hearing from his son, a senior who told him the shooting occurred just as festivities for the coronation were concluding.

Blackwood said his son was sheltering in place in the arts center's auditorium. He sang in the ceremony and was planning to host a prayer service afterward.

"That's my son. He's going to make

sure I know he's OK," Blackwood said. "It's just sad. They were doing a good thing — an event to promote positivity — and all this negativity happens."

At the scene Tuesday night, officers were blocking off the south entrance to campus near dorm buildings while a police helicopter circled overhead.

Morgan State University President David Wilson said he cancelled classes for Wednesday.

The university with an enrolment of about 9,000 students was founded in 1867 as the Centenary Biblical Institute, with an initial mission of training men for ministry, according to its website. It moved to its current site in northeast Baltimore in 1917 and was purchased by the state of Maryland in 1939 as it aimed to provide more opportunities for Black citizens.

"This is just horrific for the campus and for Baltimore. It's obviously a very traumatic situation for everybody involved," said City Council member Odette Ramos, whose district includes part of the Morgan State campus. (AP)



The next steps are uncertain, but there is no obvious successor to lead the House Republican majority

US: McCarthy becomes first speaker ever to be ousted from job in House vote

WASHINGTON, Oct 4: Speaker Kevin McCarthy was voted out of the job in an extraordinary showdown, a first in US history that was forced by a contingent of hard-right conservatives and threw the House and its Republican leadership into chaos.

McCarthy's chief rival, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, forced the vote on the "motion to vacate," drawing together more than a handful of conservative Republican critics of the speaker and many Democrats who said he was unworthy of leadership.

The next steps are uncertain, but there is no obvious successor to lead the House Republican majority. Stillness fell as the presiding officer gavelled the vote closed, 216-210, saying the office of the speaker "is hereby declared vacant."

Moments later, a top McCarthy ally, Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., took the gavel and, according to House rules, was named speaker pro tempore, to serve in the office until a new speaker was chosen.

The House then briskly recessed

so lawmakers could meet and discuss the path forward. It was a stunning moment for the battle-tested McCarthy, a punishment fuelled by growing grievances but sparked by his weekend decision to work with Democrats to keep the federal government open rather than risk a shutdown.

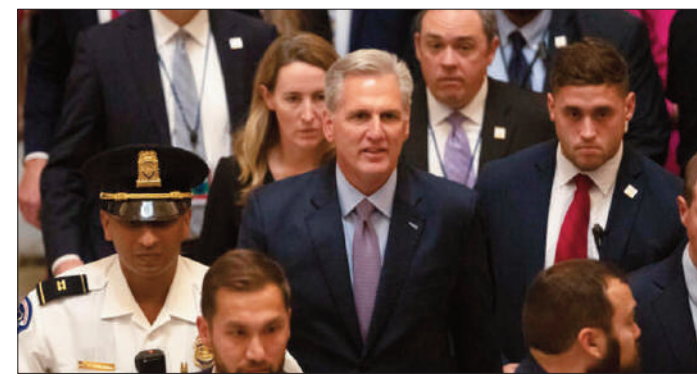
An earlier vote was 218-208 against tabling the motion, with 11 Republicans allowing it to advance.

The House then opened a floor debate, unseen in modern times, ahead of the next round of voting.

McCarthy, of California, insisted he would not cut a deal with Democrats to remain in power — not that he could have relied on their help even if he had asked.

Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said in a letter to colleagues that he wanted to work with Republicans, but he was unwilling to provide the votes needed to save McCarthy.

"It is now the responsibility of the GOP members to end the House Republican Civil War," Jeffries said, announcing the Democratic leadership would vote for



the motion to oust the speaker.

As the House fell silent, Gaetz, a top ally of Donald Trump, rose to offer his motion. Gaetz is a leader of the hard-right Republicans who fought in January against McCarthy in his prolonged battle to gain the gavel.

"It's a sad day," Republican Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma said as the debate got underway, urging his colleagues not to plunge the House Republican majority "into chaos."

But Gaetz shot back during the debate, "Chaos is Speaker McCarthy."

McCarthy's fate was deeply un-

certain as the fiery debate unfolded, with much of the complaints against the speaker revolving around his truthfulness and his ability to keep the promises he had made since January to win the gavel.

But a long line of McCarthy supporters, including Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, a founding leader of the conservative Freedom Caucus, stood up for him: "I think he has kept his word." And some did so passionately, Rep. Garret Graves, R-La., waved his cellphone, saying it was "disgusting" that hard-right colleagues were fundraising off the

move in text messages seeking donations. At the Capitol, both Republicans and Democrats met privately ahead of the historic afternoon vote.

Behind closed doors, McCarthy told fellow Republicans: Let's get on with it.

"If I counted how many times someone wanted to knock me out, I would have been gone a long time ago," McCarthy said at the Capitol after the morning meeting.

McCarthy insisted he had not reached across the aisle to the Democratic leader Jeffries for help with votes to stay in the job, nor had they demanded anything in return. During the hour-long meeting in the Capitol basement, McCarthy invoked Republican Speaker Joseph Cannon, who more than 100 years ago confronted his critics head-on by calling their bluff and setting the vote himself on his ouster.

Cannon survived that takedown attempt, which was the first time the House had actually voted to consider removing its speaker. A more recent threat, in 2015, didn't make it to a vote. (AP)

Russia says it has foiled a major Ukrainian drone attack as concerns grow about weapons supplies

MOSCOW, Oct 4: Russian air defences shot down 31 Ukrainian drones in a nighttime attack on border regions, the Russian Defence Ministry said on Wednesday, in what appeared to be Kyiv's largest single cross-border drone assault reported by Moscow since it launched its invasion 20 months ago.

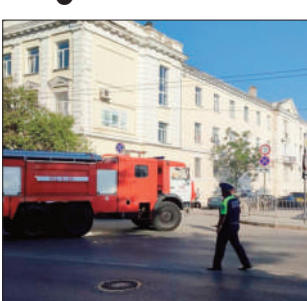
The Defence Ministry didn't provide any evidence for its claims nor any details about whether there were any damage or casualties.

It also said Russian aircraft thwarted a Ukrainian attempt to deploy a group of soldiers by sea to the western side of Russian-annexed Crimea.

The force attempted to land on Cape Tarkhankut, on Crimea's western end, using a high-speed boat and three jet skis, the ministry said.

Moscow's claims could not be independently verified, and Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment.

The Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014, has been a frequent target of Ukrainian attacks. The region has been the key hub



supporting the invasion.

Ukraine is pressing on with a slow-moving counteroffensive it launched three months ago, even as uncertainty grows over the scale of the future supply of weapons and ammunition from its Western allies.

Adm. Rob Bauer, the head of NATO's Military Committee, sounded the alarm about depleted stockpiles.

With the war of attrition likely continuing through winter into next year, Bauer said of weapons systems and ammunition supplies: "The bottom of the barrel is now visible."

He urged the defence industry to boost production "at a much higher tempo. And we need large vol-

umes," he told the Warsaw Security Forum, an annual conference, on Tuesday.

Also, the Pentagon has warned Congress that it is running low on money to replace weapons the U.S. has sent to Ukraine.

Concern about the commitment of Kyiv's allies has also grown amid political turmoil in the United States amid the unprecedented and dramatic ouster Tuesday of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

Some in the House Republican majority, and many GOP voters, oppose sending more military aid to Ukraine. The U.S. is by far Ukraine's largest military supplier.

The concerns prompted U.S. President Joe Biden to hold a phone call Tuesday with key allies in Europe, as well as the leaders of Canada and Japan, to coordinate support for Ukraine.

The call came three days after Biden signed legislation hastily sent to him by Congress that kept the federal government funded but left off billions in funding for Ukraine's war effort that the White House had vigorously backed. (AP)

NKorea vows strong response to Pentagon report that calls it 'persistent' threat

SEOUL, Oct 4: North Korea slammed the United States over a recent Pentagon report that labelled it a "persistent" threat because of weapons of mass destruction, saying it will counter any US aggression or provocations with "the most overwhelming and sustained response strategy."

Last week, the Pentagon released the unclassified version of its "2023 Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction" describing WMD challenges and methods to address them. The report stated that while China and Russia present "the principal WMD challenges," North Korea, Iran and violent extremist organisations remain "persistent regional threats" that must also be addressed.

Such US descriptions of North Korea and the North's angry response aren't unusual. But the latest exchange comes as concerns grow that North Korea is pushing for a weapons transfer deal with Russia in violation of UN Security Council resolutions. "The US has just revealed its dangerous intention for aggression to seriously violate the sovereignty and security of (North Korea) and other independent sovereign states by threatening them with WMDs, and realize its wild ambition for seizing global military hegemony," an unidentified spokesperson for North Korea's Defence Ministry said in a statement carried by state media.

North Korea's military will "counter the US imperialist aggressor's military strategy and provocations with the most overwhelming and sustained response strategy," the statement said. North Korea's nuclear programme has taken on new urgency since it enacted a law last year that authorises pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons.

Since the beginning of 2022, North Korea has conducted more than 100 missile tests, many of them involving nuclear-capable weapons potentially able to target the US and South Korea.

Last week, North Korea's parliament amended the country's constitution to include the nuclear law, an indication that the North is further boosting its nuclear doctrine. During the parliament meeting, leader Kim Jong Un called for an exponential increase in the production of nuclear weapons and for his country to play a larger role in a coalition of nations confronting the United States in a "new Cold War."

South Korea's Defence Ministry warned in a statement on Wednesday that any attempt by North Korea to use nuclear weapons would result in the end of the Kim government. It said North Korea's inclusion of the nuclear law in its constitution will further deepen its international isolation and the suffering of its people. (AP)

A Nepal town imposes a lockdown and beefs up security to prevent clashes between Hindus and Muslims

KATHMANDU, Oct 4: Despite quickly escalating tensions between Hindus and Muslims, the night passed peacefully after a lockdown was imposed and security heightened in a city in southwest Nepal, officials said.

Trouble began in the regional hub city of Nepalgunj over the weekend after a Hindu boy posted a status about Muslims on social media. Muslims protested the status inside the region's main government administrator's office building, burned tires on the streets and blocked traffic.

A larger Hindu rally was held on Tuesday until stones and bottles were thrown at protesters, resulting in a few minor injuries.

The indefinite curfew was imposed since Tuesday afternoon in Nepalgunj, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of the capital, Kathmandu, directly after the Hindu protest came under attack. (AP)

Bus crash across lagoon from Venice's historic centre kills 21 people

ROME, Oct 4: At least 21 people were killed and 18 injured in a fiery bus crash in a borough of Venice, Italy, across the lagoon from its historic centre, where firefighters and other emergency responders worked into the night trying to extract bodies and squelch the flames. The bus was carrying foreign tourists, including Ukrainians, according to a Venice official, when it fell from an elevated street Tuesday in Mestre en route to a camping site near the community of Marghera.

"The people in the bus found themselves surrounded by flames," said Mauro Luongo, commander of the Venice firefighters team. "The scene we found was terrible. It took about one hour to extract some of the bodies." Venice Mayor Luigi Brugnaro wrote on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, that the crash scene was "apocalyptic" and de-

clared the city in a state of mourning.

Four of the injured were in serious condition following the accident, which happened on the mainland just 9 km northwest of the old city of Venice, said Renato Boraso, a Venice city official. Two of the dead were children, Venice prefect Michele Di Bari said. The injured were transferred to five different hospitals in the region.

According to local media, the bus fell a few metres before crashing close to Mestre's railway tracks, where it caught fire. The Veneto region governor, Luca Zaia, told RAI state television that the cause of the accident was still unclear.

"This is an important tragedy, but it's difficult to understand how it happened," he said. "The bus was new and electric, and that street wasn't particularly problematic." (AP)

Pope Francis opens a big Vatican meeting on the church's future

VATICAN CITY, Oct 4: Pope Francis opened a big meeting on the future of the Catholic Church on Wednesday by saying it was in need of repair to make it a place of welcome for "everyone, everyone, everyone", not a rigid barricade riven by fears and ideology.

Francis presided over a solemn Mass in St. Peter's Square to formally open the meeting, which progressives are hoping will lead to more women in leadership roles and conservatives are warning could split the church.

Rarely in recent times has a Vatican gathering generated as much hope, hype and fear as this three-week, closed-door meeting, known as a synod. It won't make any binding deci-



sions and is only the first session of a two-year process. But it nevertheless has drawn an acute battle line in the church's perennial left-right divide and marks a defining moment for Francis and his reform agenda.

In his homily, Francis acknowledged the ideological divisions at play but urged the faithful to put them aside and instead listen to the Holy Spirit. He recalled that his namesake St. Francis of Assisi, whose

feast day is celebrated Wednesday, also faced divisions and tensions in his lifetime and responded with prayer, charity, humility and unity when he was told: "Go and rebuild my church."

"Let us do the same!" Francis said. "And if God's holy people with their shepherds from all over the world have expectations, hopes and even some fears about the synod we are beginning, let us continue to remember that it is not a political gathering, but a convocation in the spirit; not a polarised parliament, but a place of grace and communion." Even before it started, the gathering was historic because Francis decided to let women and laypeople vote alongside bishops in any

final document produced. While fewer than a quarter of the 365 voting members are non-bishops, the reform is a radical shift away from a hierarchy-focused Synod of Bishops and evidence of Francis' belief that the church is more about its flock than its shepherds.

"It's a watershed moment," said JoAnn Lopez, an Indian-born lay minister who helped organise two years of consultations prior to the meeting at parishes where she has worked in Seattle and Toronto.

"This is the first time that women have a very qualitatively different voice at the table, and the opportunity to vote in decision-making is huge," she said. (AP)

Suspect in Bangkok mall shooting that killed 2 used a modified mock gun, police say

BANGKOK, Oct 4: The teenage boy who allegedly shot two people dead and wounded five others inside a major shopping mall in the centre of Thailand's capital used a mock handgun that had been modified to fire real bullets, police said on Wednesday. The suspect was taken into custody less than an hour after the first gunshots Tuesday afternoon at the Siam Paragon Mall, one of Bangkok's biggest and most upscale shopping destinations.

