

WORLD

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NATION

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- Biden administration waives 26 federal laws to allow border wall construction
- 1 dead, over 300 injured as Typhoon Koinu sweeps parts of Taiwan
- India's voice being heard world over today, Cong has problem with this: PM
- Cong to hold CWC meeting on Oct 9 in Delhi; discuss caste census

Himanta announces slew of measures for development of BTR

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 5: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday dedicated the newly constructed RCC Bridge on Barama-Dhamdhama-Tamulpur Road at Jartaluk in Tamulpur district to the service of the people at a function held at Tamulpur.

It may be noted that foundation of the bridge was laid on February 26, 2021. The bridge has been constructed with financial outlay of ₹ 29.57 crore under SOPD-G. The length of the bridge is 193.480 metre. The bridge connects Tamulpur with Baksa district directly where there was no alternative route to connect these two districts earlier.

Speaking on the occasion, chief minister Sarma said, "With the inauguration of the bridge the connectivity of BTR will get a new momentum. Now transportation



between Tamulpur and Baksa will be very convenient and distance and time taken can be brought down drastically. With the help of this bridge over river Pagladia at least 25 thousand people across the river will be directly benefitted."

The chief minister on the occa-

sion also announced that the 26 km road from Dhamdhama to Tamulpur will be turned into a double-lane road under Asom Mala project. CM Sarma said that both the state government and BTC have been working unrelentingly to (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

SIKKIM CALAMITY

Death toll rises to 14, 102 still missing

Flash flood could be a combination of excess rainfall and Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF): NDMA

GANGTOK, Oct 5: 14 bodies have been found so far while 102 people, including 22 Army personnel, remained missing after a cloudburst over Lhonak Lake in North Sikkim triggered a flash flood in the Teesta river basin, officials said on Thursday.

So far, 2,011 people have been rescued, while the calamity that occurred on Wednesday affected 22,034 people, the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) said in its latest bulletin.

The search for the 22 missing soldiers was continuing with a focus on the downstream areas as the fast-flowing river is likely to have carried them to the lower reaches, officials said.

The state government has set up



26 relief camps in the four affected districts, the SSDMA said. A total of 1,025 people are taking shelter in the eight relief camps in Gang-

tok district, while the number of inmates at the 18 other relief camps was not available immediately.

Chief minister Prem Singh

Tamang visited Singtam, one of the worst affected areas, and took stock of the situation. He urged the people to stay alert and take shelter in safe locations, and assured them that the government was making all necessary arrangements for their rehabilitation.

After visiting the affected areas, Tamang also chaired an emergency meeting at the Singtam Community Centre.

"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," he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

2 houses torched in Imphal

IMPHAL, Oct 5: Fresh violence broke out in Manipur's Imphal West district where at least two houses were set on fire and several rounds of bullets were fired, police said on Thursday.

The incident happened in New Keithelmanbi under the Patsoi Police Station area around 10 pm on Wednesday, they said. After the attack, the accused fled the spot, triggering tension in the area, they added. Security forces and fire services personnel brought the blaze under control, police said.

A mob of Meitei women who gathered in the area following the incident, were prevented by the security forces from proceeding further, they said.

Additional security has been deployed and the situation is under control, police said. More than 180 people lost their lives and several hundreds were injured since the ethnic clashes broke out in Manipur on May 3, after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organized in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

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

HT BRIEFS

Man arrested

DIPHU: A resident of Lahorijan in Karbi Anglong, Arif Ahmed, has been arrested on charges of obtaining a passport using fake documents following a complaint by Sarsing Engti of Diphu. According to Additional SP (Crime), Nayan Moni Barman, Arif Ahmed had allegedly misrepresented his father's identity and used that person's Legacy Data to obtain the passport. The complaint prompted an inquiry by the Diphu police, leading to Arif Ahmed's arrest. He is currently residing in Dimapur. The police are conducting further investigations to determine the source of the false documents. Charges related to identity fraud and forgery are expected to be filed against Arif Ahmed, who is now in custody. This incident highlights the importance of rigorous document verification processes to prevent fraudulent activities, especially in matters as critical as obtaining a passport.

Advisory

GANGTOK/KOLKATA: As a flash flood left a trail of destruction in Sikkim, the govt on Thursday urged people, who planned to visit the Himalayan state soon, to postpone their programmes till the situation normalises. The state administration also requested those stranded in the flood-hit Mangan district not to panic as the authorities concerned would start an evacuation process from Friday. According to estimates, over 3,000 tourists, including foreigners, are stuck in various parts of Sikkim. The department also assured those stranded in Mangan district that the state govt would extend all possible help and support in the "evacuation process starting from October 6 subject to weather conditions", it said.

WATERY WOES



A car wades through a flooded street at Anil Nagar in Guwahati on Thursday. HT Photo

Terror ecosystem has to be destroyed, ruthless approach needed: Amit Shah



NEW DELHI, Oct 5: Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday said anti-terror agencies will have to adopt such a ruthless approach that no new terrorist group is formed in the country.

Addressing an anti-terror conference here, he also said not only terrorism, but the entire ecosystem of the terrorists has to be destroyed.

The home minister said tough decisions taken by the Narendra Modi government have yielded very good results in handling challenges posed by cryptocurrencies, hawala, terror-funding, organised crime

syndicates and narco-terror links. Still a lot more is to be done, he said inaugurating the two-day anti-terror conference organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

"All anti-terror agencies will have to adopt such a ruthless approach that new terrorist organisations cannot be formed," he said.

Shah said there is a need to not only combat terrorism but also dismantle its entire ecosystem, and for this "we must work with the spirit of the whole government and Team India". He said under the leadership of Modi, the central and state agencies have succeeded in firmly curbing all forms of terrorism in the country in the last nine years.

He said the task of NIA, anti-terror squads and state task forces should not be limited to investigation but they should also think out of the box and take innovative measures to counter the terrorism.

The home minister said the fight against terrorism requires collaboration from the global level to the grassroots, involving various states within the country, as well as international cooperation.

He said to deal with terrorism, the Centre and the states, their agencies and inter-agency cooperation will have to think in vertical and horizontal ways. The home minister also awarded (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

China's assertiveness more evident with its rise: CDS Gen Chauhan

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: China's assertiveness is more evident now with its rise and India will have to take this aspect into account in its overall "strategic calculus", Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan said on Thursday while delving into various national security challenges and profound geopolitical changes.

Delivering the annual Gen KV Krishna Rao memorial lecture, he also referred to India's "major dispute" along the northern borders with China and suggested that New Delhi will have to play its "strategic autonomy" card well.

"The strategic autonomy may be relevant to exploit opportunities rather than to take care of your threats. That's where the future should lie. We should be thinking about opportunities more," he said.

"This all what I said comes with a little bit of a caveat because of the northern neighbor. In this strategic calculus, India will have to take into account the emergence of China as a major power," the Chief of Defence Staff said. "China's assertiveness is (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

BJP pins Cong's scam slur against Tuliram

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Oct 5: The BJP, East Karbi Anglong District Committee (EKADC) has extended solidarity with chief executive member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, who has been accused by Congress of swindling ₹ 100 crore in connection with the construction of a road.

The Congress alleged that the CEM has swindled ₹ 100 crore by doing overlapping construction work of a 17 km stretch of Hapjan road from Birla to Rongplimlam. The scam was alleged to have been committed through firms registered in the name of his wife and some relatives. The Congress has questioned how the road could be completed in just 7 days' time.

In a press conference at the office of the BJP, EKADC, Member of Autonomous Council (MAC), Dr Mongve Rongpi quoting a High Court judgment said, "Mr B. Baruah learned counsel representing the petitioners submits that after going through the affidavits filed by the respondents and the photographs attached thereto, the petitioners are satisfied that most of the roads in question have been constructed. However, his prayer that regarding the issue of maintenance etc., the petitioners may be given liberty to approach the Principal Secretary/ Secretary of PWD as and when the need arises."

The MAC further said, "It is clear now that the road has been constructed and the allegations are false and baseless. As the Lok Sabha election is approaching the opposition wants to create a political issue out of it." The MAC also said, "The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) constituted by the Assam Legislative Assembly whose members comprise (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



CBI quizzes two senior cops at Nagaon

Finding of Junmoni's 'missing' phones from ill-fated vehicle stuns many

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 5: In a new twist to the mysterious death of SI Junmoni Rabha, the team from central investigative agency - CBI - on Thursday quizzed then superintendent of police and additional superintendent of police, Lakhimpur Bedanta Madhab Rajkhova and Runa Neog respectively at Nagaon circuit house.

The investigating agency summoned both the senior cops to CBI's temporary office at Nagaon circuit house on Thursday.

As per directive of the central investigative agency, both Rajkhova Neog arrived at Nagaon circuit house.

The CBI initially questioned both the senior officials together and recorded their statements. Subsequently, the team also quizzed ASP Runa Neog separately for quite some time and recorded her

statement too, sources said, adding that earlier on Wednesday last the investigative team from the central investigative agency was able to recover the mobile phones of SI Junmoni Rabha that went missing since her mysterious death in a controversial road mishap on May 15 last.

It is pertinent to mention here

that the CBI team examined SI Junmoni Rabha's personal vehicle several times and were not able to recover it till Wednesday.

Significantly, earlier the CID team from the state police also carried out several rounds of examinations into SI Junmoni Rabha's personal vehicle, but they were not able to find (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

BJP following politics of intimidation: Gaurav

GUWAHATI, Oct 5: The deputy leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi on Thursday claimed that the BJP is "scared" and was following the "politics of intimidation".

The BJP is now on the "backfoot" and is "trying to intimidate not only politicians but the people of the country", Gogoi said here after participating in a protest rally, organised by the Congress, against the steep hike in electricity rates. "Last year they had summoned Rahul and Sonia Gandhi and now they have targeted other parties. This is just a way of intimidating the people of India. Forget about political parties or individuals, they are using the law enforcement agencies on journalists," he said.

The media should talk about how they are intimidating journalists, farmers whom they called Khalistanis along with students, the Congress MP said.

"This BJP, especially Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah believes in the politics of intimidation but Rahul Gandhi has told the people 'Daro mat' (Do not be scared). They are listening to him and nobody is scared of Modi Shah," Gogoi said. "Every time the government runs into several crores of debt, the BJP government increases the tax, the electricity bill, all forms of duties, toll taxes and therefore, the poor people have to bear the brunt of the BJP's failure and they become increasingly poorer," he further said.

"When the Congress party comes to power, like in the other states where we have a government, we will provide 200 units of free electricity per month to the deserving families," the Congress Working Committee (CWC) member said. (PTI)

Fosse is the fourth Norwegian writer to get the literature prize

Norwegian writer Jon Fosse awarded Nobel Prize in literature

STOCKHOLM, Oct 5: Jon Fosse, a master of spare Nordic prose in a sprawling body of work ranging from plays to novels and children's books, won the Nobel Prize in literature on Thursday for writing that gives "voice to the unsayable".

Fosse's work, rooted in his Norwegian background, "focuses on human insecurity and anxiety," Anders Olsson, chair of the Nobel literature committee, told The Associated Press. "The basic choices you make in life, very elemental stuff."

One of his country's most-performed dramatists, Fosse said he had "cautiously prepared" himself for a decade to receive the news that he had won.

"I was surprised when they called, yet at the same time not," the 64-year-old told Norwegian public broadcaster NRK. "It was a great joy for me to get the phone call."

Why did the Nobel Prize in lit-



erature go to Jon Fosse?

The author of 40 plays as well as novels, short stories, children's books, poetry and essays, Fosse was honoured "for his innovative plays and prose, which give voice to the unsayable," according to the Swedish Academy, which awards the

prize. Fosse has cited the bleak, enigmatic work of Irish writer Samuel Beckett — the 1969 Nobel literature laureate — as an influence on his minimalist style.

Fosse has also taught writing — one of his students was best-selling Norwegian novelist Karl Ove Knaus-

gaard — and consulted on a Norwegian translation of the Bible. "He tends to write in a fairly sparse style," said Guy Puzey, senior lecturer in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Edinburgh. "There's a lot of repetition of quite simple expressions, which then take on a lot deeper meaning and make you ponder what lies in between the lines."

What is Nynorsk?

While Fosse is the fourth Norwegian writer to get the literature prize, he is the first in nearly a century and the first who writes in Nynorsk, one of the two official written standards. It is used by just 10% of the country's 5.4 million people, according to the Language Council of Norway, but completely understandable to users of the other written form, Bokmaal. Still, Bokmaal is "the language of power, it's the language or urban centers, of the press," according to Puzey. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Markets rebound after 2-day slump; L&T top boost



MUMBAI, Oct 5: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded sharply on Thursday after sliding for the past two sessions, propelled by bargain hunting in capital goods, banking, and IT stocks amid a sharp correction in global crude prices.

An encouraging PMI data further bolstered sentiment, even as relentless foreign capital outflows trimmed gains, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 405.53 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at 65,631.57. During the day, it rallied 527.16 points or 0.80 per cent to 65,753.20.

Nifty advanced 109.65 points or 0.56 per cent to end at 19,545.75.

"The positive signal from the PMI data and the correction in the crude price boosted the market sentiment. While regarding RBI policy, positively, the market expects the interest rate to be hold-on as external demand outlook indicates muted trend fearing disinflationary trend in the future," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Larsen & Toubro was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, rising 2.35 per cent, followed by Titan, Tata Consultancy Services, Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, ICICI Bank and Asian Paints.

In contrast, Power Grid, Nestle, NTPC, HCL Technologies and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.59 per cent and the midcap index dipped 0.03 per cent.

Among the indices, capital goods jumped 1.31 per cent, services climbed 1.03 per cent, IT (0.98 per cent), industrials (0.95 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.93 per cent), tech (0.83 per cent) and auto (0.81 per cent).

FMCG, telecommunication, utilities and metal were the laggards.

"Global markets steadied on Thursday rebounding from previous losses after a strong lead from Wall Street. A plunge in oil prices and softer U.S. labour data late on

Wednesday helped bring US Treasury yields back down from 16-year highs," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said.

In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the green, while Seoul ended lower. Trading was closed in Shanghai for a holiday.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.89 per cent to USD 85.05 a barrel.

"Recovery in global markets followed by a sharp drop in international crude oil prices and steady trend in US bond yields triggered a relief rally in domestic shares after two sessions of losses. Buying in IT, banking, auto and capital goods stocks led the upsurge, whereas selective profit-taking in metals, and power stocks trimmed gains of key benchmark indices.

"Despite the rebound, uncertainty over more rate hikes going ahead coupled with slackening demand and recessionary fears would mean that markets are likely to witness strong bouts of intra-day volatility with a slightly negative bias in the near to medium term," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 4,424.02 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"Though the market bounced back today, uncertainty persists, which would keep the Nifty range bound. Investors would watch out for US weekly jobless claims that would be released late today. Also, the release of US non-farm payroll data, along with the RBI policy outcome tomorrow would be key events to watch out for," Khemka said.

The BSE benchmark declined 286.06 points or 0.44 per cent to settle at 65,226.04 on Wednesday. Nifty slipped 92.65 points or 0.47 per cent to end at 19,436.10. (PTI)

Services sector activity in India touches 13-year high in Sept: PMI

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: The services sector growth in India rose to a 13-year high in September on sharp increase in new business amid strong demand conditions, and job numbers continued to increase as overall business mood improved, a monthly survey said on Thursday.

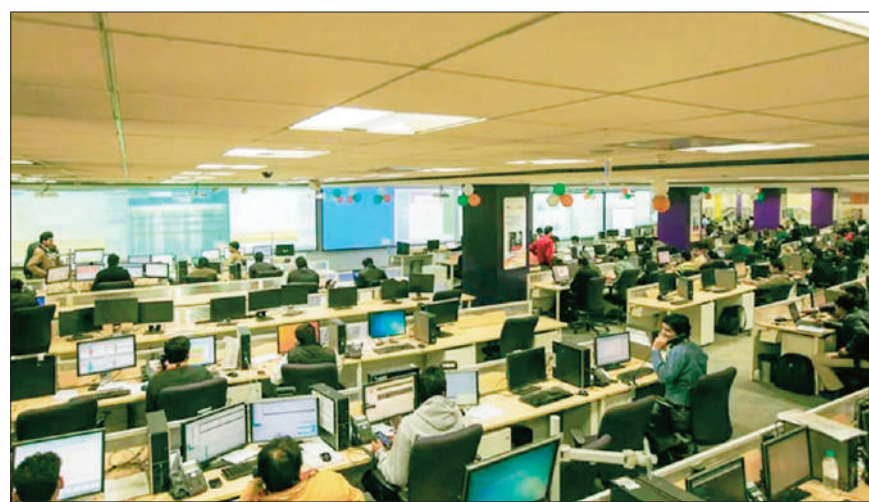
The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Services PMI Business Activity Index rose from 60.1 in August to 61 in September, signalling a sharp upturn in output.

In Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

The survey is compiled from responses to questionnaires sent to a panel of around 400 service sector companies.

The latest data showed a substantial increase in new business placed with Indian service providers, one that was the second-fastest since June 2010.

Besides the rise in total sales, firms noted an upturn in demand from abroad, particularly from clients based in Asia, Europe and North America.



"The latest PMI results brought more positive news for India's service economy, with September seeing business activity and new work intakes rising to one of the greatest extent in over 13 years," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at

S&P Global Market Intelligence.

According to the survey, confidence in the outlook improved, with survey members forecasting healthy market dynamics and buoyant demand for the year ahead.

The level of positive sentiment was at its

highest for over nine years. An upturn in business optimism about the year ahead, fuelled by buoyant demand conditions, bode well for further growth across the service sector. Job creation sustained as the business mood improved.

"Services charges rose at a softer rate as cost pressures receded to one of the lowest in two-and-a-half years. Although the latter indicates that near-term output price inflation may cool, worries about potential fluctuations in food prices due to El Niño means the RBI is highly unlikely to cut rates until early next year," Lima said.

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 S&P Global India Composite PMI Output Index was up from 60.9 in August to 61 last month. Buoyant demand for Indian goods and services underpinned the second-sharpest increase in aggregate new business for over 13 years in September, the survey said. (PTI)

Rupee pares initial gains, settles 3 paise lower at 83.27 per USD

MUMBAI, Oct 5: The rupee pared initial gains and settled 3 paise lower at 83.27 against the US dollar on Thursday, following a recovery in the American currency.

Forex traders said the rupee consolidated in a narrow range as investors preferred to stay on the sidelines ahead of the Reserve Bank of India's rate decision.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 83.21 against the greenback and touched an intra-day low of 83.30 and a high of 83.16.

It finally settled at 83.27, down 3 paise over its previous close of 83.24.

"The Indian rupee erased opening gains following recovery in the greenback but ended almost steady ahead of the US weekly jobless data and the RBI's rate decision," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Parmar said the rupee was well supported by lower crude oil prices, the central bank's dollar supply and recovery in the domestic equity markets.

"Spot USDINR is expected to trade between 83.10 to 83.35 with the trend remaining sideways to bullish," he said.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.01 per cent lower at 106.79.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures dipped 0.97 per cent to USD 84.98 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 405.53 points, or 0.62 per cent, higher at 65,631.57, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 109.65 points, or 0.56 per cent, to 19,545.75. (PTI)

RBI expected to retain benchmark rate: Experts

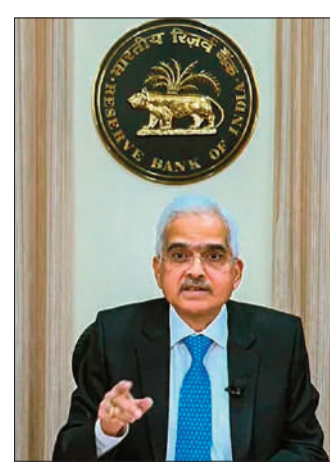
KOLKATA, Oct 5: The RBI is expected to retain the benchmark rate of 6.5 per cent in its latest bi-monthly monetary policy review, amid inflation concerns and other global factors, experts said.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) started its three-day meeting on Wednesday, and the policy review will be announced on Friday morning.

"I think that between the last MPC meeting in August and this time, inflation has gone up, growth remains strong while global factors have turned a little adverse in the sense that the US Federal Reserve is still aggressive in its stance, which has led to hardening of yields. In this situation, the central bank is expected to maintain a status quo on policy rates in the ensuing policy," Crisil Chief Economist D Joshi told PTI.

He said the RBI would focus more on inflation given that growth is strong right now, adding oil price movements need to be watched carefully, too.

"We believe that the interest rates will be on the higher side, which essentially means that we will not see any rate cut this fiscal year," Joshi said.



The Reserve Bank has been mandated by the central government to ensure the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Retail inflation jumped to a 15-month high of 7.44 per cent in July, as prices of vegetables and other food items spiked, according to official data.

Chief Economist of Bandhan Bank, Siddhartha Sanyal, said, "The global macroeconomic backdrop remains complicated with uncertainties around growth. This will prompt the

MPC to stay watchful, with a likely guidance of rates to remain higher for longer.

"Nevertheless, softening in prices of agro commodities since August has offered the MPC some breathing space, which will allow it to refrain from any rate action at the moment."

Founder and director of Credit-Wise Capital Aalish Avlani also said there will likely be no change in the policy rates on Friday.

The RBI started increasing the policy rate in May 2022 in tranches, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war and took it to 6.5 per cent in February this year. Since then, it has kept the rate unchanged in the last three successive bi-monthly monetary policy reviews.

Vice-Chairman and MD of Titagarh Rail Systems, Umesh Chowdhury, added: "The government's policies and capital spending have certainly fuelled infrastructure growth. There are a lot of opportunities for the manufacturing sector, which means the private sector would have to incur capital expenditure. For that, the interest rate regime would continue to play a very important role". (PTI)

Rising long-term interest rates are posing threat to US economy

WASHINGTON, Oct 5: Surging interest rates are intensifying the challenges for the US economy and threatening to derail the Federal Reserve's drive to tame inflation without causing a deep recession. Since mid-summer, the yield on the 10-year Treasury note, a benchmark for many loans, has steadily climbed, causing a spillover rise in other borrowing costs. The costs of mortgages, auto loans and credit card debt have all risen in response. The collective impact of higher rates across the economy could also weaken the government's own finances.

The jump in longer-term rates coincides with other threats, from higher gas prices and this week's resumption of student loan payments to autoworkers' ongoing strike and the risk of a government shutdown next month, all of which could leave consumers with less money to spend to power the economy.

The strike by the United Auto Workers, now in its third week with no resolution in sight, could reduce vehicle sales in coming months. And the threat of a government shutdown, narrowly averted this past weekend, looms large, especially given the chaos over the leadership of the House of Representatives. Far-right Republican House members deposed their leader, Rep. Kevin McCarthy, on Tuesday for working with Democrats to temporarily avoid a shutdown.

The economy is coming off a robust summer,

fueled by strong consumer spending on travel, concert tours and movie blockbusters. The economy is estimated to have grown at a healthy 3.5% annual rate in the July-September quarter, according to economists at Goldman Sachs.

Yet growth will likely slow to a meager 0.7% annual rate in the final three months of the year, Goldman estimates. With borrowing rates high and inflation still relatively elevated, consumers, who drive about 70% of economic growth, are expected to spend more cautiously.

On Friday, the government will provide a snapshot of how employers are factoring the turmoil into their hiring plans when it issues the September jobs report. Economists have forecast that it will show that employers added a solid 162,000 jobs last month and that the unemployment rate dipped to 3.7%, near a half-century low, from 3.8%.

But the substantial rise in borrowing costs could intensify the economy's slowdown. The yield on the 10-year Treasury touched a 16-year high of 4.8% on Tuesday, up from 3.3% in April. Last week, the average 30-year fixed rate mortgage hit 7.3%, the highest rate in 23 years, according to mortgage buyer Freddie Mac.

On Tuesday, Loretta Mester, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, said she and other Fed policymakers will have to consider the rise in long-term rates in deciding whether to

raise their key rate once more before year's end. Her remarks suggested that the higher borrowing costs might lead the Fed to forgo another hike.

"That will influence not only our policy decisions but how the economy evolves over the next year," Mester said. "Those tighter, higher rates will have an impact on the economy." Financial analysts point to several reasons for the rapid increase in lending rates. To begin with, the Fed has repeatedly underscored that it intends to keep its key rate elevated for much longer than financial markets had expected earlier this year. And the economy's ability to keep growing, even as the Fed has jacked up rates, has lent the impression that it can withstand higher borrowing costs.

The economy's resilience in the face of higher rates could mean that borrowing costs will stay higher than they did after the 2008-2009 financial crisis, which led the Fed to cut its rate to near zero. During that period, the 10-year Treasury yield dropped to as low as 1.5%, and mortgage rates even fell below 3% during the pandemic.

