

WORLD

- US and China agree to resume military communications during Biden-Xi summit
- Biden says he still believes Xi Jinping is a dictator

NATION

- BJP pledges LPG subsidy, completion of Eastern Canal Project
- Rajnath holds conversation with US counterpart Austin in Jakarta

New Delhi confident of positive outcome

Appeal against death order on 8 Indians in Qatar initiated

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: India on Thursday said the appeal process against the death sentence handed down to eight former Indian Navy personnel by a Qatari court is under process and it was hopeful of a positive outcome from it.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said India is engaged with the Qatari authorities on the matter and that the government will continue to extend all legal and consular assistance to the Indian nationals.

The eight Indians were on October 26 given death sentences by Qatar's Court of First Instance. India described the ruling as "deeply" shocking and vowed to explore all legal options in the case.

Days later, an appeal was filed against the death sentence.

"The case is currently in a legal process there. As we mentioned, an appeal has been filed in Qatar's



Court of Appeal. We are also engaged with the Qatari authorities on the matter and we will continue to extend all legal and consular assistance (to them)," Bagchi said.

"I would again urge everyone not to engage in speculation considering the sensitive nature of the case," he said.

The judgement in the entire

process has been made confidential by the Qatari side.

"The appeal process is underway and we would hope for a positive outcome," Bagchi said, replying to a question on the matter at his weekly media briefing.

He also described as "factually incorrect" some reports that suggested the appeal in the case has

been adjudicated.

The Indian nationals, who worked with private company Al Dahra, were arrested in August last year reportedly in an alleged case of espionage.

Neither the Qatari authorities nor New Delhi made the charges against the Indian nationals public.

In its reaction to the ruling by the Qatari court, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) last month said that it is attaching "high importance" to this case and is exploring all legal options.

The charges were filed against the eight Indian navy veterans on March 25 and they were tried under Qatari law.

All of the former Navy officers had "unblemished stints" of up to 20 years in the Indian Navy and had held important positions including that of instructors in the force, former military officials had said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

India not ruling out investigation, but wants evidence in Nijjar killing: Jaishankar



LONDON, Nov 16: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that India is not ruling out an investigation into Canada's allegations about the involvement of the Indian government's agents in the killing of a Khalistani separatist in that country but wants it to provide evidence to back its claims.

Jaishankar made the comments on Wednesday in response to questions during a conversation with veteran journalist Lionel Barber titled 'How a Billion People See the World' here.

"If you have a reason to make such an allegation, please share the evidence with us. We are not ruling out an investigation and looking at anything which they may

have to offer. They haven't done so," Jaishankar, who was here on a five-day official visit to the UK, said while responding to a question.

The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18 in British Columbia. India had designated Nijjar as a terrorist in 2020. India has rejected Trudeau's allegations as "absurd" and "motivated".

Jaishankar also said Canadian politics has given space to violent and extreme political opinions which advocate separatism from India, including through violent means. "These people have been accommodated in Canadian politics. They are given the freedom to articulate their views," he said.

Jaishankar said that freedom of speech and freedom of expression comes with a certain responsibility and the misuse of those freedoms and the toleration of that misuse for political purposes would be very wrong, referring to the pro-Khalistani activities in Canada.

Jaishankar said that he was in touch with his Canadian counterpart Melanie Joly on the issue.

He recalled the attacks on the High Commission of India in Canada, or smoke bomb attacks on the High Commission and (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

HT BRIEFS

Employee arrested

GUWAHATI: Sleuths of Directorate of Vigilance & Anti-Corruption (DVAC) on Thursday apprehended a government employee for allegedly demanding bribes Directorate of Vigilance & Anti-Corruption, said an official statement. The accused identified as Ashok Rabha, who was deployed as senior assistant in the office the Sub Divisional Agricultural Officer in Dudnoi under Goalpara district. Rabha had demanded ₹ 5,000 as bribe from the complainant for land re-classification related matters. Unwilling to pay the bribe, the complainant approached this Directorate for taking necessary legal action against the above-mentioned public servant. Accordingly, a trap was laid on Thursday by a team from the DVAC in the office of the Sub Divisional Agricultural Officer where Rabha was caught red handed, in presence of independent witnesses, immediately after he accepted ₹ 2,000 as part of the demanded bribe from the complainant in the office.

Heroin recovered

GUWAHATI: Based on an input, Raid was conducted by STF, Assam near Khanapara bus stand under Dispur PS Jurisdiction and apprehended two habitual woman Drugs peddlers and recovered 43 vials containing suspected heroin weighing 54.5 grams, cash ₹ 5,680 and one mobile handset. Necessary legal actions are being done. The two women identified as Sunita Basumatary and Pranita Das.

Welson Englung

BOKAJAN: Secretary of Silonjan Lamps Ltd., Welson Englung passed away in Referral Hospital, Dimapur early morning. He was under hospitalisation due to dengue. He held the post of Silonjan Lamps' Secretary from 2012 onwards. He was a social worker who used to help the people of Bokajan Sub-Division in Karbi Anglong. He left behind his wife Sewali Teropri and son Athimong Hirme Englung and host of relatives.

TMC, AAP seek sacking of Assam Guv for campaigning in Rajasthan polls

GUWAHATI, Nov 16: The Assam units of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have demanded that state Governor Gulab Chand Kataria be sacked for allegedly campaigning in the Rajasthan assembly elections.

No immediate comments could be obtained from either Kataria or Assam Governor's Office on the issue. Issuing separate statements, the two parties have sought the intervention of the President and the Election Commission of India for taking action against the governor, who relinquished all political posts before joining the constitutional post. "Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria is busy campaign-

ing for the BJP in Udaipur, Rajasthan. This is a challenge to democracy, the Election Commission of India should take action against him," Assam TMC president Ripun Bora said in a post on X.

He also said it is "extremely shameful" that despite being the custodian of the Constitution, Kataria is campaigning for the BJP. "He should be immediately sacked from his post," Bora said.

Sharing a statement of Assam TMC, he further alleged that Kataria campaigned for BJP candidate Tarachan Jain in Udaipur and it is a violation of the election norms as he holds a constitutional post. "A few days ago, Assam Assembly's (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

EC sticks to Dec 3 as poll counting date, despite appeals for change in Mizoram



AIZAWL, Nov 16: The Election Commission has decided to go ahead with the scheduled date for counting of votes for the Mizoram assembly polls on December 3, despite repeated appeals by various quarters to change it, a top official said on Thursday.

As December 3 is a Sunday, all

major political parties of the Christian-majority state, civil societies organisations and others had urged the poll panel to change the day as it will clash with church programmes.

"I have discussed the matter with the Election Commission. Counting will be held as per the schedule announced by the commission," Mi-

zoram chief electoral officer Madhup Vyas told PTI. Vyas visited Delhi and talked to EC officials on the issue on Tuesday.