Video uploaded to social media and broadcast on television showed a long-haired teenage boy in the custody of police. Major Thai media reported he was 14 years old and a student at a prominent private school.

Recently appointed Police Chief Torsak Sukvimol confirmed only that he is a minor and had a record of being treated for mental illness.

Assistant National Police Chief Samran Nualma said at a news conference Wednesday that the weapon used was "a plastic gun and adapted to use with real bullets." It has variously been described as originally intended to fire blanks or BBs.

Samran said the authorities were looking into the regulation of such items. Mock weapons are popular among military buffs in Thailand and can be freely purchased. Licensing of real guns is restricted and limited to people 20 years or older. The penalty for unlawful possession of a firearm is up to 10 years in prison and a fine of 20,000 baht (USD 538).

The minister of Tourism and Sports, Sudawan Wangsuppakitkosol, confirmed at the news confer-

ence that a Chinese citizen and a Myanmar citizen had died. She said five people were hospitalised — one from China, one from Laos and three Thais — and that several were in critical condition.

"We need to rebuild confidence. We will discuss with the National Police putting safety measures in malls and communities to prevent such incidents," she said. Siam Paragon installed metal detectors at its entrances during political tensions several years ago, but recently they have been only casually monitored. Security guards were conducting hand searches of customers' bags at entrances on Wednesday. Inside, workers were repairing the front of a luxury shop that was apparently damaged by the gunfire.

Thailand is relying on its once-robust tourism industry for a full economic recovery after the coronavirus pandemic. It is especially encouraging visitors from China, who before the pandemic were by far the largest national group. But Chinese social media have lately been filled with warnings about safety in Thailand because of some high-profile crimes and scam operations. Gun violence is not uncommon in Thailand, though mass shootings are rare.

The incident occurred days before Thais are to mark the anniversary of the country's biggest mass killing by an individual, a gun and knife attack at a rural day care centre in a northeastern province that killed 36 people, most of them preschoolers, on October 6, 2022. (AP)

US defence secretary speaks with Pak Army chief amidst spike in terror attacks in Pak

WASHINGTON/ISLAMABAD, Oct 4: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to Pakistan Army chief Gen Asim Munir and discussed "areas of mutual interest and recent regional developments," amidst a spike in terror attacks in Pakistan.

In Washington, the US Department of Defence said Secretary of Defence Austin spoke by phone with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Munir on Tuesday. Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder, the Pentagon Press Secretary, confirmed the telephone conversation between the top officials and said, "They discussed areas of mutual interest and recent regional developments."

This is the second time that Gen Munir and the US secretary have spoken on the phone. The last time they spoke was in January of this year, when the US defence

secretary had called Gen Munir to congratulate him on taking charge as the army chief, Geo News reported.

The Inter-Services Public Relations, the media wing of the Pakistani military, has not made a statement regarding the call yet, Dawn News reported. But, neither Washington nor Islamabad has revealed the details about the topics discussed.

The Dawn report recalled how the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Tom West had recently identified the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as the greatest threat to regional stability. The telephone conversation between Austin and Munir, therefore, assumes significance. According to Dawn, there has been "an uptick in terror activities in Pakistan, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, after the TTP



ended its ceasefire with the Pakistan government in November last year."

Dawn also quoted a report released in July by the think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies that said the first half of the current year witnessed a steady and alarming rise in terror and suicide attacks, claiming the lives of 389 people across the country. Pakistani authorities have blamed Afghanistan for allowing militants to use its soil, with in-

terim Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti saying that 14 of 24 suicide bombings in the country this year were carried out by Afghan nationals.

Earlier on Monday, US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller offered to work with Pakistan on strategies that can better assist the country's efforts to counter all forms of violent extremism.

Some Pakistani media houses linked the phone call with the illegal immigration

issue. Pakistan has maintained that a majority of the illegal foreign nationals in Pakistan are Afghan nationals and also that the TTP cadre draws from that lot. "The announcement about the call came shortly after Pakistan set a deadline to expel all illegal foreign nationals in the country," Aaj English, a TV channel, website said.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Bugti on Tuesday announced a November 1 deadline for thousands of illegal immigrants to leave the country or face deportation as the government intensified its crackdown against those involved in militancy and smuggling. Bugti made the announcement after a high-level meeting of the Apex Committee chaired by caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar and attended by Army Chief General Asim Munir among others. (PTI)

Cong slams PM over situation in Manipur

‘Situation has turned from bad to worse in state’

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The Congress on Wednesday questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the situation in Manipur, and alleged that never before has a PM completely “abandoned” a state and its entire people like now.

Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said that Manipur coming to such a situation after the BJP was elected to power there 15 months ago is a “most damning indictment of its policies and the prime minister’s priorities”. He charged that five months back, on the evening of May 3, Manipur erupted because of the “divisive politics of the so-called double engine sarkar” there.

After almost a month, after being relieved from Karnataka election duties and other such urgent matters, the home minister deemed it fit to visit the state, he said.

“But there has been no marked improvement. In fact things have



turned from bad to worse. Social harmony has broken down completely. Horrific details of violent crimes emerge every other day. Tens of thousands continue to languish in relief camps. Clashes between the Armed forces and the state police are routine,” the Congress leader said on X.

“Yet the prime minister has been completely silent except for a much belated, routine and ritualistic comment for less than 5 mins in a 133 minute speech in the Lok Sabha on August 10th. The chief minister continues to brazen it out despite majority of BJP MLAs wanting him out of office,” Ramesh said.

He said there are some questions to ponder over and asked when was the last time the prime minister visited Manipur.

“When was the last time the prime minister spoke to the BJP CM of Manipur? When was the last time the prime minister met BJP MLAs of Manipur? When was the last time the prime minister discussed Manipur with his cabinet colleague from the state?”

“Never before has a prime minister completely abandoned a state and its entire people like now. That Manipur has come to this horrendous situation just about 15 months after the BJP got a huge mandate in the state is a most damning indictment of its policies and the prime minister’s priorities,” Ramesh charged. The Congress has been questioning the prime minister’s silence and asked why he has not taken out the time to visit the violence-hit state. (PTI)

Two super high altitude firing ranges in Arunachal Pradesh made available for armed forces

TAWANG, Oct 4: Two super high altitude firing ranges were made available to the armed forces for the practice of various kinds of weapons and surveillance equipment in Arunachal Pradesh within an aerial distance of 50 kilometres from the highly sensitive Line of Actual Control, sources said.

The initiative to hand over the land of the Mandala and Kamrila firing ranges, located at an altitude of above 10,000 feet, to the armed forces was taken by chief minister Pema Khandu.

While the first of the integrated surveillance and fire-power training exercises named ‘Buland Bharat’ has already been conducted at Mandala in May, a major firing exercise is yet to be conducted at the Kamrila firing range, security sources told PTI.

Both the super high altitude firing ranges are located within 50 km aerial distance of the LAC.

Arunachal Pradesh shares a 1,129-km-long LAC with China’s Tibet Autonomous Region.

A top security officer deployed in the region said both the firing ranges in Arunachal Pradesh were made available to the armed forces at the personal initiative of chief minister Khandu.

When contacted, Khandu told PTI: “National interests come first. We have decided to hand over the land for the two firing ranges taking into account the need of the armed forces.” Yangste, where PLA troops intruded on December 9 last year, comes under the chief minister’s own assembly constituency Mukto in Tawang district. After the PLA troops had entered Yangste, they clashed with the Indian Army, resulting in injuries to soldiers on both sides.

The sources said the two firing ranges will be highly advantageous for the armed forces as troops deployed in high-altitude strategic locations in Ladakh, Himachal



Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh can test their firepower and get acclimatised.

During the ‘Buland Bharat’ exercise, the armed forces carried out an integrated surveillance and fire-power training exercise to test “simulated war conditions in high altitude areas”.

The exercise involved the synergised application of surveillance and firepower capabilities of the infantry and artillery radars and weapon systems. Firing from the air was also practised. It was done in close coordination with the special forces, aviation and Central Armed Police Forces deployed in the Kameng and Tawang sectors in Arunachal Pradesh, the sources said.

At Mandala, the Army used 155 mm Bofors howitzers, 105 mm field guns and 120 mm mortars among other heavy weapon systems.

Dhanush and Sharang guns, Pinaka and Smerch multi-launch rocket systems, new M-777 ultra-light howitzers and the winterised K-9 Vajra self-propelled tracked guns were also used during the exercise, the sources said. (PTI)

2-day Northeast Youth Leaders Conclave in Kohima

DIMAPUR, Oct 4: The National Foundation for India (NFI) will host a two-day Northeast Youth Leaders Conclave at the Capital Convention Centre in Kohima from November 7 on the theme “Empowering Youth Leadership: Bridging Sustainable Development Goals and Inclusive Socio-Economic Development”.

The main highlights of the conclave will include interactions with peers and experts, knowledge sharing and collaborative efforts towards achieving the SDGs, interactive case study sessions, in-depth exploration of the interconnections between the biosphere, society and the economy, group discussions and workshops featuring youth leaders from all the eight northeastern states, fostering cross-learning and the exchange of innovative ideas, comprehensive skill-building workshops and ample networking opportunities.

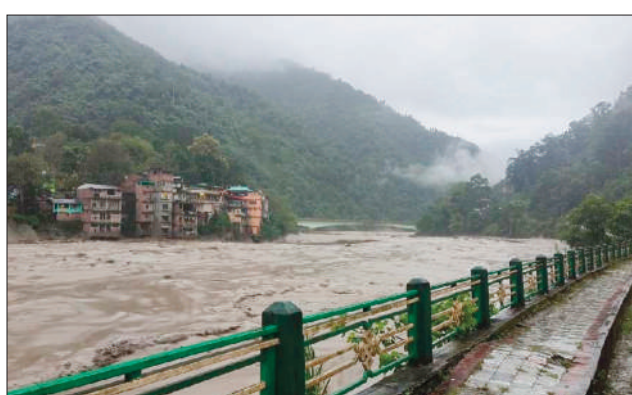
The NFI urged the interested participants to submit their applications for participation by October 10.

For more information and to apply, one may visit the NFI’s official website <https://nfi.org.in/leaving-no-one-behind>.

Meanwhile, a total of 265 youths from 11 districts, who competed in folk dance and folk song categories, showcased their talents at a day-long State Level Youth Festival at Indira Gandhi Stadium in Kohima on Tuesday.

Adviser to the youth resources and sports department, S Keoshu Yimchunger, who attended the festival as the special guest, expressed gratitude to the department for organising the event to provide a platform to young gifted individuals to display their talents, particularly in the realm of folk dances and songs, which have been preserved through generations.

Water level in Teesta currently below danger mark, no flood situation around it: CWC



NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The water level in the Teesta river was below the danger mark at 1 pm on Wednesday and there is no flood situation around it, according to Central Water Commission data.

Three people died and 23 Army personnel were washed away earlier in the day after a cloudburst over the Lhonak Lake in north Sikkim resulted in a flash flood in the Teesta River basin, which was aggravated by the release of water from a dam, officials said.

According to the Central Water Commission (CWC), the water level at three stations – Melli, Singtam and Rohtak – on the Teesta is below the danger mark but hovering near it.

The water level at station Melli is 214.63 metres, while the danger level is 224 metres, it showed.

“It has a rising trend. Water level is below warning Level. So, there is no flood situation around Melli,” the CWC said on its app.

The current water level at station Singtam is 351.31 metres while the danger level is at 355.09 metres. “Water Level is below warning level. So, there is no flood situation around Singtam. Currently, no flood forecast is available for this location,” the CWC said.

The current water level at station Rohtak is 360.06 metres while the danger level stands at 364.98 metres. (PTI)

Saha calls for investment in renewable energy

AGARTALA, Oct 4: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha on Wednesday urged industrialists to invest in the renewable energy sector in the northeastern state. The government has already set a target of generating 500 MW power through renewable energy sources by 2030 to meet the state’s future demand, he said, during a ‘workshop on energy transition in Tripura’.

“The Tripura Power Generation Ltd (TPGL) has already decided to turn two existing gas-based power projects into combined cycle power plants. Besides, it is also planning to generate 30 MW of power from a small hydroelectric project,” he said. Tripura Renewable Energy Development Agency (TREDA), a state government-owned entity, has inked a memorandum of understanding with NTPC for installing a 130-MW renewable energy plant in Dum-



bur in Gomati district, he said.

In today’s world, green power has become most important for meeting energy needs, he said.

“I appealed to all the financial institutions and private players to invest in Tripura, taking advantage of a favourable industrial policy. The government has initiated a drive to promote non-fossil energy. It will help explore opportunities for sustainable development of the northeastern state,” the chief minister said.

Tripura’s power minister Ratan Lal Nath also appealed to the investors to explore possibilities in the renewable energy sector. (PTI)

Mamata expresses concern over Sikkim flash flood

KOLKATA, Oct 4: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday expressed concern over reports that 23 soldiers went missing following a flash flood in Sikkim, and assured all possible help on the part of her government. A sudden cloudburst over Lhonak Lake in North Sikkim resulted in a flash flood in the Teesta River, which was compounded by the release of water from a dam, leading to 23 Army personnel being washed away, officials said. (PTI)



AXOM SARBA SIKSHA ABHIJAN MISSION
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT MISSION CO-ORDINATOR,
KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL, DIPHU, ASSAM

NO.SSA/KAAC/CW/KGBV/Const/2023-24/34/447

Dated 4/10/2028

TENDER NOTICE

The District Mission Co-ordinator, SSA, KAAC Diphu invites fresh bids for the following works from the registered Contractor (A,B under PWD Bid.) having experience of similar nature of work.