The Treasury Department is now also auctioning off more debt to cover the government's swelling budget deficit, which reached \$1.5 trillion this year and is expected to rise further in 2024. The supply of Treasuries is growing even as the Fed is reducing its holding of bonds. Overseas buyers have reduced their purchases, thereby forcing rates higher to attract buyers. (AP)

POCO tops smartphone sales on Flipkart

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 5: POCO, a leading consumer technology brand in India, has achieved the remarkable feat of becoming the #1 smartphone brand on Flipkart in Q3'23. This achievement underscores the exceptional performance of their feature-packed smartphone lineup. Capitalizing on this success, POCO is all set to usher consumers into a technological revolution during the upcoming Flipkart Big Billion Day Sale, one of the year's largest sales events. The sale is scheduled to commence on October 8th, running through to October 15. Flipkart Plus members will enjoy early access starting October 7 at midnight, with the added advantage of instant discounts when using ICICI, Axis, and Kotak Bank debit/credit cards.

Government sets minimum price for raw jute after record harvest

KOLKATA, Oct 5: The government on Thursday fixed the minimum price for jute following reports that farmers are facing losses due to bumper crop of the golden fibre.

In a notification, the jute commissioner said the minimum price has been fixed at ₹ 5,050 per quintal at the farm level and ₹ 5,500 per quintal for deliveries in Kolkata.

The move was appreciated as average raw jute prices of the most traded variety TD5 had slumped to as low as ₹ 4,100 on Wednesday, market sources said.

Jute commissioner Moloy Chandra Chakraborty said that the minimum price of jute in all forms will be in force till October 31 or until further orders for any trade in raw jute. (PTI)

Airtel unveils cricket-centric plans for enthusiastic customers

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 5: As cricket fever grips the nation, Airtel is stepping up to the crease with exciting news for its customers. The telecommunications giant has rolled out special cricket-themed plans, offering extended benefits to cater to the cricketing zeal.

For Airtel's prepaid customers, a special data pack has been launched to ensure uninterrupted connectivity during the matches. Now, for just ₹ 99, customers can enjoy unlimited data for 2 days, while ₹ 49 recharge offers a generous 6GB of data for 1 day.

Airtel DTH has also joined hands with Star to introduce exclusive recharge offers. Furthermore, they have simplified the process for customers to add channels from the Star Sports portfolio, enhancing the viewing experience. On the Airtel Xtream box, a quick-access promotional has been introduced, allowing customers to swiftly navigate to their preferred language broadcast of cricket matches.

Thane man on way to airport duped of foreign currency worth ₹ 1.65 lakh

When the victim got down from the cab to talk to the two persons, they allegedly snatched away 7,000 Dirhams

THANE, Oct 5: A 28-year-old garment businessman from Maharashtra's Thane district was allegedly duped of cash and foreign currency worth ₹ 1.65 lakh by four persons posing as Income Tax officials while he was on way to the Mumbai airport for a trip to Dubai, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place at around 2 am on Wednesday after the victim left from Ulhasnagar area in Thane by a cab to reach the airport for a sight-seeing visit to Dubai, an official from Kalwa police station said.

As his cab reached near Kharigaon toll naka in Kalwa area, two motorcycle-borne persons came from behind and intercepted the cab.

They claimed to be I-T officials and told the man they had received a tip-off that he was illegally carrying US dollars, the official said.

When the victim got down from the cab to talk to the two persons, they allegedly

snatched away 7,000 Dirhams and other cash worth ₹ 1.65 lakh from his pocket while pretending to question him, he said.

In the meantime, two other persons, posing as associates of the accused, arrived there in a car and the cash and the foreign currency were handed over to them. The four persons then fled in the car and on the motorbike, the official said.

The businessman had to call off his trip. He filed a police complaint against the four persons, including one whom he identified as a resident of Ulhasnagar, the official said.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered against four persons, including the one identified, under Indian Penal Code sections 170 (personating a public servant), 420 (cheating) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention), he said.

A probe was on into the case, the police added. (PTI)



AFFIDAVIT

I Porishmita Pator, D/o-Jayanta Pator, Vill-Baropujia, P.O & P.S- Kheroni, Dist- West Karbi Anglong, by an affidavit before the magistrate in Hamren Court declare that the name Porishmita Pator and Porishmita Madar is the name of same and one person. Henceforth for all intent and purposes, I will be known as Porishmita Madar.

Porishmita Madar,
D/o- Joyanta Pator,
Vill- Baropujia
P.O & P.S- Kheroni
Dist- West Karbi Anglong,
782448
Contract no- 9957411713

AJP organises 'Ek Asom Yatra' in Dibrugarh



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Oct 5: The Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) conducted the "Ek Asom Yatra" in Dibrugarh on Thursday, aimed at fostering unity in Assam. AJP President Lurinjyoti Gogoi led the "Ek Asom Yatra" in Dibrugarh, joined by thousands of his followers. The rally commenced from the Chowkidingee field and proceeded through the main routes of Dibrugarh, seeking the support of local residents for a united Assam.

Addressing the rally, Lurinjyoti Gogoi emphasized the historical significance of Chaolung Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom dynasty, who played a pivotal role in creating greater Assam.

He expressed concern that certain communal forces were attempting to divide Assam along

religious lines and stressed that the primary objective of the "Ek Asom Yatra" was to promote unity in Assam.

Gogoi pointed out that Assam had experienced division based on religion, with communal forces making some headway. The AJP's mission is to reestablish communal harmony in Assam by uniting people of all castes and creeds.

He added, "In the past, Assam was peaceful, and people lived in harmony. However, everything has changed since the BJP came to power. Through this 'Ek Asom Yatra,' we aim to restore the lost glory of Assam."

The rally serves as a demonstration of the AJP's commitment to maintaining unity and harmony in Assam, despite the challenges faced by the state.

Congress stages demo against power price hike in Dongkamukam

HT Correspondent
DONGKAMUKAM, Oct 5: The Indian National Congress (INC), an opposition national party, held a protest against the Assam Government's decision to increase the power tariff by Rs 1.29 per unit in APDCL. The protest took place in and around Dongkamukam Town, West Karbi Anglong, with Congress members shouting slogans and carrying placards on Thursday.

During the protest, Congress leaders pledged to provide 200 units of free electricity to the people when their party comes to power in the state.

Following the protest, a meeting was convened at the WKADCC office premises in Dongkamukam. It was announced that a 'Booth Sammelan' would be held in West Karbi Anglong District on October 10, 2023, in Dongkamukam, where APCC President Bhupen Bora would be the chief guest. WKADCC President Sing Teron urged all cell incharges to expedite their work to ensure the success of the program. Additionally, preparations for a mass joining program on that day were discussed, and it was emphasized that the list should be meticulously prepared.

AAMSU stages sit-in demonstration in Gossaigaon

HT Correspondent
GOSSAIGAON, Oct 5: The All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) organized a 2-hour sit-in demonstration in front of the SDO Civil office in Gossaigaon, protesting against the treatment of minorities in Assam and various other grievances.

Under the leadership of the West Kokrajhar District Committee, AAMSU, and several Anchalik committees, around five hundred AAMSU activists and supporters participated in the demonstration. They held banners and placards, chanted slogans against the government, and voiced their demands.

Some of the key demands included providing Aadhaar cards to those who were deprived due to the NRC, halting the immediate closure of government schools, reversing the decision to stop providing free textbooks to students, and including minority people in Basundhara Scheme II.

Rafiqul Islam, Vice-president of the Central Committee AAMSU, strongly criticized the BJP government, calling for the cancellation of its controversial decisions. He warned of launching a vigorous democratic movement if their demands were not met. He also criticized the government for its promises, citing examples of increased gas cylinder prices and higher electricity tariffs despite promises to improve electricity services in Assam.

Society will be strong when women of the state become strong: Ajanta Neog

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Oct 5: Ajanta Neog, minister for finance, women & child development, highlighted the importance of women's and children's development in building a stronger society. She made these remarks during a large public gathering organized for 'Mass Awareness on Women Safety, Security & Empowerment' at Phulbari Tea Estate in Rangapara, Sonitpur District. The event aimed to commemorate the International Day of Girl Child on October 11 and was part of a month-long activity program initiated by minister Ajanta Neog in various Assam districts with tea gardens.

Minister Ajanta Neog stressed the need to reduce child and maternal mortality rates in the state, particularly in tea garden areas, where 80% of the work is carried out by women. She emphasized the importance of providing healthy food to women in these areas to ensure the well-being of both mothers and babies. The minister also urged tea community organizations to work together to curb the alleged consumption of country liquor in tea garden areas.

Furthermore, Ajanta Neog called upon all stakeholders connected with the tea community to actively contribute to the educational, cultural, social, and eco-

Himanta lays foundation stone for ₹ 43-crore Baksa District Sports Complex

Approval of ₹ 500 crore road infra development of BTR soon: CM

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 5: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma continued the state government's commitment to the development of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) by laying the foundation stone for a District Sports Complex in Mushalpur, Baksa district. This modern sports complex, spanning 40 bighas of land and costing approximately ₹ 43 crore, will feature state-of-the-art facilities, including a synthetic athletic track, a multipurpose indoor stadium for badminton, table tennis, volleyball, and taekwondo, as well as an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Addressing a public gathering in Mushalpur, chief minister Sarma expressed confidence that the completion of this stadium complex would significantly contribute to the growth, development, and peace that BTR has witnessed in recent years.

This sports complex, combined with other



development initiatives in BTR, is expected to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of the re-

gion's people.

Furthermore, chief minister Sarma an-

nounced financial grants of ₹ 25 crore for the construction of a new Baksa District Commissioner's Office and an additional ₹ 5 crore for a new Circuit House. He also revealed that an allocation of ₹ 500 crore would soon be approved to enhance the road infrastructure in BTR.

CM Sarma encouraged the youth of BTR to take advantage of the upcoming advertisements for filling 5,600 vacancies in Assam Police and explore entrepreneurship opportunities through the Mukhya Mantri Atmanirbhar Asom scheme.

He also touched on subjects such as microfinance loan waivers and efforts to provide ration cards to those who are not yet covered.

The event was attended by UG Brahma, minister of handloom, textile, and other departments, Pramod Boro, chief executive member of BTR, Akash Deep, principal secretary of BTR, and several other dignitaries.

'Amrit Kalah Yatra' spreads patriotic spirit in Baghara



HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Oct 5: State water resources, information, and public relations minister Pijush Hazarika enthusiastically participated in the "Amrit Kalah Yatra" program as part of the "Mor Mati Mor Desh" campaign in Baghara, Morigaon district. The procession covered a distance of approximately 6 km from Baghara Chariali to Baghara Panchayat in the district.

Despite light to heavy rain, the event saw active participation from

various segments of the community, including Morigaon district commissioner Devashish Sharma, SP Hemanta Kr. Das, BJP's president Prabin Medhi, GS Nirmal Konwar, former CEM of TAC Paban Manta, local residents, panchayat representatives, self-help group women, and a large number of people.

Minister Hazarika addressed a gathering at the Baghara Panchayat office premises and expressed his gratitude to the people

who braved the rain to join the procession. He particularly praised the enthusiasm and dedication of the women participants. He assured the people that he would continue working for the development of the region in the future.

The "Mor Mati Mor Desh" program aims to inspire patriotism and participation among the people, and the Morigaon administration is making efforts to ensure its success. Various processions and events are organized across the district, involving ministers, MLAs, government officials, and dignitaries.

As part of the program, soil has been collected from households and will be sent to a state-level function at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati on October 15. The holy soil will eventually be moved to Amrit Batika near the National War Memorial in New Delhi.

The "Amrit Kalah Yatra" is a symbol of unity and patriotic spirit among the people of Baghara and Morigaon district.

Congress protests against power tariff hike in Jorhat

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Oct 5: The Jorhat unit of the Congress party staged a protest today against the recent hike in power tariffs. Protesters expressed their outrage by burning copies of the notification issued by the Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL) announcing the tariff increase.

Carrying placards and banners, the demonstrators voiced their discontent with both the APDCL and the State Government, demanding an immediate rollback of the electricity rate hike. They criticized the BJP-led governments at both the central and state levels for their failure to control the rising prices of essential goods.

During the protest, Congress party members made a solemn commitment that if their party comes to power in the state in the next election, every household will receive up to 200 units of electricity consumption for free.

The protesters highlighted the heavy burden already placed on the people due to frequent power tariff increases over the past two years. They cited the ongoing surge in prices of essential commodities and fuels since the Covid-19 pandemic began, emphasizing that the recent power tariff hike would only add to the difficulties faced by the public.

The protest in Jorhat reflects growing concerns over rising electricity costs and their impact on the daily lives of citizens, a sentiment that the Congress party aims to address in its political agenda.

NTPC conducts successful mock drill on earthquake preparedness

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Oct 5: NTPC Bongaigaon recently organized a mock exercise on earthquake preparedness to evaluate emergency management plans and enhance response capabilities during unforeseen emergencies. The exercise took place under the supervision of G.M. Thangzom, Commandant of CISF.

The drill, held on September 22, 2023, was chaired by Chief Incident Controller Sanjay Kumar Jha, GM, O&M (I/c), and Shri Induri S. Reddy, GM (Maintenance). Various officials from different departments were present along with other senior officers.

The mock drill simulated a major earthquake scenario with Assam as the epicenter. It portrayed a magnitude 7 RS earthquake affecting the New Administrative Building outside the NTPC plant premises. The exercise began at 11:00 AM.

During the mock earthquake scenario, CISF, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), and local police personnel informed NTPC employees and workers about the simulated drill within 15 minutes of the earthquake. The CISF, State Police, and NTPC representatives were the first to arrive at the scene to initiate rescue operations, followed by the NDRF and SDRF teams.

The NDRF and SDRF teams established an Incident Command Post near the incident site, demonstrating the recovery of surface casualties, rope rescue techniques, and other recovery strategies. They rescued people trapped inside and buried beneath the fallen building and administered first aid on-site. The drill included scenarios with moderately injured, critically injured, and deceased individuals who were successfully rescued and provided with medical assistance.

The exercise concluded successfully after a debriefing session, during which improvements and suggestions were discussed. The participants and officials from various departments were educated on disaster response procedures, ensuring better preparedness for real emergencies.

Reep Hazarika sworn in as state information commissioner



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 5: In a formal ceremony held at the Durbar Hall of Raj Bhavan, Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria administered the oath of office to Reep Hazarika, who has taken up the role of State Information Commissioner. Prior to the oath-taking, Paban Kumar Borthakur, chief secretary to the Government of Assam, sought the Governor's permission to commence the proceedings.

The event was graced by the presence of several dignitaries, including Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, State Chief Information Commissioner, A.P. Rout, former State Chief Information Commissioner, Harmeet Singh, Special DGP, SS Meenakshi Sundaram, commissioner & secretary to the Governor, Shantanu P. Gotmare, commissioner & secretary, Administrative Reforms and Training, Pallav Gopal Jha, DC Kamrup(M), and various senior officers from the state government.

Reep Hazarika's appointment as the State Information Commissioner marks an important step in the administration, emphasizing transparency and information access within the state.

Newborn declared dead, found alive in crematorium in Silchar

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 5: In a shocking incident, a newborn, initially declared dead by doctors at a private hospital in Silchar, Assam, was later discovered to be alive, leading to tension in the area. The newborn's father, Ratan Das, claimed that he had taken his wife to a private hospital on Tuesday evening where doctors had informed them of a difficult pregnancy and said they could only save either the mother or the child.

"We allowed them to perform the delivery, and they told us that my wife had given birth to a stillborn. On Wednesday morning, the hospital authorities handed over the child in a packet along with a death certificate," he said.

However, when the family members reached the crematorium for the last rites and opened the packet, they discovered that the child was crying. "We rushed the baby to the hospital where he is currently under treatment," Das stated.

The family members lodged a complaint against the hospital and a doctor, alleging that the hospital staff had kept the newborn inside a packet for more than eight hours without properly examining whether he was alive.

Angry residents of the Mainabil area of the town gathered outside the hospital and staged a protest on Wednesday.

Hospital authorities defended their actions, saying they had kept the baby under observation for eight hours before declaring it dead.

"We examined the baby boy several times, and he was not responding. We declared the child dead after following all necessary processes and then handed him over to the family. There was no wrong intention on our part," a hospital spokesperson stated. (With inputs from PTI)



QUOTE OF THE DAY

I drank the silence of God from a spring in the woods. - Georg Trakl

Democracy in peril

In recent days, the bedrock of Indian democracy has come under a grave threat, as the actions of the ruling government have raised serious concerns about the state of press freedom and democratic norms in the country. The Delhi Police's raids on the offices of the NewsClick news portal and the subsequent arrest of its founder editor, Prabir Purkayastha, and HR head, Amit Chakraborty, on October 3rd, mark a disturbing turning point in India's democratic journey. The NewsClick case serves as a stark illustration of how central government agencies can transform a pending money laundering case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) into one involving conspiracy and terrorism under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). This abrupt conversion sets a dangerous precedent and strikes at the very core of our judicial system. To provide context, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had levied money laundering allegations against NewsClick and its founder editor, Prabir Purkayastha, back in 2021. The case has been under the scrutiny of the Delhi High Court since then. Up to this point, the hearings have failed to establish any violations of foreign funds laws by NewsClick.

While the ED has every right to pursue action under the PMLA if they can prove violations in court, they seemingly chose not to wait for the verdict, realizing that the transactions were in compliance with existing laws. Thus, the task of chastising NewsClick shifted from the Finance Ministry, which officially oversees the ED, to the Home Ministry. The events of October 3rd—raids by the Delhi Police, the forced closure of NewsClick's office, and the arrest of its editor—are the culmination of a series of attacks on media independence during the nine and a half years of Narendra Modi's rule. As the Lok Sabha elections draw near, the stifling of independent media voices is expected to intensify. This juncture represents a crucial moment for independent media in India. The framers of the Indian Constitution identified four pillars of democracy: the legislature, executive, judiciary, and media. The media, as the fourth pillar, is expected to complement the others, fostering a vibrant democracy. It is now incumbent upon the media to turn to the judiciary to assess whether the executive is working to strengthen or undermine democracy.

The ruling dispensation appears to be apprehensive about allowing the press to speak truth to power, evident in their efforts to quash journalistic independence. They seek an embedded media, contrary to the principles espoused by CJI Chandrachud. The journalists targeted on October 3rd and 4th were simply following the same principles that the CJI has championed. Therefore, the entire Indian media, dedicated to upholding the press as the fourth pillar of democracy, looks to the Chief Justice for intervention. The apex court should consider taking suo moto action based on the letter from the journalists' bodies and fulfill its role as the chief custodian of the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court, under the leadership of CJI Chandrachud, has an opportunity to play a historic role in reversing the current erosion of press freedom and restoring the vision of the Constitution's framers regarding the essential role of the press in a thriving democracy. The world is watching, and the fate of Indian democracy hangs in the balance.

MS Swaminathan's Enduring Legacy in Agricultural Science

by: Shashanka Das

Monkombu Sambasivan Swaminathan, popularly known as MS, was a towering figure in the field of agricultural science, both in India and internationally. His influential work in agricultural technology, his unwavering commitment to humanitarian principles, and his strong support for secularism distinguish him as an exceptional leader and influencer.

After completing his doctoral studies in genetics from Cambridge University in 1952, Swaminathan returned to India at a time when the country was grappling with a severe food shortage due to its rapidly growing population. India heavily relied on food imports, which proved to be a significant drain on its finances. Recognizing the urgent need to improve food production, particularly in terms of higher yields, Swaminathan played a pivotal role in the development of new varieties of rice and wheat.

Working closely with the renowned scientist Norman Borlaug, Swaminathan's team successfully crossbred the Norin-10 wheat varieties from Japan with Indian wheat varieties, resulting in the creation of short-statured wheat varieties during the early stages of the Green Revolution. These new varieties, including Kalyan Sona, Sonalika, Safed Lerma, and Chhoti Lerma, had the potential to yield between 6 and 8 tonnes per hectare.

In the domain of rice cultivation, Swaminathan and his team introduced short-stemmed rice varieties by crossbreeding the Chinese dwarf variety Dee-geo-Woo-gen with tall indica varieties in India. This led to the development of several varieties such as Jaya, Padma, Hamsa, Krishna, Cauvery, Bala, Ratna, Vijaya Co-34, Jamuna, Sabarmati, Pankaj, Jagannath, and many more, most of which had the capacity to yield 8 tonnes per hectare. Swaminathan's collaboration with other esteemed scientists like EA Siddiq and VP Singh also resulted in the creation of popular basmati rice varieties, with Pusa Basmati being the world's first semi-dwarf, high-yielding basmati rice variety.

The advancements in rice and wheat cultivation brought about by Swaminathan's efforts triggered a remarkable revolution in

Indian agriculture.

The Green Revolution successfully increased food production without the need for expansion of agricultural land, an accomplishment Swaminathan likened to an analogy from Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking-Glass". He compared the situation to the Red Queen's statement to Alice, emphasizing that progressive efforts were required to increase food production at least twice as fast as the rising demand.

Nevertheless, despite the achievements of the Green Revolution, Swaminathan was acutely aware of its limitations. He believed that comprehensive land reforms should have accompanied the revolution, as it failed to address issues of land inequality. Swaminathan also recognized the ongoing challenges of equitable food distribution, as India continued to grapple with mass hunger and malnourishment, even after achieving self-sufficiency in food production. He consistently advocated for universal food distribution and the right to food for every citizen, recognizing that mere increases in production were not enough to eradicate hunger.

Throughout his life, Swaminathan actively supported farmers' movements and tirelessly fought for their rights. Notably, he stood in solidarity with the farmers protesting against the controversial farm laws enacted in India during 2020-2021, and expressed his joy when the laws were ultimately repealed. Swaminathan believed that the welfare and empowerment of farmers were crucial to ensuring food security and a more equitable society.

With Swaminathan's passing, India's agricultural science community mourns the loss of a great leader. However, his legacy will continue to inspire future generations of scientists to tackle the country's challenges, particularly those related to deprivation and inequality. Swaminathan's commitment to scientific progress, humanism, and the well-being of farmers will forever serve as a shining example. We hope that his legacy will ignite the minds of young scientists, motivating them to address these pressing issues and work towards creating a more sustainable and equitable agricultural system for India and the world. *(The author can be reached at shashankadas007@gmail.com)*

Smile: A precious gift of health, prosperity and stress relief

The first Friday of every October i.e. 6th October this year is World Smile Day. The idea of World Smile Day is proposed by Harvey Ball, an American commercial artist from Worcester, Massachusetts. The iconic smiley face was created by him in 1963. Since then, it has captured everyone's attention to celebrate joy. The first Smile Day in 1999 was celebrated with enthusiasm and pomp without any hindrance, because a smile is an expression which contains solutions to many problems and troubles. In 2001, after Harvey passed away, the Harvey Ball World Smile Foundation was established as a tribute to the 'smiley' creator.

According to Harvey Ball, the Massachusetts artist who founded this day, we should all dedicate one day every year to smiling and being kind to the whole world. Because the smiling face does not know any political, geographical or religious things. Instead of smiling just today, make it a habit to smile every day. This will not only ease your problems but your loved ones will also be happy to see you.

Smiling is essential for good health, mental peace and overall development. Today's life is full of stress, unrest, worries and problems; there is a strong need for a smile. Because laughing and smiling is very helpful in everyone's physical, mental, emotional and intellectual development.

Smiling is the key to success in our life; it is also the solution to many problems. Smile is a balm that heals the wounds of a sad heart. There is exercise for our face and rest for our mind. Research says that as we grow older, we smile less. We have become old because we have stopped smiling. Mother Teresa said, peace begins with a smile. Your happiness starts from your lips. This year on World Smile Day, don't forget to curl your lips a little. It will be contagious and create a positive environment around you.

One mantra of health is to smile openly. We should smile and keep smiling no matter what happens is the mantra of a successful and meaningful life. But sometimes the whole day passes without a smile. There are clouds of sadness and restlessness, the sunshine of smiles cannot bloom.

Smiling and laughing is such a positive emotion which makes not only the internal but also the external appearance of a person prosperous and effective. Smile is a powerful emotion which has the ability to energize a person and make the world peaceful.



It affects the electro-magnetic field of the person and transmits positive energy to the person. When a person smiles in a group, his smile spreads positive energy in the entire environment.

In today's stressful environment, people are forgetting their smile and laughter, resulting in inviting stress-related diseases like high blood pressure, diabetes, migraine, hysteria, madness, depression etc. Smiling increases energy and oxygen circulation.

Smiling openly strengthens the components of the body. It also increases the speed of blood circulation in the body. Apart from this the digestive system functions more efficiently. That is why doctors also say that smiling is useful for patients suffering from every disease. Because by saying loudly and smiling, every part of the body gets movement. Due to this, the hormone producing system (endorphin gland) present in the body starts functioning smoothly, which is helpful in getting rid of many diseases.

The people who make us smile through their words, actions and thoughts remain etched in our memories. We may like or dislike someone for many reasons. But in the long run, the people who deserve our love are those who make us laugh and bring a smile to our faces. Perhaps that is why Victor Borg says, 'Laughter is the shortest bridge to cross the distance between two people.'

It also comes as many suspect Saudi Arabia may compromise on Palestinian rights as part of a US-led effort to get the kingdom to recognize Israel. In a first, two Israeli ministers visited Saudi Arabia in the last week to attend international conferences.