Counting, unlike polling, does not involve common people and they are free to do what they like on December 3 as only the designated staff who work directly under the EC would be involved in the counting of votes, he said.

"Counting has to take place for all five states at the pre-designated date," Vyas added.

Votes will be counted for Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana on December 3. Polling for the 40-member Mizoram assembly was held on November 7. More than 80 per cent of over 8.57 lakh voters cast their votes to decide the fate of 174 candidates. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Drugs worth ₹ 15 crore seized

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Nov 16: The police in Karbi Anglong recovered 1.652 kg of heroin worth around Rs 15 crore from a van under Dillai police station on Thursday.

The police while carrying out checking in the evening recovered 130 plastic cases containing heroin from the door panels of a Tata Winger van bearing registration number AS 01KC 9014, coming from Manipur.

In this connection Mohammad Elias Khan (29) and Mohammad Sirajuddin, both from Manipur were detained. In another success of the police in Karbi Anglong they recovered heroin worth around Rs 90 lakh from a car yesterday evening. The police was carrying out checking at Lahorijan Patrol Post, under Dillai police station when they intercepted (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

CM orders overhaul of key roads connecting Bhutan

GUWAHATI, Nov 16: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday instructed officials to maintain and repair roads connecting the state with Bhutan to promote tourism and economy on both sides.

Sarma, who also looks after the Public Works Department (PWD), reviewed various road projects between Assam and Bhutan with senior officials of the department.

"To take stock of the condition of highways and roads connecting Assam and Bhutan, HCM Dr @himantabiswa held a meeting with officials of PWD and other concerned officials," the Chief Minister's Office said in a post on X.

Sarma instructed the officials to maintain and repair the roads to complement tourism and economy on both sides, it added.

Earlier this month, Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk visited Assam for the first time and travelled to different important places during his three-day tour, beginning November 3. The 43-year-old king was accompanied by the Royal Bhutan Ambassador Major General Vet-sop Namgyel and other senior members of the royal office. (PTI)

India committed to unimpeded lawful commerce in international waters: Rajnath Singh

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: India is committed to freedom of navigation, overflight and unimpeded lawful commerce in international waters in accordance with global norms, defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday against the backdrop of China's increasing military muscle flexing in South China Sea.

In an address at a meeting of 10-nation ASEAN and some of its dialogue partners in Jakarta, Singh also underlined the importance of dialogue and diplomacy to ensure enduring peace and stability in the world.

The defence minister reaffirmed India's message to the world at large, that "this is not an era of war", and spoke about the imperative to give up the "us versus them" mindset. Singh said India is commitment to freedom of navigation, overflight and unimpeded lawful commerce in the international waters in accordance with international laws, including United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982.

There have been growing global concerns over China's sweeping claims of sovereignty over all of the South China Sea, a huge source of hydrocarbons.

Several countries in the region including Vietnam, the Philippines and Brunei, have counterclaims.

In his remarks at the meeting of ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the defence minister described terrorism as a serious threat to international peace and security and called for concerted efforts to deal with it.



The ADMM-Plus is a platform comprising 10-nation ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight dialogue partners -- India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States.

Indonesia is hosting the meeting as the current chair of ADMM-Plus. The defence minister called for regional security initiatives that are consultative and development-oriented to reflect the larger consensus among various stakeholders.

He committed towards nurturing practical, forward-looking and result-oriented cooperation with ADMM-Plus for enhancing maritime security in the region, the defence ministry said here. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Over 8000 former militants rehabilitated in past two years: Himanta

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 16: A total of 8,756 former militants have been rehabilitated under the Swavalamban scheme in the last two years, said Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday.

Sarma emphasised that the surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy, coupled with the Swavalamban scheme, provided skill development training, enabling these individuals to lead dignified lives.

"Inspired by Hon PM's vision, a large number of militants have shunned the path of violence and decided to help us build a new Assam. Under the surrender-cum-rehabilitation policy & #Swavalamban scheme they received skill development training & are now leading a dignified life", Sarma wrote on microblogging site X.

As per the tally shared Assam chief minister, a total of 4203 cadres from NDFB, 1926 Karbi, 1182 Adivasi, 301 NLF, 88 ADF, 63 NSLA, 28 RNLF, 29 UPFR, 124 ULFA (I), 127 UGPO, 74 TLA, 38 KNLA, 11 DNLA and 181 under Memorandum of Settlement (MoS), 164 NLF (Bodo) 184 among others have been rehabilitated.

It is worth mentioning that this initiative, launched by the Assam government in 2019, focuses on reintegrating individuals with militant backgrounds into mainstream society.

Prez asks CAG, others to contribute towards making India developed nation by 2047

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday called upon Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) and other important organisations to contribute towards making India a developed nation by 2047.

Addressing a gathering at the 'Audit Diwas' organised by CAG, the President also lauded the apex government auditor for taking many steps, including the establishment of the Centre for Data Management and Analytics, in which digital technology and other modern methods are being used in line with the future. This awareness towards the future will prove useful, she said.

"Today our countrymen want to move forward rapidly towards building a developed India by the year 2047. All important institutions and communities of the country, including CAG, have to contribute to achieve this goal," Murmu said.



Audit Diwas commemorates the occasion of the appointment of the first Auditor General of India on November 16, 1860 and creation of the CAG organisation.

Recognising the significance of the day in the annals of the Indian history, since 2021, the CAG has celebrated November 16 as Audit Diwas.

CAG Girish Chandra Murmu

said that in cognisance of the paradigm shift in governance to digital bedrock, the apex auditor too has leveraged technology.

"...this year we achieved a remarkable milestone. Effective April 2023, we have transitioned to 100 per cent digital auditing processes, utilising our unique enterprise-wide audit process and knowledge management IT System (One IAAD

One System - OIOS), creating a single source of truth for our audit activities," he said.

This achievement, he added is attributable to the unstinting efforts of many, those who conceptualised it, designed it, painstakingly integrated module after module, and valiantly initiated implementation, training many, hand-holding 24X7.

"Data analytics is a regular feature of our audit processes and routinely deploying advanced tools like drones, Global Positioning System (GPS) and remote sensing has enabled us to make incisive observations that would not have been possible otherwise," the CAG said.

He informed that concerted efforts of the organisation resulted in 183 audit reports covering the entire gamut of government activities, tabled in Parliament and State Legislatures, during 2022-23. Winners of the second (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

KAAC EM calls on media to portray reality of remote villages

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 16: The executive member (EM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Prabhat Chandra Taro on Thursday urged media to bring out the true picture of remote villages in Karbi Anglong.

Taro said this while addressing a gathering on the occasion of 57th National Press Day.

"In a democratic country without the 4th pillar i.e. media, is incomplete. A district like Karbi Anglong has a vast area and remote villages still lack basic amenities. It is the foremost duty of the media to bring out the true picture of such remote villages," he added. The EM also noted that most of the area remains neglected as media doesn't reach such areas and cautioned media persons to refrain themselves from bias and negativity.