Details of the bid may be seen at the e-procurement portal website i.e. www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours 4th Oct/2023(6:00PM) to 18th Oct/2023(2:PM)

Name of Work	Package Nos.	Place of construction works	Approx. Value of work	Time of Completion	Earnest Money Deposit(EMD)	EMD to be withdrawn in favour of	Tender cost
Construction of Kasturba Gandhi Ballka Vidyalaya Building (Class VI to X) Academic Block Apron Type with RCC Hostel Building (G+2) at Koilamati “under Nilip Block In Karbi Anglong	1A	Koilamati under Nilip Block in Karbi Anglong District	Rs.6,42.80,000/-	18 month	Rs 12,85,600/ (for general) and Rs 6,42,800/(reserved category)	The District Mission Co-ordinator, Samagra Siksha, KAAC, Diphu	Rs.10,000/-
Construction of Kasturba Gandhi Ballka Vidyalaya Building (Class VI to X) Academic Block Apron Type with RCC Hostel Building (G+2) at Dolamara “Under Rongmongve Block in Karbi Anglong		Dolamara “Under Rongmongve Block in Karbi Anglong District	Rs.6,42.80,000/-	18 month	Rs 12,85,600/ (for general) and Rs 6,42,800/(reserved category)	The District Mission Co-ordinator, Samagra Siksha, KAAC, Diphu	Rs.10,000/-

Note:

- Pre-bid meeting: Date and time 6th Oct/2023 at 11.00 AM
- Venue: Office of the District Mission Co-ordinator, SSA, KAAC, Diphu, online mode of submission for both Technical and Financial Bid is mandatory.
- A hard copy of Technical bid submitted online is also to be submitted at the office chamber of the undersigned on or before 18th Oct/2023 upto 15:00 hours for evaluation purpose. For any discrepancy between the online bid and the hard copy of the bid, the online bid will govern and will be considered for evaluation.
- Alongwith the hard copy of the Technical bid, the following document(in original) must also be submitted on or before 18th Oct/2023 upto 15:00 hours:-
 - Original power of Attorney for signing the BID, If any.
 - Bid Security in the form of Original TDR/FDR/DCR from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank,
 - Original DD/Banker's Cheque of the specified amount against the works should be in favour of the District Mission Co-ordinator, Samagra Shiksha, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu towards cost of Bid documents for the job.
- Bidders are advise to scan their Technical papers at the resolution of 100 dpl (Black & white mode) in pdf format for multiple pages with maximum file size of 25 MB. If the file size exceeds 25 MB, the bidders are advised to create multiple files and upload the same in "Upload Additional Document" stage.
- In the event of date of bid opening being a holiday the activities will take place on the next working day.
- All the interested Bidders are requested to read the bid document carefully before submission of their bid.

Sd/-
District Mission Co-ordinator
Samagra Shiksha, Karbi Anglong
Diphu
Dated 4/10/2023

Memo. No. SSA/KAAC/CW/KGBV/Const./2023-24/34/446(A)

Security concerns extend way beyond preservation of territorial integrity: Prez

'Need to explore innovative applications of artificial intelligence in addressing current and future challenges'

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said India's security concerns extend way beyond preservation of territorial integrity and encompass other dimensions of well-being dealing with economy, environment, energy security and cyber security. Addressing the faculty and course members of the 63rd National Defence College (NDC) course, who had called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, Murmu said the global geopolitical environment is dynamic and poses numerous challenges.

"In the fast-changing geopolitical environment, we need to be well prepared to tackle any adverse situation. Geopolitical dynamics have changed the security landscape. There is a need to have a deeper understanding of national and global issues. We not only have to secure our national interests, but also prepare for new security challenges like cyber warfare, technology-enabled terrorism and climate change," she said.

The president said updated knowledge and cutting-edge technologies based on extensive research are required to be applied. "You need to explore innovative



applications of artificial intelligence in addressing current and future challenges. In fact, government agencies and the corporate sector need to join hands to identify and address these challenges," she said. The way in which global events are unfolding, "we increasingly realise the importance of being *atmanirbhar* (self-reliant)", globally competent and future-ready to deal with any kind of situation and crisis, Murmu stressed.

"Today, our security concerns extend way beyond preservation of territorial integrity and encompass other dimensions of well-being

dealing with economy, environment, energy security and cyber security among others," she said.

The president noted that the role of the armed forces has also expanded beyond traditional military matters.

"It is clear that future conflicts in the complex defence and security environment will require a more integrated multi-state and multi-agency approach," she said. Murmu said security and defence are essential for progress and development.

"The real progress of a nation depends to a large extent on how effectively it harnesses resources at

its disposal, especially its human resource," she said.

Both civil services and defence services officers must understand the fine points of the constitutional framework in the country's democratic system, the president said.

"This awareness is the first step towards fostering synergy among the functionaries of different services. I am sure that our officers will rise to the dynamic needs of our country," she added.

The NDC course, therefore, plays an important role in preparing military and civil services officers to deal with the complex security environment of the future in a comprehensive manner, Murmu said.

She noted that the NDC course is a one-of-a-kind course encompassing areas of national security and strategy, along with governance, technology, history and economics.

The president expressed confidence that the holistic approach of learning at the NDC — comprising research, classroom discussions, insights from eminent speakers and on-ground exposure through national and international visits — has enriched the course members in terms of facing challenges. (PTI)

PM Modi to launch multiple development projects in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch development projects worth ₹ 12,600 crore in Madhya Pradesh and ₹ 5,000 crore in Rajasthan during his visit to the two poll-bound states on Thursday.

In Jodhpur in Rajasthan, the Prime Minister's Office said, Modi will lay the foundation stone and inaugurate multiple development projects in sectors like road, rail, aviation, health and higher education. In Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, he will inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of development projects in sectors such as road, rail, gas pipeline, housing and clean drinking water, it said.

Among the health projects for which he will lay the foundation stone in Rajasthan include a 350-bedded trauma centre and critical care hospital block at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur, and seven critical care blocks under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) to be developed across the state. The centre at the AIIMS will be developed at a cost of more than ₹ 350 crore, it said.

The statement said the facility will bring a holistic approach in management of trauma and emergency cases by providing multidisciplinary and comprehensive care to patients while critical care blocks across Rajasthan will augment district level critical care infrastructure, it added.



The Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone for the development of a state-of-the-art new terminal building at the Jodhpur airport costing ₹ 480 crore and dedicate the IIT Jodhpur campus to the nation as well.

The statement said the campus has been built at a cost of more than ₹ 1,135 crore. It is a step towards providing high quality holistic education and building infrastructure for supporting cutting-edge research and innovation initiatives, it said.

Among other projects, he will lay the foundation stone of multiple road development projects to be built at a cumulative cost of about ₹ 1,475 crore and also flag off two new train services in the state. The PMO said Modi will inaugurate a light house project at Indore, Madhya Pradesh. Built at a cost of about ₹ 128 crore under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban, the project will

benefit more than 1,000 beneficiary families as part of his vision of "housing for all", it said.

He will also lay the foundation stone of multiple Jal Jeevan Mission projects in Mandla, Jabalpur and Dindori districts worth over ₹ 2,350 crore and inaugurate a drinking water project under the same scheme in Seoni district.

These projects in four districts of the state will benefit about 1,575 villages of Madhya Pradesh. It said he will also lay the foundation stone and dedicate to the nation multiple projects more than ₹ 4,800 crore for improving the road infrastructure in the state.

He will dedicate to the nation rail projects worth more than ₹ 1,850 crore and 352 km-long Vijapur-Auraiyan-Phulpur pipeline projects built at a cost of more than ₹ 1,750 crore, among several other development facilities he will launch during the visit. (PTI)

Two militants killed in Kulgam encounter

SRINAGAR, Oct 4: Two unidentified militants were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Kulgam district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, police said. The encounter started earlier in the day when security forces launched a cordon and search operation at Kujjar following information about the presence of ultras there.

"02 terrorists killed. Bodies of the killed terrorists being retrieved from the site of encounter. Cordon & search operation is still in progress. Further details shall follow," Kashmir Zone police posted on X.

The search operation had turned into an encounter after the militants opened fire on the security forces, which retaliated. (PTI)

TMC organises protests across Bengal against detention of party leaders

KOLKATA, Oct 4: The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Wednesday organised demonstrations and burnt effigies of Union rural development minister Giriraj Singh across West Bengal in protest against the detention of its national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee in Delhi the day before.

This development marks an escalation in the ongoing conflict between the Centre and the West Bengal government over the release of funds under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and other schemes to the state.

The TMC had conducted protests in the national capital on October 2 and 3 when their leaders were detained.

Carrying posters and placards, TMC activists in various parts of the state organised sit-ins and shouted slogans

against the Union government. At various places, they also squatted on railway tracks and burnt tyres and effigies of Giriraj Singh.

The party stated, "Peaceful protest rallies are being held across the state on Wednesday against the barbaric attitude of the BJP-led Union government. We were conducting peaceful protests, and our leaders were being assaulted and detained by police. Effigies of Union Rural Development Minister Giriraj Singh were burnt in all the blocks of the state."

The TMC's youth wing, in collaboration with the main unit, also organised protest programmes in all the blocks of the state. The All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) posted on X that the party is committed to continuing its fight and won't let the BJP silence Bengal's voice.

The AITC tweeted, "@BJP4India shows its true colors when voices rise

against their corrupt practices and oppression. The harsh treatment that our leaders and deprived beneficiaries faced yesterday reveals their lowly strategies to the nation. Unwavering in our commitment, we won't let the BJP silence Bengal's VOICE."

On Thursday, the ruling party in West Bengal will organise a march to Raj Bhavan, where it will submit "50 lakh letters from deprived MGNREGA card holders," which it wanted to present to the Union rural development ministry on Tuesday but couldn't.

West Bengal chief minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee also condemned the incident as a "dark day of democracy."

Abhishek Banerjee, along with party lawmakers, state ministers, and supporters, including MGNREGA workers, protested at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Tuesday, a day after

they held a two-hour sit-in at Rajghat on Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary before being evicted by police.

They later took out a march to the rural development ministry at Krishi Bhawan, where they had an appointment with Minister of State Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti.

However, around an hour-and-a-half after going to the Bhawan, TMC leaders claimed that the MoS refused to meet them, saying she would not meet more than five representatives.

The TMC leaders, who had brought with them bundles of letters addressed to the prime minister and the rural development minister, refused to leave until the MoS met them.

Led by Abhishek Banerjee, a group of TMC leaders sat on a dharna, which continued until around 9 pm when they were detained by police and evicted from the ministry premises. They were released later. (PTI)

NMC notification on new medical colleges may be legally untenable: TN CM

CHENNAI, Oct 4: A notification by the National Medical Commission on restricting the opening of new medical colleges has created a "regressive scenario" and should be kept in abeyance, the Tamil Nadu government said on Wednesday.

Chief minister M K Stalin urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to instruct the Union Health Ministry to keep the notification in abeyance and initiate a consultative process to address the matter.

"I wish to draw your kind attention to the regressive scenario created by the recent notification issued by the NMC to restrict the opening of new medical colleges. It has been notified by the NMC that after the academic year 2023-2024, the Letter of Permission for starting new medical colleges shall be issued only for an annual intake capacity of 50/100/150 seats, provided that the medical college shall follow the ratio of 100 MBBS seats for 10 lakh population in that State/UT."

This is a "direct encroachment" on the rights of all State governments and penalisation of those who have invested more in their public health infrastructure over the years, the CM said.

He said progressive states like Tamil Nadu have been strengthening their tertiary healthcare network for many decades, leading to ample availability of doctors and nurses, which he said has manifested in their better performance in terms of various health indicators.

"Chennai has emerged as the healthcare capital of India. In both public and private sectors, our skilled medical professionals have been able to successfully serve not only the people of Tamil Nadu but also of other states as well as other nations. This has generated a huge demand for quality health services and new institutions are absolutely necessary for us to cater to it in the

future," Stalin added.

"The criterion proposed for such restriction, higher doctor-population ratio at the state level as compared to the norms, is also not appropriate. Even when there is adequate availability of doctors at the state level, there are districts where their availability continues to be a persistent issue," he said.

The problem can be effectively addressed only by starting new medical colleges in backward areas and any restriction based on state level criteria will deprive these deserving districts of much needed tertiary institutions.

"I would also like to point out the fact that in states like Tamil Nadu which have a higher doctor-population ratio, such high availability of doctors has been achieved predominantly due to investments made by State Governments and the private sector and not by investments made by the Union Government."

"We have been continuously urging that the Union Government needs to contribute more but projects like AIIMS, Madurai are yet to take-off," Stalin said.

Given this situation, a restriction on new institutions will completely eliminate any chance of TN getting new Central investments in health sector.

In a recent judgement, the Supreme Court also held that executive instructions could not impose reasonable restrictions on the fundamental right to establish educational institutions under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution of India.

"Thus, the above NMC notification may also be legally untenable. Considering all the above issues, I request you to instruct the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to keep this notification in abeyance and initiate a consultative process with the State Governments on the steps to address this issue," Stalin told the PM. (PTI)

President's Rule was imposed in Maharashtra in 2019 with Sharad Pawar's consent: Fadnavis



MUMBAI, Oct 4: The President's Rule was imposed in Maharashtra in 2019 with the consent of NCP president Sharad Pawar, said Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday.

The deputy CM was responding to a question at the India Today Conclave here about the timeline of his attempt to form a short-lived government with the NCP.

In one of the biggest political surprises in Maharashtra after the 2019 polls, the then Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari swore in Fadnavis as the chief minister and Ajit Pawar as deputy CM on November 23, 2019. However, the government fell after about 72 hours.

"Post assembly elections in 2019, we were discussing government formation with Sharad Pawar. We had even finalised portfolio distribution and guardian ministers' responsibilities. But Pawar made a U-turn and backed out," said Fadnavis on Wednesday, insisting that the decision to impose the President's Rule in the state was taken with Pawar's consent.

In the last Maharashtra assembly elections, the results of which were announced on October 24, 2019, the BJP won 105 of the 288 seats in the state. The Shiv Sena, which was in an alliance with the BJP, won 56 seats. However, the allies parted ways after bickering over power-sharing, with the CM's post being the bone of contention.