Politics also loomed large when Saudi club Al-Ittihad FC refused this week to play an Asian Champions League match in Isfahan against Iran's Sepahan because of busts of controversial assassinated Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani at the entrance to the pitch. Iranian media reported that the busts had been in place for three years and that Al Ittihad practiced in the stadium earlier this week without making an issue of the figures.

The match would have been one of the first since 2016 that Saudi and Iranian clubs would have played games against one another on home soil.

In a similar incident in June, Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, in Tehran for the first time since Saudi Arabia and Iran reestablished diplomatic relations, demanded a change of venue for a news conference with his Iranian counterpart because the initially scheduled room featured a photo of Mr. Soleimani on the wall. China mediated the restoration of relations in March. Saudi Arabia severed ties in 2016 after Iranians ransacked Saudi diplomatic missions in protest against the kingdom's execution of a prominent Shiite Muslim cleric.

Soleimani was killed near Baghdad airport in a United States drone strike in January 2020. Saudi Arabia had designated as terrorists Soleimani and his Al Quds Brigade, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) unit operating outside Iran. Iranian authorities celebrate Soleimani as a national hero.

Saudi Arabia asserts the brigade and Soleimani were involved in Iranian attacks on Gulf shipping and Saudi oil installations and support Yemen's Houthi rebels and Shiite Muslim militias in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Some 60,000 spectators

waited in vain this week in Isfahan's Naghsh-e Jahn Stadium as Al-Ittihad refused to leave the dressing room if Soleimani's busts remained in place.

Laughing and smiling is such a precious gift, which nature has bestowed only on humans. Humor and smile are a universal language. It has the ability to integrate humanity irrespective of caste, religion, colour, gender. This is an initiative to connect man to man. Smiles and laughter are capable of creating a new world by connecting different communities. This idea may seem imaginary, but people have a deep belief that only laughter and smiles can unite the world.

Both happiness and sorrow are two sides of a coin. If a person remains cheerful in both situations, his mind always remains under control and he can stay away from worries. Smiling brightens the soul. With this you not only get pleasure but also make others happy. Humour and smile is the enemy of pain, a sure cure for despair and anxiety and a panacea for sorrows. Laughing and smiling brings enthusiasm to the body and mind and smiling from the heart is no less than a medicine. Smile works as a great tonic.

Prominent scholars and thinkers like Thackeray and Shakespeare have also confirmed that a happy person lives longer. There is a scale to measure the satisfaction of human soul, physical health and stability of intellect and that is the happiness on the face. Professor Sophie Scott of the University of London says, "Through laughter, our subconscious mind signals that we are relaxed and feeling safe."

Some postings suggested that Sepahan players applauded the fans. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC), the continent's soccer body, said it was looking into the incident. The AFC could penalize both clubs. Sepahan could be fined and lose points for putting political symbols in the stadium in violation of the fictitious assertion by football regulators that sports and politics are separate, while Al-Ittihad could be punished for refusing to play a match.

Two weeks ago, Saudi club Al-Nassr played Iran's Persepolis in Tehran's empty Azadi Stadium after the AFC imposed a one-game spectator ban because of fan behaviour. The Isfahan stadium protest follows a crackdown on months of protests sparked a year ago by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in Iran's morality police custody.

Security forces killed more than 500 protesters and detained 20,000 others, including footballers, journalists, and film stars. Seven protesters were sentenced to death and executed in what the United Nations UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran Javād Rehmān called "arbitrary, summary and sham trials marred by torture allegations."

This week's hospitalisation of a 16-year-old girl in Tehran has put Iran back on edge. Activists alleged the girl was beaten on a train into a coma by the morality police for not complying with Iran's mandatory hijab rules. State-run media asserted the girl had fainted because her blood pressure dropped and had hit the side of the train carriage.

Al-Ittihad's refusal to play Sepahan highlights limits to Saudi Arabia and Iran's rapprochement. The two countries seek to cooperate on economic and other issues without attempting to resolve fundamental differences symbolized by Soleimani's legacy. The Al-Ittihad incident casts a shadow over Saudi and Iranian efforts to manage their differences to prevent them from spinning out of control. *(IPA Service)*

Hotei was a disciple of Lord Buddha in Japan. He was a beggar of very humble nature. He believed in living life in a very detached and neutral manner. Whatever work he was doing, he would become completely immersed in it. There is a belief in Japan that once Hotei became so enthralled while meditating that he started laughing and smiling loudly while meditating. Only after this amazing incident, people started addressing him by the name of Laughing Buddha.

Traveling, exploring the country, giving smiles and happiness to people became the aim of the Laughing Buddha. Laughing Buddha is also known as Putai in China. Chinese people see him from the perspective of a beggar who, with a bag of money and grains in one hand, shows his big belly and slim body with a cheerful face and gives positive energy to everyone while smiling. He is also considered a messenger of prosperity and happiness and a symbol of removal of Vaastu defects in homes. In countries like Japan, people teach their children to laugh and smile right from the beginning, so that their future generation is capable and bright.

Most of the countries of the world are afraid of terrorism; there is a chaos of panic and unrest inside every person. In such times, only a smile can spread positive energy across the world. Harvard University professor Teresa Amabile has said that our brain is most creative when we laugh. We should promote laughter and smiling not only in the family environment but also in the office. The office environment should be one of harmony and laughter, so that enthusiasm for work can be spread among the team.

Smiling can prove effective for a beautiful face. Smiling increases the body's immunity, which increases a person's self-confidence. Medical experiments have found that smiling for 10 minutes results in two hours of deep sleep.

People who smile become many friends and in this way the feeling of brotherhood and unity arises in them, we never realize when. Every human being is troubled by fear, insecurity and terrorism, and then the great need of 'Smile Day' is felt. Never before has this much unrest been seen in this world. In this busy, turbulent and stressful life, people should take out at least one day for them and smile with full heart. *(The author is a journalist, columnist who can be reached at latitgarg11@gmail.com)*

The play of politics in the practice of sports in Saudi Arabian and Iran

By James M Dorsey

Saudi and Iranian sports have politics written into their DNA. Little more than a decade ago, Saudi Arabia fielded three expatriate Saudi women athletes at the 2012 London Olympics to avoid an International Olympic Committee (IOC) ban on participation.

The IOC had made fielding women athletes a condition for Saudi male athletes, alongside Qataris and Bruneians, for competing in the tournament. At the time, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Brunei were the three countries that had never included women in their Olympic teams.

Today, women's sports is a tool in Saudi Arabia's effort to cement its position as a global player and leader of the Muslim world, defender of Muslim rights, and arbitrator of what constitutes 'moderate' Islam. In the kingdom's latest move, the Riyadh-based Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation (ISSF) warned that a ban on French women athletes wearing a hijab, or headcover, at next year's Paris Olympics "send(s) a message of exclusion."

The Federation groups representatives of 39 Muslim-majority National Olympic Committees and governmental youth and sports organisations. It is headed by Saudi sports minister Abdulaziz bin Turki Al Faisal, a member of the kingdom's ruling family and former racing driver. Last week, the IOC insisted hijabs would be allowed inside the athletes' village at next year's Olympics but stopped short of applying the rule to the French squad. The IOC said it was in touch with the French Olympic Committee "to further understand the situation regarding the French athletes."

Earlier, French sports minister Amelie Oudrea-Castella told France 3 television that no French delegation member would be allowed to wear the hijab to support France's "strict secularism." In a statement, the ISSF asserted the ban "contradicts the principles of equality, inclusivity, and respect for cultural diversity that the Olympics stand for. The hijab is an aspect of many Muslim women's identity and should be respected."

The ISSF said, "This ban not only infringes upon the religious freedom of French Muslim athletes but could also deny them the opportunity to participate in the Olympics, representing their country and inspiring others." The Olympic ban follows the August banning of the abaya, or

women's whole body cover, in French schools.

By defending a Muslim majority view in favour of a woman's right to wear a hijab, Saudi Arabia, a dominant force in the ISSF, brandishes its religious credentials at a time when it has lifted several restrictions on women in the kingdom, including in sports, eased gender segregation, sought to reduce the role of religion in public life, and introduced Western-style entertainment.

It also comes as many suspect Saudi Arabia may compromise on Palestinian rights as part of a US-led effort to get the kingdom to recognize Israel. In a first, two Israeli ministers visited Saudi Arabia in the last week to attend international conferences.

Politics also loomed large when Saudi club Al-Ittihad FC refused this week to play an Asian Champions League match in Isfahan against Iran's Sepahan because of busts of controversial assassinated Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani at the entrance to the pitch. Iranian media reported that the busts had been in place for three years and that Al Ittihad practiced in the stadium earlier this week without making an issue of the figures.

The match would have been one of the first since 2016 that Saudi and Iranian clubs would have played games against one another on home soil.

In a similar incident in June, Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, in Tehran for the first time since Saudi Arabia and Iran reestablished diplomatic relations, demanded a change of venue for a news conference with his Iranian counterpart because the initially scheduled room featured a photo of Mr. Soleimani on the wall. China mediated the restoration of relations in March. Saudi Arabia severed ties in 2016 after Iranians ransacked Saudi diplomatic missions in protest against the kingdom's execution of a prominent Shiite Muslim cleric.

Soleimani was killed near Baghdad airport in a United States drone strike in January 2020. Saudi Arabia had designated as terrorists Soleimani and his Al Quds Brigade, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) unit operating outside Iran. Iranian authorities celebrate Soleimani as a national hero.

Centre's raids on NewsClick is a part of policy of intimidation of independent media

By K Raveendran

The use of terrorist laws against journalists in the NewsClick makes the Narendra Modi government's intentions very clear: terrorise independent media outfits which dare not to follow their 'gaudi' counterparts that dominate the country's media scene. The government apparently feels that even the few that remain outside its orbit cannot be allowed to operate, given that new threats in the form of a caste re-assertion as well as the emergence of a more unified opposition under the INDIA bloc have made its position look increasingly vulnerable in terms of the upcoming elections.

The case against NewsClick, pending since 2021, has primarily been about alleged money laundering and was being pursued under the prevention of money laundering Act (PMLA). The charges included overvaluing of shares, diversion of funds and violation of foreign direct investment (FDI) regulations. The portal and founder Prabir Purkayastha had even secured a Delhi high court order restraining Enforcement Directorate from 'coercive action' against them. But in August this year, ED moved the high court to vacate its earlier order offering protection to the accused. The court is yet to pronounce its verdict on NewsClick's plea to quash an Economic Offences Wing criminal case against the portal. But the government has now slapped terrorism charges against not only the organisation but its functionaries as well.

The swiftness and drama of the raids make it clear that the idea is to intimidate. Searches were conducted at 30 locations, including the shared residences of staff, and computers and mobile phones seized. The raids were reminiscent of action against outlawed terror outfits such as ISIS and most recently the PFI. The charges are also similar: treason. The raids fall into a perfect pattern ever since Modi assumed office in 2014. In February this year, raids were conducted on the premises of BBC in the wake of the release of a documentary which was critical of the prime minister. Similar actions have been taken against other media units critical of the Modi government, such as The Quint and The Wire. In 2021, income tax officials launched an investigation into the affairs of the Dainik Bhaskar, one of the leading and influential newspaper groups in the country, for criticising the pitfalls in the government's handling of the Covid pandemic.

The use of enforcement and investigating agencies to settle score has not escaped the attention of the judiciary, which has of late been increasingly vocal about the problem. A three-member bench of the Supreme Court is set to examine the whole gamut of issues raised by critics about the abuse of central agencies. It may not be just coincidence that the Supreme Court has expressed itself quite unequivocally against such abuse, providing insights as to how the court plans to approach the problem in the days to come.

Even as Purkayastha and his HR manager are undergoing interrogation in ED's custody, the agency has been at the receiving end of the Supreme Court rebuke after it cancelled two similar arrests in a money-laundering case. The court said the Enforcement Directorate cannot behave in a vindictive manner and must be seen to act with the highest degree of fairness.

"Every action of the ED is expected to be transparent, above board and conforming to pristine standards of fair play in action," the Supreme Court said in its judgment a case in which Basant Bansal and Pankaj Bansal, directors of Gurugram-based realty group M3M, had approached the court against a Punjab and Haryana High Court order which dismissed their request for bail in June.

The court observed that in this case, the facts demonstrated that the probe agency 'failed to discharge its functions and exercise its powers'. "ED is not expected to be vindictive in its conduct and must be seen to be acting with utmost probity and with the highest degree of dispassion and fairness," said the judges. The failure of the accused to respond to questions put to them could not be sufficient grounds for arrest by the Enforcement Directorate, they added.

The judges observed that ED had to specifically find reason to believe that the accused are guilty of an offence under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and mere non-cooperation in response to the summons would not be enough to arrest anyone. "It is not open to the ED to expect an admission of guilt from the person summoned for interrogation," the court asserted. *(IPA Service)*

Age of consent: Law panel report simply diagnoses, doesn't solve the problem

By: Yashaswini Basu

The Law Commission released its 283rd report last week with the focus on 'Age of Consent under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012'. This is indeed a timely exposition into a fault line between the legislative intent and the real-life manifestations of the stringent laws around 'age of consent', i.e., the legal age to consent to sexual relations. In India, the age of consent stands at 18 years, as enshrined in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

However, over the past couple of years, ground reports, numerous court orders, and observations from higher judicial officers have revealed that such a stricture has caused widespread abuse of the law and resulted in over-broad criminalisation of adolescent sexuality.

In the report, the Commission rejects the feasibility of reducing the age of consent in India in anticipation of an increase in child marriages and trafficking as a direct consequence. However, it does acknowledge that a blanket criminalisation of consensual sex, even between minors, can lead to the undermining of their agency and bodily autonomy and unjust tribulations.

Hence, the report captures: One, the social reality of the prevalence of child marriages despite legal embargoes.

And second, the bitter truth

about the misuse of a well-intentioned law. But where it stops short is in the mere diagnosis and does not delve into a resolution.

Evolution of Age of Consent in India

Before assessing the report's implications, it may be opportune to recollect the evolution of the age of consent in India and the nuances that it encapsulates with regard to sexual autonomy.

The age of consent in India started out at merely 10 years old during colonial rule and, through successive amendments, ascended to 12. It later became 14, then 15, and finally 18 when the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) came into being in 2006.

The interlinkages between marriage and sexual consent is of utmost importance because in India marriage imparts a de facto right upon the husband to have sex with his wife.

However, it was not before the enactment of the POCSO Act that the emphasis on the age of consent, especially in the prosecution of rape cases, was laid down.

Through provisions like mandatory reporting and diluting consent of anyone under the age of 18, the POCSO Act established any sexual activity involving anyone under 18 years as "statutory rape."

Interestingly, the bill, when presented in the Lok Sabha, had 16 years as the age of consent but was revised in the Rajya Sabha following protests from mem-

bers.

A Decade of the Diktat: Where Do We Stand Now?

It's been over 10 years since the POCSO Act was enforced. In that context, a few facts need to be reckoned with.

Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, an independent think tank in legal research, report – 'A Decade of POCSO' said, "One in every three POCSO cases ends in an acquittal, and in 48.66 percent of the cases, the accused was a friend or romantic partner of the survivor."

Similarly, a report by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and Enfold highlights that in 87.9 percent of the so-called 'romantic' cases, the victim herself admitted to being in a 'consensual' relationship with the accused.

This highlights that the POCSO Act is largely being weaponised to control the sexual autonomy of adolescents irrespective of whether they have attained sexual maturity.

The repositories of POCSO cases all over the country are surfeit with instances where the accused is in fact the chosen partner of a girl whom the family disapproves of, either on grounds of socio-economic or caste or religious differences.

In such cases, not only is the boy wrongfully criminalised but also the girl is forcefully victimised.

This yields two conse-



quences:

Trauma of the trial sours the relationship between the adolescents.

And second, the stigmatisation often forces the parties to go into seclusion.

Moreover, the fear of law, forces teenagers to resort to unsanitary means of abortion in case of unwanted pregnancies.

Various benches of the different High Courts including the Karnataka High Court, Bombay High Court, Madhya Pradesh High Court, and even the Chief Justice himself have opined that the age of consent in its current all encompassing form can cause more harm than good.

The Law Commission's Report: Intent & Impact

The report has observed:

"After a careful review of existing child protection laws, various judgments and considering the maladies of child abuse, child trafficking and child prostitution that plague our society, the Commission is of the measured view

that it is not advisable to tinker with the existing age of consent under the POCSO Act."

283rd Law Commission Report

The Law Commission hinges upon the collaterality of potential increase in child marriages and trafficking if the age of consent is reduced.

However, it does provide a detailed caveat in delineating the different situations where the age of consent must be dealt with in discretionary manner.

Accepting the overwhelming number of cases where consensual relationships between adolescents are shackled by the systematic rigours of the POCSO Act, the report listed down two amendments to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2015 and the POCSO Act on the following lines:

Where both parties are aged between 16 and 18, their case be dealt under the Juvenile Justice(JJ) Act instead of POCSO wherein section 18 of the JJ Act

be amended to dispose of the cases through measures alternative to imprisonment.

Where one party is aged between 16 and 18 years and the other is an adult, the courts should exercise "guided judicial discretion" while dealing with the matter and through an amendment to the POCSO Act, less than minimum punishment be awarded wherever applicable.

The report also highlights that sexual maturity does not often align with maturity in decision-making and in the milieu of growing incidents of grooming, cyber crimes, sex-tortion etc. A reduction in the age of consent will provide a "safe harbour" for miscreants involved in trafficking, prostitution and even child marriages.

While the report does calibrate the broad implications of any reduction in the age of consent, it does not facilitate a resolution.

To begin with, age of consent for marriage and age of consent for sex are mutually exclusive and can remain so even if only the POCSO Act was to be amended.

This is also evinced by the fact that sex with one's wife below the age of 18 years was criminalised only in 2017, a good decade after the enactment of the law prohibiting child marriage.

In fact, till date the consent of a wife remains legally irrelevant. On the issue of trafficking, there is no place for consent.

Trafficking – be it for prostitution or slavery or bonded labour

or organ extortion – is a heinous crime under Section 370 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the provisions herein confer rigorous punishments, irrespective of the age of the victim.

Reducing the age of consent therefore need not aggravate the risks of early marriages or trafficking.

Moreover, while the report espouses "guided discretion", the recommendation remains over-broad and vague in its lettering thus increasing the risks of contrary judicial positions in case of consensual adolescent sexuality.

The report, however, rightly observes that sexual maturity must be adequately paired with intellectual maturity.

So sensitisation and awareness of safe touch and consent as well as sexual and reproductive health must be conducted for young adults, debunking the taboos and myths that shroud the sexual knowledge of most teenagers in our country.

In the context of misappropriation of the POCSO Act to undermine agency of young adults or to further familial or personal vendetta and the glaring reality of prolonged trials which entails significant suffering even before one is pronounced guilty, the reports' impassioned support to keeping the age of consent as is, will continue to quillotine consensual adolescent sexual relations and is likely to not do much in bridging the gaps in the current criminal law related to rape cases. (Courtesy: the Quint)

A Chinese toolkit for global influence

By: Harsh V. Pant & Kalpit A Mankikar

The build-up of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) capability to influence global narratives seems to have been in sync with the nation's ascent in the global order, as revealed in a report from the US State Department's Global Engagement Center that monitors foreign disinformation.

The propensity of Communist parties to shape narratives is universally acknowledged. However, in China's case, the shift from Deng Xiaoping's maxim "lao guāng yāng hui", which emphasised keeping a low profile, to Xi Jinping's "fēnfā yǒu wéi" that pushes for achieving things, has meant a greater scrutiny of the CPC's disinformation toolkit in recent times. Second,

China's rise as the second-largest economy in the world has enabled it to convert wealth into power and influence. The report notes that the CPC has used its cash piles to shape narratives on territorial and maritime disputes, economic engagement, and human rights, while drowning out versions of its rivals.

The news media is a primary source through which people consume information; however, for Beijing, it is the main conduit in its battle for hearts and minds. In East Africa, the Chinese regime paid a newspaper to publish favourable news items, which were presented as independent reportage. Shortly after Honduras switched diplomatic recognition to Beijing from Taipei early this year, the Chinese-state outlets opened bureaus and inked a pact on sharing content with Honduras state media.

Under the guise of capacity-building programmes, local journalists will be schooled in seeing the Americas through a Chinese prism. Nearer home, through the aegis of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework, deepening of cooperation to "combat disinformation" is being pushed. The proposal envisages setting up a Sino-Pak think-tank to monitor reports from China, media outlets, Confucius centres, and local Chinese companies. It must be noted that China's deepening economic engagement in Pakistan has created a pushback from places like Balochistan, resulting in attacks on Chinese nationals stationed in Pakistan.

Thus, through the joint mechanism, China's aim was to manipulate the information environment in Pakistan to secure its interests.

When the Chinese regime is unable to make the Fourth Estate amenable to its interests, other institutions come in handy. Both Chinese state-owned enterprises and private companies have taken the legal route to suppress critics. A Chinese company filed a lawsuit against a writer in Taiwan, demanding a retraction of a piece or amending it with information that it provided.

Telcom major (Huawei) filed a defamation suit against a researcher in France for merely claiming that the firm had ties to the Party-state. The US report notes that China Inc

uses those jurisdictions where there is a high probability of judges imposing stiff legal costs that drain out a defendant's financial resources.

It is said that diplomats are sent to lie abroad for the good of their country. But in his book, China's Civilian Army', Peter Martin posits that Chinese leader Zhou Enlai moulded its envoys as "People's Liberation Army in civilian clothing" sent overseas to wage wars. In the Xi era, this indoctrination was transmogrified into the high-pitched wolf-warrior diplomacy. For example, the Chinese embassy warned the Indian media to desist from referring to Taiwan as a country.

Thus, the US report cites an instance of China's diplomatic corps far exceeding their brief in Germany, where they pressured universities to cancel discussions on a book about Xi. The presence of its diplomatic corps is increasing on social media platforms, this is accompanied by a force multiplier in the form of bot networks that either amplify important online posts by envoys, or suppress sensitive hashtags on Xinjiang during the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics. Chinese technology, too, aids in this battle of narratives with PRC-made phones being programmed to censor phrases like "Taiwan independence", "Free Tibet", and "democracy".

To conclude, since its inception, the CPC has been consolidating its legitimacy at home and abroad. Initially, the Party-state manipulated the message through ideologically-committed sympathisers. Since Xi's ascent to power, there has been a greater push within the CPC to make "China's narrative the world's story".

To pursue this goal, China's toolkit weaponises technology and its economic statecraft that are backed by legions masquerading as diplomatic corps. In the aftermath of the 2020 Galwan clashes, India systematically curbed instruments that China uses to expand its influence.

Agreements signed between Indian universities and China on Confucius centres, and educational cooperation between higher education institutions were reviewed.

India banned several Chinese apps, chiefly among them a short-video hosting service TikTok. The US report observes that China is constantly improving its techniques to manipulate the outcomes of elections in democracies, with its stock-in-trade being disinformation about political parties, candidates, and creating rifts between social groups. The big question is, while India has been battering down the hatches with respect to Chinese influence, do content sharing tie-ups between Chinese news agencies and Indian media, which the report red-flags, unwittingly allow the latter to become the proverbial borrowed boat for Chinese propaganda to cross the sea? Managing the China challenge requires a whole-of-nation approach, and the media too will have to reassess their own priorities. (Courtesy: ORF)

Throttling what remains of independent media in India

By: Anand K. Sahay

atan, like God, works round the clock. Thus it is that, of all days, on October 2, Gandhi Jayanti, a day that is meant to celebrate the ideals of truth and ahimsa, New India was plotting to carry out the biggest and most violent swoop modern India has known against journalists and journalism – and in effect against the right of free speech and free expression of the people.

The Special Branch of the Delhi Police, which reports to New India's top executives, delivered the goods the first thing the following morning. A knock on the doors of close to 50 journalists, commentators, artists and others – in Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida and Ghaziabad – all in the National Capital Region, and also in far-away Mumbai, led to intense questioning and later removal for a deeper probe elsewhere by posers of police – and eventually to two arrests.

The operation was menacing and blunt. Was it Gestapo-like – meaning executed in true fascist fashion – or are we not there yet but in a police state, India-style? The two need not be co-terminus. The matter is perhaps open to debate.

On the face of it, the State was seeking to unearth and arrest Chinese moles and agents, no less, based on patterns of Chinese payments presumably received by them. Flagging China is clearly a ploy to generate sympathy for the government's action when public opinion in the country is extremely negative on China after Beijing's incursion into Eastern Ladakh.

Invoking China here is breathtaking hypocrisy, of course. The PM says the Chinese forces never came into Indian territory! Chinese multinationals operate in India – and contribute to the PM CARES Fund of dubious provenance. India and China have a roaring trade and India is awash with Chinese investments. Then, why the fuss? Probably, they think that a spy and Chinese propaganda angle are easier excuses if the intent is to intimidate journalists and bring the dreaded anti-terrorism law UAPA against journalists. A few years ago, a journalist called Rajeev Sharma was dramatically "captured" by the police in the car park of the Press Club of India in New Delhi. He faced hell for a long time until the courts gave him relief. He was supposed to be trading in military secrets. His name was besmirched in the mainstream media, since the police version was highlighted. In the end, a lot depends on the judiciary in defending citizens' rights, more so when the State is on the rampage.