"The media persons should be



trained so that they can do justice to their profession," he added.

It is worth mentioning that the day was observed under the banner West Karbi Anglong District Press Club (WKADPC) with District Information & Public Relation Office (DIPRO), Hamren, at Dongkamukam Forest Inspection Bungalow (IB). The theme of the observation was 'Media in the era of artificial intelligence' and 'Jour-

nalism ethics and challenges in the digital era'.

On the occasion, senior journalists and those who were in media earlier, but have now opted for some other professions were felicitated by WKADPC.

Earlier, the WKADPC flag was hoisted by WKADPC president, Joying Terang followed with paying floral tributes to the departed. As part of (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

We are not out of the woods yet and have miles to go: RBI Bulletin on inflation

MUMBAI, Nov 16: A Reserve Bank Bulletin on Thursday said retail inflation has moderated due to monetary policy action and supply side interventions, but "we are not out of the woods yet and have miles to go".

An article on the state of the economy in the November Bulletin also noted that the global economy is showing signs of slowing down in the ongoing quarter as manufacturing languishes while services sector activity appears to have reached the end of its post-pandemic expansion.

Going forward, it said tightening financial conditions is a significant risk to the global outlook.

"In India, the momentum of the change in GDP is sequentially expected to be higher in Q3, 2023-24, with festival demand remaining ebullient," the article authored by a team lead by RBI Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra said.

The authors said investment demand appears to be resilient with



the government's infrastructure spending, an uptick in private capex, automation, digitalisation, and indigenisation providing a boost.

Referring to the headline inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI), the article said a combination of monetary policy action and supply side interventions guided inflation down from the high reaches to which it had

climbed through the first seven months of 2022-23.

In fact, November 2022 was the first month when headline inflation dropped back into the RBI's tolerance band of 2-6 per cent in the whole calendar year.

"We are not out of the woods yet and have miles to go, but readings of around 5 per cent and 4.9 per cent in September and October, respectively, are a welcome relief

from the average of 6.7 per cent in 2022-23 and 7.1 per cent in July-August 2023," it said.

The RBI, however, said the views expressed in the article are of the authors and do not represent the views of the central bank.

The article further said India's external sector has remained viable, with a modest Current Account Deficit (CAD) financed by resilient capital flows, one of the least volatile currencies in the world and a healthy level of foreign exchange reserves.

The momentum of growth has picked up, taking GDP well above pre-pandemic levels to becoming the fifth largest economy in the world at market exchange rates, it added. "Steadfast policy initiatives are showing results, with the financial sector exhibiting soundness and supporting the credit needs of a resurgent economy," it said.

The 37th edition of the State of the Economy article marks the third year of its revival after a long hiatus of 25 years. (PTI)

Rupee falls by 14 paise to 83.23 against US dollar



MUMBAI, Nov 16: The rupee declined by 14 paise to settle at 83.23 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday due to foreign fund outflows and a firm greenback in the overseas markets.

Losses in crude oil prices, however, helped the rupee restrict the fall, forex dealers said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 83.18 against the US currency. The local unit remained under pressure in the day trade moving in a range of 83.17 to 83.25.

The rupee settled at 83.23 (provisional) against the US dollar, showing a loss of 14 paise over the last close.

The rupee appreciated 24 paise to close at 83.09 against the US dollar on Wednesday as the American currency retreated from its elevated levels after the US inflation came lower than expected.

"The rupee faced weakness as the dollar index rebounded from 103.90 to 104.30," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said.

"The (US) retail sales data, which came in line with minor weakness, sent positive signals regarding the prospects of a US rate hike as Fed (Federal Reserve) has key data in support to not hike further," he added.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.10 per cent at 104.35 on Thursday.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.54 per cent to USD 80.78 per barrel.

Analysts said that oil prices declined further in Asian trade due to signs of easing demand in China and a bigger-than-expected weekly build in US crude stockpiles.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex climbed 306.55 points to settle at 65,982.48 while the broader Nifty rose by 89.75 points to close at 19,765.20.

According to exchange data, foreign institutional investors (FIIs) emerged as net buyers in the capital market on Wednesday as they bought shares worth ₹ 550.19 crore. (PTI)

Windfall profit tax on crude oil, diesel exports cut

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: The government on Thursday cut the windfall profit tax on crude oil produced in the country and on exports of diesel in line with softening international oil prices.

The tax, levied in the form of Special Additional Excise Duty or SAED, on domestically produced crude oil has been reduced to ₹ 6,300 per tonne from ₹ 9,800 per tonne, according to an official notification. SAED on the export of diesel was reduced to ₹ 1 per litre from ₹ 2 per litre. The levy on the export of jet fuel or ATF and petrol will continue to be zero.

The new tax rates came into effect from Thursday. At the last revision effective from November 1, the government had increased the tax on crude oil to ₹ 9,800 per tonne from ₹ 9,050 per tonne. Simultaneously, the levy on the export of diesel was halved to ₹ 2 and that on jet fuel was brought to nil from ₹ 1 per litre. International oil prices have softened since the last revision, necessitating the reduction. The basket

of crude oil that India imports has averaged USD 84.78 per barrel this month as against USD 90.08 a barrel average in the month of October and USD 93.54 in September. India first imposed windfall profit taxes on July 1 last year, joining a growing number of nations that tax supernormal profits of energy companies. At that time, export duties of ₹ 6 per litre (USD 12 per barrel) each were levied on petrol and ATF and ₹ 13 a litre (USD 26 a barrel) on diesel. A ₹ 23,250 per tonne (USD 40 per barrel) windfall profit tax on crude oil produced by companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) was also levied.

The tax rates are reviewed every fortnight based on average oil prices in the previous two weeks.

A windfall tax is levied on domestic crude oil if rates of the global benchmark rise above USD 75 per barrel. Export of diesel, ATF and petrol attract the levy if product cracks (or margins) rise above USD 20 per barrel. (PTI)

₹ 820 cr erroneously credited to UCO Bank account holders due to technical glitch

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: As much as ₹ 820 crore were credited to account holders of UCO Bank in what the lender described as an erroneous transfer and has initiated a process to reverse the same. The bank has recovered ₹ 649 crore or 79 per cent of the amount erroneously credited to some accounts of the bank via Immediate Payment Service (IMPS). By taking various proactive steps, the bank blocked the recipients' accounts and has been able to recover ₹ 649

crore out of ₹ 820 crore which is about 79 per cent of the amount, UCO Bank said in a regulatory filing on Thursday. The state-owned bank is yet to clarify whether this technical glitch was due to human error or a hacking attempt. It is to be noted that the IMPS platform is operated by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). IMPS is a real-time interbank electronic funds transfer system that happens straight without intervention. The bank has initiated requi-

site actions to recover the balance amount of ₹ 171 crore, it said, adding the matter has also been reported to the law enforcement agencies for necessary action.