Following the deadlock, the President's Rule was imposed in the state. "The governor has to ask every political party whether it would like to stake claim to form the government. The NCP refused to do so and its letter (to this effect) was typed at my residence in Mumbai. Pawar suggested some corrections, which were made, and then it (letter) was submitted," said Fadnavis, claiming that Pawar's consent had been taken before it was decided to go for the President's Rule.

"Pawar told us that he could not take a decision to tie up with the BJP in a short period. Pawar said he would first tour the state and announce his decision to form a government with the BJP after convincing people. Pawar said he would need one month for it," Fadnavis said.

After Sharad Pawar made a U-turn about forming the government with the BJP, his nephew and NCP leader Ajit Pawar tried to form the government with the saffron party, Fadnavis added.

Later, Sharad Pawar announced that the then Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray had been unanimously chosen to head an alliance of Sena, NCP and Congress — Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) — which formed the government.

The MVA government fell last year after Eknath Shinde, along with 39 Sena MLAs, joined hands with the BJP to become the chief minister with Fadnavis as his deputy. Ajit Pawar broke away from NCP in July this year to be a part of the ruling coalition. (PTI)

Age of consent: NCPCR likely to advise govt against accepting Law Commission recommendations, say sources

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The apex child rights body NCPCR is likely to advise the government against accepting the Law Commission's recommendations on the age of consent for introducing guided judicial discretion in POCSO cases involving "tacit approval" of adolescents in the 16-18 age bracket, sources said.

The NCPCR has also raised questions on the veracity of the policy brief published jointly by Enfold Proactive Health Trust, UNFPA and UNICEF, which was considered by the Law Commission in bringing out its report on the age of consent, saying it gives "misleading" arguments on the implementation of the POCSO Act, sources said.

"After the publishing of report by Enfold on 'Implication of the POCSO Act in India on Adolescent Sexuality: A Policy Brief', on several occasions it has been highlighted that around 25 per cent of cases pertaining to POCSO matters are under romantic relationships which is a wrong statement because unfortunately, Enfold has analysed the orders

of various courts and not the cases per se. The actual scenario differs in the said context," the NCPCR said in its submission to the Law Commission.

The sources said the NCPCR will now be approaching the government next week to advise against accepting the recommendation of the Law Commission on the issue of giving judicial discretion in the POCSO cases involving tacit approval of children aged 16-18 years. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has also written to UNICEF asking it to withdraw the document. The Law Commission has advised the government not to tinker with the existing age of consent under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) and suggested introducing guided judicial discretion in the matter of sentencing in cases involving tacit approval of children in the 16-18 age bracket.

During the consultations, the NCPCR strongly advised the Law Commission to maintain the age of consent at 18 years

and also opposed giving judicial discretion to the judges in the matter.

"It is pertinent to highlight that considering the judgement from one point of view may lead to the ignorance of the aspect of sexual violation against minor children which protects minors below the age of 18 years under the POCSO Act," the NCPCR had said in its recommendations to the Law Commission during the deliberations in May. The NCPCR, in the document accessed by PTI, had said that the two references used by the Law Commission from the Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka high courts have failed to appreciate that both the cases should have been viewed seriously with respect to child marriages since the parties in the cases agreed to be married to each other even though being minors and not of permissible age for marriage.

However, giving judicial discretion in sentencing in POCSO cases involving tacit approval may raise these issues and the NCPCR now plans to advise the government against accepting these recommendations, sources said. (PTI)

ICMR issues expression of interest on implementation of research proposals to accelerate cancer treatment

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has issued expression of interest on implementation of research proposals to accelerate screening, early diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

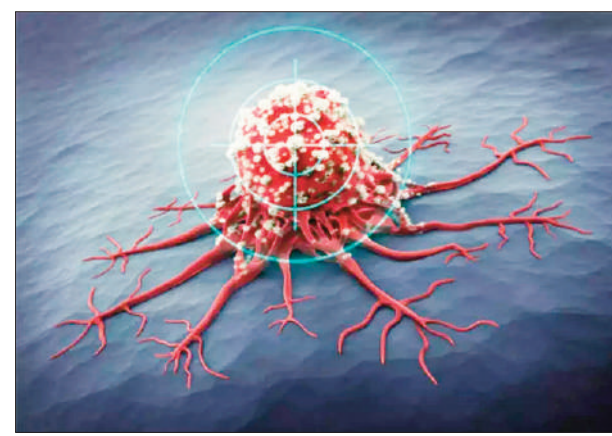
Cancer poses a significant and pressing public health challenge in India and is a top priority within the mandate of the Indian Council of Medical Research, the ICMR said in the interest document.

According to estimates from the Global Cancer Observatory GLOBOCAN for the year 2020, there were 19.3 million new cancer cases worldwide, with India ranking third in incidence after China and the US, it stated. Alarmingly, GLOBOCAN projections indicate that India is expected to witness a substantial 57.5 per cent increase in cancer cases from 2020 to 2040.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.4 seeks to reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases, including cancer, by one third through prevention and treatment. India launched the National Program for Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, and Stroke (NPCDCS) in 2010, later renamed NPNCD in 2023.

This programme has been instrumental in strengthening healthcare infrastructure, developing human resources, promoting health awareness, enabling early disease diagnosis, facilitating management, and ensuring timely referrals for common non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including cancer.

It operates under the umbrella of the National Health Mission (NHM) with the overarching goal of reducing the mortality and morbidity associated with NCDs. However, one notable challenge has been the low coverage of cancer screening, with only a minority of districts effectively implementing screening meas-



ures in accordance with the operational guidelines outlined by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

Research has indicated that frontline health workers, such as accredited social health activists (ASHAs), have the potential to play a crucial role in promoting and conducting home-based cancer screening.

Home screening has resulted in higher compliance rates because it offers the privacy and convenience necessary for individuals to participate actively in the screening process, the document stated. In the case of cervical cancer, HPV sampling health worker assisted/self, etc has emerged as an empowering approach, allowing women to collect their own specimens in private, at their preferred time and location, thereby addressing sev-

eral barriers to accessing cytology-based screening, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

For the early detection of breast cancer, women are empowered through education on Breast Self-Examination (BSE), etc. as a vital part of this initiative. To enhance oral cancer screening and early detection, validated Point-of-Care (POC) systems, with a focus on detecting oral potentially malignant disorders (OPMDs). Recognizing the need for a shift in cancer research priorities in India, ICMR formulated National Agenda on Cancer Research and invited research questions and ideas from national cancer experts, policymakers, and State Program Officers to cancer research initiatives. Implementation research to accelerate screening was one of the three top priorities.

"Subsequently, ICMR is inviting implementation research proposals, with the primary goal of enhancing the coverage and quality of cancer screening and early detection within the framework of the public healthcare system under NP-NCD," the document stated. The study will help in the development of an optimized, effective, evidence-based implementation model for screening, early diagnosis and treatment which can be integrated into NP-NCD programme in feasible and scalable manner in real world settings.

It will result in documentation of inputs required for the above implementation model including human resources, logistics and costs, help in measure of effectiveness will be the proportion of cancers detected at early stage, or at precancerous/potentially malignant stage and measure the district-wide coverage and quality of implemented screening interventions.

The study should cover men and women aged 30 years and above. (PTI)

Staring at defeat in 2024 LS polls, ED raids last desperate attempt of 'rattled' BJP: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday termed the ED raids at AAP MP Sanjay Singh's residence the "last desperate attempt" of a party that is staring at defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Many such raids will take place but there is nothing to be scared of, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener said.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday morning raided Singh's home in connection with a money laundering case linked to the Delhi excise policy and later arrested him.

"For the last one year, we have been seeing that there is a cacophony surrounding an alleged 'liquor scam.' To date there hasn't been any recovery of money, more than a thousand such raids have been conducted and many people have been arrested. They have been framing numerous accusations on us from time to time. Earlier they accused us of 'classroom scams' in schools, scams in the purchase of buses, construction of roads, water and electricity supply," Kejriwal said earlier in the day.

Claiming that thousands of raids have been carried out against but not a single penny has been recovered till date, he asserted nothing will be found at Singh's house.

"The BJP is rattled. They believe that they're going to face



massive defeat in the national elections of 2024. These are the last desperate attempts of a losing party. Yesterday it happened with many journalists, now it's happening with Sanjay Singh, and as elections come closer it'll happen to many," he claimed.

The chief minister said such raids will only increase as the election nears.

"ED, CBI, I-T and police - all the agencies will become active as the elections come closer. Many such raids will happen. But there is no need to be scared," he added.

Delhi Cabinet minister Gopal Rai echoed similar views and claimed the panic of the impending defeat in the Lok Sabha polls was the reason behind the raids.

"The way journalists were targeted on October 3 also indicates an attempt to silence any voice against those in power, which I believe is against democracy. The BJP should have trust in the people. Misusing agencies to silence voices won't win elections, and history states this," he said.

Rai's cabinet colleague Atishi asserted that the BJP is afraid of the AAP.

"I can confidently say that just like in the 15-month investigation, no evidence of corruption will be found at Sanjay Singh's house, village, or office, even if they raid it ten times," she said.

Later in the day, addressing a press conference, Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said this is an

imaginary scam that has been under scrutiny for the past 15 months.

"The ED and CBI have conducted at least a thousand raids, but not a single rupee of corruption has been found. It is now being said that Sanjay Singh is also involved in this imaginary scam, but nothing will be found at his place either. Their sources will certainly say that they have found a lot, but when they go to court, they will claim they found nothing," he said.

He said that Singh is one of the formidable voices in the opposition and he has been questioning the Centre over a range of issues.

"The Centre is trying to suppress his voice... BJP's Centre government is going. They are taking desperate steps in the last moment to salvage their situation. We strongly condemn such raids and hope that elections happen quickly and people say Bye Bye to BJP," Bharadwaj said.

AAP chief national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar called the raids "vendetta" politics.

"This is the most significant evidence that this is low-level politics. It is a politics of revenge, an attempt to discredit someone. In the past 15 months, many people have been harassed in jails, but nothing has been found. This proves that it is a politics of vendetta," she stressed. (PTI)

ED summons actor Ranbir Kapoor in Mahadev betting app case



NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned actor Ranbir Kapoor for questioning on Friday in connection with the Mahadev betting application money-laundering case in Chhattisgarh, officials said. They said the agency has accused Kapoor of receiving money from the promoters of the app for promoting their product in the virtual (online) space. The ED has asked Kapoor to appear at the agency's Raipur office on October 6, they said.

Around 14-15 other celebrities and actors are under the ED's scanner in the case and they will also be summoned soon, sources said. The company promoted by Sourabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal was being operated from Dubai. It was allegedly using the online book betting application to enrol new users, create IDs and launder money through a layered web of benami bank accounts, the agency has alleged.

The ED investigation has shown that the Mahadev Online Book App is run from a central head office in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), officials said. It operates by franchising "Panel/Branches" to their known associates on a 70-30 profit ratio, the agency had said. Large-scale hawala operations are done to siphon off the proceeds of betting to offshore accounts, it had said.

A huge expenditure in cash has also been incurred in India for advertising of betting websites to attract new users and franchise (panel) seekers, it had said. The company promoters hail from Bhillai in Chhattisgarh and the Mahadev online book betting application is an umbrella syndicate arranging online platforms for enabling illegal betting websites. (PTI)

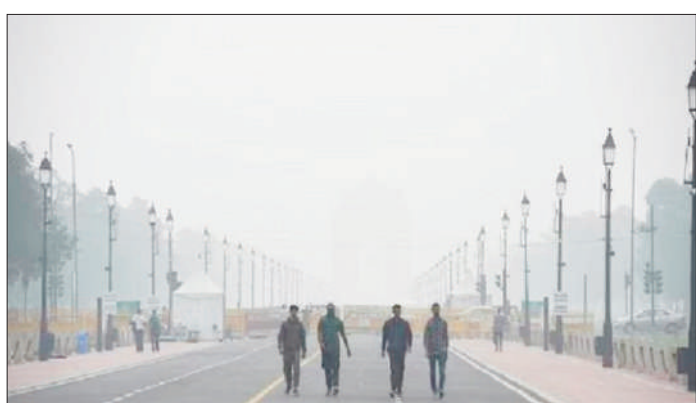
Delhi most polluted city in India in past year: Analysis

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Although its air quality improved marginally, Delhi remained the most polluted city in the year ending September 30, with a PM2.5 concentration of 100.1 micrograms per cubic metre, which is three times the government's safe limit, according to a new analysis.

The analysis conducted by independent think tank Climate Trends and tech firm Respiro Living Sciences, that manufactures real-time IoT-based air quality monitoring devices, showed that Aizawl and Mizoram have India's cleanest air with a PM2.5 level of only 11.1 micrograms per cubic metre.

Four more cities from the National Capital Region -- Faridabad (89 micrograms per cubic metre), Noida (79.1 micrograms per cubic metre), Ghaziabad (78.3 micrograms per cubic metre) and Meerut (76.9 micrograms per cubic metre) -- also feature among the top 10 most polluted cities.

The report is based on the analysis of the government's PM2.5 data from October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023, and focuses on the cities covered under the National Clean Air Programme, which aims to achieve a 40 percent reduction in



particulate matter concentration by 2026. The analysis showed that Patna, the second most polluted city with an average PM2.5 concentration of 99.7 micrograms per cubic metre, saw a 24 percent deterioration in air quality compared to the previous year.

The top seven polluted cities -- Delhi, Patna, Muzaffarpur, Faridabad, Noida, Ghaziabad, and Meerut -- are all part of the Indo-Gangetic Plains, the report highlighted.

However, the analysts noted that PM2.5 concentration in Delhi, Faridabad, Noida, Ghaziabad and Meerut reduced by 4 percent, 12 percent, 12 percent, 25 percent and 11 percent,

respectively, during the study period. "The analysis reflects that there has been improvement in the Indo-Gangetic Plain cities over the last few years. However, considering the enormous pollution load, these cities continue to experience the highest PM levels in the country," Aarti Khosla, the director of Climate Trends, said.