The ruse of Chinese funds is a low trick that bears a closer look. The much-touted illegal money, which is being sedulously suggested, relies on a 2021 case of the Enforcement Directorate against the news portal NewsClick, whose journalists have been raided and arrested. The ongoing case appears to be a journey without end; such are the gifts of the regime. But in reality, the so-called Chinese funding is an investment by a listed US company in the form of a business venture that is legally permissible. The investment then is far from being Chinese, although the US partner in question is said to be sympathetic to China. Even so, there is nothing in the day-to-day news and views coverage of NewsClick to suggest an underlying pro-China sentiment over the years – not that this can be a crime.

It is to be noted that the innuendo against this portal appears to rely wholly on a shoddy report in the New York Times in August, in which NewsClick is mentioned in passing as an entity that "sprinkles" Chinese "talking points". Typical innuendo of the long-dead Cold War era.

But where is the proof? Have Indian in-

vestigators run the NYT story through a check and vet process, or have they conveniently adopted it wholesale in order to strike at a stream of journalism in India that appears to embarrass the regime, which has of late come to encounter serious political opposition in the country?

Any half-decent judicial authority will easily see through the State's game. Given today's political context, it would appear that other journalists who question and argue and refuse to kowtow, are now more likely to attract a greater degree of government ire than previously. Key state and national elections are approaching. The stakes are getting higher. The October 3 developmental is a pointer. Spreading communal mayhem, and largesse for big capital, is likely to prove less easy now as people are getting wiser. For the regime, giving it a bad name and then shooting the messenger is the easy way out.

Several of those picked up for questioning are employees of the news portal in question or contribute to it while being independent writers or video producers, and as such are unlikely to be acquainted with the company's financial dealings. So, why pick on them if not to spread anxiety in the media? Crucially, one of them, Paranjay Guha Thakurta, is a leading international expositor of the games that the magnate Gautam Adani has played in his controversial financial and stock market activities.

It is by now well understood that Adani enjoys a relationship of great mutual trust and warmth with the prime minister. Guha Thakurta would have been given a piece of hell by Modi's police on account of the Adani factor, rather than anything else. Nobody can believe he is a propagandist for China or any other foreign power. Then there is the curious case of some non-journalists. Sanjay Rajoura, D. Raghunandan, and Sohail Hashmi. Rajoura is a famous stand-up comic who is known to take the mickey out of the regime. The second named is a scientist and science propagator, and Hashmi is an amateur historian and cultural activist with a broad left-wing inclination. Why were they questioned and their laptops and mobile phones seized? On the whole, it appears that those picked up for questioning, or later arrested, have one common trait: they do not take the regime's words, actions, and policies at face value – and question and propagate alternative narratives.

In broad-brush terms, these may be narratives of the wider non-party Left in India concerned with the lives of ordinary people, the virtues of rationality and the methods of science, and the outright rejection of communalism or majoritarian thought in any form. In political terms, this section of opinion has grown in recent times as Modi and his government have reneged on promise upon promise and converted the country's territory into a religious battlefield.

Before Modi too, India was hardly the pristine, ideal, democracy in the poverty-stricken, sub-tropical regions of the world, as its makers, through the freedom movement, may have desired – especially Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, on whom fell the burden to first lead the country. Individual journalists were attacked by the State from time to time. In the Emergency years, journalists were jailed. Subsequently too, journalists were picked up on false charges, including in the Modi years. But the events of October 3 are in a class of their own on account of the widespread extent of the single-day attack, which we cannot say for sure has ended. Renewed questioning or more arrests can hardly be ruled out. The message of intimidation continues to ring loudly.

Some of what happened in the name of

day-long interrogation has been recorded, in the public interest, by two prominent and outstanding journalists – Abhisar Sharma and Guha Thakurta, after they emerged from an ordeal that would have left anyone shaken. But these two remain steady, confident and unrepentant, ready to get on with their professional lives.

Prabir Purkayastha, the founder-editor of NewsClick, a relatively small news and current affairs portal in the national capital but one with growing influence on account of its fact-based coverage that the regime does not like, and a senior manager of the portal, Amit Chakravarty, are believed to have been apprehended under the dreaded UAPA.

UAPA is rightly condemned as an unlawful law by political activists and legal luminaries alike because, as the provision now stands, the government can simply declare any individual of being a terrorist without furnishing evidence and going through even the motions of due process, put them in jail, and throw away the keys.

In the years 2016-20, some 24,000 individuals were booked under UAPA, according to official figures. The conviction rate is a mere 2%, suggesting that the cases are mostly bogus, if not downright fictitious. Thus, nearly all those taken in under UAPA are languishing in jail in miserable conditions, awaiting trial.

Is this the fate that awaits a prominent founder-editor whose organisation did some of the more meaningful reporting of the year-long movement against the egregious NRC-CAA, which sought to re-define the notion of India's citizenship on a straightforward communal basis by a biased regime; and again the year-long movement of farmers against the now discredited farm laws being sought to be pushed by the regime to propitiate Big Capital?

It is sobering to recall that a Jesuit, the 80-year-old Father Stan Swamy, a UAPA prisoner highly regarded for his selfless work amongst the poor tribal people of Jharkhand and for his ascetic way of life, died in custody, denied any worthwhile medical assistance. Almost all those arrested along with Fr Swamy – among them scholars, intellectuals and academics, a revolutionary poet and bard, besides a journalist-activist, Gautam Navlakha – in the infamous Elgar Parishad case of 2018, are still facing the serious charge of terrorism. Especially in the case of Stan Swamy, the Bombay high court made the right noises but can hardly be said to have covered itself with glory. In sensitive matters, when in a bind, the lower judiciary seems to be driven by anxiety and the higher judiciary by technicality – giving the meat of the matter a wide berth. This, at any rate, is the popular perception.

A polished, high-order, representation and appeal was made to the Chief Justice of India by the media fraternity on October 4, following the brazen, broad daylight repression of the media and after a powerful protest meeting of journalists, writers and prominent citizens at the Press Club of India in New Delhi. This could well be a weathervane moment.

Malicious and mindless misuse of the UAPA? Journalists as terrorists? These are the points of consideration. In a democracy, must the privileges, rights, privacy, and juridical persona of citizens be made automatically and naturally subservient to the whims, prejudices and malafide actions of the State?

If some sections of the UAPA are appealed against before an appropriate court, will leaders of the judiciary stand by the citizen against the state, and strike down the more dangerous provisions of the UAPA or direct their modification so that ordinary citizens are not placed on the same footing as terrorists? Parliament

makes laws, but the Supreme Court interprets them, and interpretations constitute a part of the body of laws. We will know if the top court is ready to step up to the plate.

After a succession of communal onslaughts against the country's principal religious minorities and the Untouchables of the Chaturvarnashram or the four-tier rigid caste hierarchy of traditional, un-reformed, Hindu social order, that have occurred on a regular basis in the past ten years, the attack on the very idea of journalism in a democracy, and its slow subversion and cooption, does appear to be the most defining and egregious feature of the New India being propagated and presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his acolytes.

When Modi arrived on the scene in 2014, he made ritualistic noises about treating all citizens equally and was, oddly enough, believed by many. Truly, there was innocence abroad. Subsequently, the PM gave the call for a Congress-mukt Bharat – calling upon Indians to throw out the Congress party, believing that the country was in love with him and had ejected his opponents from its affections and its consciousness. Other than that, a full-throttle attack on the opposition parties was still in the future. But an attack on the media was not.

Right from 2014, the regime, its beneficiaries, its ideological subsidiaries and its dependents, have moved heaven and earth to "capture" the Indian media, using a variety of techniques, the carrot and the stick – even a buyout, as the case of NDTV shows. The express purpose of this extensive and expensive exercise lasting nearly 10 years was to rub the very idea of objective journalism, the testing of government and ruling party claims, out of the default mode in mainstream journalism in the country.

The simultaneous objective was to acquire a long string of clapper boys through the media system who would sing the government's praise – and taunt its opponents – from morning to night (although now, this makes people sick). This hasn't quite worked as planned, and alternatives have mushroomed in the form of strong news portals and YouTube channels. For a regime seeking to perpetuate itself, marrying a majoritarian communal ideological agenda and its accompanying politics with Big Capital was crucial, but without full control over the media space, the enterprise would never be secure. After gaining control of mainline media, the newly sprung foci of rebellion too needed to be conquered. This is what transpired on October 3. The propaganda cry of catching terrorists and Chinese agents is for the gullible. The real game is to bring opponents of any stripe, persuasion, or profession, to heel. So far, the trick has not worked. There has been resistance.

The regime's aim and plan may be to alter the basic character of the democratic state – no matter how flawed – that we have inherited, but this is likely to be hard to bring about on the strength of electoral politics alone. Resistance is scattered through the country in the shape of pockets and islands, but no less importantly in the shape of arguments, languages, and belief systems of the people. Karnataka the past May was an example.

In a vast and varied land with multiple histories and geographies, people seek mutual engagement, stability and harmony – and not sameness and uniformity. The Third Reich is unlikely to follow the German route here and come on the back of elections, even rigged ones. More dire means would need to be devised. One way or another, there is much to do for a media that wishes to keep encroachers at bay. (Courtesy: The Wire)

According to govt data, about 2,45,000 illegal entries have been recorded in this region during this fiscal year

Biden administration waives 26 federal laws to allow border wall construction in South Texas

TEXAS, Oct 5: The Biden administration announced they waived 26 federal laws in South Texas to allow border wall construction, marking the administration's first use of a sweeping executive power employed often during the Trump presidency.

The Department of Homeland Security posted the announcement on the US Federal Registry with few details outlining the construction in Starr County, Texas, which is part of a busy Border Patrol sector seeing "high illegal entry."

According to government data, about 2,45,000 illegal entries have been recorded in this region during the current fiscal year.

"There is presently an acute and immediate need to construct physical barriers and roads in the vicinity of the border of the United States in order to prevent unlawful entries into the United States in the project areas," Alejandro Mayorkas, the DHS secretary, stated in the notice.

The Clean Air Act, Safe Drinking Water Act and Endangered Species Act were some of the federal laws waived by DHS to make way for construction that will use funds from a congressional appropriation in 2019 for border wall construction. The waivers avoid time-consuming reviews and lawsuits challenging violations of environmental laws.

Starr County's hilly ranchlands, sitting between Zapata and McAllen, Texas, are home to about 65,000 residents sparsely populating about 3,108



square km that form part of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Although no maps were provided in the announcement, a previous map shared during the gathering of public comments shows the piecemeal construction will add up to an additional 20 miles to the existing border barrier system in the area. Starr County Judge Eloy Vera said it will start south of the Falcon Dam and go past Salineño, Texas.

"The other concern that we have is that the area is highly erosive. There's a lot of arroyos," Eloy Vera, the county judge said, pointing out the creeks cutting through the ranchland and leading into the river.

Concern is shared with environmental advocates who say structures will run through public lands, habitats of endangered plants, and species like the Ocelot,

a spotted wild cat.

"A plan to build a wall through will bulldoze an impermeable barrier straight through the heart of that habitat. It will stop wildlife migrations dead in their tracks. It will destroy a huge amount of wildlife refuge land. And it's a horrific step backward for the borderlands," Laiken Jordahl, a southwest conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity, said on Wednesday afternoon.

During the Trump administration, about 450 miles of barriers were built along the southwest border between 2017 and January 2021. Texas Governor Greg Abbott renewed those efforts after the Biden administration halted them at the start of his presidency.

The DHS decision on Wednesday contrasts the Biden administration's posturing when a proclamation to end the

construction on January 20, 2021, stated, "building a massive wall that spans the entire southern border is not a serious policy solution." US Customs and Border Protection had no immediate comment. The announcement prompted political debate by the Democratic administration facing an increase of migrants entering through the southern border in recent months, including thousands who entered the US through Eagle Pass at the end of September.

"A border wall is a 14th-century solution to a 21st-century problem. It will not bolster border security in Starr County," US Representative Henry Cuellar said in a statement. "I continue to stand against the wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars on an ineffective border wall."

Political proponents of the border wall said the waivers should be used as a launching pad for a shift in policy.

"After years of denying that a border wall and other physical barriers are effective, the DHS announcement represents a sea change in the administration's thinking. A secure wall is an effective tool for maintaining control of our borders," Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, said in a statement.

"Having made that concession, the administration needs to immediately begin construction of wall across the border to prevent the illegal traffic from simply moving to other areas of the border." (AP)

1 dead, over 300 injured as Typhoon Koinu sweeps parts of Taiwan

TAIPEI, Oct 5: Typhoon Koinu swept southern Taiwan on Thursday, killing one person and injuring more than 300 as it brought pounding rain and record-breaking winds to the island, leading to school and office closures.

One person was killed by flying glass in the central city of Taichung and at least 304 were injured around the island, Taiwan's fire department said. Gusts of wind downed trees and caused damage to some buildings.

Koinu, which means "puppy" in Japanese, made landfall early Thursday in Cape Eluanbi, the southernmost tip of Taiwan, and is expected to weaken as it moves west toward the Guangdong and Fujian provinces of southern China.

The typhoon brought the fastest wind ever recorded in Taiwan as it approached on Wednesday night.

A weather monitoring station on the outlying Orchid Island, southeast of the main island, measured a gust of 342.7 kph (212.9 mph) at 9:53 pm, as well as sustained winds that reached 198.7 kph (123.5 kph) at 9:40 pm.

Both values set all-time highs since Taiwan began keeping records of wind speeds in 1897, said Huang Chia-mei, head of the Central Weather Administration's Taitung Weather Station, according to the official Central News Agency.

The device measuring the wind speeds broke shortly afterward, Huang said.

Images shared on social media from Orchid Island showed buildings with broken windows and boats sunk in a harbour.

On Thursday evening, Koinu's maximum sustained winds measured 137 kph (85 mph) with gusts of 173 kph (107 mph).

The heaviest rain fell in the east-coast counties of Taitung and Hualien, and in the mountainous Pingtung county in the south.

Cities across the island cancelled work and classes, including the major southern port city of Kaohsiung. The capital, Taipei, in the north, was operating as normal.

Most domestic flights and dozens of international flights were cancelled, according to the transportation ministry, while ferries to outlying islands were also suspended.

Despite weakening, typhoon Koinu is expected to douse coastal areas of southern

China over the weekend. The city of Guangzhou cancelled some flights and trains starting Friday, while its maritime authorities issued a Level 4 alert — the least severe in a four-tier system, calling for caution.

In Fujian province, bordering the Taiwan Strait, authorities suspended 137 passenger ferry trips.

Taiwan sits in an active region for tropical cyclones, but Koinu is only the second typhoon to make landfall in four years. Typhoon Haiwai hit the island in early September, injuring dozens. (AP)



Russia launches more drone attacks as Ukraine President Zelenskyy travels to a European forum

KYIV, Oct 5: Russia targeted Ukraine with drones in another massive attack early Thursday as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy traveled to Spain to rally support from Western allies at a summit of some 50 European leaders.

Ukraine's air force said that the country's air defenses intercepted 24 out of 29 Iranian-made drones that Russia launched at the southern Odesa, Mykolaiv and Kirovohrad regions. Ukrainian officials didn't immediately report any casualties of damage.

The attack came as Zelen-

skyy arrived in Granada in southern Spain to attend a summit of the European Political Community, which was formed in the wake of Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

"The key for us, especially before winter, is to strengthen air defense, and there is already a basis for new agreements with partners," he said in a statement posted on his Telegram channel.

During the last winter, Russia targeted Ukraine's energy system and other vital infrastructure in a steady barrage of missile and drone attacks, triggering continuous power out-

ages across the country. Ukraine's power system has shown a high degree of resilience and flexibility, helping alleviate the damage, but there have been concerns that Russia will again ramp up its strikes on power facilities as winter draws nearer.

Zelenskyy noted the Granada summit will also focus on "joint work for global food security and protection of freedom of navigation" in the Black Sea, where the Russian military has targeted Ukrainian ports after Moscow's withdrawal from a United Nations-sponsored grain

deal designed to ensure safe grain exports from the invaded country's ports.

Ukraine, in its turn, has struck back at Russia with regular drone attacks across the border.

Roman Starovoi, the governor of Russia's Kursk region that borders Ukraine, said Ukrainian drones attacked infrastructure facilities in several areas, resulting in power cuts.

Starovoi also said that Ukrainian forces fired artillery at the border town of Rylsk, injuring a local resident and damaging several houses. (AP)

Israeli arms quietly helped Azerbaijan retake Nagorno-Karabakh, to the dismay of region's Armenians

TEL AVIV, Oct 5: Israel has quietly helped fuel Azerbaijan's campaign to recapture Nagorno-Karabakh, supplying powerful weapons to Azerbaijan ahead of its lightning offensive last month that brought the ethnic Armenian enclave back under its control, officials and experts say. Just weeks before Azerbaijan launched its 24-hour assault on Sept. 19, Azerbaijani military cargo planes repeatedly flew between a southern Israeli airbase and an airfield near Nagorno-Karabakh, according to flight tracking data and Armenian diplomats, even as Western governments were urging peace talks.

The flights rattled Armenian officials in Yerevan, long wary of the strategic alliance between Israel and Azerbaijan, and shined a light on Israel's national interests in the restive region south of the Caucasus Mountains.

"For us, it is a major concern that Israeli weapons have been firing at our people," Arman Akopian, Armenia's ambassador to Israel, told The Associated Press. In a flurry of diplomatic ex-

changes, Akopian said he expressed alarm to Israeli politicians and lawmakers in recent weeks over Israeli weapons shipments.

"I don't see why Israel should not be in the position to express at least some concern about the fate of people being expelled from their homeland," he told AP. Azerbaijan's Sept. 19 blitz involving heavy artillery, rocket launchers and drones — largely supplied by Israel and Turkey, according to experts — forced Armenian separatist authorities to lay down their weapons and sit down for talks on the future of the separatist region.

The Azerbaijani offensive killed over 200 Armenians in the enclave, the vast majority of them fighters, and some 200 Azerbaijani troops, according to officials. There are ramifications beyond the volatile enclave of 4,400 sq kms. The fighting prompted over 100,000 people — more than 80% of the enclave's ethnic Armenian residents — to flee in the last two weeks. Azerbaijan has pledged to respect the rights of ethnic

Armenians. Armenia calls the exodus a form of ethnic cleansing. Israel's foreign and defence ministries declined to comment on the use of Israeli weapons in Nagorno-Karabakh or on Armenian concerns about its military partnership with Azerbaijan. In July, Israeli Defence Min Yoav Gallant visited Baku, the Azerbaijan capital, where he praised the countries' military cooperation and joint "fight against terrorism."

Israel has a big stake in Azerbaijan, which serves as a critical source of oil and is a staunch ally against Israel's archenemy Iran. It is also a lucrative customer of sophisticated arms.

"There's no doubt about our position in support of Azerbaijan's defence," said Israel's former ambassador to Azerbaijan, Arkady Milman. "We have a strategic partnership to contain Iran."

Although once resource-poor Israel now has plenty of natural gas off its Mediterranean coast, Azerbaijan still supplies at least 40% of Israel's oil needs, keeping cars and trucks on its roads. (AP)

Fukushima nuclear plant starts 2nd release of treated radioactive wastewater into the sea

TOKYO, Oct 5: Japan's wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant said it began releasing a second batch of treated radioactive wastewater into the sea on Thursday after the first round of discharges ended smoothly.

Plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings said workers activated a pump to dilute the treated water with large amounts of seawater, slowly sending the mixture into the ocean through an underground tunnel.

The wastewater discharges, which are expected to continue for decades, have been strongly opposed by fishing groups and neighbouring countries including South Korea, where hundreds of people staged protest rallies. China banned all imports of Japanese seafood, badly hurting Japanese seafood producers and exporters.

The plant's first wastewater release began Aug. 24 and ended Sept. 11. During that release, TEPCO said it discharged 7,800 tons of treated water from 10 tanks. In the second discharge, TEPCO plans to release another 7,800 tons of treated water into the Pacific Ocean over 17 days.

About 1.34 million tons of radioactive wastewater is stored in about 1,000 tanks at the plant. It has accumulated since the plant was crippled by a massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

TEPCO and the government say discharging the water into the sea is unavoidable because the tanks will reach capacity early next year and space at the plant will be needed for its decommissioning, which is expected to take decades.

They say the water is treated to reduce radioactive materials to safe levels, and then is diluted with seawater by hundreds of times to make it much safer than international standards. Some scientists say, however, that the continuing release of low-level radioactive materials is unprecedented and needs to be monitored closely. Japan's government has set up a relief fund to help find new markets and reduce the impact of China's seafood ban. Measures also include the temporary purchase, freezing and storage of seafood and promotion of seafood sales at home.

Cabinet ministers have travelled to Fukushima to sample local seafood and promote its safety.

TEPCO is tasked with providing compensation for reputational damage to the region's seafood caused by the wastewater release. It started accepting applications this week and immediately received hundreds of inquiries. Most of the damage claims are linked to China's seafood ban and excess supply at home causing price declines, TEPCO said. (AP)

Imran Khan approaches Pak court seeking suspension of trial court's verdict in Toshakhana corruption case

Islamabad, Oct 5: Imran Khan on Thursday approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana corruption case more than a month after it suspended the jailed former prime minister's three-year sentence for concealing details of state gifts, according to a media report.

Khan, 70, was arrested on August 5, 2023, and shifted to Attock jail after a court sentenced him to three years in prison in the Toshakhana (national treasury gifts) graft case. The trial court in Islamabad had found the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief guilty of "corrupt practices" in the Toshakhana case.



The Supreme Court later acknowledged "procedural defects" in Khan's conviction by the trial court.

After his sentence in the Toshakhana case was suspended by the IHC, the government detained the PTI chief in the cipher case for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a cable sent by the country's embassy in Washington last year in March. He has since remained behind bars on judicial remand, which has been extended until October 10.

On September 26, Khan was shifted to Adiala jail in Rawalpindi from Attock jail in Punjab province following the directives issued by the IHC. Last weekend, the police ramped up security in the vicinity of the Adiala jail by deploying elite commandos and setting up additional security pickets to ensure foolproof measures.

Khan, through senior lawyer Latif Khosa, on Thursday moved the IHC against the Toshakhana verdict under section 561-A (saving of inherent power of high court) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The petition's title stated that it sought "rectification of the order dated August 28 to the extent of suspending the operation of the impugned order along with the sentence as verbally prayed by the learned counsel for the petitioner before this honourable court at the time of arguments".

On August 28, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) suspended Khan's

B'desh's anti-graft watchdog quizzes Nobel laureate Yunus in embezzlement case

DHAKA, Oct 5: Bangladesh's official anti-graft watchdog Anti-Corruption Commission on Thursday questioned Muhammad Yunus, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006, involving charges of money laundering and fund embezzlement.

Yunus pioneered the use of microcredit to help impoverished people in Bangladesh—a model replicated in many other countries across the world. His legal troubles have drawn international attention, with many observers considering that they are politically motivated.

He emerged from Thursday's questioning session in the commission's headquarters in the nation's capital, Dhaka, saying that he was not afraid and he did not commit any crimes. Yunus' lawyer, Abdullah Al Mamun, said the charges against his client were "false and baseless".

The commission summoned Yunus, chairman of Grameen Telecom, over \$2.28 million from the company's Workers Profit Participation Fund. A dozen other colleagues of Yunus face similar charges in the case.

Grameen Telecom owns 34.20 percent shares of Bangladesh's largest mobile phone company Grameenphone, a subsidiary of Norway's telecom giant Telenor. Investigators say Yunus and others misappropriated funds from the workers fund.

In August, more than 170

global leaders and Nobel laureates in an open letter urged Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to suspend legal proceedings against Yunus.

The leaders, including former US President Barack Obama, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and more than 100 Nobel laureates, said in the letter that they were deeply concerned by recent threats to democracy and human rights in Bangladesh.

"We are alarmed that he has recently been targeted by what we believe to be continuous judicial harassment," said the letter.

Hasina responded by saying she would welcome international experts and lawyers to come to Bangladesh to assess the legal proceedings and examine documents involving the charges against Yunus.

In 1983, Yunus founded Grameen Bank, which gives small loans to entrepreneurs who would not normally qualify for bank loans. The bank's success in lifting people out of poverty led to similar microfinancing efforts in many other countries.

Hasina's administration began a series of investigations of Yunus after coming to power in 2008. She became enraged when Yunus announced he would form a political party in 2007 when the country was run by a military-backed government and she was in prison, although he did not follow through on the plan. (AP)

Zimbabwe announces 100 suspected cholera deaths, imposes restrictions on gatherings

HARARE, Oct 5: Zimbabwe has recorded 100 suspected deaths from cholera and more than 5,000 possible cases since late last month, prompting the government to impose restrictions to stop the spread of the disease, including limiting numbers at funerals and stopping some social gatherings in affected areas.

The health ministry announced the death toll late Wednesday and said 30 of the deaths had been confirmed as from cholera through laboratory tests. It said 905 confirmed cases had been recorded, as well as another 4,609 suspected cases. Cholera is a water-borne disease that can spread rapidly in areas with poor sanitation and is caused by the ingestion of contaminated water or food.