During the period from November 10-13, the bank had observed, due to technical issue in IMPS, certain transaction(s) initiated by holders of other banks have resulted in credit to the account holders in our bank without actual receipt of money from these banks. (PTI)

RBI tightens norms on personal loans for banks, NBFCs

MUMBAI, Nov 16: The Reserve Bank on Thursday tightened norms for unsecured personal loans for banks and non-banking financial companies.

The revised norms wherein risk weights have been increased by 25 percentage points will not be applicable on certain consumer loans, including housing, education, and vehicle loans.

Besides, the norms will not be applicable on loans secured by gold and gold jewellery. These loans will continue to attract 100 per cent risk weight.

Higher risk weight implies that banks have to keep aside more money as buffer when it comes to unsecured personal loans.

In simple words, a higher risk weight restricts banks' lending capacity.

Recently, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had flagged the high growth in certain components of consumer credit and advised banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to strengthen their internal surveillance mechanisms, address the build-up of risks and institute suitable safeguards, in their own interest.

The high growth seen in consumer credit and increasing dependency of NBFCs on bank borrowings were also highlighted by the governor during the interactions with MD/CEOs of major banks and large NBFCs in July and August, respectively.

"On a review, it has been decided to increase the risk weights in respect of consumer credit exposure of commercial banks (outstanding as well as new), including personal loans, but excluding housing loans, education loans, vehicle loans and loans secured by gold and gold jewellery, by 25 percentage points to 125 per cent," the RBI said in a circular.

The central bank has also increased the risk weights on credit receivables by 25 percentage points to 150 per cent and 125 per cent for banks and NBFCs, respectively. (PTI)

Sahara matter will continue even after Roy's death: Sebi chief

MUMBAI, Nov 16: Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on Thursday said the Sahara matter will continue for the capital markets regulator even after the death of the group's founder Subrata Roy. Roy died in Mumbai on Tuesday after a prolonged illness at the age of 75. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a FICCI event, Buch said for Sebi, the Sahara matter was about an entity's conduct and added that it will continue regardless of whether an individual is there or not.

When asked why the refunds have been too less, Buch said the monies were returned through a Supreme Court-appointed committee basis the evidence of the claims made by investors. It has been reported that refunds of only ₹ 138 crore have been made to investors even though Sahara group was asked to deposit over ₹ 24,000 crore with Sebi for further refund to investors.

Sahara group has faced many allegations, including that of running a Ponzi scheme. Troubles for Roy started in November 2010 with Sebi asking two entities of Sahara group not to mobilise funds from equity markets or from issuance of any security to the public while restraining Roy

Markets rally for 2nd day on buying in IT stocks

MUMBAI, Nov 16: Equity benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for a second straight day on Thursday following gains in IT, tech and consumer durable shares amid a mixed trend in global equities. Softer-than-expected US inflation data and easing bond yields have also brought optimism in equity markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 306.55 points or 0.47 per cent to settle at 65,982.48. During the day, it jumped 682.44 points or 1 per cent to 66,358.37.

The Nifty gained 89.75 points or 0.46 per cent to 19,765.20.

"The Indian market continued its positive resurgence, tracking global gains. Softer-than-expected US inflation data and easing bond yields have bought optimism that spending will emerge like in technology.

"Taking the cues further, IT stocks showed a significant jump in the broader market. The market is sensing that export-based sectors like IT and pharma could be future winners. While cut in inflation will also benefit domestic placed staples and consumer sector," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Among the Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finserv were among the major gainers.

Axis Bank, Power Grid, ITC and ICICI Bank were the major laggards. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.52 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.52 per cent.

Among the indices, IT jumped 2.59 per cent, teck rallied 2.13 per cent, healthcare (0.98 per cent), realty (0.98 per cent), oil & gas (0.84 per cent), telecommunication (0.68 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.64 per cent).

FMCG, bankex and metal were the laggards.



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

European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended with gains on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.54 per cent to USD 80.74 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Wednesday as they bought equities worth ₹ 550.19 crore, according to exchange data. "Although key indices pared gains towards the closing hour, markets continued their upward bias due to an upsurge in IT and realty stocks. Moderating inflation in the US could be signalling that the Federal Reserve may be done with rate hikes, which is good for global markets.

"Further, domestic economic numbers like exports have shown signs of recovery, which has further boosted the market sentiment and has triggered renewed buying interest in recent sessions," Prashanth Tapse, Research Analyst-Sr VP Research, Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The BSE benchmark jumped 742.06 points or 1.14 per cent to settle at 65,675.93 on Wednesday. The Nifty climbed 231.90 points or 1.19 per cent to 19,675.45. (PTI)

Topcem with Utsah distributes school stationery to needy children



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Nov 16: On the occasion of World Children's Day 2023, Topcem Cement, in collaboration with Utsah Guwahati, undertook a commendable initiative to distribute school stationery to the underprivileged students of 10 Child Care Homes in Guwahati.

This thoughtful endeavor is geared towards supporting these children on their educational paths, paving the way for brighter futures. The distribution event, held in Guwahati, saw the provision of school stationery kits to institutions like Kalyani Niwas, Rupna-

gar, Seven Sisters Children Home for Girls Bhagaduttapur, Sishu Kalyan Sadan, Jalukbari, Open Shelter Home for Boys, Panjabari, Utsah Education/Community Centre, Bamunimaidan, Ashaneer Home Rupnagar, Amoya Choli-halo Open Shelter Home for Boys, Ulubari, Sneha Bandhan, Tripura Road, Jayanagar, Late. Rishi Hazarika Memorial Home for Children (Destination), Bhagaduttapur, Kasturi Children Care Home, Suraj Nagar, Sixmile.

The distribution encompassed approximately 12,000 pencils, 7,000 pens, and 1,200 notebooks,

strategically allocated based on the specific needs outlined in a proposal by Utsah.

The officials from Utsah Guwahati actively participated in the event alongside representatives from the beneficiary institutions. Dr Anil Kapur, speaking at the occasion, emphasised the fundamental right of every child to education, expressing gratitude to Utsah for providing the platform for this meaningful event.

Since its inception in 2021, this initiative by Topcem Cement has been a beacon of hope for more than 500 students from underprivileged backgrounds. The primary objective of this ongoing drive is to bridge the educational resource gap for these children, ensuring that they have access to essential materials that might otherwise be beyond their reach. As Dr Anil Kapur affirmed, this commitment to supporting education will persist, reflecting the company's dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of these deserving youngsters.

Amazon India signs MoU with AICTE



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Nov 16: Amazon India has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to extend its initiative, Amazon WoW (Women of the World) across the country. This innovative programme is designed to empower and equip women students enrolled in engineering colleges across India with essential skills to thrive in the technology industry. The collaboration agreement was signed by Suman Yadav, director - Student Programmes, Amazon, and on behalf of AICTE, by Prof T G Sitharam, chairman of AICTE, Govt of India.