"While measures like the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana or hyperlocal developments like the peripheral highways around Delhi are positive actions, there is a need for a scientific approach to address air quality issues in a sustained manner through an airshed approach," she said. (PTI)

SC asks Centre to actively pursue mediation process to resolve SYL canal dispute

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the Centre to survey the portion of land in Punjab which was allocated for construction of part of the Satluj-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal in the state and make an estimate about the extent of construction carried out there.

A bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul also asked the central government to actively pursue the mediation process to resolve the festering dispute between Punjab and Haryana over the construction of the canal.

The SYL canal was conceptualised for effective allocation of water from the Ravi and Beas rivers. The project envisaged a 214-km canal, of which 122 km was to be constructed in Punjab and 92 km in Haryana. Haryana has completed the project in its territory but Punjab, which launched the construction work in 1982, later shelved it.

"We would like the Union of India to survey the portion of the land of Punjab allocated for the project to ensure that the land is protected....," said the bench, also comprising Justices C T Ravikumar and Sudhanshu Dhulia.

"In the meantime, the mediation process should be actively pursued by the Central government," it said. The bench observed that the matter is at an execution stage.

"The decree stands. Therefore, you will have to take some steps," the bench told the counsel representing Punjab. The dispute between the two states has been lingering on for decades. The top court had on January 15, 2002 ruled in favour of Haryana in a suit filed by it in 1996 and di-



rected the Punjab government to construct its portion of the SYL canal. The apex court has passed several orders in the matter since then, including a verdict by a five-judge constitution bench that said Punjab has to comply with its earlier verdict and held as unconstitutional the Punjab Termination of Agreement Act (PTAA), 2004. The constitution bench pronounced the verdict on a 2004 presidential reference.

The PTAA discharged the government of Punjab from its obligations under all agreements related to the waters of Ravi and Beas rivers. A presidential reference was filed by the Union of India on July 22, 2004 seeking the opinion of the Supreme Court on the constitutional validity of PTAA. The SC held that the Act cannot be said to be in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of India. On Wednesday, senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Haryana, said the issue relates to construction of the canal and Haryana has completed its part of the work.

"Someway, this is a perennial problem in different states. Wherever there is a shortage, the problem will arise," the bench

observed. The bench told the counsel appearing for Punjab to find out a solution otherwise the apex court will have to do something in the matter.

"Don't give us solution for 20 years down the line that this will come up and that will come up. You have to find a solution today," it said.

"We are concerned with the execution of a decree for construction of the SYL canal in the Punjab portion as Haryana has already constructed the canal," it said, and posted the matter for hearing in January next year.

While hearing it in March, the apex court had told the Centre that being the main arbiter in the water dispute between the two states, it was required to play a more "proactive role instead of being a mute spectator" and asked the Punjab and Haryana governments to hold discussions to resolve the SYL canal dispute. During the hearing, the Punjab government had told the top court that the state was facing a huge scarcity, with water tables going down in the rivers. It asserted there was "no point building canals like a Taj Mahal", with no water flowing through it. (PTI)

Cong slams govt for reducing NEET PG qualifying percentile to zero

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The Congress on Wednesday attacked the government over the reduction of the qualifying percentile for NEET-PG 2023 to zero, alleging that the move is aimed at benefiting private medical colleges and a select few.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare last month reduced to zero the qualifying percentile for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET)-PG 2023 to be eligible for counselling across all categories.

Union Health Ministry officials had said that reducing the qualifying percentile to zero would increase the pool of qualifying candidates but not dilute the merit system for admission to postgraduate medical courses.

Addressing a press conference, Congress leader Ajay Kumar said, "The BJP's bumper loot offer has started in private medical colleges. The price of MD Radiology was ₹ 3 crore last year and this year it has become ₹ 11 crore. The price of MD Medicine increased to ₹ 5 crore and MD Dermatology costs ₹ 10 crore." Kumar said the move is aimed at befitting a few people and private medical colleges.

"You may sleep, play ludo, listen to disco music, during the exam or even get minus 40, you would still be eligible for PG (admission in postgraduate courses) under NEET. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Eight dead, 23 army men

"We were travelling to Gangtok from Siliguri when our car was forced to halt in the Swetjhora area. The NH-10 had caved in as incessant rains had eroded the rock and soil below the road. Fortunately, all cars were moving slowly because of the rains, otherwise the cave-in could have actually swallowed a vehicle," Dolma Bhutia, a college student going back home to Sikkim, told PTI telephonically.

Police officers in neighbouring West Bengal said two youths from Raiganj district --Swarnadwip Majumder (23) and Srikant Majumder (27) and another, Ishan, from Jharkhand - went missing in Sikkim on Wednesday.

The trio had left for the small Himalayan state on Saturday on a motorcycle holiday. "Since Tuesday morning, they could not be traced as their mobile numbers remained unreachable. We have contacted Sikkim Police for help," a police officer from Raiganj said. The officials said two other bridges, Baluatar and another near the Lanco Hydel power project, have collapsed due to the spate in Teesta since Tuesday night.

The administration has set up a number of relief camps, where hundreds are taking shelter, they said.

The Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority stated that a "cloudburst in portions of Lhonak Lake, which caused the rise of water levels with very high velocities downstream along the Teesta River basin in the early hours of Wednesday" damaged many establishments in Mangan, Gangtok, Pakyong, and Namchi. Chief minister P S Tamang visited Singtam and took stock of the situation. He also held a meeting with senior officials at the Singtam Nagar Panchayat office and asked them to keep vigil. In a post on social media, Tamang said his thoughts and prayers are with all during this difficult hour. "In these challenging times, I want to extend my heartfelt support to all the victims and their families affected by this unfortunate event," he said.

"I want to assure you that the government is fully committed to providing all necessary assistance and relief to those in need. We understand the magnitude of the situation and are mobilizing all available resources to ensure the safety and well-being of our citizens. Our dedicated teams are working day and night to address the immediate concerns and challenges posed by this calamity," Tamang said. In West Bengal, torrential rain in the last few days, besides increase in the water level in the Teesta river, affected several places in Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri districts, where the administration has started evacuating affected people to safer locations, state government officials said. (PTI)

PM takes stock of situation

the unfortunate natural calamity in parts of the state. Assured all possible support in addressing the challenge. I pray for the safety and well-being of all those affected," Modi said on X. Twenty-three army personnel have been reported missing and 41 vehicles submerged under the slush as authorities launched intensive search operations. (PTI)

Rima Das bags nomination

to watching the best of Asian films. My earlier film 'Village Rockstars' was nominated for Best Youth Film. I am very glad to be nominated yet again, this time as a best director for 'Tora's Husband'," Das said in a statement. The film, starring her real-life brother and sister-in-law, revolves around a couple during the pandemic and through their daily life, reflects on relationships, humanity and love. It had its world premiere at the 2022 Toronto International Film Festival. "Tora's Husband" is currently playing in theatres in Assam as well as prominent metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. (PTI)

915 arrested, 710 cases

He previously stated that child marriages would be eliminated by 2026, designating all gram panchayat secretaries as child marriage prevention officers. However, opposition parties, including the Congress, have argued that stopping child marriage requires sustained campaigns involving all stakeholders, rather than relying solely on police enforcement. (With inputs from PTI)

Canadian allegations against

Meanwhile, The New York Times said that Canada's approach appears to be an effort not to undermine US President Joe Biden who has devoted much time and energy to courting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "For the United States, India is seen as perhaps the most important of the so-called Global South states that it is wooing in its geopolitical contest with Moscow and Beijing," it said. (PTI)

Double anti-corruption arrests

Both public servants are now facing the legal consequences of their actions as necessary follow-up actions are underway in these corruption cases.

Governor urges strengthening

creation of a Heritage museum to preserve and showcase objects and materials of religious, cultural, and historical significance. The meeting was attended by commissioner and secretary to the Governor SS Meenakshi Sundaram, secretary of the Tourism Department Padmapani Bora, secretary of the Tourism Department Prabhathi Thaosan, director of the Tourism Department Ranuj Borkotoky, as well as senior officers from the Tourism Department and Raj Bhavan.

Protest in Diphu against alleged

highway in the names of his wife, son, and relatives, obtaining compensation under Packages 5 and 6. He further alleged that some plots with valid land titles were classified as Forest land, resulting in no compensation, while others designated as Forest land received compensation. For example, in Silbitha, Forest land was documented as land with valid titles, and compensation was granted.

Kro asserted that NSM would continue to protest and seek legal assistance if necessary to address these issues.

Trio wins Nobel Prize in

Were the winners announced prematurely?

Swedish media reported hours before Wednesday's announcement that the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences had sent out a news release that identified Bawendi, Brus and Ekimov as the latest Nobel laureates.

Public broadcaster SVT said the release said the trio were receiving the prize for the "discovery and synthesis of quantum dots". After officially announcing the three winners, secretary-general Hans Ellegren said the Swedish academy would investigate how the information got out in advance.

"There was a press release sent out for still unknown reasons. We have been very active this morning to find out exactly what happened," he said during the news conference where the award was announced. "This is very unfortunate and we deeply regret what happened." The academy, which awards the physics, chemistry and economics prizes, asks for nominations a year in advance from thousands of university professors and other scholars around the world. A committee for each prize then discusses candidates in a series of meetings throughout the year. At the end of the process, the committee presents one or more proposals to the full academy for a vote. The deliberations, including the names of nominees other than the winners, are kept confidential for 50 years.

How did the winners react?

Bawendi told the news conference he was "very surprised, sleepy, shocked, unexpected and very honoured."

Asked about the leak, he said he didn't know he'd been made a Nobel laureate until he was called by the academy. Bawendi said he was not thinking about the possible applications of his work when he started researching quantum dots. "The motivation really is the basic science. A basic understanding, the curiosity of how does the world work? And that's what drives scientists and academic scientists to do what they do," he said. Brus, a professor emeritus at Columbia, said he didn't pick up the phone when the early morning call came from the Swedish academy to notify him. "It was ringing during the night, but I didn't answer it because I'm trying to get some sleep, basically," he told The Associated Press. He finally saw the news online when he got up around 6 am.

"I certainly was not expecting this," Brus said. Brus said he was glad to see recognition for the area of chemistry he practices. The practical applications of quantum dots, like creating the colours in flatscreen TVs, are something he was hoping for when he started the work decades ago, he said. "Basic research is extremely hard to predict exactly how it's going to work out," Brus said. "It's more for the knowledge base than it is for the actual materials. But in this case, it's both." Ekimov is the former chief scientist at Nanocrystals Technology, a company based in New York where he started working in 1999.

The Swedish academy credited him with demonstrating in the early 1980s that the size of copper chloride nanoparticles affected the colours in glass. On Tuesday, the physics prize went to French-Swedish physicist Anne L'Huillier, French scientist Pierre Agostini and Hungarian-born Ferenc Krausz for producing the first split-second glimpse into the super-fast world of spinning electrons.

On Monday, Hungarian-American Katalin Karikó and American Drew Weissman won the Nobel Prize in medicine for discoveries that enabled the creation of mRNA vaccines against COVID-19. The chemistry prize means Nobel season has reached its halfway stage. The prizes in literature, peace and economics follow, with one announcement every weekday until Oct 9. The Nobel Foundation raised the prize money by 10% this year to 11 million kronor (about \$1 million). In addition to the money, winners receive an 18-carat gold medal and diploma when they collect their Nobel Prizes at the award ceremonies in December. (AP)

Air Force acquires first LCA

minister of state for defence, Ajay Bhatt was the chief guest during the function at which the LCA twin-seater was unveiled, the Release to Service Document (RSD) was handed over and the Signalling out Certificate (SOC) was issued, in the presence of Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari, among others.

Speaking at the event, the minister said that it is a huge boost to India's self-reliance. "In all, the development of LCA Tejas has also brought about a shift in our approach to defence procurement. It has demonstrated that India has the talent, knowledge and capability to design, develop and manufacture world-class fighters," Bhatt said. Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari said that IAF would be procuring 97 more LCAs, and with this it will have 220 LCAs in its inventory. HAL CMD (Addl Charge) C B Ananthakrishnan said the company is committed to delivering all the twin-seater aircraft pertaining to IOC (Initial Operational Clearance) and FOC (Final Operational Clearance) contract to IAF in the current financial year.

"With this, we are moving one step closer towards achieving self-sufficiency in the fixed wing segment. These trainers also ensure smooth transition for the pilots from trainer to fighter aircraft in this class," he added. HAL has said that it is in discussions with many friendly foreign countries towards exporting the LCA Tejas platform and had submitted various customised proposals for exporting LCA Tejas fighter and twin-seater aircraft to them around the world. LCA Tejas is the best platform for India to be a flagbearer to achieve export targets set by the Indian government, it said.

LCA-Tejas is the "largest" research and development programme ever undertaken in India, HAL said. It made its maiden flight during 2001 and achieved various milestones since then. It is going to be the backbone of the IAF fleet in the years to come and is slated to be produced in high numbers by HAL in Bengaluru as the company has already got an order of 123 aircraft out of which 32 fighters has been supplied to IAF and two squadrons are already operational with IAF at Sullur Air Force base. (PTI)

'Paatal Lok' season two more complicated and refined: Jaideep Ahlawat

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: The second season of "Paatal Lok" will be "more complicated" than its first chapter and will shake things up, says actor Jaideep Ahlawat, who became a recognised name with his portrayal of cop Hathiram Chaudhary in the hit series.

Written and created by Sudip Sharma, the first season of the Prime Video show featured Ahlawat as a washed-out Delhi police officer who lands the case of a lifetime when four suspects are captured in the assassination attempt of a prime time journalist.

Post the series, the

Rohtak-born actor has starred in diverse shows and films such as "Ajeeb Daastaans", "The Broken News", and "An Action Hero". "What I know about 'Paatal Lok 2' is that the way I was in love with the story of the first season, season two is much more complicated, refined. I regard Sudip bhai as a very creative writer because he never tries to catch those things that have already become hits.