Zimbabwe struggles with access to clean water. Large gatherings at funerals, which are common in the southern African country as people flock to mourn the dead, have been stopped in some of the most affected areas in parts of the Manicaland and Masvingo provinces.

No more than 50 people are allowed to attend funerals, while people should avoid shaking hands and are not allowed to serve food at the funerals, the government said.

The government has also said people should stop attending open markets, some social gatherings and outdoor church camps, where there is usually no sanitary infrastructure.

Zimbabwe has often imposed restrictions during its repeated outbreaks of cholera.

Buhara, an impoverished southeastern district, is the epicentre of the current outbreak, the health ministry said, adding that cases have now spread to 41 districts in various parts of the country, including the capital, Harare.

In southern Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi, South Africa and Mozambique have all had recent cholera outbreaks. More than 1,000 people died in Malawi's worst outbreak in decades late last year and early this year. (AP)

About 10 million of the dollar coins will be circulating by Christmas King Charles III's image to appear on Australian coins this year

CANBERRA, Oct 5: An image of King Charles III will soon appear on Australian coins, more than a year after the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II, officials said on Thursday.

The gold Australian dollar coin will be the first with an image of the new British monarch, who is also Australia's head of state, Royal Australian Mint chief executive Leigh Gordon said.

About 10 million of the dollar coins will be circulating by Christmas, he said.

Assistant Minister for Treasury Andrew Leigh said the government had not wanted to rush the coin transition following the queen's death in September last year.

"Certainly, we're keen to get as many of the new



coins with the king's face on them out there as quickly as possible," Leigh said.

The remaining denominations — 5, 10, 20 and 50 cent coins plus a \$2 coin — will be rolled out with the king's left profile and without a crown during 2024 based on demand from banks.

The latest queen's image wore a crown. In

maintaining tradition, the right profile of the queen was shown.

The king's image is a plan by the center-left Labor Party government to replace the British monarch as Australia's head of state with an Australian president.

Leigh said there was no plan to remove the monarch from Australian coins. (AP)

since Australia introduced decimal currency in 1966 will remain legal tender. She has appeared on Australian money since 1953.

The government was criticized over a decision this year to replace the queen's image on the \$5 note with an Indigenous design rather than an image of the king.

The \$5 bill had been Australia's only remaining bank note to still feature an image of the monarch.

Critics saw it as part of a plan by the center-left Labor Party government to replace the British monarch as Australia's head of state with an Australian president.

Leigh said there was no plan to remove the monarch from Australian coins. (AP)

Tripura govt mulling to set up homoeopathy, ayurvedic college in state: CM



AGARTALA, Oct 5: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha on Thursday said the government is mulling to set up a homoeopathy and ayurvedic college in the state.

He said another medical college would also be set up at Ambassa in Dhalai district.

Saha who holds the health portfolio said this after inaugurating the state's first block public health unit at Kalyanpur Community Health Centre in Khawai district.

"We already have dental and nursing colleges and we plan to open homoeopathy and ayurvedic colleges as well. With determination, anything is possible. Another medical college will be established in Ambassa. Trauma centres are crucial, and we have opened three trauma centres in three places, with one more under construction", Saha said.

"We plan to establish 18 block public health units initially, with Kalyanpur being the first, followed by all 59 blocks. Development of health infrastructure for the well-being of the people remains a top priority for the government", Saha said.

He said by strengthening medical care at the block level, "we aim to reduce the pressure on sub-divisional and state hospitals, ensuring people's well-being."

Saha said the block public health unit will provide emergency facilities.

He emphasised that the present state government consistently prioritises health, education, and agriculture.

"Without good health, no one can work towards development. Referral cases from the state to outside have also decreased," the chief minister said.

Later, Saha inaugurated the operation theatre complex at Telimura sub-divisional Hospital in Khawai district. (PTI)

Arunachal govt plans frontier highway of strategic value along LAC

TAWANG, Oct 5: The Arunachal Pradesh government is planning to construct a 1,500 km-long road, to be known as Frontier Highway, and an additional 1,000 km road to link the remotest parts of the state, chief minister Pema Khandu has said.

This "futuristic highway" will be constructed along the "India-Tibet-China-Myanmar" border and it will be as close as 20 km from the Line of Actual Control and the international borders.

"The frontier highway has a huge strategic value. It will bring transformational changes in road connectivity in Arunachal Pradesh. This will be beneficial for the Army too," Khandu told PTI.

The frontier highway will start from Bomdila and pass through Nafra, Huri, and Monigong, which is closer to the LAC or the McMahon Line. The road will end in Vijaynagar, near the India-



Myanmar border.

Some of the important places that will be linked through the road are Tawang, Mago Upper Subansiri, Upper Siang, Mechuka, Tuting, Dibang Valley, Kibithoo, Changlang, and Dong.

As per the plan, the road will also connect with the under construction Trans-Arunachal Highway, a two-way national highway standard trunk route of about 1,811

km in length linking Tawang in north-western tip of Arunachal Pradesh to Kanubari in south-eastern end of the state and finally ending on the NH-52 near Akajan, close to Bogibeel bridge near Dibrugarh in Assam.

The CM said the road upon completion will stop migration from border areas and bring development to the doorsteps of the people living in remote areas.

In addition, 1,000 km of roads will be constructed to connect the district headquarters, places of importance, and some villages for a seamless movement of the armed forces and equipment to the border areas.

"The entire project will cost around ₹ 40,000 crore," Khandu said.

The frontier highway will come up adjacent to Yangtze, where China's PLA troops intruded on December 9 last year.

After the PLA troops had entered Yangtze, a clash took place with the Indian Army resulting in injuries to soldiers on both sides.

The frontier highway will provide improved connectivity to the state capital, and important places with high density population and economic activities, including the sites of major hydroelectric power projects, a state government official said. (PTI)

NWU opposes extension of AFSPA in Manipur

SENAPATI, Oct 5: The Naga Women's Union (NWU) "vehemently" opposed the extension of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (AFSPA) to the entire state of Manipur excluding 19 police stations in "Imphal valley" for a period of six months with effect from October 1, 2023.

The NWU felt that the decision of the Government of India to extend the draconian law after seeing the present situation of the state of Manipur is highly questionable. "Nagas have been trying their best to maintain peace and to restore normalcy in spite of the turmoil and not even a single voice is raised other than continuous pleas for restoring peace". However, the extension of AFSPA in the Naga areas at this present juncture is tyrannical, intimidating and menacing, the NWU also said. The domineering and autocratic behavior can never bring any empathy, it added.

The NWU then argued whether the violence hit valley under 19 police stations in Imphal is safer than the "calm" Naga areas. The NWU added that the "disparity shown" to the Nagas is unacceptable when peace and normalcy have prevailed for 26 years in Naga areas after the signing of Indo-Naga Ceasefire on July 1, 1997.

The NWU then said, since the promulgation of AFSPA in the state, Nagas had a fearful life and "we long for the day when the Government of India will wipe away our tears of fear and hug us with love". The women community fears that it has been 66 years of infliction of pain after the entry of AFSPA and the further extension could mean trepidation. The NWU condemned and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, (AFSPA) from the "Naga homeland" and restore hope and confidence in the peace process. (NNN)

M'laya high court directs against diversion of illegal mined coal to cement industries



SHILLONG, Oct 5: The Meghalaya High Court recently directed that illegally mined coal should not be diverted to cement and coke industries in the state.

"Further action in such regard should continue unabated to ensure that the illegally-mined coal in the state is not diverted to such industries as aforesaid," the full bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee said in its order passed after hearing a PIL on the issue.

In addition to the report filed by the State, the advocate-general in-

formed that details have been obtained and further details are awaited as to the extent of use of coal and the source of such coal in the ferro-alloy, cement and coke industries. The AG also informed that pursuant to certain observations made by Justice Katakey in one of the interim reports, show-cause notices have been issued to some of the units manufacturing cement in the State.

The order said as to the 17th interim report filed by Justice Katakey, the State said that a report

will be filed before Justice Katakey by October 7, 2023, as directed, as to the steps taken by the State in respect of various aspects that have been pointed out in the interim report.

The State also assured the Court that the disposal of the previously mined coal is continuing as per schedule and, as far as practicable, the schedule submitted in Court will be adhered to.

The bench has directed that the matter will again appear after six weeks and that Justice Katakey be paid an ad hoc remuneration of Rs. 4 lakh in addition to the other expenses as per previous directions.

Meanwhile, the bench has directed the State to look into the allegations levelled against Jai Maa Coal Private Limited and its associates and the persons in control by the petitioner in the relevant PIL.

It said that the State of Assam assures the Court that all assistance has been rendered to Meghalaya Police and the State of Assam will continue to ensure that the incidental activities pertaining to illegal mining in Meghalaya, if conducted in Assam, are arrested. (NNN)

Stanford University places USTM scientist among world's top 2%

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 5: Dr Faizuddin Ahmed, assistant professor in the department of Physics at the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), has been recognised among the world's top 2% scientists in 2023 by Stanford University in the United States.

The prestigious list was officially published on October 4, 2023.

This marks the fourth consecutive year that Dr Faizuddin Ahmed has been honored with a spot on the esteemed list of World's Top Scientists by Stanford University. His groundbreaking research primarily focuses on Theoretical Physics, particularly in the domains of General Relativity and Quantum

Mechanics.

Over the course of his career, Dr Ahmed has contributed significantly to the field, publishing 116 research papers in renowned Scopus Index Journals such as The European Physical Journal C, The European Physical Journal Plus, Scientific Reports, Proceedings of the Royal Society A, and more.

Upon receiving this remarkable honor, Dr Ahmed expressed his gratitude and enthusiasm for his continued recognition as a prominent scientist on the global stage. He stated, "It is truly humbling to be recognised by Stanford University for the fourth year in a row. This achievement underscores the importance of dedicated research and the relentless pursuit of knowledge. I am deeply grateful for the sup-

port I have received from USTM and my colleagues."

Ahmed graduated in Physics from Bholanath College, Dhubri in 2006 and completed his master's degree at Gauhati University in 2009. His passion for research led him to pursue a PhD at the same university, which he successfully completed in 2016.

Ahmed's recognition on the global stage reflects not only his dedication but also the excellence in scientific research being conducted at the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya. This accomplishment serves as a source of inspiration for aspiring scientists and underscores the institution's commitment to fostering world-class research and innovation.

Four district magistrates of Tripura transferred

AGARTALA, Oct 5: Tripura government has transferred four district magistrates and made changes in the portfolios of a number of secretaries.

Debasish Basu, secretary, health and family welfare department, was relieved from the present posts and will take charge of general administration (secretariat administration) and general administration (political) departments relieving AK Bhattacharya, a press statement issued by the government on Wednesday night said. Rathod Sandeep Rewaji, IAS, secretary will take charge of health and family welfare department.

District magistrate (DM) of West Tripura district Debapriya Bardhan has been transferred and posted as DM of North Tripura district. DM Sepahijala district Vishal Kumar has been posted as DM West Tripura district.

Nagesh Kumar B, who was DM North Tripura, is the new district magistrate and collector of Sepahijala district, and Tarit Kanti Chakma, IAS, district magistrate and collector, Unakoti district, has been transferred and posted as district magistrate and collector of Gomati district. Rajib Datta, additional DM and collector, Unakoti district, is the new district magistrate and collector of the same district. Brahmeet Kaur, IAS, posted as additional secretary, government of Tripura, health and family welfare department, will also hold the charges of chief executive officer of Tripura Rural Livelihood Mission (TRLM) and mission director of National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM). (PTI)

NEHU Academic Council requisitions emergency meeting to VC

SHILLONG, Oct 5: Members of the Academic Council (AC) of North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) have requisitioned a special/emergency meeting of the AC to the University's vice-chancellor and chairman of the AC Prof P Shukla to discuss the alleged inappropriate implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 at the under-graduate (UG) level in the affiliated colleges from the session 2023-24 without the AC's approval.

The decision was taken after the vice chancellor was not keen to convene an emergency meeting of the AC despite several requests made by the teaching communities through their respective associations and other stakeholders, president of the Teachers' Association (NEHUTA) Prof Lakshon Kma said in a statement issued here on Wednesday.

He said, "The responsible members of the AC are deeply concerned with the act of infringement on the authority of the AC and violation of the established norms and procedures as per NEHU Act, Statutes and Ordinances."

"Therefore, the members have requisitioned a special/emergency meeting of the AC to discuss

the inappropriate implementation of the NEP 2020 at the UG level in the affiliated colleges of NEHU without the approval of the Academic Council as per Regulation RA-5, Clause 13, under Clause (1) (a) and (2) of Statute 42," Kma added.

Kma further maintained that the AC members are not harping on the roll-back of the NEP implementation but on the urgent need to rectify the procedural flaws after discussion and approval in the emergency meeting and move forward for the sake of students at the UG level in our affiliated colleges.

"In accordance with upholding the democratic norms and protecting the sanctity of the Statutory Body of the University Academic Council, the members have requested the vice chancellor to convene the special/emergency meeting of the AC immediately based on the requisition as per rule. More than 100 bona fide members of the AC from Shillong and Tura Campuses of NEHU have signed the requisition of the special/emergency AC meeting which is much higher than the requirement of one-third of the total members of the AC as per Regulation RA-5, Clause 13, under Clause (1) (a) and (2) of Statute 42", Kma stated. (NNN)

Nagaland DGP calls for collaboration to combat substance abuse

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Oct 5: Nagaland director general of police Rupin Sharma called for collaboration and information sharing among civil societies, NGOs, state police and other government agencies to effectively address the issue of substance abuse in the state.

Sharma said this while addressing a state level seminar on substance abuse in Nagaland and its impact on women as the special guest at the Capital Convention Center, Kohima, on Thursday.

The day-long seminar was organised by the Nagaland State Commission for Women (NSCW) with support from the National Women Commission (NCW).



Underlining the importance of synchronized efforts and information sharing in combating substance abuse, he urged civil societies and NGOs to report information about drug financing, peddling, sales, or consumption to the police so that appropriate action can be taken against

offenders. He, however, cautioned against taking the law into one's own hands.

He also called for conducting awareness campaigns against substance abuse in educational institutions so as to make the young people aware of its consequences in their

personal lives and society.

Observing that there is limited capacity in rehabilitation centres in the state, the state police chief requested the NCW, NSCW and the social welfare department to address the issue and also make rehab centres more cost-effective.

Highlighting the severity of the substance abuse problem in Nagaland and its impact on society, particularly women, NCW joint secretary A Asholi Chalaia stressed the need for organising awareness campaigns in schools and colleges, community empowerment, access to treatment, rehabilitation facilities, mental support, economic empowerment and early intervention to combat the issue effectively.

Nagaland motor vehicles dept asked to strictly enforce MV Act

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Oct 5: In the backdrop of upsurge in road accidents in the state, Nagaland adviser for transport and technical education Temjenmenba directed the motor vehicles department to strictly enforce all the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act to ensure that vehicles are perfectly fit for road use with all valid documents.

He called upon all the officers of the department to adopt a holistic approach to prevent road accidents in the state.

Speaking at a meeting on road safety, convened by the motor vehicles department, at the transport commissioner's conference hall in Kohima, Temjenmenba noted

that most of the accident cases are either fatal or critical.

Taking a very serious note of the road accidents in recent times, he impressed upon the officers of the department to put in strengthened efforts and organise awareness programmes to prevent road accidents.

Temjenmenba insisted that drivers must be well-sensitised and said that periodical tests must be conducted to upgrade their skills as accidents lead to loss of precious lives and often incur huge economic losses.

The officers of the department, including the regional and district transport officers and the assistant regional transport officers, attended the meeting.

LOST

I have lost my land documents consisting of Periodic Patta of Diphu Town, Ward No. 08 (Dillaji No. 1), which has been issued in my name somewhere in Diphu town while marketing on 04/10/2023. Details of the Periodic Patta has been detailed as follows-

1. Name of Patta Holder – Smt. Buri Narzari
2. Name of Father- Lt. Torendra Brahma
3. Address- Diphu Town, Ward No. 08 (Dillaji No. 1), PO- Rongkhehan, Dist- Karbi Anglong, Assam- 782460, Contact No. 9954819298
4. Lost land documents-
 - a) Periodic Patta No. 3
 - b) Dag No. 50
 - c) Village: Dillaji No. 1
 - d) Mouza: Jamunapar
 - e) Area of land: 2Bigha 0Katha 0Lessa

Smt. Buri Narzari,
Ward No. 08 (Dillaji No. 1),
PO- Rongkhehan, PS- Diphu,
Dist. – Karbi Anglong, Assam, 782460

DECLARATION

I Sri BUSAM RAMADASU like to state that in Adhar Card, Voter ID and all documents my name is BUSAM RAMADASU and my sons name is NAGA MALLIKARJUNA RAO B. But in some of his official documents my name is wrongly written as B RAMADAS/NANCHARAIH RAMADAS insted of BUSAM RAMADASU. So i would like to declare that my name is BUSAM RAMADASU.

BUSAM RAMADASU
Add.- VETAPALEM (TEHSIL)
JANDRAPET
BAPATLA
ANDHRA PRADESH
Temp. add.- ARTC & SCHOOL, DIPHU
KARBI ANGLONG, ASSAM

No.DWCD(BTC)230/2023-24/65

Dated Kokrajhar, the 5th October, 2023

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Joint Director cum CHD, Women & Child Dev., B.T.C, Kokrajhar invites Notice Inviting Tender affixing court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25/- only from local Suppliers / Firms for supply of Aids & Appliance for Physically Handicapped persons in BTC area under SOPD-G fund during the year 2023-24 (estimated amount Rs. 10.00 Lakhs only). The Notice Inviting Tender with detail terms & conditions along with the item(s) may be obtained from the office of the undersigned. Intending Suppliers / Firms may obtain NIT documents during Office hours till 1:00 P.M. of the 26th day of October, 2023. The sealed NIT with all particulars / documents viz. GST registration certificate, Trade License, Pan Card etc. as required are to be submitted to the office of the Joint Director cum CHD, Women & Child Dev., B.T.C, Kokrajhar on or before 2:00 P.M. of 26th day of October, 2023. The successful Supplier / Firm will have to submit security deposit 1% only in case of ST / SC and 2% for General Firm / Supplier of the estimated value in the form of Bank Draft / Banker's Cheque in favour of the Joint Director, Women & Child Dev., B.T.C, Kokrajhar. The NIT will be opened on the same day at 3:00 P.M. in presence of Suppliers / Firms or their authorized representative.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the offers / proposals, without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-

Jt. Director cum CHD,
Women & Child Development, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/568

No.DWCD(BTC)230/2023-24/61

Dated Kokrajhar, the 5th October, 2023

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Joint Director cum CHD, Women & Child Dev., B.T.C, Kokrajhar invites Notice Inviting Tender affixing court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25/- only from local Suppliers / Firms for supply of furniture, furnishings, fittings, utensils etc. at proposed guest house (renovated) in the building of Directorate of Women & Child Development, Dimalgaon, Kokrajhar under fund SOPD-G for the year 2023-24 (estimated amount Rs. 16.00 Lakhs only). The Notice Inviting Tender with detail terms & conditions along with the item(s) may be obtained from the office of the undersigned. Intending Suppliers / Firms may obtain NIT documents during Office hours till 1:00 P.M. of the 26th day of October, 2023. The sealed NIT with all particulars / documents viz. GST registration certificate, Pan Card etc. as required as per terms & conditions are to be submitted to the office of the Joint Director cum CHD, Women & Child Dev., B.T.C, Kokrajhar on or before 2:00 P.M. of 26th day of October, 2023. The successful Supplier / Firm will have to submit security deposit of 1% only in case of ST / SC and 2% for General Firm / Supplier of the estimated value in the form of Bank Draft / Banker's Cheque in favour of the Joint Director, Women & Child Dev., BTC, Kokrajhar. The NIT will be opened on the same day at 3:00 P.M. in presence of the Suppliers / Firms or their authorized representative.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the offers / proposals, without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/-

Jt. Director cum CHD,
Women & Child Development, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/567

India's voice being heard world over today, Cong has problem with this: Modi in poll-bound Rajasthan

JODHPUR, Oct 5: India's voice is being heard all over the world today and the Congress has a problem with this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday, accusing the grand old party of beginning to oppose Bharat in its pursuit to oppose the BJP. Addressing a rally here in the poll-bound state, he slammed the Ashok Gehlot government over the issue of corruption, saying the "paper leak mafia" in Rajasthan has ruined the future of lakhs of youths and they demand justice.

He also talked about the 'red diary' -- a reference to one possessed by sacked Rajasthan minister Rajendra Gudha who claimed it contained details about financial transactions of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

It has "every black act of corruption by the Congress" and a BJP government will have to be formed in the state to expose it, Modi said.

The BJP, he said, aims to make Rajasthan the number one state in the tourism sector and will take development to every corner on forming the government.

The Congress cares neither about farmers nor soldiers, he charged. "They can't see anything except the

chair... The Congress loves its vote bank more than the interest of the people."

It is Prime Minister Modi's third rally within two weeks in the state that goes to polls later this year. The rally was organised at the Ravan ka Chabutra ground in the Sardarpura assembly constituency in Jodhpur, chief minister Gehlot's seat. Stories of India's influence is being heard from across the world -- from America to Singapore to Japan -- but Congress people do not like it and they feel sad, Modi told the rally, also attended by former chief minister Vasundhara Raje.

"While opposing the BJP, the Congress has started opposing Bharat," he alleged. "Today India's voice is being heard all over the world. But, the Congress has a problem with this."

"The BJP government made India the fifth largest economic power from the 10th position, but the Congress has a problem with this too. But this Modi's guarantee that in a few years, it (the country's economy) reaches number three" he said. The Congress-led state government has made Rajasthan top in the country in



terms of corruption and riots, he alleged.

"The BJP government at the Centre is making every effort for the development of Rajasthan but it is very sad to see the situation here," he said. The Congress has made Rajasthan top in the country in terms of corruption, riots, and atrocities against women and Dalits, he said.

In its five years, the Congress government here did not take even a single step forward and their power politics continues here 24 hours, he alleged.

"The Jodhpur city which was known for peace, there is gang war in broad daylight. A businessman's son is kidnapped and brutally killed. A Congress MLA says that she is not safe. We can imagine what would be

the condition of sisters and daughters," he said. The prime minister said the paper leak mafia ruined the future of lakhs of youth here. "The Congress, which had promised unemployment allowance at the time of elections, handed over the youth here to the paper leak mafia. The BJP government will take the strictest action against every such paper leak mafia."

When the BJP forms its government in Rajasthan, it will bring employment, wipe out the paper leak mafia, and take development to every corner of the state. "It will bring prosperity."

Earlier at a different venue in Jodhpur, Modi laid the foundation stone and inaugurated development works of about ₹ 5,000 crore. Taking a dig at Gehlot, PM Modi said he was missing from the government programme "because he was confident that everything would be fine if Modi comes".

"You all have heard about Red Diary. People say that every black act of corruption of the Congress is recorded in this red diary. If you want the secret of this red diary to come out, then it is necessary for you

to form a BJP government here," he said. Modi also hit out at the Congress and its alliance partners over the women's reservation bill. "Just a few days ago, the Nari Shakti Vandan Act was passed in Parliament. But this has exposed the leaders of Congress and the arrogant alliance. These people were never in support of women's reservation. That's why after this law was made, these people became nervous."

He said the Congress and its ally are not able to understand how Modi fulfilled this guarantee given to the sisters. These people do not know that Modi's guarantee means it will be fulfilled, the prime minister said. On the inauguration and foundation laying of various development works by him in Jodhpur, PM Modi said today the people of Jodhpur and Marwar have received many gifts together.

"Yesterday only, the BJP government decided that now the beneficiary sisters of Ujjwala will get gas cylinders from the central government for just ₹ 600. I am sure that with this all you sisters will be able to celebrate festivals with more enthusiasm," he said. (PTI)

Cong to hold CWC meet on Oct 9 in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: Congress' top decision making body CWC will meet on October 9 here to deliberate on the current political situation, caste census and further firm up the strategy for the upcoming assembly elections in five states. The party is seeking to retain power in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, while hoping to wrest power from the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, BRS in Telangana and the Mizo National Front (MNF) in Mizoram.

The meeting is likely to have a discussion on the caste census. The Congress has made a strong pitch for the caste census and has raised the demand for giving rights on the basis of population with emphasis on other backward classes (OBCs).

The CWC meet also comes at a time when some opposition leaders are facing heat from central agencies. The latest in the series of arrests is that of AAP leader Sanjay Singh in the Delhi excise policy case and the Congress top leadership will have to take a call on extending support to him and others

being targeted by the government. The meeting of the top decision making body of the Congress comes just over three weeks after the first meeting of the reconstituted Congress Working Committee (CWC) was held in Hyderabad on September 16 to evolve a strategy for the assembly polls in five states and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Sources said the CWC will meet on Monday at the AICC headquarters here to discuss the current political situation and to follow up on the decisions and discussions at the top decision-making body's meeting in Hyderabad.