The Amazon WoW initiative provides a dynamic platform for women students to seamlessly connect with the Amazon community, engage in immersive skill development sessions, and access a wealth of resources. Through this strategic collaboration with AICTE, the national apex body for technical education, Amazon is committed to enabling women students with the essential tools and knowledge necessary to navigate and succeed in the ever-evolving landscape of technology. Given the shared vision of AICTE and Amazon India in nurturing talent for the tech sector, this industry-government collaboration seeks to help women engage with industry leaders, technologists, and like-minded peers, all while honing essential career focused skills.

Prof T G Sitharam, chairman of AICTE, expressed his enthusiasm about the collaboration, stating, "Amazon India is leveraging its industry expertise and technical prowess to support women empowerment in the country. Amazon WoW will be an invaluable program for women in engineering colleges across India. This initiative not only imparts essential skills, such as coding, but also opens doors to invaluable opportunities for industry exposure and soft skill development to young women. It truly embodies the spirit of progress in AICTE's pursuit of a more inclusive and dynamic tech landscape."

Chetan Krishnaswamy, vice president of Public Policy at Amazon India concurred, "I am elated to see this collaboration between Amazon and AICTE for the WoW program. AICTE being the umbrella body for all technical education institutions will allow Amazon India to sensitize and upskill future women leaders in tech in all corners of the country. We hope that through this initiative, women will not only gain skills that will help them tap job opportunities but that they will also be able to come together as a community that can continue to support each other in the future." Suman Yadav, director - Student Programs, Amazon also highlighted the success that Amazon WoW program has seen since its launch in 2021 mentioning that "We recognize the gap in our country's talent landscape today, where students lack appropriate mentoring and skills essential for their careers. Amazon WoW bridges that gap by providing a structured path including mentorship and learning opportunities to women engineering students to make informed career choices. Our collaboration with AICTE will further support our efforts in democratizing access to knowledge enabling and empowering women students to build fulfilling tech careers."

India's GDP to grow 6.7.1 pc during 2024-2026, growth prospects remain strong: S&P

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: India's economic growth prospects should remain strong over the medium term, with GDP expanding 6-7.1 per cent annually in fiscal years 2024-2026, S&P Global Ratings said on Thursday.

In a report titled 'Global Banks Country-By-Country Outlook 2024', S&P said the banking sector's weak loans will decline to 3-3.5 per cent of gross advances by March 31, 2025, on the back of structural improvement, including healthy corporate balance sheets, tighter underwriting standards and improved risk-management practices.

Interest rates in India are unlikely to rise materially, and this

should limit the risk for the banking industry, it added.

"Unsecured personal loans have grown rapidly and could contribute to incremental NPLs. We believe underwriting standards for retail loans generally remain healthy and

overall level of delinquencies remains within acceptable limits for this product category," S&P Primary Credit Analyst Deepali Seth Chhabria said.

The report said that global uncertainties will have a lesser impact on the Indian economy.

Slower global growth and external demand will weigh on economic activity and could fuel further inflation. However, given that India is domestically oriented,



the agency expects the economic growth to be less affected, it added. "Economic growth momentum

to continue. India's economic growth prospects should remain strong over the medium term, with

GDP expanding 6-7.1 per cent annually in fiscal years 2024-2026," S&P said. India's real GDP rose 7.8 per cent year-on-year in the June quarter, up from 6.1 per cent in the March quarter.

The Reserve Bank of India has forecast a 6.5 per cent economic growth for the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscal years. The report further said that the State Bank of India and the leading private-sector banks have largely addressed their asset-quality challenges.

Many public-sector banks still carry relatively high volumes of weak assets, which will result in higher credit losses and hit profitability; their performance lags that of the industry. (PTI)

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One detained for threatening minister Atul Bora



GUWAHATI, Nov 16: One person has been detained for allegedly threatening state agriculture minister Atul Bora on social media, director general of police, Gyanendra Pratap Singh said on Thursday.

The criminal investigation department (CID) of Assam Police had on Tuesday filed a case and initiated a probe over Bora receiving a threat to his life on social media.

Singh said that a 31-year-old youth from Bamun Moran village in Gaurisagar of Sivasagar district has been picked up for his Facebook post, which allegedly threatened the agriculture minister of the state.

"The detention is based on substantial evidence," he said in a post on X.

Bora is also the president of Asom Gana Parishad, an ally of the ruling BJP-led coalition government in the state.

Earlier, a person, claiming to be a part of the banned ULFA, made a purported threat of a bomb in Bora's quarter in the comment section of the Facebook page of a local news portal.

"No such threat would be acceptable against elected representatives as it threatens the democratic polity," the DGP had said. (PTI)

Sensitisation programme on ART guideline held

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Nov 16: The Alliance India in collaboration with the Assam State AIDS Control Society and the Tezpur branch of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) conducted a sensitisation and orientation workshop on the National AIDS Control Programme ART guideline at the IMA Conference Hall in Tezpur.

Several members of the IMA along with other medical professionals attended the sensitisation programme held in Tezpur recently.

Queen Gogoi Das, honorary secretary of IMA, Tezpur branch, welcomed the participants and highlighted the role of the doctors in addressing the epidemic.

Chiranjeeb Kakoty, state coordinator of Alliance India spoke about the 95:95:95 goal of the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) and what is the position currently at both national and state levels. He made a presentation on the private sector engagement and what role the private practitioners and private health institutions can



Post-Exposure Prophylaxis which all health care providers and institutions should be aware of, given their vulnerabilities.

Atul Kr. Kalita, honorary secretary of IMA, Assam state branch highlighted the treatment and reporting of tuberculosis cases by private practitioners. He said the same should be tried in HIV cases also, though such a step has not yet been taken to train doctors in the state and particularly the district.

On the other hand, both Kakoty and Thaosan answered various queries which were put forth by the participants related to stigma, testing and referral and treatment of co-infections.

Dwipen Mahanta, president of IMA's Tezpur branch, while speaking on the way forward highlighted the need for one to one communication with the medical practitioners to include them in the network of service providers for PLHIV and taking a massive social media campaign to address stigma and discrimination and promote treatment seeking behavior of such persons.

play in treating the PLHIVs. He also discussed the reporting format which needs to be submitted by those private practitioners, who prescribe ARV medicines to the SACS every quarter.

Purabi Thaosan, assistant professor of the department of medicine of the Tezpur Medical College and the nodal officer of the ARTC oriented the gathering on the ART guidelines of NACO and also about the various possible co-infections including HIV TB Co-infection. She also highlighted the

Yuva Mahotsav concludes in Guwahati



HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Nov 16: The state level Yuva Mahotsav concluded at the Don Bosco Institute in Guwahati on Thursday.