"(He's always like) 'Let's do something new'. I'm sure when the show will reach the audience, thoda kuch toh hilne wala hai (things

will shake up for sure)" Jaideep told PTI in an interview on the sidelines of The Himalayan Film Festival (THFF) in Leh. The actor said both second seasons of "Paatal Lok" and "The Broken News 2" are coming soon.

"In 'Broken News 2', you'll see Deepankar Sanyal (his character of senior news anchor) take a new route, you'll see more dimensions to him," he added.

The first season of "Paatal Lok", directed by Avinash Arun and Prosit Roy, arrived on the streamer in 2020 during the peak of the pandemic. (PTI)



Karan Johar returning with brand new season of 'Koffee With Karan' on Oct 26



MUMBAI, Oct 4: Film-maker Karan Johar on Wednesday announced the eighth season of celebrity chat show "Koffee With Karan", set to premiere on streaming service Disney+ Hotstar on October 26.

The 50-year-old film-maker, who has been hosting the chat show since its inception in 2004, shared the news on Instagram along with an announcement video.

"Turns out, my own Kon-science wants to troll me too! But screw what he thinks, I'm still brewing Season 8! #HotstarSpecials

#KoffeeWithKaran Season 8 - streams from 26th October only on @disney-plustarstar." Johar wrote in the caption. In a statement, Disney+ Hotstar said the new season of "Koffee With Karan" will be "edgier, crazier and candid leading to a whole lot of revelations". "This season the conversation will be beyond marriages, airport looks, social media and toodles to toddlers. Karan Johar will bring out the fun and no filter side of the actors to give you all the scoop you need to discuss until the next season," it added.

Johar said the show's seventh season, which debuted on Disney+ Hotstar in 2022, had received an "overwhelming response" from the viewers.

"This season let's make my friends and your favourite celebrities spill their secrets along with the no filter conversations on the infamous Koffee couch. Coming back to Disney+ Hotstar, the new season of 'Koffee with Karan' will be full of uninhibited chats, competitive rapid fires and a lot of conversations, which we all love," he added. (PTI)

Trevor Noah finishes India tour, promises to return to Bengaluru with 'best show ever'

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Popular comedian Trevor Noah on Wednesday concluded his India trip that saw him perform at stand-up shows in Delhi and Mumbai, while his gigs in Bengaluru were cancelled due to "technical issues". Taking to microblogging site X, the South African comedian shared photos of his trip to the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra. "India. What an experience it was coming and performing in your country for the first time. Thank you for sharing your rich history, your delicious cuisine and your fantastic arguments with me.

"Thank you to everyone who came out to the shows in Delhi and Mumbai because you made it truly unforgettable. Bangalore, our story isn't done, I'll be back and next time we'll make sure it's the

best show ever," Noah, 39, wrote in the caption. As part of his 'Off The Record Tour', the comedian delivered three performances in Delhi from September 22 to 24. His following gig in Bengaluru on September 27 was called off minutes after he took the stage over complaints of "bad sound" from the audience members. He had also decided to cancel his next show in Bengaluru, which was scheduled for September 28.

At the time, Noah had apologised to the people of Bengaluru for the inconvenience. "Dear Bengaluru India, I was so looking forward to performing in your amazing city but due to technical issues we've been forced to cancel both shows. We tried everything but because the audience can't hear the comedians on stage there's literally no way to do a show," the Emmy Award-winning comedian had said in a post on X. (PTI)



Nicole Kidman, Lulu Wang's limited series 'Expats' set for January premiere on Prime Video

MUMBAI, Oct 4: Film-maker Lulu Wang's upcoming limited series "Expats", starring Nicole Kidman, Sarayu Blue and Ji-young Yoo, will make its debut on Prime Video on January 26, 2024, the streamer announced on Wednesday.

Set in Hong Kong, the six-episode show is based on the internationally best-selling novel "The Expatriates" by Janice Y K Lee, according to a

press release. "Expats" is set against the vibrant and tumultuous tapestry of 1940s Hong Kong. It follows three American women—Margaret (Kidman), Hilary (Blue), and Mercy (Yoo)—whose lives intersect after a sudden family tragedy.

The series interrogates privilege and explores what happens when the line between victimhood and culpability becomes blurred. The show also

features Brian Tee as Margaret's husband Clarke, and Jack Huston as Hilary's husband David. Wang, known for directing comedy-drama films "Posthumous" and "The Farewell", serves as a creator, director, and writer for "Expats". She has also executive produced the series in collaboration with Kidman, Daniele Melia, Per Saari, Alice Bell, Theresa Park and Stan Wlodkowski. (PTI)

ZEE5 sets October 6 release for 'Gadar 2' digital premiere

MUMBAI, Oct 4: ZEE5, the streaming platform on Wednesday announced that Sunny Deol-starrer "Gadar 2" will be premiered on the digital platform from October 6. "The countdown begins! Tara Singh is all set to win your hearts! India's Biggest Blockbuster is coming on #ZEE5 in just 2 days! #Gadar2OnZEE5," Zee Entertainment Enterprises-owned ZEE5 said in a post on X. Anil Sharma-directed film saw Deol reprise his iconic role of Tara Singh from 2001's "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha". "Gadar 2" follows Tara Singh as he ventures across the border in a daring attempt to rescue his son, portrayed by Utkarsh Sharma, who has been captured in Pakistan. "Gadar 2", produced by Zee Studios, also features Ameesha Patel as Sakceena and Utkarsh Sharma as Charanjeet. It also starred Manish Wadhwa, Gaurav Chopra and Simrat Kaur. "Gadar 2" was released in theatres on August 11. The film has earned around ₹500 crore till now. The film has become the second highest-grossing Hindi film and has surpassed the lifetime collection of the Hindi version of Prabhas starrer "Baahubali 2". (PTI)



Would love to do a mini-series or OTT shows, says Sonam Kapoor

MUMBAI, Oct 4: "I'm ready and raring to go again," says Sonam Kapoor and one of the items on her agenda is to explore the long-form storytelling on OTT. The actor, who took a break from work after the birth of son Yash in August 2022, said she is inspired by her father Anil Kapoor's work on popular series "The Night Manager".

"I got pregnant at the tail end of COVID-19 and I've always said that I will take time off (from work). It was maternity leave, which every woman and man should get. I spent time with my baby. Now, I'm ready and raring to go again," Sonam told PTI in an interview. "I would love to do a mini-series or OTT shows. I saw my father's show

and I was very excited to see what it was like. It was at the level of any film that you will see. I would love to do something like that. I feel you can have more time playing a character," the actor said.

Kapoor, 38, known for "Delhi-6", "Aisha", "Raanjhanaa", "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag" and "Neerja", was recently seen in Sujoy Ghosh-produced crime thriller "Blind", which was filmed in 2021 and released on OTT in July this year. Her last theatrical outing was the 2019 release "The Zoya Factor".

The actor, who recently promoted Jio MAMI Mumbai Film Festival's market initiative 'Word to Screen', said she likes to be part of book adaptations as

her character is already well-established on paper. She has featured in two films with literary inspirations -- 2010's "Aisha", an adaptation of Jane Austen's famed novel "Emma", and "The Zoya Akhtar", the 2019 film which was based on Anuja Chauhan's 2008 book of the same name.

"For an actor, it is a lot easier to play a character that is already written because there's so much description and a back story, etc." But sometimes, if it is a beloved character, then you might falter in the audience's expectations and the way they look at that character because a lot of people already know the story and they love the character."

She believes another Austen's classic

"Sense and Sensibility" would make for a fantastic book-to-screen adaptation. Kapoor praised Rajshree Ojha, the director of "Aisha", and Abhishek Sharma of "The Zoya Factor" for the way they handled the book adaptations.

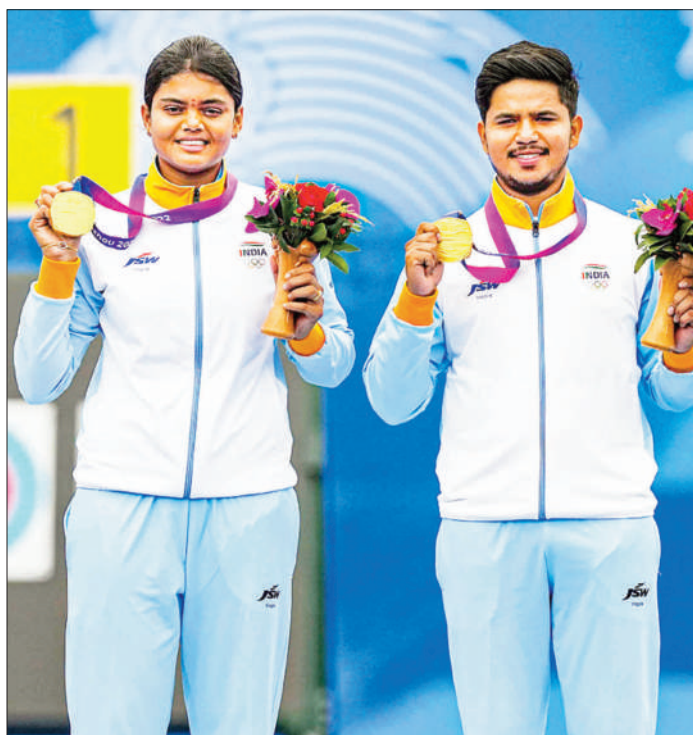
"For 'The Zoya Factor', it was controlled and all about the director. Everything I did, he had directed me. I had no control over my creative process. Every director works differently.

"With 'Aisha', I was given the freedom to create something that I wanted to create in terms of the character. We did many workshops. Even though we were bound by the book, we had the freedom to explore our characters," Kapoor said. (PTI)



ASIAN GAMES: RECURVE ARCHERS ELIMINATED

DEOTALE-JYOTHI PAIR WINS INDIA'S MAIDEN COMPOUND MIXED TEAM GOLD



HANGZHOU, Oct 4: Ojas Deotale's youthful energy blended seamlessly with Jyothi Surekha Vennam's skills, securing India's maiden gold medal in the compound mixed team event and contributing to their best-ever show in archery at the Asian Games, here on Wednesday.

The 21-year-old reigning world champion Deotale dropped a point but a flawless Jyothi made up for it, shooting all perfect scores from her eight arrows to down the second-seeded Korean pair So Chaewon and Joo Jaehoon 159-158.

With this, Indian archers are set to win at least four medals from the ongoing Games, which will better their previous best show at Incheon in 2014 when they bagged a men's team compound gold, one silver and a bronze.

Playing three back-to-back knockout matches -- quarterfinals, semifinals and final -- in 140 minutes can be gruelling, but the Indian pair was ice-cool, especially the 27-year-old Jyothi, who ex-

celled in some crucial moments to nail it. That the pair dropped just four points in three matches tells a lot about the authority shown by Deotale and Jyothi.

"I'm not surprised by the result," Deotale said after the win.

"We knew that we could do this. It was very close, but we maintained our form, we stayed calm in every situation," he added.

Making her third Asian Games appearance, the multiple World Cup gold medalist Jyothi, who was chasing an elusive Asian Games yellow medal, first sealed it with a decisive 10 in the final end when India ousted a formidable Malaysia 158-155 to make the semifinals.

The Indian duo entered the final with a 159-154 win over Kazakhstan. They had just one '9' and the rest were all '10's in the semifinals against the Kazakh pair of Adel Zhexenbinova and Andrey Tyutyun.

In the gold medal clash between the top-two seeds, the No. 1 In-

dian pair opting to shoot first had all 10s in the first end, to race to a 40-39 lead. By virtue of trailing, the Koreans had the advantage of starting off in the second end and managed to squeeze in all 10s, while the Indians remained steady to hold onto their lead (80-79).

In the penultimate end, Ojas faltered with a nine while responding to the Koreans' two 10s, but Jyothi held her nerves and responded with a slam-bang 10 right in the inner-circle.

The two teams headed for the final end all squared up (119-119) but the Indian duo remained as cool as cucumbers, shooting all 10s from four arrows to seal it before the Koreans' last two arrows.

Talking about his minor blip of 9, Deotale credited his Indian compound head coach Sergio Pagni, a two-time World Cup Final winner, to lift his morale.

"It was perfect, and I was quite enjoying it. Just like our coach said: 'It is a piece of cake, you have to shoot 10 only'."

"(The sun) was shining, it was quite normal, but now it is a little bit windy. It was quite easy for us to manage it."

Asked whether he was under any undue pressure of being the reigning world champion, he said: "The pressure is gone, I'm playing freely, enjoying stuff."

Both Deotale and Jyothi will also vie for an individual gold medal each.

Deotale will face senior teammate Abhishek Verma, while top-seed Jyothi will take on So Chaewon in the individual finals on Saturday.

Indian men's and women's compound teams are also in medal hunt, having advanced into their respective quarters slated on Thursday.

India, however, suffered a heartbreak in the recurve mixed pair event, with Atanu Das and Ankita Bhakat squandering a 4-2 lead to fall short in the shoot-off against Indonesia to be eliminated in the quarterfinals. (PTI)

Pacer Southee to miss World Cup opener against England

AHMEDABAD, Oct 4: Already dealing with the absence of regular skipper Kane Williamson, New Zealand will play the World Cup-opener against England on Thursday without key pacer Tim Southee, who is yet to recover from his thumb surgery.

Stand-in captain Tom Latham said Southee is making good progress after undergoing surgery last month to treat his fractured right thumb.

Southee had suffered the injury while attempting a catch offered by Joe Root at the Lord's in a recent series which they lost 1-3.

Williamson had also underwent surgery for a torn anterior cruciate ligament in April and is yet to make a comeback to competitive cricket, though he played in Kiwi's warm-up games ahead of the World Cup.

"Obviously no Kane and no Tim as well. He's unavailable for selection just in terms of what happened to his thumb a couple of weeks ago, but he's recovering nicely," Latham told reporters on the eve of the tournament-opener.

"I think he's nearly two weeks post-surgery so fingers crossed he can keep recovering. It's a bit of a day-by-day process with him in terms of what that looks like too. But fingers crossed he'll be available sooner rather than later as well," Latham said.