Chief ministers of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh will also attend the meeting. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had on August 20 reconstituted the CWC, retaining the old guard and giving space to the young in the 84-member body. This will be the first meeting of the CWC in the national capital.

The CWC has 39 regular members, 32 permanent invitees and 13 special invitees, including 15 women and several new faces. (PTI)



US embassy trashes reports about Ambassador Garcetti alerting team

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: The US embassy on Thursday trashed reports that American Ambassador Eric Garcetti alerted his team about possible impact of New Delhi's diplomatic spat with Ottawa on India-US relations. American media outlet The Politico reported that Garcetti also has said the US may need to reduce its contacts with Indian officials for an undefined period of time.

"The US embassy dismisses these reports. Ambassador Garcetti is working hard every day to deepen the partnership between the people and governments of the United States and India," a US embassy spokesperson said, when asked about the report.

"As his personal engagement and public schedule demonstrates, Ambassador Garcetti and the US Mission to India are working every day to advance the important, strategic, and consequential partnership we have with India," the spokesperson said.

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June.

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

K'taka files petition before Cauvery body seeking review of its order on water release to TN

BENGALURU, Oct 5: Karnataka deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar on Thursday said that the state has filed a petition before the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) seeking a review of its order on the release of water to Tamil Nadu, and the government is making all preparations to go ahead with the Mekedatu balancing reservoir across the river.

Shivakumar pointed out the scarcity of water at the reservoirs in the Cauvery basin, despite rains in some areas in the past couple of days. The DCM, who is also the state's Water Resources Minister, said the government has managed to save the standing crops in the region and is hoping for more rains in the days to come for the situation to improve.

"We have already appealed (before CWMA) expressing our inability to release even 3,000 cusecs; not sure when it will be taken up. We have also made a proposal regarding the Mekedatu issue. We are in full work,

and we are making all the legal preparations required for it," he told reporters here. Asked if the state will also go before the Supreme Court on the issue, he said, "...we will have to go stage by stage, or else it (our petition), will not be entertained in the courts."

To a question on formulating a distress water-sharing formula to be followed in times of deficit rains, he said, "Let this year get over, we will see later...ask our MPs regarding it."

The CWMA on September 29 asked Karnataka to release 3,000 cusecs of water daily to Tamil Nadu till October 15, despite the upper riparian state stating that there is not enough storage in its reservoirs.

The Karnataka government has been maintaining that construction of the Mekedatu balancing reservoir across the river near Kanakapura in Ramnagara district is the only solution to resolve the inter-state water dispute during distress years.

Tamil Nadu is opposed to this proj-

ect, claiming it would be detrimental to its interest and that of its farmers.

Noting that 106 tmc water is required, but there is only 56 tmc in Cauvery basin reservoirs, Shivakumar said that inflow had increased during the last couple of days due to some rains, but it has now come down.

"Inflow of 23,000 cusecs was there on October 2. It was 13,000 cusecs on October 1, 20,000 cusecs on October 3, and 15,000 cusecs on October 4. On October 5, it came down to 10,000 cusecs," he said.

The DCM claimed that the standing crops of the state's farmers have been protected with this water, and called it a respite.

"Drought has been declared and we have requested the agriculture department to ensure that there is no fresher cropping until there is an intimation about enough water. Another spell of rain is expected sometime next month. We will decide based on that," Shivakumar added. (PTI)

BJP, Cong indulge in poster war on social media

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: The poster war between the Congress and the BJP intensified on social media on Thursday with the ruling party sharing a poster on X portraying Rahul Gandhi as a "new age Ravan", evoking strong criticism from the opposition party which termed it as "unacceptable" and "downright dangerous".

The poster came out a day after the Congress posted on X a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the caption "The Biggest Liar" and another calling him a "Jumla Boy", who was "Going to hit the election rally soon".

In a sharp retort, the BJP on its official handle on X shared a poster of Gandhi with several heads with the title "Bharat Khatre Mein Hai - A Congress party production. Directed by George Soros".

"The new age Ravan is here. He is Evil. Anti Dharma. Anti Ram. His aim is to destroy Bharat," the BJP said on X.

This evoked a strong reaction from the Congress general secretary in charge of communications Jairam Ramesh, who said, it is intended to incite and provoke violence against the former Congress chief whose father and grandmother were assassinated by forces that want to divide India. "What is the real intent of an atrocious

graphic portraying Rahul Gandhi as Ravan by the BJP's official handle? It is clearly intended to incite and provoke violence against a Congress MP and a former President of the party, whose father and grandmother were assassinated by forces that want to divide India," he said in a post on X.

"It is one thing for the PM to give evidence daily of being a pathological liar and of suffering from a narcissistic personality disorder. But for him to get his party to produce something this obnoxious is not just completely unacceptable, but is downright dangerous," Ramesh said.

"We will not be intimidated," the Congress leader also asserted.

As the battle lines between the two main parties get drawn in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, leaders of both have intensified their attacks against each other.

The poster war between the two parties is likely to escalate further in the coming months as elections in five states and the general elections draw near.

Earlier too, both the parties had launched cartoon strips against leaders of both the opposing parties on social media. (PTI)

It is BJP that sent feelers for alliance in 2018, says BRS' Rama Rao on PM Modi's remarks; BJP denies it

HYDERABAD, Oct 5: Hitting back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for saying he nipped in the bud Telangana chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's desire to be a part of NDA, BRS Working President K T Rama Rao has said it was in fact the other way around and the saffron party had sent feelers for an alliance in 2018.

In a message posted on social media platform X on Wednesday, Rama Rao said the BRS has never allied with anyone during polls ever since Telangana was formed, despite several requests. And in fact it is the opposition that have come together setting aside their ideological differences in an attempt to defeat the "formidable" KCR.

"In 2018, 'Biggest Jhootha Party' through its State president Dr K Laxman sent feelers to ally with BRS. Could the offer have been made without the approval of his Delhi bosses? Here is the then BJP state president making a statement on

record," Rama Rao said, posting some old paper clippings suggesting that the then BJP Telangana chief Laxman had said his party was ready to support BRS (then TRS) if the latter fell short of a majority in the 2018 assembly polls.

Refuting Rama Rao's comments in the post, BJP Rajya Sabha MP Laxman said they were made with ill intentions and aimed at resorting to false propaganda.

"During the GHMC polls, BRS had a tie-up with AIMIM and together they got the mayor seat... BJP would never encourage or have alliance with any family run or dynastic political party," Laxman said in a statement on Wednesday. Rama Rao, however, further alleged that "political tourists" with selective amnesia who are fabricating stories should know about the BJP's alleged overtures and said the BRS had rejected the offer outright the very next minute it was made. Modi

had on October 3 at a public rally said he had rejected a request from Chandrasekhar Rao to join the NDA, after the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections in 2020, citing his "deeds."

The PM's remarks were vehemently refuted by the ruling BRS, while Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in a message posted on X on Tuesday, took the opportunity to reiterate that, according to him, the BRS and BJP indeed have an understanding. The prime minister has "openly accepted" what he (Rahul) had said at a rally last month that the BRS stands for "BJP Rishitedaar Samiti", Rahul Gandhi said on X.

Rama Rao in his post asked why the BRS should ally with a party (BJP) which couldn't even keep its deposit in 105 assembly segments. He added, "Why does BRS need support of BJP in GHMC elections when we had the strength to form on our own?" (PTI)

Money power, freebies distribution would be on special radar: CEC Rajiv Kumar on Telangana polls

HYDERABAD, Oct 5: The Election Commission is fully committed to delivering free, fair, transparent and inducement-free elections, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar said on Thursday. A 17-member team headed by the CEC is currently in the city to assess the poll preparedness in Telangana and, as part of that, Rajiv Kumar held meetings with various stakeholders such as political parties, state and central government officials and enforcement agencies. Speaking at a press conference summarising the team's activities over the past three days, Rajiv Kumar said that a very loud and clear message has been given to enforcement agencies to act strictly against the use of money power during elections.

"Money power, freebies distribution would be on our special radar. If they (enforcement agencies) do not act we will make them act. As the time comes, we will assess and ensure that they act on all of this," he told reporters adding that banks were asked to keep a watch on online cash transfers in this regard. He said that during the interaction with political parties, they requested the Election Commission to ensure that elections in Telangana are inducement-free. The total number of voters in Telangana is 3.17 crore, with men and women in equal numbers, he said.

"For the first time in Telangana, there would be a facility available for all our senior citizens aged 80 above to vote from the comfort of their home,

if they so want," he said adding that, similarly, persons with disabilities -- those with more than 40 per cent or more disability -- can also vote from home. The CEC, who made a presentation on various aspects of election preparedness, appealed to the voters in the state to exercise their franchise. During an interaction, the political parties requested for enhancing voter participation in urban areas and ensuring the purity of the electoral rolls, he said.

He said the number of first time voters is 8.11 lakh, whereas the number of voters who are aged above 80 is 4.43 lakh of which 7,689 are centenarians. Talking about the 'cVIGIL' mobile application which the public can use to report violations of the model code of conduct (MCC), he said. (PTI)

Energy efficiency, renewable energy key pillars for achieving India's goal of net-zero emissions: Prez



NEW DELHI, Oct 5: President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said energy efficiency and renewable energy are the key pillars for achieving India's goal of net-zero emissions.

Addressing officers of the Central Power Engineering Service (2018, 2020 and 2021 batches) and probationers of the Indian Trade Service (2022 batch), who had called on the president at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, Murmu said the power sector is one of the prime movers for India's development.

"One of the indicators of the socio-economic progress of a country is energy demand and consumption. Therefore, as India moves ahead to become the third largest economy of the world, demand and consumption of power will certainly increase, which will further drive the country's development," she said.

The president asserted that energy efficiency and renewable energy are the key pillars for achieving India's goal of net-zero emissions.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), energy efficiency is called the "first fuel" in clean energy transitions as it provides some of the quickest and most cost-effective climate change mitigation options, she noted.

"It also reduces energy bills and strengthens energy

security. I urge you to focus on increasing energy efficiency, which will make it easier to achieve the climate change-related goals. You may face several challenges in the process of energy transition and grid integration, but you must play a productive role in adopting a holistic approach to address the challenges," Murmu told the Central Power Engineering Service officers.

She said the future of the power sector lies in research and innovation -- be it in energy storage, grid management or new forms of energy generation.

"I urge you to give importance to research and development in the power sector so that India remains competitive at the global stage," Murmu told the officers.

Addressing the probationers of the Indian Trade Service, she said trade forms the backbone of economies.

Asserting that India is at the forefront of global trade facilitation efforts, Murmu said the country is committed to digital and sustainable trade facilitation.

"You, the Indian Trade Service officers, are not just trade regulators, but trade facilitators too," the president said. She asked the officers to learn and use the latest tools of trade analytics to understand the emerging international trade scenario.

"You require a holistic outlook as well as specific domain expertise to comprehend and handle global challenges," she said.

Murmu said the social, economic and political interests of a country are interlinked and whatever decisions they take, will have an impact on the overall development of the country.

"You should align yourselves to the broader goals and economic interests of India," the president said. (PTI)

ISRO gearing up for Gaganyaan mission's first abort test of crew escape system this month-end 'Getting ready for launch by the end of October'

BENGALURU, Oct 5: ISRO plans to undertake an inflight abort test of the crew escape system by this month-end using a test vehicle developed as part of the country's ambitious maiden human spaceflight venture Gaganyaan. "Preparations are going on. All vehicle systems have reached Sriharikota (for the launch). Final assembly is progressing. We are getting ready for launch by the end of October," Director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) S Unnikrishnan Nair told PTI on Thursday.

"(With) this crew escape system, we will demonstrate (validate) in different conditions like high dynamic pressure and for transonic conditions," Nair added.

Thiruvananthapuram-based VSSC is the lead centre of ISRO under the Department of Space.

An ISRO official said the crew escape system (CES) is the most important element in Gaganyaan.

According to ISRO officials, this month's launch of the test vehicle TV-D1 would be the first of the four abort missions of the Gaganyaan programme. It would be followed by the second test vehicle TV-D2 mission and first uncrewed mission of Gaganyaan (LVM3-G1).

The second series of test vehicle missions (TV-D3 & D4) and LVM3-G2 mission with robotic payload is planned next. The crewed mission is planned based on the outcome of the



successful test vehicle and the missions in which no crew is on board, they said.

The test vehicle is a single-stage rocket, based on liquid propulsion, developed to validate the CES performance at different critical Mach numbers but Nair said it can be used for many purposes including space tourism.

"We are taking (the test vehicle) to transonic conditions. That means crossing the Mach number of one. We will go to something like Mach number of 1.2. That reaches around 12 km altitude. From there, the escape system will be activated, and that will go some 20 km, and from there the crew module will be released," he explained.

"This vehicle can be used for space tourism,

if any industry is interested. Same vehicle can take a crew module to 100 km and then come back. That's possible. If anybody is interested, this vehicle can be used for that," Nair said.

The Crew Module is habitable with Earth-like environment in space for the crew. It is of double-walled construction consisting of a pressurised metallic inner structure and unpressurised external structure with thermal protection system.

It houses the crew interfaces, human centric products, life support system, avionics and deceleration systems. It is also designed for re-entry to ensure safety of the crew during descent till touchdown.

According to ISRO officials, the Gaganyaan project would demonstrate India's capability of taking a crew of two to three members to a circular orbit of about 400 km around the earth for a one-to-three days mission and bring them back safely to earth, by landing in a designated location in Indian sea waters.

The LVM3 rocket, the heavy lift launcher of ISRO, is identified as the launch vehicle for the Gaganyaan mission.

It consists of solid stage, liquid stage and cryogenic stage. All systems in LVM3 are re-configured to meet human rating requirements and christened Human Rated LVM3 (HLVM3).

Nair said the LVM3 cannot be used for conducting tests to validate CES, saying it's an expensive rocket. (PTI)

PM inaugurates development projects in Rajasthan

JODHPUR, Oct 5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched multiple projects worth ₹ 5,000 crore in poll-bound Rajasthan, and asserted that they will lead to further development of the state.

At a function here, Modi laid the foundation stone and inaugurated multiple development projects in sectors like road, rail, aviation, health and higher education.

"The projects started today will lead to further development. Together we have to make Rajasthan a developed and prosperous state," he said speaking at the function.

He said till 2014, only 600 km railway line was electrified in Rajasthan while in the last nine years, more than 3,700 km of railway track has been electrified.

The prime minister laid the foundation stone of various projects, including a 350-bedded trauma centre and critical care hos-



pital 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.

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.

The prime minister also laid the foundation stone for the development of a state-of-the-art new terminal building at the Jodhpur airport costing ₹ 480 crore and inaugurated the IIT Jodhpur campus as well.

The new terminal building will be developed in an area of about 24,000 sqm and will be equipped to provide services to 2,500 passengers during peak hours. It will cater to 35 lakh passengers annually, improving connectivity and boosting tourism in the region.

Among other projects, he laid the foundation stone of multiple road development projects to be built at a cumulative cost of about ₹ 1,475 crore and also flagged off two new train services in the state.

Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat was among those present at the programme. (PTI)

AAP dares BJP to make public evidence against Sanjay Singh

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: The AAP on Thursday accused the Centre of trying to silence its MP Sanjay Singh by arresting him and challenged the BJP-led Union government to make public any evidence they have against him. Singh was arrested on Wednesday by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with its money laundering probe linked to the 2021-22 Delhi Excise policy case.

Addressing a press conference here, senior AAP leader Atishi claimed that over 500 officers of the ED and CBI conducted raids at several places linked to the AAP leaders in the last 15 months but "haven't found single evidence" against them. "They raided Manish Sisodia's residence, offices and several other places but they couldn't find evidence of corruption of even a single penny. And now, Sanjay Singh has been targeted," she said.

"The ED officers raided every inch of Sanjay Singh's residence but couldn't find anything. They arrested

him because he constantly raised issues of the Centre's corruption," she added. Atishi said that if there is any evidence against Singh, the Centre "should make it public."

"I want to challenge the BJP that if they have found any evidence against Sanjay Singh, they should make it public or they should quit politics. They can send their officers anywhere where Sanjay Singh has been and I can vouch they will not find anything against him," she claimed.

"We all know that whenever someone raises their voice against the government, there will be attempts to silence them. Since they couldn't silence him, they arrested him. The BJP should know that AAP is not going to get scared of their arrest threats," she said.

The arrest of the 51-year-old Singh, who became the second high profile leader of the Aam Aadmi Party to be nabbed in the case relating to the now scrapped Excise policy after former deputy chief

minister Sisodia, has sparked a political slugfest between the Arvind Kejriwal-led party and the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Another AAP leader, Gopal Rai, at the press conference said, "We went to Sanjay Singh's residence and his family told us that the ED didn't find anything against him, yet he was arrested. Until evening, the ED kept reiterating that it was just a part of the investigation process. But suddenly there were instructions from the higher authorities to arrest him." Rai too alleged that the BJP is "misusing" the central agencies like CBI and ED.

"The Centre is misusing ED and CBI by taking action against those who dare to speak up against rising inflation, poverty, and unemployment in the country. Even if the Central Government arrests all the leaders of the AAP, we won't bow down. We've been raising our voice for the country, its constitution and democracy and will continue to do so," he said. (PTI)

Varanasi court grants 4 more weeks to ASI to complete

GYANVAPI MOSQUE SURVEY

VARANASI (UP), Oct 5: A Varanasi court on Thursday granted four more weeks to the Archaeological Survey of India to complete the scientific survey of the Gyanvapi mosque complex and submit its report, and added that the duration of the survey will not be extended beyond this.

Government counsel Rajesh Mishra said that District Judge A K Vishvesh accepted their appeal to extend the period of the ongoing survey by four more weeks during a hearing on a plea by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The ASI, which was to submit the report of the survey by October 6, now has time till November 6 to do the same. The ASI is carrying out a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi mosque premises, next to Kashi Vishwanath Temple here, to determine whether the 17th-century mosque was constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple (PTI)

Tourism recovery in Asia-Pacific region strong and robust post pandemic: PATA



NEW DELHI, Oct 5: The recovery in tourism in the Asia-Pacific region after the Covid-19 pandemic has been "strong and robust" and the numbers have reached about 80 per cent of 2019's figures, the chief of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) said on Thursday.

Peter Semone was interacting with reporters during the second day

of the 46th edition of the PATA Travel Mart being hosted here from October 4-6.

The physical version of the PATA Travel Mart is being held after a hiatus of three years due to the Covid pandemic.

"Recovery from 2019 numbers... in the Asia-Pacific region, we are running at about 80 per cent. So there is a recovery and I have to say its strong and robust recovery."

"The quality of tourism, in terms of lengths of stays, is better. It seems, when people are travelling, they are travelling a little bit more seriously and in a bit more committed way," Semone said when asked about the recovery made in tourism sector in the Asia-Pacific region.

Later on the sidelines, he also shared some of the factors which have led to this "good recovery".

"Pent-up demand for travel is one of the main factors, I think, as people have been wanting to travel since the pandemic, when restrictions were imposed," he told PTI.

Exhibitors from South Korea, Nepal, Malaysia, Taiwan and some of the states from India are also participating in the mega event.

Lot of travel incentive deals were offered by agencies once borders began to be opened again, and people were also yearning to travel to meet their family members in other countries, do these factors also contributed to the recovery in tourism in the region, another senior official of PATA told PTI.

Union Tourism Secretary V Vidyavathi and other senior officials of

the ministry also were present on the occasion.

Vidyavathi said besides promoting "Travel for LIFE" initiative, the Ministry of Tourism is also focussing on shining light on lesser-known tourism sites, the "hidden gems" of India, to urge tourists to try out new destination while lessening burden on existing tourism sites.

The PATA Travel Mart 2023 is being held at the International Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC) at Pragati Maidan. The IECC complex was also the venue for the G20 Summit held from September 9-10. The G20 theme under India's presidency has been 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam -- One Earth. One Family. One Future'.

PATA, founded in 1951, is a renowned not-for-profit association recognised internationally for its role as a catalyst in the responsible development of travel and tourism in the Asia-Pacific region. The event in Delhi brings together tourism professionals and business stakeholders from across the world, offering a unique platform for networking, learning and collaboration, officials said.

PATA Travel Mart is one of the important international trade exhibitions catering to the tourism sector and it serves as a platform for trade interactions between global buyers and sellers mostly from the Asia-Pacific region. This year, the event is featuring different activities, including, the PATA Youth Symposium and the PATA Forum on Sustainability, besides the B2B Mart. The prestigious PATA Gold Award ceremony was also held during the travel conclave here. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Himanta announces slew of

expedite the socio-economic and academic development of BTR. He said that the construction of ₹ 600 crore Tamulpur Medical College and Hospital is going on a full swing. "Once dedicated, the medical college and hospital will greatly cater to the health and education of the people belonging to BTR areas," the chief minister added.

Referring to the upcoming recruitment for filling up 5,600 vacancies in Assam Police, he appealed to the youths of BTR to make the best use of this employment opportunity by applying for the same.

He also appealed to the unemployed youths of BTR to become entrepreneurs by applying for financial assistance under the Mukhya Mantri Atma Nirbarh Asom scheme.

The chief minister also dedicated the newly constructed bridge on Barama-Dhamdhama-Tamulpur Road in Tamulpur district for the service of the people.

The chief minister on the occasion also announced a slew of projects like establishment of ₹ 25 crore integrated DC Office at Tamulpur, ₹ 5 crore circuit house at Tamulpur and a ₹ 50 crore stadium at Tamulpur district. He moreover said that in the coming days the eligible women of BTR will be included in the beneficiary list of Orunodoi.

Handloom and textile minister UG Brahma, CEM BTC Pramod Boro, MP Dilip Saikia, MLA Jolen Daimari, Speaker BTC Katiram Boro and a host of EMs and MCLAs were present on the occasion.

Death toll rises to 14, 102 still

"Our dedicated teams are working day and night to address the immediate concerns and challenges posed by this calamity. I urge the administration, local authorities, all organizations, and individuals to join hands in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. Together, we can make a significant difference in providing relief to those affected and rebuilding our communities," he added.

The flash flood in the Teesta river, triggered by the cloudburst in Lhonak Lake in North Sikkim, caused accumulation of huge quantities of water, which turned towards Chungthang dam destroying the power infrastructure before moving downstream in spate, flooding towns and villages. The chief minister is in constant touch with the Centre, officials said.

He spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the phone and apprised him of the situation, they said, adding that the PM assured all necessary assistance to the state. The chief minister wrote to the Prime Minister, and sought necessary support, especially for areas that needed immediate intervention, officials said.

The flood destroyed 11 bridges in the state, with eight bridges getting washed away in Mangan district alone. Two bridges were destroyed in Namchi and one in Gangtok. Water pipelines, sewage lines and 277 houses, both kucha and concrete, have been destroyed in the four affected districts. Tamang said he has asked the district magistrates (DMs), superintendents of police (SPs) and different departments to maintain a state of heightened vigilance.

Chungthang town bore the maximum brunt of the flood with 80 percent of it getting severely affected. The national highway -10, considered the lifeline of the state, sustained extensive damage at several places.

Seven people died in Pakyong district, four in Mangan and three lost their lives in Gangtok, according to the SSDMA.

Among the 102 people missing, 59 are from Pakyong, including the army personnel. 22 are missing in Gangtok, 16 in Mangan and five people are missing in Namchi. A total of 26 people sustained injuries, the SSDMA said.

Defence spokesperson Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said the Border Roads Organization (BRO) was helping the state in the rescued operations in Chungthang and Mangan, where four critical bridges have been severely damaged.

"More than 200 people have been moved to safer areas by the BRO in spite of continuous heavy rainfall and extremely bad weather," he said.

"Search and rescue operations for the missing army personnel are still on," he added.

The families of the missing persons have been informed of the situation, the official said.

The troops of the Trishakti Corps are extending mobile connectivity to civilians and tourists stranded in Chungthang, Lachung and Lachen in North Sikkim, another official said. About 10,000 people have been affected by the calamity in the Mangan district, while 6,895 people were affected in Pakyong, 2,579 in Namchi and 2,570 people in Gangtok.

The SSDMA advised people to stay away from the Teesta as the water level was rising due to incessant rains in the upper reaches.

According to officials of the 17 Mountain Division, the water level was increasing in the Chungthang area till 11.30 am.

The state tourism department is also in contact with the stranded tourists, officials said.

Meanwhile, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Wednesday said the possible cause of the flash flood in Sikkim could be a combination of excess rainfall and a Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) event at South Lhonak lake in North Sikkim.

In a statement, the NDMA also said the Himalayan ranges are host to many glacial lakes, estimated through remote sensing techniques at about 7,500 and of these, Sikkim has around 10 per cent of which nearly 25 are assessed to be at-risk.

Giving details of the incident, the NDMA said in the early hours of Wednesday, there was a sudden surge in water flow in the Teesta river, which washed away several bridges, parts of NH-10, the Chungthang Dam and has impacted several small villages, towns and infrastructure projects in the upper reaches of the river valley. The main affected districts are Mangan, Gangtok, Pakyong and Namchi.

"While scientists are investigating the exact cause of the flash flood, the primary reason for the sudden surge appears to be a likely combination of excess rainfall and a GLOF (Glacial Lake Outburst Flood) event at South Lhonak lake in North Sikkim," it said in the statement.