Over 500 students from across the state participated in the two-day programme that was organized by the Nehru Yuva Kendra San-

gathan in association with the Don Bosco Institute. These students participated in various competitions organized during the event.

The programme was inaugurated by Zamil Hillali, secretary of the state department of sports and youth welfare in the presence of Zing Zilong, regional director of

the Rashtriya Sewa Yojnaand and Hemanta Rabha, national award winner and expert on training and capacity building of ARIAS Society.

The participants got the opportunity to showcase their skills during the competitions that covered different areas of interest

like painting, mobile photography, group level cultural contests, etc.

The Barpeta district bagged the first prize in the group level cultural contest of the youth festival, while Kamrup (rural) and Kamrup (metro) won the second and third prizes respectively.

State sports and power minister, Nandita Garlosa attended the closing session of the event as the chief guest while local Guwahati MP Queen Oja was present as special guest in the event. Eng Khung Guwang, regional director of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Shekhar Ranjan Deb and Pramethesh Chakraborty deputy director of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan initiated the closing session with a brief note on the objectives of the event. The chief guest as well as other invitees handed over the prizes as well as certificates to the winners of the competitions.

Dacoit injured in police firing at Nagaon

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Nov 16: Raju Ahmed, a dreaded dacoit was injured in police firing in the wee hours on Thursday at Juria Samdhora Barunguri village in Nagaon district. Police also recovered one 7.65 mm pistol and other ammunition from his possession.

According to police sources, after the firing the injured dacoit was immediately admitted at the Nagaon BP Civil Hospital in Nagaon for treatment.

The police had reportedly arrested another dacoit, Mehbub Islam from Shingiya Pothar on

Wednesday. It was based on his statement that a police team conducted a raid at Juria Samdhora Barunguri village in the morning on Thursday.

When the team arrived at the village last night, the injured dacoit had tried to escape from police and even fired at them. The police personnel also retaliated in self-defence. In the process the former sustained a bullet injury.

On the other hand, local sources also claimed that the injured Raju is also a local leader of a political party.

NFR to operate one-way special trains



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Nov 16: The North-east Frontier railways (NFR) has decided to operate a few more one-way special trains to deal with the huge rush of passengers during the ongoing festive season.

These festive special trains will operate connecting Udhna Junction railway station to New Jalpaiguri and Katihar railway stations.

Accordingly, the special train no. 09015 (Udhna - New Jalpaiguri) will depart from Udhna on November 17 at 2 pm to reach New Jalpaiguri at 8:30 am of November 19. Another special train no. 09019 (Udhna - Katihar) departed from Udhna on November 16 at 6 am to reach Katihar at 11 pm of November 17. Both these special trains will travel through Bhusaval, Jabalpur, Satna, Sonpur Junction, Hajipur, Khagaria Junction and Katihar. The trains will run as unreserved consisting of sleeper and general seating coaches for the convenience of the passengers.

Another special train no. 09135 left Udhna for Katihar with Bihar bound passengers on November 15. The details of these festive special trains are being notified in social media platforms of NFR. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

Margherita-Deomali road in deplorable condition

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Nov 16: The Margherita-Deomali road's deplorable condition has compelled local residents to approach the authorities concerned to undertake its repair. However, their requests have so far fallen on deaf ears.

The road is an important one connecting Assam with neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh. Local residents claimed that the condition of the road has remained so during the past decade, with no step being initiated towards its repair.

Pranjal Baraik central publicity secretary of the Assam Tea Tribes Student Association's (ATTSA) central executive committee said, "It is very unfortunate that the Margherita-Deomali road which stretches 31 kilometres from NH 31 in Margherita has become one of the worst roads in the Tinsukia district. About 1000 vehicles ply on this road every day. The situation turns worse during the rainy season when there is immense water logging on this road, making it almost impossible for commuters to travel." "Local residents have approached the Margherita sub-divisional administration (civil), Tinsukia district administration and even Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma and Dibrugarh MP and Union Minister Rameswar Teli for construction of the Margherita-Deomali road," said Baraik.

2 injured in scuffle with police



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Nov 16: Two persons were injured during a scuffle that broke out between the police and a section of the public participating in the Kali Puja immersion procession in Dibrugarh on Wednesday evening.

The confrontation between the police and individuals accompanying the Kali Puja idols took place over loud music being played during the procession. The incident took place at around 8.15pm when the idols were being taken in a procession for their immersion in the Brahmaputra.

The situation escalated when someone from the crowd pushed a police personnel on-duty 1, causing him to stumble and fall onto the road. After that other policemen present on the spot roughed up a section of the people.

Amid the chaos, two youths who were waiting near the petrol pump to refill the vehicle carrying the idol were also beaten up by the cops. They sustained injuries in the process.

The injured individuals have been identified as Bicky Singh and Tinku Phukan, both residents of the Jyotinagar area of the town.

Bicky Singh is the son of Arjun Singh, a retired town sub-inspector (TSI) of the Dibrugarh Police Station. The two injured youths were rushed to the hospital for necessary medical attention.

Bicky Singh said, "We were a part of the group transporting the idols for immersion. When we reached Thana Chari, the police told us to shut down the sound system. After that we came to the petrol pump to refill the vehicle carrying the idol, but the policemen on duty beat me up. I fainted and fell down on the road." Following the incident, the enraged participants of the immersion procession blocked the road and raised slogans against the police alleging highhandedness.

Later senior police officials rushed to the spot and managed to diffuse the situation with assistance from the puja organisers.

State BJP reorganises media department

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Nov 16: The BJP before Lok Sabha elections has reorganised the media department of the party. Following the orders of state president Bhavesh Kalita, this step has been taken with the aim of making the department more powerful. This has been confirmed in an official statement issued by party general secretary Diplo Ranjan Sharma.

It has been stated the responsibility of the coordinator of the department has once again been handed over to Dewan Dhruvijyoti

Maral. Along with him, Dr Bhaswati Chakraborty, Krishna Nath, Ghanshyam Dalai, Bhaskar Jyoti Das Vishnu Koch and Nang Lucky Gogoi have been included as assistant coordinators. Apart from this, Rituparno Tamuli Phukan, Deepen Devanji, Bajendra Dutt, Vani Saikia Vikas Gupta, Mrinmoy Talukdar, Devjit Deka, Laxeshwar Nath, Deepak Talukdar, Anup Das, Upen Nath, Pradeep Burman, Rana Vashishtha, Pulak Kalita, Ashish Bharali and Monica Das has been selected as members.

National Press day observed, importance of ethical journalism highlighted

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, Nov 16: The district information and public relation department with support from the Biswanath district administration on Thursday organised a programme on the occasion of the 'National Press Day' at the conference hall of district commissioner's office in Biswanath Chariali.