The New Zealand skipper insisted that the outcome of their recent series as well as what happened in the World Cup final four years ago would not have any bearing when they clash with the defending champions.

"I don't think it has any bearing on the next game. It's about turning up on that specific day and trying to play your best brand of cricket. If we do that and we play to the best of our ability, then we can beat anyone in the world."

"It's going to be a great opportunity tomorrow for us to come up against one of the best teams in the world at the moment. Conditions are completely different to what we played over in England," he said. (PTI)

Squash: India on course for best ever showing after Ghosal reaches men's singles final

HANGZHOU, Oct 4: India's Saurav Ghosal outclassed Henry Leung of Hong Kong in the men's singles semifinals to remain firmly on course for a second gold medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games here on Wednesday.

Having played his part in the men's team triumph, the world number 19 from India was far too good for the 52-ranked Henry and completed a dominating 11-2, 11-2, 11-6 victory in 33 minutes.

India could end up with an unprecedented three gold medals from the squash courts with the mixed doubles duo of Dipika Pallikal and Harinderpal Sandhu also reaching the title clash, to be played on Thursday.

Second seed Ghosal will meet top seed Eain Yow Ng in the final on Thursday. The Indian had beaten his Malaysian rival in four games in the team semifinals.

Having missed a golden chance to step on the top of the singles podium in 2014, the 37-year-old Ghosal will be determined to end his sixth and probably last Asian Games on a high.

Though his Hong Kong opponent was much younger, Ghosal was superior on both tactical and physical side of the game.

Henry could do little about the boasts (shot that hits the side wall before hitting the front wall) that Ghosal would unleash out of nowhere to end the point in his favour. His deft drop shots on the right side of the front wall also helped him gain a big lead in the first game. In the second game, he complemented his boasts with drop shots on the left side of the front wall. Ghosal converted his

first game point from 10-1 when his Hong Kong opponent hit his backhand on the tin.

With Henry leading 3-1 in the third game, a comeback looked likely but Ghosal was quick to cut the tiny lead before gaining an 8-5 advantage with a perfect placed boast. Ghosal's forehead drop on the right was not retrieved by Henry, handing the Indian a convincing win.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Indian pairing of Dipika and Harinderpal won 7-11, 11-7, 11-9 against Hong Kong's Lee Ka Yi and Wong Chi Him to make the final. However, it was heartbreak for the second Indian pair of Abhay Singh and Anahat Singh as they lost to Aifa Binti Azman and Mohammad Syafiq Bin Mohd Kamal of Malaysia 11-8, 2-11, 9-11 in the other mixed doubles semi-final.

In a match that saw Anahat colliding with Azman, the Indians won the first game quite comfortably but lost their way in the second before the Malaysians emerged winners in the decisive tie, ensuring that it won't be an all-India final in the mixed event.

Dipika, who is playing her last Asian Games, and Harinder lost the opening game of their semifinal to Yi and Him, but staged a remarkable comeback to claim the next two games after 38 minutes of intense squash. While the Indians took just nine minutes to win the second game thanks to Harinder and Dipika's excellent court coverage, the third game lasted 15 minutes as the pair from Hong Kong looked to stretch the decider. (PTI)

Sunil Kumar wins India's first Greco Roman medal at Asian Games since 2010

HANGZHOU, Oct 4: Sunil Kumar won India's first Greco Roman medal in 13 years at the Asian Games, bagging a bronze in the 87kg category even as three of his compatriots exited the tournament here on Wednesday. Up against Kyrgyzstan's Atabek Azizbekov, the Indian wrestler fought a strategic bout in which twice he defended well from 'par terre' position, denying his opponent a scoring opportunity from the ground position for a 2-1 win.

He kept sliding in circles on his right, not letting Azizbekov get a grip to lift him.

It was Azizbekov, who got on board first with a passivity point in the first period. Sunil levelled the score on Azizbekov's passivity as a major part of the bronze play-off was move-less.

The Indian also successfully challenged the referee's two-point decision given in favour



of Azizbekov, who had managed to push Sunil out but was not in control of the push-out move.

Sunil was already ahead on criteria and got the decisive point towards the end.

India had won two medals in Greco Roman in the Guangzhou edition with Ravinder Singh (60kg) and Sunil Kumar Rana (66kg) winning a bronze each in

2010.

Sunil had begun with a close 4-3 win over China's Fei Ping and followed that up with a technical superiority victory over Tajikistan's Sukhrob Abdulkhaev, winning the quarterfinal in the first period itself.

The 2020 Asian champion then bumped into formidable reigning Asian champion Naser

Alizadeh from Iran and lost 1-4 to go out of the gold medal race.

The other Indians in contention -- Gyanender (60kg), Neeraj (67kg) and Vikas (77kg) -- could not even win a single round.

Gyanender lost his opening bout 1-7 to Iran's Meysam Dalkhani, while Neeraj lost 3-5 to Uzbekistan's Makhmud Bakhsilloev.

Vikas lost his bout by technical superiority to China's Rui Liu.

On Thursday, the two remaining Indian Greco Roman wrestlers -- Narinder Cheema (97kg) and Naveen (130kg) -- will present their challenge.

The women's competition will also begin on Thursday and fast-rising Antim Panghal (53kg) will be in action along with the talented Pooja Gehlot (50kg) and Mansi Ahlawat (57kg). (PTI)

Afghanistan need to overcome inexperience, pressure to shine in WC

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Since getting ICC full membership in June 2017, Afghanistan have progressed as a cricketing nation and now they need a breakout performance in a global event to underline that growth.

Afghanistan debuted in the 2015 World Cup, and in the two editions they have played so far, the Afghans have managed only one victory from 15 games, which came against Scotland. In the 2019 World Cup, Afghanistan came close to stunning India and Pakistan but they failed to close out the match, and this time they will look to better their performance and make this edition a memorable event.

Before their tournament opener against Bangladesh on Saturday in

Dharamsala, here is a SWOT analysis of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan, led by Hashmatullah Shahidi, boasts of a formidable spin department in the form of veteran Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Noor Ahmad. Rashid, in particular, will be the one to watch out for in the tournament as he has rich experience of playing in Indian conditions having plied his trade in the IPL since 2017. The wrist spinner has so far picked up 139 wickets from 109 IPL matches. His ODI record in India is also impressive as he grabbed 23 wickets from 13 ODIs here. Besides that, Afghanistan will also be banking on Rashid's batting skills lower down the order. The Afghans will

also rely on former captain Nabi, a veteran of 147 ODIs, to display his all-round skills while the 22-year-old Mujeeb is expected to take the responsibility with the new ball. Left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad will provide variation and the quartet will be key to Afghanistan's success in Indian conditions. Afghanistan have a good batting line-up but inconsistency has been their bane which cost them many close matches. The onus to buck the trend will be on the likes of hard-hitting Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Shahidi, who will have to provide good starts at the top. Najibullah Zadran, Nabi and Rashid are expected to provide the firepower through the middle and lower-order. (PTI)

Satwiksairaj-Chirag secure quarterfinal berth; Sindhu, Prannoy in last eight; Srikanth out

HANGZHOU, Oct 4: Kidambi Srikanth bowed out but top men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty came up with a smashing performance to enter the quarterfinals as India had a mixed day in office in badminton competition of the Asian Games here on Wednesday.

In a contest that lasted a marathon 84 minutes, Satwik and Chirag prevailed 24-22 16-21 21-12 against Indonesian duo of Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin, who were not willing to concede even an inch to the celebrated Indian duo, ranked No. 3 in the world.

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and world champion's bronze medallist HS Prannoy also sailed into the quarterfinals of the women's and men's singles events respectively with straight game wins.

However, it was curtains for Srikanth as he went down against Japan's Kodai Naraoka, a world championships silver medallist, 16-21 17-21 in pre quarterfinals.

In men's doubles, the Indonesian world No.11 pair never looked like they were the underdogs, matching the Indians in every aspect, though Satwik's lethal smashes made the difference in the first game.

The Indians didn't get the start they would have liked in the second game and trailed for much of the entire 28 minutes the set lasted.

The third game too saw the Indonesians take an early lead but the Indians closed out the match with relative ease 21-12 to secure their place in the last-eight.

Earlier, former world champion Sindhu won the round of 16

match against Putri Kusuma Wardani 21-16 21-16, sealing it in her favour without breaking a sweat against the hapless Indonesian.

Sindhu will line up against China's He Bingjiao in the quarterfinals, and will fancy her chances against the Chinese having denied her a medal at the Tokyo Olympics two years ago.

Bingjiao won 21-10 21-4 against Rasila Maharjan of Nepal. Prannoy also booked his spot in the quarterfinals as he beat Kazakhstan's Dmitriy Panarin 21-12 21-13.

Sindhu was excellent in rallies and dictated terms to her opponent from the go, and so was Prannoy, India's best singles player at the moment who, unfortunately, could not feature in the team event final against China owing to an injury.

However, Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand were knocked out in the round of 16 by the Korean pair of Kim Soyeong and Kong Heeyong. The Koreans won 21-15, 18-21, 21-13.

Earlier, India's Tanisha Prastho and Sai Pratheek Krishna Prasad were also bowed out in the Round of 16 after a defeat to Malaysia's Toh Ee Wei and Chen Tang Jie.

The Malaysian duo won 21-18, 21-18.

For former world No. 1 Srikanth, it was always going to be a tricky affair against in-form Naraoka, who had claimed the silver at World Championships in Copenhagen, Denmark this year.

Expectedly, the match started with Srikanth and Naraoka moving 5-5 but the Indian fell behind 9-11 at the break. The Japanese continued his run, moving to 18-14 and soon grabbed six game points. (PTI)

Underdogs Netherlands bank on all-rounders to surprise big teams in World Cup

NEW DELHI, Oct 4: Just like any other greenhorns, Netherlands will be eager to make their World Cup campaign memorable while upsetting a big team or two, something that makes the tale of underdogs so endearing. They had shown signs of their potential while beating two-time champions West Indies, Scotland, USA, Oman and Nepal in the ICC World Cup Qualifiers 2023.

But it would be easier said than done as the Netherlands lack experience and international exposure, which they will look to gather from the showpiece.

Here's a look at the Netherlands' strengths and weaknesses ahead of their tournament opener against Pakistan on Friday in Hyderabad.

STRENGTHS

The Netherlands biggest strength is the presence of a number of all-rounders in their squad, which is vital in white-ball cricket. In Bas de Leede,

Teja Nidamanuru, Max O'Dowd, Colin Ackermann, Shariz Ahmad and Roelof van der Merwe, the Dutch are blessed with some exciting all-round options, who have the ability to turn a match on its head.

Besides, there won't be any pressure of expectations on the Dutchmen, which would augur well for them on a big stage.

WEAKNESSES

The Netherlands are vulnerable against spin and it was quite evident in the ICC World Cup Qualifiers. Tackling spinners in Indian conditions will be the Dutch side's biggest challenge.

One more weak link for the Netherlands is their spin attack. With just one main-line spinner in Aryan Dutt in their ranks, the department lacks sting and they will have to rely on captain Scott Edwards' part-time spin.

OPPORTUNITIES

Cricket not being the number one sport in the Netherlands, the Dutch players hardly get oppor-



tunities to rub shoulders with the best and the World Cup will provide them the opportunity to compete against the likes of India, Australia, England and Pakistan among others. But the Netherlands are largely an unknown entity for the big teams, and they should try to exploit that unfamiliarity factor.

The tournament is also a chance for them to make a statement before the world with some upset victories and, who knows, probably a place in the next stage. After all, miracles are an unavoidable part of sports.

THREATS

They should be able to control their nerves in the biggest stage of cricket. They will be up against some experienced cricketers and punishing moments will come their way invariably. They also have little experience playing cricket in India, and it might not be entirely surprising to see them struggling in these conditions. (PTI)

Boxer Lovlina settles for Silver, Parveen signs off with Bronze

HANGZHOU, Oct 4: Tokyo Olympic medalist Lovlina Borgohain put up a lacklustre display to settle for a silver as Indian boxers signed off with a haul of five medals at the Asian Games here on Wednesday.

Parveen Hooda couldn't overcome the height disadvantage against two-time world champion Lin Yu Ting of Chinese Taipei in the women's 57kg semifinal to sign off with a bronze.

Borgohain's defensive performance cost her the gold as she was out-punched in the top-sided final. The reigning world champion was thrashed by home favourite and two-time Olympic medalist Li Qian in the 75kg final.

With Borgohain's loss, India's campaign came to an end. The country's boxers thus signed off with five medals, including one silver and four bronze. In the last edition, India had won a gold and a bronze. "I gave my best but could not bring the gold. I am happy with my performance. I will try to change the colour of the medal in the Olympics," Borgohain said after the bout.

"I committed some mistakes like I was playing closer to the opponent and got a point cut. I will



work on the mistakes I committed," she added.

Fighting for gold, both Borgohain and Qian looked tentative, trying to size each other up.

Borgohain, the reigning Asian champion, was unwilling to attack until the referee asked her to start fighting following which she landed right punch.

The two boxers did throw punches at each other but without much accuracy with none of them making much of an impression in the first round, which involved a lot of clinching. Borgohain was warned twice for holding and Qian narrowly took the round 3-2.

The second round followed a

similar script with both boxers clinching each other. Borgohain was once again passive and after her third warning, she was hit with a point deduction for excessive holding.

Trailing after the first two rounds, Borgohain needed to be proactive but the Indian seemed content with a silver.

"Also there were lots of positive which I can take. Qualifying for Olympics from this tournament was more important to me and I achieved it," she added.

Parveen, who won the 63kg bronze at the 2022 World Championships, went down to Lin via a 5-0. Standing at five feet and seven

inches, Parveen was at a disadvantage against Lin because of her height, which made it difficult for her to land scoring punches.

Lin, on the other hand, capitalised on her two-inch advantage. The 2018 bronze medalist pounded Parveen with a range of punches while fighting from afar.