The lake is at a height of 5,200 metres, with a towering ice-capped feature at about 6,800 metres to the north of and in close proximity to the lake. Satellite images received from the Indian Space Research Organization at 6 am on Wednesday, revealed the draining out of more than half the lake, most likely as a result of an avalanche from the ice-capped feature.

The Central Water Commission's monitoring stations revealed that the first surge of water was 19 metres above the maximum water level at Sangkalang at 0130 hours and 4 metres above the maximum water level at Melli at 0400 hours.

As soon as news was received, the NDMA said, alerts were issued to downstream habitations and relief and rescue operations were initiated by the NDRF, SDRF, ITBP, Army, and Sikkim civil administration. Several persons, including 23 Army men are missing, it said.

Continued snowfall in upper reaches and rainfall and clouds in lower reaches is hampering deployment of helicopters and relief operations.

However, the NDMA said consistent efforts are underway to assist the state government in all manner possible. Relief camps have been set up at several locations in the affected areas. Recently, in order to mitigate the impact of a GLOF event in these lakes, an NDMA-led expedition in the first week of September 2023 had surveyed two at-risk lakes in order to eventually deploy early warning systems for real-time alerts. (PTI)

CBI quizzes two senior

the lost mobile phones of Junmoni. The sudden recovery of the lost mobile phones from Junmoni's personal vehicle that was kept at Jakhalabandha PS after five months, raised eyebrows among the conscious people of the district, sources added further.

Terror ecosystem has to be

medals to NIA officials for excellence in service. Shah said the model anti-terrorism structure should be established under the purview of NIA, the hierarchy, structure, and SoPs of investigation of all anti-terrorism agencies in all states should be made uniform for better coordination between central and state agencies. He said that to deal with terrorism, the Centre and the states, their agencies and inter-agency cooperation will have to think in vertical and horizontal ways. Shah said the government has prepared many database verticals in the last five years.

All the agencies of the Centre and the states should make multidimensional and artificial intelligence-based use of the database, only then will we be successful in the fight against terrorism, he said.

The database should be used for investigation, prosecution, prevention and action, the home minister said and stressed upon every police station as well as young police officers to make their maximum use. He asked the NIA and the Intelligence Bureau to prepare a common training module for all central and state-level counter-terrorism agencies, so that uniformity can be brought in the methodology of fighting against terrorism. He said the number of terrorism incidents in 2001 was 6000, which reduced to 900 in 2022. Praising the NIA for achieving more than 94 percent conviction rate, Shah said more work is needed in this direction and asked all the states to take steps to increase the conviction rate.

Highlighting major successes in the fight against drugs, he said during Operation Samudragupta, conducted this year by the NCB, narcotics worth more than ₹ 12,000 crore were seized simultaneously. Apart from this, 10 lakh kg of drugs have also been disposed of, he said. Shah said terrorism has no boundaries and no state can face terrorism alone and collective effort will be needed to root out this evil.

He suggested making five actionable points in every session of the two-day conference to be sent to the home minister. (PTI)

China's assertiveness more

more evident with its rise. India has a major dispute on its northern borders with China and will have to play the strategic autonomy card....," he added. Referring to disruptions in the global geopolitical order, Gen Chauhan also underlined the need for India to continue maintaining "strategic autonomy" in its approach and highlighted how New Delhi was moving forward from its approach of "non-alignment" to an era of being a "Vishwa-mitra" — a friend to the world. He also cited India's nuclear tests in 1998, its "neutral and a nuanced" stand on the Russia-Ukraine war and the decision to go ahead with procurement of S-400 missile systems from Moscow notwithstanding

threats of sanctions as examples of the country exercising its "strategic autonomy".

"I believe that India has transited ahead from non-alignment of yesteryears to self-alignment as you said to maybe multi-alignment," he noted.

The Chief of Defence Staff also summarised India's journey of being non-aligned to that of exercising strategic autonomy. "If I were to summarize the journey of India from non-alignment to exercising of strategic autonomy, it can be based on what I can say is three S. First is securing India. Next is self-reliance. And lastly, shaping the environment to India's advantage and benefit," he said.

Gen Chauhan also elaborated on economic aspects of global geopolitics and that the global balance of power can be shifted by economic alignment and even issues like morality, righteousness and convergence of global interests. "In India's famous epic Mahabharata, Lord Krishna shifted the balance of power towards the Pandavas. His military might went to the Kauravas but it was only his righteousness and sage advice which shifted the balance of power," he said. "And ultimately the Pandavas emerged victorious in that particular war. We as a nation have utilised the G20 platform to leverage soft power to play a dominating role. So these are also important facts we must keep in mind when we take strategic decisions on how to get aligned in future," he said.

Gen Chauhan said the global geopolitical environment is currently in a state of flux and India must exercise its options looking at its national interests. "The world I believe is transiting between two orders. The old order is withering away and the shapes and no one knows the contours of this new order and how it will shape in the long run," he said.

Gen Chauhan also cited the financial crisis, disruptions in the global supply chains due to Covid-19, food and fertilizer shortages due to Russia-Ukraine conflict, the situation in the South China Sea as some of the manifestations of the geopolitical and geoeconomic flux. (PTI)

BJP pins Cong's scam

both ruling and opposition MLAs has come to Diphu and inspected the road and other government schemes implemented in Karbi Anglong. The committee had said that all roads were constructed well."

Dr Rongpi further said, "I have no doubt that there were no irregularities and all schemes were executed well. Developmental schemes are still going on under the able leadership of CEM Ronghang." The press conference was attended by the president of BJP, EKADC, Roland Killing and state secretary, ST Morcha and chairman, PWD Development Board, KAAAC, Longsing Tokbi.

Norwegian writer Jon Fosse

Nynorsk, by contrast, is used mainly by people in rural western Norway. "So it's a really big day for a minority language," he said. Norway's culture minister, Lubna Jaffery, told news agency NTB that it was "a historic day for the Nynorsk language and Nynorsk literature" and noted that "it has been 95 years since the last time a Norwegian author received the Nobel Prize for literature". Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson received the prize in 1903, Knut Hamsun was awarded it in 1920 and Sigrid Undset in 1928. In recognition of his contribution to Norwegian culture, in 2011 Fosse was granted use of an honorary residence in the grounds of the Royal Palace.

The literature prize has long faced criticism that it is too focused on European and North American writers, as well as too male-dominated.

Last year, French author Annie Ernaux won the prize for what the prize-giving Swedish Academy called "the courage and clinical acuity" of books rooted in her small-town background.

She was just the 17th woman among the 119 Nobel literature laureates. In 2018, the award was postponed after sex abuse allegations rocked the Swedish Academy and sparked an exodus of members. The academy revamped itself but faced more criticism for giving the 2019 award to Austria's Peter Handke, who has been called an apologist for Serbian war crimes.

What did Jon Fosse write?

His first novel, "Red, Black," was published in 1983, and his debut play, "Someone is Going to Come," in 1992.

His work "A New Name: Septology VI-VII" — described by Olsson as Fosse's magnum opus — was a finalist for the International Booker Prize in 2022. His other major prose works include "Melancholy," "Morning and Evening," whose two parts depict a birth and a death; "Wakefulness;" and "Olav's Dreams."

His plays, which have been staged across Europe and in the United States, include "The Name," "Dream of Autumn" and "I am the Wind."

How did Jon Fosse react to the news?

Mats Malm, permanent secretary of the academy, reached Fosse by telephone to inform him of the win. He said the writer, who lives in the western city of Bergen, was driving in the countryside and promised to drive home carefully.

In a statement released by his publishing house, Samlaget, Fosse said he saw the prize "as an award to the literature that first and foremost aims to be literature, without other considerations".

The Nobel Prizes carry a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (USD 1 million) from a bequest left by their creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel. Winners also receive an 18-carat gold medal and diploma at the award ceremonies in December. (AP)

Shakespeare, first shots and a cinematic universe of spies: Vishal Bhardwaj on 'Khufiya'



NEW DELHI, Oct 5: The man behind Maqbool, Omkara and Haider says he's a little troubled by Shakespeare's imprint on his work and might wait another 10 years to get back to the bard. But the Vishal Bhardwaj-William Shakespeare connect might just be too strong for that.

A scene in Bhardwaj's latest film *Khufiya*, an espionage thriller, has a scene showing a theatrical production of Julius Caesar. A possible hat tip to Shakespeare in a film about betrayal?

"It wasn't by design," Bhardwaj told PTI in an interview. "I get very happy that a lot of things happen on their own. If you analyse it later, you'll see that a depth has been created in it on its own. Yes, it was because Brutus is known for his betrayal and 'et tu Brutus' is a famous line. I wanted to name the film *Khufiya: Operation Brutus* at one point," he said.

The filmmaker, who translated Shakespearean tragedies *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Hamlet* into celluloid classics, said he held back because he did not want people to assume he had gone back to Shakespeare again.

"I'm also a little troubled by his imprint on my work. I will now take time to go back to Shakespeare. I will not rush. It's already 10 years (since his last adaptation *Haider* in 2014) and I want to wait another 10 years before I make something," Bhardwaj said. His newest venture is a spy thriller for Netflix that he wants to turn into a franchise.

The opening scene of *Khufiya*, set in 2000 after the Kargil war with Pakistan, almost didn't happen, Bhardwaj said.

The dreamy opening about a woman with a red umbrella emerging from the rain with Tabu's voice playing in the background got edited out and survived because of the insistence of his friends.

"When I started filmmaking, I read a quote by a big filmmaker who said a filmmaker is known by his first shot. I found it really interesting... Which is why the first image or how I open my film is the most important thing for me," Bhardwaj said.

"When I wrote this script, I wrote the opening lines for the winters of Delhi. I wrote these lines in the very first draft, drawing an image of a beautiful girl walking through the mist. But that scene got edited out in the subsequent drafts as we felt that it does not hold or there should be an action scene," he recalled.

His friends and former assistants, directors Abhishek Chaubey and Honey Trehan, read that scene in the first draft and loved it. And when Bhardwaj started making the film, they kept asking whether he had retained it or not.

"I felt like I was forgetting how I began and probably I should not leave that. But when we came to Delhi to shoot the film, it was the monsoon season. I had to rewrite that scene and create a new image of the girl walking through the rain, holding red umbrella... The scene survived because my friends had read it and helped me bring it back. It is one of my most favourite scenes," he said. The film stars his favourite Tabu, with whom he worked with in *Maqbool* and *Haider*, and actors Ali Fazal and Wamiqa Gabbi.

Bhardwaj said he based *Khufiya*, about the hunt for a mole in the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) led by Tabu's Krishna Mehra, on Amar Bhushan's book *Escape to Nowhere*. (PTI)

My parents are my biggest source of guidance: Suhana Khan



MUMBAI, Oct 5: "The Archies" actor Suhana Khan on Wednesday said her parents, superstar Shah Rukh Khan and producer-interior designer Gauri Khan, are her "biggest source of guidance".

The 23-year-old, who is set to make her film debut with Zoya Akhtar's "The Archies", was speaking at the India Today Conclave's session titled 'New Kids on the Block: Meet the Gen Z of Bollywood aka The Archies Gang'. "My biggest source of guidance are my parents and actually, my entire family. I feel like we all chip in and help each other out... I ask Mom 'Was that okay? Is my hair okay? Is my outfit okay?'" Suhana said.

"The Archies", directed by Zoya Akhtar, is a live-action musical movie based on the popular American comics of the same name. It also marks the acting debut of late star Sridevi and film producer Boney Kapoor's daughter Khushi Kapoor (Betty), and megastar Amitabh Bachchan's grandson Agastya Nanda (Archie).

In the Netflix film, Suhana plays Veronica, a character she described as someone with a magnetic personality.

"She is unabashedly herself and she knows her worth. That's something I'm learning from her," she added.

According to the makers, the 1960s-set film explores friendship, freedom, love, heartbreak and rebellion through the lives of Archie, Betty, Veronica, Jughead, Reggie, Ethel and Dilton. It will take audiences to the fictional hilly town of Riverdale.

Everyone on the set of "The Archies" was trying to facilitate Zoya's vision, Suhana said. (PTI)

Jr NTR-starrer 'Devara' to release in two parts

HYDERABAD, Oct 5: "Devara", starring Jr NTR in the lead, will be released in two parts, director Koratala Siva announced on Wednesday.

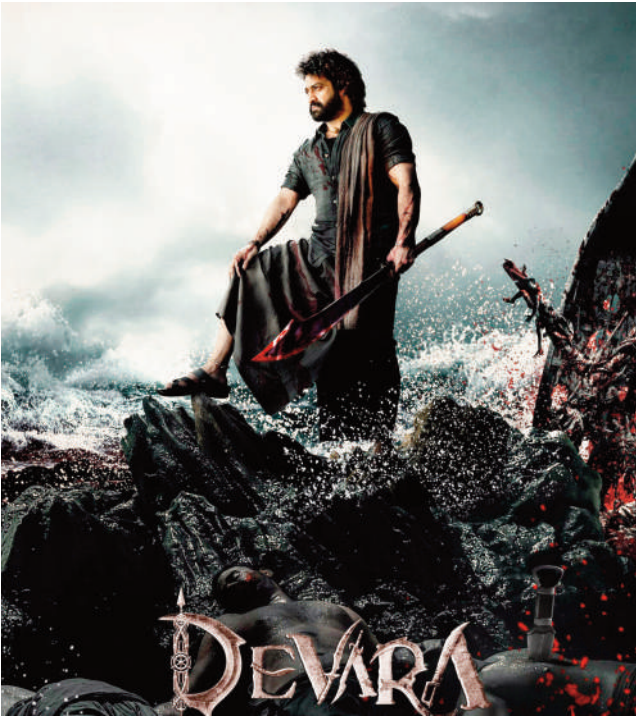
Billed as an high-octane action drama set in the forgotten coastal lands of India, the Telugu film also features Saif Ali Khan and Janhvi Kapoor. The first part of the movie will hit the screens on April 5, 2024.

In a video shared on the official X page of "Devara", Siva said they decided to release the film in two parts as the canvas had become "too big" for the story to be narrated well in one full-length feature.

"The film is set against the forgotten lands of coastal India and the canvas is too big. As we started shooting the film, the canvas revealed itself and started getting bigger and bigger. Every character in the film has its own weight and they need to be explored and established in depth and in detail, which we can't justify in one part."

"So, we took the decision to tell this big story and canvas in two parts. The story won't change in shape but will thrive in scale. One of the biggest canvases ever of 'Devara' will be done in two parts and April 5, 2024, is just the beginning," the filmmaker said in the clip.

"Devara" is produced by Yuvasudha Arts and NTR Arts, and presented by Nandamuri Kalyana Ram. (PTI)



MUMBAI, Oct 5: Actor Alia Bhatt

has started filming for her upcoming movie "Jigra", which marks her maiden collaboration with filmmaker Vasan Bala. Bhatt, who recently won the National Award for best actress, shared the news on Instagram along with photos from the film's set.

"& we're rolling... day one of bringing our 'Jigra' to life... stay tuned as we bring to you a piece of our hearts... fingers and toes crossed for the journey aheaddddddd...love Team Jigra," Bhatt, 30, wrote in the caption on Wednesday evening.

Backed by Karan

2nd edition of The Himalayan Film Festival concludes; short films 'Taar', 'Thigspa' win big

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: Short films "Taar", "Thigspa" (Last Drop), "Memoria" and "Nyoli" emerged as the winners at the second edition of The Himalayan Film Festival (THFF). The five-day event, which aims to promote filmmakers from the Himalayan region, concluded at the Sindh Sanskriti Kendra in Leh, Ladakh on Tuesday night.

Whereas "Taar", by Tsering Lhanzes, was named the winner, "Thigspa" (Last Drop), directed by Tsering Wangdus Lonpo and Tashi Dawa, was named the first runner-up.

Two shorts "Memoria" by Shashvat Kaushal and "Nyoli" by Samar Belwal were adjudged as the second runners-up at the competition.

Tsering Lhanzes said she is "thrilled and honoured" to have won the award.

"It's a moment of immense gratitude and validation for all the hard work that went into achieving this. I also want to thank The Himalayan Film Festival for showcasing my film," the director said.

Tsering Wangdus Lonpo, who co-directed "Thigspa" (Last Drop) with Dawa, said winning this award reaffirms their belief that films can be a force for positive change.

"It highlights the power of collaboration between filmmakers, environmentalists, activists, policy makers

and all of those who care about the earth," he said.

"The Himalayan Film Festival has given a platform to filmmakers of the region to present their work and connect with established names from Bollywood. This time we came second, next time we'll try to come first," added Dawa.

For "Memoria" director Kaushal, the win is a "personal milestone".

"Making a film in a short span of time is a gigantic task. To make something that is loved and appreciated, feels really surreal," he said.

Belwal, who directed "Nyoli", said the journey has been nothing short of a dream come true.

"Words can't quite capture the excitement and gratitude I'm feeling right now. I look forward to what the future holds and am excited to continue this creative journey," the filmmaker added. "Jaane Jaan" and "Last Days of Summer" opened the second THFF on September 29.

"Three of Us" brought down the curtains at the gala on October 3.

THFF is organised by the Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) of the Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh, in collaboration with Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Leh. (PTI)



Alia Bhatt commences shooting for Vasan Bala's 'Jigra'



Johar's Dharma Productions and Bhatt's Eternal Sunshine Productions, "Jigra" will hit the screens on September 27, 2024.

Dharma Productions also posted about shooting start on the project on Instagram.

"And the shoot for #Jigra begins - Day 1!" the banner posted.

"Jigra" marks Bhatt's second production venture via Eternal Sunshine Productions after 2022's "Darlings", which was released on Netflix. She was last seen in the streamer's "Heart of Stone", her Hollywood debut.

Johar, Apoorva Mehta, Bhatt and Somen Mishra are credited as producers on the upcoming project. (PTI)

KAFEEL KHAN PENS LETTER TO SRK

'Decision to bring Gorakhpur incident on screen profoundly moved me'



NEW DELHI, Oct 5: Dr Kafeel Khan, whose name surfaced in the 2017 Gorakhpur encephalitis deaths case, has expressed gratitude to superstar Shah Rukh Khan for shedding light on the tragic incident through his blockbuster film "Jawan".

Taking to microblogging site X, Dr Kafeel Khan said he has been trying to get in touch with the superstar for a while to convey his deep appreciation for his "extraordinary commitment to using cinema as a means to address critical socio-political issues". "The movie's poignant portrayal of the tragic Gorakhpur Encephalitis incident has left an indelible mark on my heart. As someone who has had a personal connection with the incident and its aftermath, I was profoundly moved by your decision to bring this story to the screen," he wrote in a letter addressed to the actor that he posted on X.

"Jawan", headlined by SRK and released

on September 7, features a subplot involving actor Sanya Malhotra, who plays a doctor struggling to arrange oxygen supply at a government hospital when a number of children are admitted due to high fever. But the children die and the doctor is held responsible for their deaths and jailed.

Viewers noticed a similarity between the sub-plot and the case of Dr Kafeel Khan, who was jailed for dereliction of duty after 63 children died of acute encephalitis syndrome at Baba Raghav Das (BRD) Medical College in Gorakhpur. A government inquiry later cleared him of these charges.

Dr Kafeel Khan said though "Jawan" is a work of fiction, the parallels it draws to the Gorakhpur tragedy serve as a "powerful reminder of the systemic failures, apathy, and, most importantly, the innocent lives lost".

"It underscores the urgent need for accountability within our healthcare system.

The character portrayed by @sanyamalhotra07 (as Dr Eeram Khan) although not directly referencing me, encapsulated the experiences I faced. "It was heartening to witness the real culprit of 'The Gorakhpur Hospital Tragedy', got caught, though sadly in real life the real culprits are roaming free, me still struggling to get my job back, and those 63 parents who lost their little ones still waiting for justice," he added. Dr Kafeel Khan also highlighted his book "The Gorakhpur Hospital Tragedy" and believes "a part of the movie's plot resonates with the events detailed" in the book. "If given the opportunity, I would be immensely honored to meet you and the talented director @Atlee_dir, as well as other members of the film's crew, to express my gratitude personally."

"I also want to assure you that my sanctification, devotion, and determination towards serving my countrymen would

continue undeterred. Thank you once again for being a beacon of hope," he added. "Jawan", a high-octane action thriller directed by Tamil filmmaker Atlee, is a father-son story that addresses social and political issues such as government apathy, corruption, farmers' suicides, and a failing healthcare system.

After the film's release, Kafeel Khan had posted on X that though he had not seen the movie, he was flooded with messages regarding the film. "I haven't seen 'Jawan', but people have been messaging me saying they thought about me after watching Dr Irum's character. There is a lot of difference between the film world and real life. The culprits in the army, health minister etc. get punished. But here I and those 81 families are still wandering for justice... Thank you @iamsrk sir and @Atlee_dir sir for raising the social issue," he had posted. (PTI)

Indian football team coach Stimac's contract extended until 2026

NEW DELHI, Oct 5: Senior national team head coach Igor Stimac's contract has been extended until 2026, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) announced on Thursday, rewarding him for overseeing three title triumphs this year. As per the contract, the Croat will automatically get an extension by another two years if India qualify for the third round of FIFA World Cup Qualifiers.

Former India stopper Mahesh Gawli, the assistant coach of the senior men's

team, was appointed as the head coach of the men's U-23 team. Stimac, a member of the Croatia side that finished third at the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France, took charge of the Blue Tigers in 2019 and has won four major titles with the side, including two SAFF Championships.

"The federation, the members have decided to extend the contract of our national team, Igor Stimac, until the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers. We have agreed to this, agreed to continue as



one team," AIFF secretary general Shaji Prabhakaran said during a virtual interaction. Stimac was seated beside Prabhakaran and Gawli as the top AIFF official made the announcement.

Most recently, Stimac guided the Indian men's team to the round of 16 at the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China. It is the first time in 13 years that the team has progressed thus far in the continental showpiece.

"We are seeking to ensure stability in the national team.

What we have experienced in the last few months, winning back-to-back tournaments, the performance on the pitch, even in the Kings Cup match against Iraq was great.

"We can only progress, we can only improve from here. The process cannot be halted in between," Prabhakaran said. Stimac was last week offered a fresh deal of two more years as head coach of the senior team with the AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey proposing the contract extension.

"I feel a part of this family. I have huge trust in my staff. I appreciate the AIFF for placing their trust in us. It's been a busy last three-four days, and we know what is at stake here, we know we need to keep progressing.

"Having stable staff around me is important, it's important to have great people around," Stimac said.

Meanwhile the AIFF said the I-League is set to start from October 28 and the fixtures will be released soon. (PTI)

SINDHU BOWS OUT IN QUARTERFINALS

PRANNOY BATTLES HIS WAY TO ASIAN GAMES MEDAL

HANGZHOU, Oct 5: A valiant HS Prannoy battled his way to the semifinals, becoming only the first Indian in 41 years to win a badminton medal in men's singles at the Asian Games but it was curtains for PV Sindhu in women's singles here on Thursday.

Playing with a tapping on his lower back and a belt under his shirt, Prannoy battled severe back spasm to dish out a performance for the ages, outshining Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia 21-16 21-23 22-20 in the quarterfinals to assure India a second badminton medal at the ongoing Games.

India had won a silver in men's team championships last Sunday.

"I think it was a really tough one out there. I think Lee is always a tough opponent. It was a very physical match today for me," Prannoy said after the match.

"I'm not at all in a condition where I could say I'm 80 per cent right. But I think to pull off something like this, I would give a lot of credit to myself. I think the will to fight was always there. So I think that paid off."

After fighting his way through a marathon 78 minute contest, the 31-year-old from Kerala fell on



the court in disbelief. He then removed his shirt, fist-pumped and ran into the arms of chief coach Pullela Gopichand.

Prannoy thus ended India's long wait for a men's singles medal at the Asian Games with Syed Modi winning the first -- a bronze -- at the 1982 edition in New Delhi.

The world championships bronze medallist was ruled out of team championships final due to the back injury as India went

down 2-3 to China to settle for a silver.

"It is affecting me. But that's how sport is. You can't be 100 per cent every day. But you have to learn to pull off matches even when you're 60 or 70 per cent. I think today was one of those days when I had to do that," he said.

While it was ecstasy for Prannoy, Sindhu had to endure the pain of returning without a medal for the first time in nine years after

she lost 16-21 12-21 to world No.5 Chinese He Bingjiao in 47 minutes to bow out of the competition.

Prannoy displayed his mental fortitude as he rallied his way from a 5-11 deficit to grab the opening game and then had two match points in the second only to see it slip away.

But Prannoy quickly wiped the slate clean and once again fought his way back in the decider, saved

two match points with his booming smashes and deceptions to register a great victory.

Prannoy had beaten Lee, a former All England Champion, at the Badminton Asia Championships in Dubai but he didn't have a good start.

However, the Indian managed to erase a six-point deficit at the break to grab four game points with Lee faltering with his length and going long and wide. He converted at the first chance.