The theme of this year's National Press Day was 'Media in the Era of Artificial Intelligence'. The programme began with illumination of a ceremonial lamp followed by a welcome address offered by Neha Jadav, district commissioner of Biswanath.

Dilip Kumar Bhattacharjya, eminent writer spoke on the topic 'Media in the Era of Artificial Intelligence'. Five journalists from Biswanath district, Dip Kumar Sarma, Rohini Koudinya Chetry, Jagtar Singh, Durga Powdel and Amir Khan were felicitated with citation and gamocha by the district administration.

The event was attended by additional district commissioner Dhruvajyoti Das, Puspankar Patir, DIPRO (in-charge) cum assistant commissioner, Girish Hazarika along with other journalists from Biswanath. Ranjit Saikia conducted the proceedings on behalf of DIPRO. The meeting was also addressed by Dhruvajyoti Das, Dip Kumar Sarma and Basanta Bora.

Our Gossaigaon correspondent adds: The 57th 'National Press Day' was observed at the premises of Gossaigaon Press Club in Gossaigaon on Thursday.

The program commenced with the hoisting of the flag by Utpal Dey, president of the Gossaigaon Press Club assisted by Sayed Ali correspondent of The Hills Times. Mir Jiaur Rahman, general secretary of the Gossaigaon Press Club also paid floral tributes to journalists, who had laid down their lives while reporting.

An open session was also held keeping on the occasion with Utpal Dey in the chair, where senior journalist cum social



worker Sankar Choudhury elaborated on the significance of the day.

Choudhury said, "The government should be committed to protecting journalists and they too should abide by the ethics and exercise caution while reporting news. They should not publish biased news."

Senior Journalist Swapan Kumar Ish, who was awarded by the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) government in a media workshop organized by the information and public relation department of the Bodoland Territorial Council recently for his contribution in the field of journalism, asserted that nowadays the mainstream media has been facing a crucial time due to the increasing number of so-called web portal reporter.

"Youths having no basic knowledge of media ethics create Facebook pages are seen roaming here and there for news. This is a matter of serious concern as they do not adhere to the ethics of journalism. This gain poses challenges for the mainstream media persons," said Swapan Kumar Ish.

Kamakhyia Sarkar, president of the Sri-

rampur Press Club regretted the increasing number of web portal reporters, who do not engage in ethical reporting.

"The mainstream media should stand united to uphold the spirit of true journalism for the sake of a better society and initiate necessary steps to control the web portal reporting. Otherwise, there is no doubt that unethical journalistic practices will shake the very foundation of the fourth pillar of democracy," Kamakhyia Sarkar said.

Rubul Pathak, assistant general secretary of the Gossaigaon Press Club also highlighted the current scenario of web portal reporters in the context of journalism.

Meanwhile, members of the Srirampur Press Club, the Bodo Press Club, and the Gossaigaon Press Club took a pledge to organize a media workshop jointly which will impart valuable suggestions to the reporters of web portal and digital media.

Our Hojai correspondent adds: The Hojai district administration celebrated the 'National Press Day' at the district commissioner's conference hall at the district headquarter at Sankardevnagar in

Hojai on Thursday.

Krishan Jyoti Deka, officer-in-charge of Hojai DIPRO, briefly described the objective of the programme and welcomed everyone.

Speaking on the occasion, Hojai district commissioner, Lachit Kumar Das said, "The media is the fourth pillar of democracy. The service of journalists to the society is pious and exemplary. They work relentlessly to provide unbiased and true information to the society. The main stream media has to play a vital and strong role while disseminating any information."

He further highlighted in detail on the role of media.

Senior journalist, Tosheshwar Tamuli was the resource person in the programme. He shared his life long experience while covering stories for print media. He further emphasized on how the profession of journalism has evolved overtime.

Tosheshwar Tamuli said, "A journalist should have certain qualities. He should be courageous, unbiased, confident and transparent while covering any story. He



should also touch all the angles of the story."

Senior journalist, Niranjan Sarawagi also explained the significance of artificial intelligence in media and how it can help reporters. During the programme Jayanta Bora, additional deputy commissioner Achyut Nandan Bhuyan, assistant commissioner and all the government recognised journalist within the district were present. The Hojai district administration also felicitated all media persons with assamese phulam ghuncha and gifts.

Our Jorhat correspondent adds: Sachin Gogoi, editorial lead of the British Broadcasting Corporation, Asia Pacific, Delhi Bureau delivered a talk on the 'Significance of National Press Day: Present day trends in Journalism and challenges faced by journalists in India' on the occasion of 'National Press Day' at the Jorhat Press Club on Thursday.

Gogoi stressed that reporters should not seek power and pelf and play an impartial role while reporting news.

Speaking about the aspects of news reporting in the state, he said that the re-

porters were committed to the causes like the environmental issues like the Baghjan explosion and decrease of water in the state. Regarding the negatives he said that there was unnecessary trivialisation of news. He said that this was seen more in the electronic media, where they had to speak more. He also touched upon the political ownership of news.

Gogoi raised concerns about the youth no longer reading newspapers or even watching TV channels, but deriving all their news from social media.

"If this is the scene now what would it be in five years from now? The competition for a reporter was now no longer from another newspaper or TV channel, but from YouTubers and social media influencers."

Earlier Soumitra Puzari, head of the department of history of the Jorhat College (Amalgamated) delivered an interesting and informative lecture on the history of newspapers in Assam.

Ashok Baruah, president of the Jorhat Press Club anchored the meet while Paramananda Bora delivered the welcome address.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

No man can be a patriot on an empty stomach.
- William Cowper

MP polls: battle royale on cards

As the fervour of the election campaign in Madhya Pradesh simmers down, the political landscape indicates a neck-and-neck contest between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress. The BJP's resurgence, seemingly bolstered by the Prime Minister's whirlwind tour, has brought a renewed sense of competition. With the polls scheduled for November 17, both parties are leaving no stone unturned in their bid for victory. The BJP's formidable campaign, marked by the Prime Minister's three public meetings daily over the past week, has refrained from revealing a chief ministerial face. Through daily advertisements featuring prominent figures like Prahlad Patel, Kailash Vijayvargiya, V. D. Sharma, Narendra Singh Tomar, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and Jyotiraditya Scindia, the party deliberately maintains an air of suspense regarding its leadership choice. While Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan expresses confidence in a BJP triumph, the Congress has adopted a different approach. PCC chief Kamal Nath has been projected as the Congress's chief ministerial candidate, supported by Rahul Gandhi's assertion that the party aims to secure 150 seats out of the 230 in the assembly. The battleground, this time, is the booth level, with both parties intensifying their efforts at the grassroots.