Trailing on all five cards, Parveen tried a more aggressive approach in the second round but the 27-year-old Lin used her experience to ward off the Indian's blows by using her nimble feet.

Parveen did find success sporadically but that was not enough to convince the judges as Lin kept on landing punches consistently.

Lin, who has three World Championships medals to her name, had also grabbed a bronze in the 2023 edition earlier this year, but was disqualified after she failed an eligibility test.

The 23-year-old Indian has already secured an Olympic quota for next year's Paris Games along with two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg), and Borgohain.

None of the male pugilists could earn Olympic quotes with only Narender Berwal (+92kg) winning a medal. (PTI)

Chinese stand in between in-form India and Asian Games final

HANGZHOU, Oct 4: Just two wins away from reclaiming the gold medal after a hiatus of 41 years, a confident Indian women's hockey team will look to overcome a partisan crowd when it takes on hosts and three-time champions China in the semifinal of the Asian Games here on Wednesday.

The Indian women came close in the 2018 edition in Jakarta before settling for a silver but this time around the Savita Punia-led side is desperate to clinch the country's second gold medal at the continental showpiece.

India's only gold at the Asian Games came in the 1982 New Delhi edition, where women's hockey was first introduced. Since then, they have won three bronze and two silver medals but the yellow metal has eluded them.

But this time around, the Indian women are

in top form and look favourites to win the title here.

Going by world rankings, India are the top side in the competition at No.7, while China are placed in 12th position, and it would be a big letdown if they return without gold medal from here.

India have been nothing short of exceptional in the competition so far, finishing unbeaten in the pool stages. They kicked off their campaign with a 13-0 win against Singapore, followed by 6-0 victory over Malaysia, a hard-fought 1-1 draw against South Korea, and a resounding 13-0 win over Hong Kong.

Barring the match against South Korea, the Indian defence was hardly tested and the Savita-led backline needs to be on its toes.

The forwardline and mid-field worked in tan-

dem to create goal-scoring chances for India from both field play as well as penalty corners and they would look to continue in the same vein.

Deepika and Deep Grace Ekka have been phenomenal with set pieces, while Vandana Katariya, young Sangita Kumari, Navneet Kaur and Lalremrsiami scored some fantastic field goals.

India captain Savita is satisfied with the performance of the side so far but warned her teammates not to be complacent.

"This is a significant moment for us. We've performed exceptionally well so far, but the semifinal is a different challenge. China are a formidable opponent with a rich history in the Asian Games. But we're fully prepared for the challenge," Savita said. (PTI)

India enter Asian Games men's hockey final with hard-fought 5-3 win over South Korea

HANGZHOU, Oct 4: India defeated South Korea 5-3 in a hard-fought semifinal to enter the title clash of the men's hockey competition at the Asian Games here on Wednesday.

The Indians, who had an easy run in the pool stages recording big wins, were made to toil by the Koreans despite taking a 3-0 lead in the first quarter.

India, who won a bronze in the last edition, will be eyeing a repeat of the 2014 Incheon Asian Games, where they won the yellow metal.

A gold in the ongoing Asian Games is of huge significance for the Tokyo Olympics bronze medalists as it will ensure their direct entry into the 2024 Paris Games.

Hardik Singh (5th minute), Mandeep Singh (11th), Lalit Kumar Upadhyay (15th), Amit Rohidas (24th) and Abhishek (54th) were the goal-getters for India, while Manjavee Jung (17th, 20th, 42nd) scored a hat-trick for Korea but it went in vain.

The Indians started from where they had left in the pool stages and came out attacking from the onset.

It was all about Indian attack and Korea's defence in the opening quarter as the Harmanpreet-led side mounted continuous raids on the opposition defence.

It took just five minutes for India to take the lead through Hardik, from a rebound after Lalit's initial try was saved by Korean goalkeeper Jaehyeon Kim.

Three minutes later, an unmarked Mandeep got plenty of space inside the circle but his slap shot, with only the goalkeeper to beat, went over the post.

The first quarter saw fast-paced continuous attacks from the Indians and their tactics bore fruit again in the 11th minute when Mandeep deflected in his 10th goal here from a Gurjant pass.

India secured their first penalty corner in the 13th minute but Harmanpreet's flick went wide.

Just at the stroke of the first quarter, Lalit was at the right place to push in a rebound after Harman-



preet's reverse hit was saved by the Korean goalkeeper to hand India a 3-0 lead.

The Koreans looked more purposeful in the second quarter and got their act together to put pressure on the Indians with two quick goals.

India looked a bit out of sorts at the start of the second quarter, and the Koreans took full advantage of that and started to put pressure on the 2014 Asian Games champions' defence.

The pressure resulted in Korea's first penalty corner two minutes into the second quarter and Jung scored as they executed a neatly worked out variation.

Three minutes later, Korea reduced the margin to 2-3 when Jung deflected in Taeil Hwang's pass.

Stunned by Korea's fight-back, the Indians got their composure back and went back to their tried and tested possession hockey, which yielded results when Rohidas stepped up in Harmanpreet's absence to flick in a penalty corner.

The goal seemed to have reignited Harmanpreet's side as minutes later they earned their third penalty corner but the variation effort was not up to the mark as the scoreline stood 4-2 in India's favour.

Known for their fighting spirit, the Koreans looked in no mood to

give up and put relentless pressure on the Indian goal after the change of ends.

Two minutes after half-time, Korea got a golden chance but Lee Nam Yong flicked the ball wide after five Korean strikers invaded the Indian 'D'.

Korea's pressure jolted the Indians as they conceded another penalty corner and another variation was perfectly deflected in by Jung to register his hat-trick and reduce the scoreline.

Trailing by just one goal, the Koreans played high-press hockey in the fourth and final quarter but the Indians defended in numbers to keep their opponents at bay.

Abhishek gave India some breathing space six minutes from the final hooter.

The young striker slammed the ball into the goal with a fierce reverse hit from top of the circle after receiving a pass from Mandeep to score his eighth goal of the tournament.

With four minutes left on the clock, Korea withdrew their goalkeeper for an extra field player in search of goals but the Indian defence stood tall.

India will take on the winners of the other semifinal between defending champions Japan and China in the gold medal clash on Saturday. (PTI)

Sports journalist Bipul Barman unveils book 'Assam's Players in Asian Games'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 4: Sports journalist Bipul Barman unveiled his fifth book, "Assam's Players in the Asian Games," on Wednesday. The book launch event took place at Hotel Gateway Gandware in Guwahati amidst the backdrop of the 19th Asian Games being held in Hangzhou, China.

The sports book, authored by Bipul Barman, was inaugurated in a solemn ceremony. It highlights the participation of 19 players from Assam in the Asian Games, spanning from 1951 to 2018. The compilation includes profiles of notable athletes, from Bhogeshwar Barua to Hima Das.

The inauguration ceremony witnessed the presence of esteemed guests, including Jaideep Das, the bronze medalist shooter from the 1986 Seoul Asian Games, and Tayyabun Nisai, an athlete who partici-

pated in the 1982 Asian Games. Renowned sports organizer Dr. Bishnuram Nunisa, sports journalist Jayanta Kumar Das, Partha Chakravarty, Pullin Saha, renowned cartoonist Pradeep Nath, and successful cyclist Pratibha Dutta were among those in attendance.

All the guests commended sports journalist Bipul Barman for his work. It is worth noting that Bipul Barman has previously celebrated the achievements of prominent athletes from the North East, including Bhaichung Bhutia in football and Assam's traditional sports preservation.

The inauguration ceremony on Wednesday was organized by the state-level advisory committee for students and youth welfare under the Assam government. The book, titled "Assam Players in Asian Games," was published by Angel Publication.

AHMEDABAD, Oct 4: A golden generation of England cricketers who have transformed the white ball format template forever will begin their 50-over World Cup title defence against an injury-battered New Zealand in a repeat of the 2019 final here on Thursday.

England are an ageing side alright, but few will dare to bet their green bills against Jos Buttler's outfit to add a third World Cup to their shelf in four years, as they are also the current T20 World Cup holders. Trying to win that elusive ICC World Cup, New Zealand will be in a state of worry for more than one reason. They will not have captain Kane Williamson, who though had played the warm-ups, and senior pacer Tim Southee in their ranks as both are still on the recovery path after respective surgeries.

Southee's fitness will be monitored closely as he is recuperating from a recent surgery on his fractured thumb. He had dislocated his finger during the ODI series

against England. But that is only a tip of their bigger concerns. The Ahmedabad pitch is generally an ally of batsmen, and England have a bionic batting line-up for whom skull-crushing their rivals is a favoured hobby. The whole ferocity surrounding their batting has only gone up after the return of Ben Stokes, as he had decided to come out of retirement for the big event.

The maverick all-rounder has a troublesome knee that may curtail his role as a bowler in the tournament, but Stokes loves big occasions. He had left indelible marks on two World Cup finals in 2019 and 2022, and to count him out to do an encore will be naive.

But Stokes will not be the only batting Cyclop, the Kiwis will have to negotiate on the morrow. England have one of the longest batting orders. They have explosive batters in Liam Livingstone, Jonny Bairstow and Harry Brook and then more conventional batters like Joe Root and Dawid Malan.

Additionally, their experience of playing in the IPL will certainly add to their ability to understand and adapt to the varied conditions at eight different venues for nine group stage games. Then they have a slew of all-rounders like Moen Ali, Chris Woakes and Sam Curran, who played a decisive role in Australia during last year's 2020 World Cup. Their bowling unit also not to be undermined. Mark Wood's express pace and IPL experience give England some edge, but leg-spinner Adil Rashid will also be a vital cog in their bowling department.

However, England will miss their leading wicket-taker from the 2019 edition—Jofra Archer. The pacer is on a comeback trail after injury, though he has been included in the squad as a reserve.

On the other hand, without Williamson and Southee, New Zealand certainly lost a big chunk of experience and fire but the Kiwis have consistently punched above their weight in the ICC tournaments. (PTI)

WC Warm-Up: Pak left with plenty to ponder following 14-run loss to Australia

HYDERABAD, Oct 4: The form of openers and bowlers remained a concern as Pakistan was handed a 14-run loss by Australia on the concluding day of the World Cup warm-ups here on Tuesday.

David Warner (48 off 33) and Glenn Maxwell (77 off 71) got valuable time in the middle as Australia amassed 351 for seven after opting to bat.

Babar Azam (90 retired hurt) was once again amongst the runs while middle-order batter Iftekhar Ahmed (83 off 85) got a good hit batting at number four.

Pakistan should have closed down the chase comfortably but found a way to lose and ended at 337 all out with 12 balls to spare. The form of openers especially Fakhar Zaman (22 off 24) had been a worry for a while and that did not change as he perished while trying to hit Maxwell out of the ground.

His opening partner Imam-ul-Haq (16 off 11) hit a delightful straight drive and flick off Mitchell Starc before getting caught behind for the second consecutive innings.

Another opening option Abdullah Shafique (12 off 16), who batted at three as Babar wanted to give batting time to others, too did not last long. At 83 for four in 15 overs, Pakistan had a mountain to climb but Babar, who came to bat at six, and Iftekhar changed the course of the innings with their free flowing strokeplay. Babar decided to retire in order to give the lower-order the chance to finish the game.

Mohammad Nawaz (50 off 42) tried but could not take his team over the line. Pakistan were within touching distance of the target but ran out of wickets.



In the bowling department, the performance of Shadab Khan and Haris Rauf, who conceded 97 runs in nine overs, was a cause of a concern while bright spots were the spells of leggie Usamar Mir and medium pacer Hasan Ali who is expected to open the bowling alongside Shaheen Afridi in the team's tournament opener against Netherlands on October 6.

From the Australian perspective, Maxwell was in his marauding best after coming from an ankle injury and that augurs well for him and his team going into the World Cup opener against India on October 8. Known for his audacious strokeplay, Maxwell's six off reverse sweep on Nawaz's bowling stood out.

Warner, who did not bat in the first warm-up against Netherlands, too entertained the Hyderabad crowd with his fluent hitting which included two sixes off Rauf.

Skipper Pat Cummins, Sean Abbott and Mitchell Starc bowled six overs each. Australia used as many as eight bowling options including Steve Smith and Warner, who was hammered for 41 runs in two overs. (PTI)

U15 inter district cricket tournament (girls) begins at KA Sports Association

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Oct 4: The Group - B under -15 Inter-District Cricket Tournament for girls has started here at Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) cricket ground, 5th Miles Diphu - Manja Road. The tournament is organised by the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) and hosted by KASA.

Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and President, KASA, Tuliram Ronghlang inaugurated the tournament. He said the under-15 Inter-District Cricket Tournament Group - B is being hosted here so that girls interested in cricket have a chance to see it.

"I hope by hosting this tournament the girls in our district will get exposure to cricket. I hope they win in this group stage and proceed to the next level. I wish all the participating teams of Group - B all the very best."

General Secretary, KASA, Pankaj Teron said the Group B teams will be playing here. There were initially five teams. On the withdrawal of Dima Hasao four teams are left, i.e. Karbi Anglong, Silchar, Hojai and Karimgang. The winning team from Group-B will proceed to the quarter finals.

The opening match was played between Hojai and Silchar. Hojai won the toss and chose to bat first and manage to set a target of 59 runs in 20 Overs at the loss of 8 wickets. Chasing the target Silchar scored 60 runs in just 12 Overs at the loss of 2 wickets. Silchar won the match by 8 wickets. Devika Deb of Silchar was awarded the Man of the Match for taking 3 wickets in 4 Overs, run given only 9. She also scored 8 runs.

All Star Club win

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Oct 4: In the A Division Football league, All Star Club secured league points by defeating Milonjyoti Club. The match took place on Wednesday at Jorhat Stadium, with All Star emerging victorious with a scoreline of 5-1. Sujit Bhowmik scored two goals, while Kiran Karmakar, S Kanyak, and D Kanyak each contributed with one goal. On the opposing side, Monoj Gogoi netted a solitary goal for Milonjyoti Club. This league is organised by the Jorhat District Sports Association.