Prannoy used his drops and deceptions to vary the pace of the rallies and lead 7-4 before taking a two point lead at interval. Lee fought his way to a 15-13 lead before the Indian regained his lead with three successive points and soon stood just two points away from a win at 20-18.

However, a couple of net cords went the Malaysian's way as Lee drew level and earned a game point at 22-21. He took the match to the decider after Prannoy found the net. Prannoy lagged 2-4 early in the third game. He then tried to prolong the rallies with deep tosses but he lacked the finishing, often hitting the net or wide as Lee lead 7-4. (PTI)



HANGZHOU, Oct 5:

Favourites India endured a forgettable 0-4 drubbing at the hands of China in the women's hockey semifinals, a result that not only pushed the team out of the gold medal race but also denied it a direct entry to the Paris Olympics.

Last edition's silver medallist India, the highest-ranked team in the tournament at world number seven, was no match to world number China, who were the bronze medallist in 2018 in Jakarta.

Jiaqi Zhong (25th minute), Meirong Zou (40th), Meiyu Liang (55th) and Bingfeng Gu (60th) scored the goals for China.

"Definitely not the result we were looking for today. I'm quite disappointed with the performance of my team," skipper Savita said.

"We knew that China is a good team, but our team is quite good too. Maybe it wasn't our day today, as we were not able to execute the plans we had made for this game. We gave it away.

"We didn't think this would happen. I can only say I'm sad, because we had a different goal in mind. We were well-prepared for it too - it's not as though there was something missing from our training."

China started on an attacking note put pressure on the Indian defence from the start.

The Chinese managed to enter their opponent's circle on frequent basis but failed to find the back of the net as the Indians defended stoutly.

China's relentless pressure resulted in back-to-back penalty corners in the sixth minute but failed to get past India captain Savita in front of the goal.

The Indians made a few circle entries but failed to yield any results from them.

The Chinese secured another penalty corner in the 11th minute but once again Savita came to her side's rescue.

Three minutes into the second

quarter China earned another penalty corner but Bingfeng Gu's flick was saved by Savita. The Indians looked completely out of sorts as the Chinese continued their domination.

The coordination between the midfield and forwardline was completely missing as India failed to create any clear cut scoring chance.

China, on the other hand, earned their fifth penalty corner in the 25th minute and Zhong made no mistake to hand the hosts the slender lead at half-time.

The Indians continued to play defensive hockey and the play backfired as China secured back-to-back penalty corners 10 minutes into the second half and Zou found the back of the net after getting a deflection from the stick of an Indian defender.

Trailing by two goals, the Indians finally started to wake up and started to press on the Chinese defence and got their first real scoring chance in the form of back-to-back penalty corners.

From the first set piece, Deep Grace Ekka sounded the board but the goal was disallowed for height and from the second chance Deep's try was saved by Chinese goalkeeper Jiao Ye.

The Indians finally started to put pressure on the Chinese defence but the attacks lacked sting.

However, India managed three more penalty corners, the second of which was converted by Udit but again the goal was disallowed for a raised ball.

The fourth and final quarter belonged to India but goals eluded them as all the 11 Chinese players fell deep to keep their lead intact.

With India going full-press, China took the opportunity with both hands and scored from a counter attack through Liang to drain the final nail on India's coffin. In the final minute of the match China secured two more penalty corners, and Gu added salt to India's wound. (PTI)

Battling nerves key for India against Japan in men's hockey final



HANGZHOU, Oct 5: The Indian men's hockey team will have to battle nerves and handle pressure effectively when it takes on defending champions Japan in the final of the Asian Games here on Friday, in its pursuit of reclaiming the gold medal at the continental showpiece after nine years.

India last won the men's hockey gold in the Asian Games in 2014 in Incheon, South Korea and would be gunning for their fourth yellow metal in the quadrennial extravaganza and secure a direct ticket to next year's Paris Olympics.

The last time India won the Gold at the Asian Games was back in 2014 in Incheon, South Korea. World no.3 India have claimed the Asian Games Gold medal thrice since the inception of Field Hockey at the Asian Games, winning the title in 1966, 1998 and in 2014.

And going by their form and world ranking, India are clear favourites to win the gold here and add to their nine silver and three bronze medal at the Asian Games. It was a disappointing outing for India in the last edition of the Games in Jakarta as they had to contend with a bronze and this time around they would look for redemption here.

The Indians were menacing in the pool stages, scoring as many as 58 goals and conceding just five. But in the semifinal, India

got a scare from South Korea before eventually winning 5-3 which was far from impressive.

Leading 3-0 at the first quarter, India lost their shape and buckled under Korea's pressure to concede three goals as the scoreline read 4-3 in their favour at one stage.

And the Indians would be very well aware that handling pressure will be the key going into Friday's all-important title clash. "There are always nerves at play when you enter a big match. We have been preparing for this tournament for a long time and this is the moment that we have all been waiting for. Winning the gold medal and securing a spot for the Paris Olympics has always been our target," said India captain Harmanpreet Singh.

"As a team, we have to ensure we do not allow pressure of the moment to dictate our nerves, and that we continue to play freely and enjoy the game. If we are able to do that, I am confident we will be able to get the win." It won't be easy against Japan, whom India defeated 4-2 in the pool stages.

That win will definitely give India confidence going into Friday's final, but the Tokyo Olympics bronze medallist will be wary of taking the Japanese lightly in such a big match, where a few mistakes can cost the gold medal. (PTI)

Pakistan seek to allay major concerns in World Cup opener

HYDERABAD, Oct 5: Pakistan would be desperate to plug the gaping holes and hope their star players regain form when they open their World Cup campaign against a free spirited Netherlands here on Friday.

Following a pre-mature Asia Cup exit and defeats in the two warm-up games, Pakistan definitely need to raise their game to go deep in the ODI showpiece.

The problems begin from the top with the opening combination not looking the most threatening in the competition. Imam-ul-Haq averages an impressive 50 in ODIs but on flatter decks in India, he need to better his strike rate of 82 by a few notches.

Imam is expected to start against Netherlands but the team will need to choose between the destructive but out-of-form Fakhar Zaman and Abdullah Shafique who doesn't have the experience of world events.

The big positive for the unpredictable team is that its number three and four, skipper Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan, are in sublime touch.

If Iftikhar Ahmed too has been getting the runs but it remains to



be seen if Salman Agha also gets accommodated in the middle-order.

If the warm-ups are an indication, the game on Friday is expected to be another high-scoring affair with bowlers having no margin for error. Getting used to the varied conditions in India will be another challenge for Babar and his players, who don't get to play in the IPL like the players of other teams.

"The boundaries are small. There is no margin for the bowlers. If the bowling is a little bit off, the batsman utilizes it. So, there will be high scores. You will have to play accordingly," said Babar.

In the absence of injured

Naseem Shah, the Pakistan bowlers were at the receiving end in the couple of warm-ups against New Zealand and Australia. Pakistan vice-captain Shadab Khan has been struggling since Asia Cup and goes into the opener under pressure. Fellow leg-spinner Usama Mir is breathing down his neck and there is a possibility that both may start against the Netherlands as Pakistan search for wickets in the middle overs.

The seasoned Hasan Ali has big shoes to fill in Naseem's absence as he will open the bowling alongside Shaheen Afridi.

Haris Rauf, who leaked 97 runs in nine overs against Australia, too need to be at his best if Pakistan are to advance in the competition.

Of late, Pakistan have left a lot to be desired in the fielding department and will be looking to correct that.

Netherlands, the only associate team in the competition, cannot be taken lightly and it's only better for Pakistan to face them early in the competition before taking on the bigger teams. Netherlands, playing their first ODI World Cup since 2011, go into the competition a bit short on game time. (PTI)

It is all right to have kids and come back to sport: Dipika

HANGZHOU, Oct 5: Dipika Pallikal knows a thing or two about 'mom guilt', having left her kids at home to chase an Asian Games medal.

On Thursday, moments after winning a maiden gold medal in mixed doubles at the continental showpiece, the veteran India squash player called on all the mothers to overcome the feeling of guilt and take time off to follow their dreams.

"We sacrificed a lot of things but that does not mean that we must give up on our dreams. It is important for women to keep empowered and also know that it is also all right to take time off to do what you love to do," said Pal-

likal, who had take a four year break from the sport to start her family.

Pallikal and Harinder Pal Singh Sandhu beat Malaysia's Aifa Binti Azman and Mohammad Syafiq Bin Mohd Kamal 11-10 11-10 in the final on Thursday.

"It is all right to have kids and come back to the sport. I know the guilt will always be there. I am feeling the guilt of leaving my kids for two weeks," said the mother of twin boys.

"I know that when they grow up they will know that my mum was not holidaying in Hangzhou but working to win a medal for the country and for them."

She said she is happy that "peo-

ple can look up to me and know that you can still have a career when you have kids."

Asked if the postponement of the Asian Games did affect her, Pallikal said, "It was important for me to stay fit. It was very hard for me to have lost my way and come back and to get fit and match fit."

"But, I was surrounded by the right people at the right time."

On her partnership with Sandhu, she said, "We have grown up together being squash players. We are always hanging out together, during training, during tournaments and just trying to make memories together."

"So we got that email, saying

that Harinder and Dipika are going to play in the doubles together, both started that day."

"I don't think we both believed that we could break, but we want to put in the hard work and whatever happens will happen. It just turned out to be an unbelievable tournament for us."

Dipika won her first Asian Games gold medal, though in mixed doubles.

"For myself and Hari to come back and try that one last push to play in the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games was a dream which is a reality right now."

"He has two gold here (but) this is my first gold medal in the

Asian Games.

"The thought was definitely there for me wanting to come back. I knew that I had one Commonwealth Games gold but the Asian Games medal was missing."

Sandhu, on his part, said he had to control all the emotions after winning the men's team gold medal.

"We started all right and lost the lead. I was not doing so well. I was like a kid in school, lost track and the teacher (Dipika) came in. She is always there and she did her job very well. She put me back on track. I was just happy that we could finish on a strong note. (PTI)

NZ routs England in World Cup opener to gain measure of revenge after 2019 final

AHMEDABAD, Oct 5: The Cricket World Cup opened Thursday with New Zealand gaining a measure of revenge for how the last one ended four years ago.

The rematch of the extraordinary 2019 final got a very different result as the Blacks Caps powered to a nine-wicket thrashing of England, whose title defense is off to an alarming start.

England, without star batter Ben Stokes because of a hip injury, was put into bat and posted 282-9 — a score that always seemed well below par at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

That's how it proved as New Zealand raced to its target in just 36.2 overs, with Devon Conway (152 not out) and Rachin Ravindra (123 not out) putting on a virtually chanceless second-wicket stand of 273 to help the team to 283-1. The chase was achieved without captain Kane Williamson, who still has yet to recover from a knee injury.

Conway's 83-ball hundred was the

Black Caps' fastest at a World Cup — but only until the 23-year-old all-rounder Ravindra went quicker, off 82 balls, to also become New Zealand's youngest century-maker.

The duo had come together when Sam Curran dismissed Will Young for a golden duck.

Joe Root top-scored with 77 for England, which at least made some history after all batters scored double figures. It's the first time that has happened in the history of ODIs, totaling 4,658 matches.

There was a sparse crowd for the start of the 13th edition of the 50-over World Cup, though the cavernous 134,000-seater stadium was slightly fuller by the time the one-sided match ended.

Conway hit 19 fours and three sixes, while Ravindra hit 11 fours and five sixes, a total boundary count of 38 that exceeded England's 27.

None of the English bowlers were able to trouble the duo, with Mark Wood taken for 0-55 in his five-over



spell.

It was the first time two batters making their debut in the World Cup scored centuries in the same match.

Put into bat, England didn't get off to a quick start as anticipated. Jonny Bairstow scored 33 off 35 balls, while Dawid Malan managed only 14 runs despite being dropped early.

They added 40 for the first wicket in 7.4 overs and New Zealand didn't allow the run-rate to take off. When the spinners came on, the runs dried up further as Mitchell Santner dismissed Bairstow in the 13th over.

Harry Brook tried to cut loose with 16 runs off Ravindra in the 17th over, but he ended up getting out caught off the last ball.

England countered the two left-arm spinners by sending Moeen Ali up the order. It didn't work as part-time offspinner Glenn Phillips clean bowled him for 11 runs.

Root held the fort at one end after England was down to 118-4 in 21.2 overs. He then added 70 runs for the

fifth wicket with skipper Jos Buttler. The duo batted in damage control mode, although Buttler did hit two fours and two sixes in his 43 off 42 balls.

Root scored his first half-century in 10 ODI innings off 57 balls. But New Zealand got the breakthrough when Buttler was caught behind off Matt Henry (3-48).

England kept losing wickets at regular intervals and New Zealand never really let any partnership blossom. Root and Livingston added 33 runs, before the latter fell to Trent Boult (1-48).

Mark Wood and Adil Rashid threw their bats around to add 30 runs for the final wicket and saved England from an embarrassing 252-9.

Brief scores: England: 282 for 9 in 50 overs (Joe Root 77, Jos Buttler 43, Jonny Bairstow 33; Matt Henry 3/46, Mitchell Santner 2/37, Glenn Phillips 2/17) lost to New Zealand: 283 for 1 in 36.2 overs (Devon Conway 152 not out, Rachin Ravindra 123 not out) by 9 wickets. (AP)

Dipika-Harinder bag mixed doubles Gold, Ghosal settles for Silver

Asian Games 2023: Squash players record best-ever performance

HANGZHOU, Oct 5: Veterans Dipika Pallikal and Harinder Pal Singh Sandhu survived some anxious moments to clinch the mixed doubles gold, but Saurav Ghosal settled for singles silver on Thursday as Indian squash players recorded their best-ever performance at the Asian Games.

Dipika and Harinder eked out a 11-10 11-10 win over Malaysian duo of Aifa Binti Azman and Mohammad Syafiq Bin Mohd Kamal in a tense 35 minute final to fetch India's second gold medal in squash at the ongoing event.

However, it was disappointment for India's top player Ghosal as he lost to Malaysia's Eain Yow Ng 11-9, 9-11, 5-11, 7-11 in a little over an hour.

But that wouldn't take shen out of India's brilliant outing in the squash competition in Hangzhou, where they bettered the country's effort in the Incheon Games 2014.

India had won a historic gold in the men's team event nine years ago, with two silver and a bronze to boot with.

However, in the ongoing Games, India have won two gold, a silver and a bronze.

"I don't always remember what happens on court. It's a blur for both of us. We only remember the last point. We are more than happy. We are very proud of the fact we are here and won



gold," Dipika said after the win.

"Myself and Harinder have worked really, really hard to be here at this moment, to be part of this team and to win the gold. We are very humbled to be in this position that we are right now," she said.

Both pairs were neck and neck in the opening game, with none of them able to hold on to the lead. Dipika kept fetching points with her fantastic forehand.

The Indians saved two game points before taking the first game after Aifa erred in hitting a forehand.

Major S Maniam, the former India coach, was present in the Malaysian camp.

Leading 9-3 in the second game, the Indian duo was on course for an easy win.

But the Malaysians had other plans as they capitalised on Dipika and Harinder's slightly sluggish movement to take seven consecutive points and rise from 3-9 to 10-9.

The encounter then became more tense as the 10-9 point had to be played multiple times due to let (obstruction).

The 34-year-old Harinder then hit two backhand winners to seal the fixture.

Ghosal, who did not drop a game in this Games till the final, started the match trailing the Malaysian who built an 8-6 lead.

However, Ghosal played some fine forehands to make it 8-8 and eventually won the game.

But the Malaysian turned the table in the second game winning it 11-9, and it seemed to have affected the concentration of Ghosal.

In the third and fourth games, Ghosal hardly produced any fight and his backhand completely deserted him, with the Indian making a slew of errors.

Ghosal also found himself out of position several times in these two games, and lost points through obstruction.

Ghosal said his opponent was simply better on the day.

"I think I played pretty alright for the most part. In the second game a few things didn't go my way. Credit to Yow, as he played really well. He imposed his game better for the most part.

"I didn't play well, but I can be really proud of the effort I put in," said the Indian after the match.

However, the 37-year-old remained non-committal about his future plans, but he expressed satisfaction over his Asian Games outing.

"Things are still very raw. Maybe it is, maybe it isn't. If it is, I know that I gave it my best shot.

"I did everything. I trained as hard as I could. If I do walk away into the sunset, I can walk away a proud man," Ghosal said. (PTI)

HANGZHOU, Oct 5: The women's combine emerged triumphant in an edge-of-the-seat thriller while the men's outfit secured the top prize without fuss as Indian compound archers swept all three gold medals on offer in team events, further bettering their best-ever show at the Asian Games, here on Thursday.

The women's compound team edged Chinese Taipei by the thinnest of margins, securing the gold medal win by just one point with Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Aditi Swami and Parneet Kaur shooting 60 out of 60 in the final round of a heart-stopping final.

Having knocked out two-time defending champions South Korea, the Chinese Taipei trio of Chen Yi-Hsuan, Huang I-Jou and Wang Lu-Yun fought till the end but the top-seeded Indian team won 230-229.

The scores were locked 200-200 till the last set but the young Indian team that has two teenagers -- Aditi and Parneet -- remained ice-cool to find three more 10s in the final three arrows.

It put the pressure back on their opponents who were to shoot last and needed to match with three 10s to force a shootout. But Chinese Taipei started off with a nine that sealed the gold for India.

Having conquered the world less than two months back, it also completed India women's compound team's domination by becoming the Asian champions.

In the afternoon session, the men's trio of Abhishek Verma, Ojas Deotale and Prathamesh Jawkar downed South Koreans 235-230 to seal their sixth medal in archery.

India's second gold in archery also assured the country of at least five medals in archery at the ongoing Asian Games.

India's mixed team had won a gold on Wednesday.

For 27-year-old Jyothi this was also a double gold from this



edition, having secured the top spot in the podium with Ojas Deotale in the compound mixed team event on Wednesday.

The Vijaywada archer is in line for a hat-trick of gold as she will fight for the Asian Games title, taking on South Korea's So Chaewon in the compound individual final on Saturday.

India have confirmed at least five medals in archery at the continental showpiece as Deotale and Abhishek Verma are assured of a top-two finish by making it an all-India men's compound individual final.

India's previous best show in archery at the Asian Games was in Incheon 2014 where they had claimed one gold, one silver and one bronze.

"We are very happy because this is the first time that we have won a gold medal in the Asian Games in the compound women's category," the 27-year-old Jyothi said.

"We are really happy and thankful to the audience who have been cheering for us here and at home watching TV. I have the individual final on Saturday, so I'm looking forward to taking that gold too," Jyothi said.

In the final, India had a one-point lead after three arrows but Parneet slipped into the red ring with an 8 in the second set of arrows, while Aditi and Jyothi also dropped a point each to trail 54-56 after first end.

Chinese Taipei trio stepped up

with three 10s to race to a 86-82 lead after nine-arrow each but Parneet started off with a 10 as they made it all perfect scores while their rivals stumbled with a seven to concede a one-point lead.

Both teams went neck-and-neck in the fourth end that saw 171-all, and the stalemate prevailed in first set of arrows in the decider before their final flourish with three 10s nailed it.

The Indian women's team began the day pocketing an 11-point win over Hong Kong (231-220) and in the semifinal they were even better, crushing Indonesia by 14 points.

"There was a little nervousness in the match but we just focused on the shots and tried to hold ourselves in as much as possible. We did not focus on the competitors' shots and just did our best," said Parneet.

The compound men's team of Ojas Deotale, Prathamesh Jawkar and Abhishek Verma, who are seeded second, followed the suit of the women's trio to storm into the final with two lopsided wins.

Veteran Verma dropped four points but that did not matter much as the young duo of Deotale and Jawkar were on a 10-hitting spree to down Bhutan 235-221 in the quarterfinals.

Chinese Taipei were no match to the Indians who once again totalled 235, en route to the final. (PTI)

Gohain Tekela Football Club beat Radiant Club

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Oct 5: Gohain Tekela Football Club got league points in A Division Football League. In a league match playing in the ground of Jorhat Stadium on Thursday Gohain Tekela defeated Radiant Club by 3-0 goals. Robert Ushan netted two goals and Akash Gogoi scored one goal in favour of Gohain Tekela Club. Friday's match - Napathya Club vs Victoria Club.

Bridge: Indian men trail Hong Kong after three sessions in final

HANGZHOU, Oct 5: The Indian men's team produced an underwhelming effort in the first two sessions to hand the advantage to Hong Kong in the bridge competition final at the Asian Games here on Thursday.

India now trail Hong Kong 91-132.10 after having played 48 boards, and the final three sessions will be played on Friday.

Indian men made a lukewarm beginning to the day, losing the first session to Hong Kong 55-32.

India, who had picked up a gold and two bronze at Jakarta Games in 2018, could not make a come-

back in the afternoon session as they had often done in this Games, and conceded the segment to Hong Kong 46-29.



However, the Indian side won the final session of the day after a close fight 30-28, and that would give them some confidence going to the final three rounds.

The Indian team is being represented by Jaggy Shiv-

dasani, Sandeep Thakral, Sumit Mukherjee, Rajeshwar Tiwari, Raju Tolani and Ajay Khare.

Indian women and mixed teams were already knocked out of the Asian Games. (PTI)

World Cup opener: Lukewarm crowd response for opening game doesn't paint nice picture

AHMEDABAD, Oct 5: There will be two World Cups being held simultaneously in India.

The first one on days when Indian team plays and it will be even difficult to get hold of a ticket. Virat Kohli made it clear in his Instagram post that no one should ask him for tickets. The stands will be jam-packed and you will feel ODI cricket is alive and kicking.

The other one is more stark in contrast like the opening game between current champions England and runners-up New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium, which saw the presence of barely 10,000 people at the start. By the time, the sun stopped beating down hard, it increased to around 15 to 17,000.

The two teams, which played the greatest World Cup match during that epic final at the Lord's in 2019, perhaps wouldn't have visualised empty stands staring at them.

Looking dapper in jet black suit, ICC's Global Ambassador Sachin Tendulkar walked in with the trophy but the greatest ODI batter of all time, even in retirement, wouldn't be used to this kind of tepid response.

On an ideal day, even in a non-India match, we would have had fans chanting "Sachiiiiin, Sachiiiiin". Nothing of that sort happened.

Jonny Bairstow's six off Trent Boult, the first scoring shot of this World Cup, produced only the thud of the ball bumping onto the empty stands.

So, is it the death knell for ODIs? Perhaps, the answer lies somewhere in between.

Indian cricket fans love their stars as always but



not the sport.

The drone camera capturing the top angle shot of the stadium made the emptiness even more visible.

You couldn't fault the critics if they felt that Australia and New Zealand have made their debuts in the Vijay Hazare Trophy in-front of near empty stands. At least that was the vibe that one got.

Contrary to usual scenes at almost all venues when India play, or even when IPL matches are held, there were hardly any large swathes of raucous fans waiting outside the Narendra Modi Stadium in the lead up to the start of the tournament.

More fans trickled in after sunset as mercury dropped down and the second innings began under lights. Also Thursday being a working day didn't

help matters.

An official from the Gujarat Cricket Association had told PTI in days leading up to the tournament-opener that they expect about 50,000-60,000 fans — from the city and nearby areas in the state to watch the non-India matches — but it remains to be seen if the viewers were at all excited by the prospect of watching last edition's finalists.

There were also reports of 30,000-40,000 women from the city being given free tickets to watch the game but that did not seem to be the case for the large part of the first innings of the game as empty stands told the story.

"I guess it is due to the heat," said Viraj Shah from Ahmedabad, who currently lives in Canada and works in the oil and gas industry.

"It was great for me that my trip back home coincided with the start of the World Cup. I booked my tickets online for this match but have yet to find one for the India-Pakistan match," he added.

"I expect the crowd to build up from say, the 40th over (of the first innings) onward when the sun starts getting down. It is difficult to sit under the shade here," said Shah while pointing at empty stands.

In particular, the F, G and H stands remained largely empty due to direct exposure to the sun and it was only around 5:00pm local time that there were some number of people taking their seats.

However, the scene would be entirely different a week from now when the biggest game of the group stage takes place here between arch-rivals India and Pakistan on October 14. (PTI)

NRL Football Academy win Youth Club League (U-15) in Sivasagar

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Oct 5: NRL Football Academy, Bokakhat emerged the champion in Zone B(U-15) Youth Club Football League in Sivasagar defeating the Majuli Riverine Club 3-0 in the final played in Peoli Phukan Stadium on Thursday.

The NRL team was leading by 2 goals before the breather with goals from Pabitra Nath and Muza Haddin in the 15th and 30th minutes. In the Second half Pabitra Nath found the net again in the 32 minutes to make it 3-0. The trophies were handed over by Rajesh Sharma, ED, ONGC, Punaram Mili, president, Sivasagar Spots Association, Manoj Bhagawato, secretary, SSA, Sarat Hazarika, member AFA, Dr. Saumerjiyoti Mahanta Principal, Sivasagar Commerce College, Santosh Agarwal, Mrinal Chutia, and Haren Dwora. Longri Hancha was adjudged the Player of the Tournament. The NRL team reached the final defeating Sivasagar SFCC while the Majuli team entered the final defeating Kakojan FCC.