In a strategic move well before the last assembly polls in 2018, Kamal Nath acknowledged the Congress's organizational shortcomings compared to the BJP's well-established cadre. Nath focused on rebuilding the cadre formation, expanding from district and block levels to introduce mandal levels. Within six months, organizational units increased from 600 to 3,000, blocks from 500 to 800, and 2,400 mandals were established to rival the BJP's organizational strength. The Congress claims parity with the BJP in terms of booth workers, albeit in larger numbers. Under Nath's leadership, the party boasts two 'booth level agents' authorized to report "BJP excesses" directly to collectors. The organizational structure has witnessed substantial growth, expanding from 3,000 to 15,000 units in this election. In contrast, the BJP touts a formidable force with 41 lakh registered workers in 65,430 booths. Despite Congress's efforts, the BJP asserts a colossal workforce of over 1 crore in the state. The presence of senior central ministers in the state, praising Shivraj Singh Chouhan's leadership and claiming extraordinary progress, raises questions about the necessity of deploying the Prime Minister for such assertions.

Observers express surprise at the influx of central ministers addressing public meetings in small towns, implying an unprecedented focus on Madhya Pradesh. However, the opposition questions the sincerity of progress claims, citing the substantial advertising expenditure. The capital, Delhi, seems to have shifted to Madhya Pradesh, with the Prime Minister, defense minister, home minister, and a dozen ministers making the state their temporary home. A noteworthy aspect of this election's propaganda is the undignified language employed by leaders across party lines, including the Prime Minister. Such rhetoric, ranging from derogatory descriptions to name-calling, raises concerns about the level of political discourse in the electoral arena. As Madhya Pradesh braces for the upcoming polls, the clash of strategies between the BJP and Congress reveals a nuanced battle at the organizational and grassroots levels. The outcome remains uncertain, but what is clear is that both parties are sparing no effort to secure victory in this crucial electoral battleground.

Fresh US sanctions against Myanmar hit essential goods export to Bangladesh

By: Ashish Biswas

Myanmar authorities, currently embroiled in an escalating civil war against armed groups of pro-democracy activists, have been forced to cut exports of essential goods to Bangladesh, owing to fresh US economic sanctions. To start with, the export of food items through the Maungdaw port in the Rakhine province has been discontinued.

This follows the freezing of accounts of two Myanmar state banks by Sonali bank authorities of Bangladesh, in response to fresh US-imposed sanctions targeting Naypitaw.

Recently, the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) announced sanctions against the Myanmar bank of Foreign Trade and the Myanmar Investment and Commercial Bank. These banks have funds amounting to over \$ 1.70 million deposited at the Sonali bank in Bangladesh. Fresh restrictions against the Myanmar banks followed the earlier round of US sanctions issued in the wake of the February 2021 army coup.

According to sources, US authorities kept Bangladesh 'informed' about the new orders, emphasizing a specific instruction to freeze existing funds.

Sonali Bank in Bangladesh then proceeded to freeze Myanmar's accounts, falling in line with the OFAC directive. It also informed other commercial banks to avoid transaction with the two concerned banks, as urged by US authorities. Observers said Dhaka-based authorities had little choice in the matter, their country hardly being in a position to invite more problems vis-à-vis the US just before the general elections or risk facing fresh sanctions itself.

According to one report, Myanmar exported food items including rice, beans, onions and other stuff worth \$4.5 million between April and August this year. Bangladesh is seeking to buy additional stocks of rice from other countries including India and the cut announced by Myanmar authorities could have a negative impact.

The country imports sizable

quantities of rice annually and the uncertainties in the international food trade in the post Ukraine war period have added to the worries of most Governments in South Asia.

Myanmar commerce department authorities apprehended possibilities of increased smuggling of food items in the region that could pose a problem for both governments. Therefore Naypitaw announced, from now on such exports would be routed only through the existing commercial zone at Sittive in the Rakhine province.

Dhaka's choices are limited, according to analysts. There are strains in US/Bangla ties, over issues relating to alleged HR violations in Bangladesh and the generally negative western reaction towards the Awami League government narrative on such matters. The Dhaka-based establishment whether with the ruling party or in opposition, would like to avoid any further misunderstanding between the two countries through any fresh new tensions.

However, Myanmar authorities, somewhat upset, arranged to meet Dhaka officials in Dhaka. BD officials then explained the situation at length.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh authorities on their part reiterated their requests to Myanmar to facilitate the return to Myanmar to the extent possible of the lakhs of stranded Rohingya Muslims as early as possible. Bangladesh had looked after them for years, but in the process it had suffered enormously in terms of economy, general governance, environmental losses and other social-economic problems.

Junta spokesmen, who officially present a more reasonable approach towards the Rohingya issue by not opposing the demand for repatriation, reaffirmed their intent to speed things up, while pointing to existing difficulties.

Dhaka-based media reports indicated that given the glacially slow pace of the Rohingya repatriation process and official negotiations involved with it, Myanmar's assurances hardly helped in lifting Bangladesh's hopes for any early improvement in the present situation. (IPA Service)

India's democracy: Press freedom, media dilemmas, and the path forward

“If both the past and the external world exist only in the mind, and if the mind itself is controllable - what then?” - 1984, George Orwell The state of both press and democracy is critical today, despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2017 declaration on World Press Freedom Day via Twitter, which has become a common platform for significant policy announcements. He stated, “World Press Freedom Day is a day to reiterate our unwavering support towards a free & vibrant press, which is vital in a democracy.”

As per the most recent update from the international media watchdog, Reporters Without Borders, India's position in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index has slipped to 161 out of 180 nations. The report also highlights that, on average, each year witnesses the tragic loss of three to four journalists due to their professional pursuits. In a comprehensive study titled “Mapping patterns of violence against journalists in India,” conducted by The Polis Project's Watch the State, a concerning total of 256 incidents of violence against journalists was documented between May 2019 and August 2021.

In the realm of democracy, India's standing has witnessed significant shifts. According to the 2021 report by the Sweden-based V-Dem Institute, India was designated as an “electoral autocracy,” signifying a decline in democratic norms. This classification underscores that while the country continues to hold regular elections, the quality of its democratic institutions and procedures

has eroded, resulting in the concentration of power and restricted political liberties. In a similar vein, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index for 2020 saw India's ranking drop by two positions to the 53rd spot, labeling it a “flawed democracy.” The year 2022 witnessed Access Now's report dubbing India as the foremost perpetrator of internet shutdowns. With a staggering count of at least 84 instances, India secured the ignominious title of having the highest number of internet shutdowns globally for the fifth consecutive year.

Notably, Manipur's government recently imposed an 83-day internet shutdown in an attempt to quell violence and disinformation. Regrettably, this strategy not only exacerbated the challenges faced by the general populace but also concealed instances of violence and misinformation from the broader national view.

On July 27, the “Indian Media: Trends and Patterns” report was unveiled by Lokniti and CSDS. The report sheds light on what many of us have perceived over the years - the disheartening and progressively deteriorating state of media in our nation, reflecting the trials encountered by society itself. This comprehensive study delves deep into the matter, offering an all-encompassing analysis drawn from a comprehensive online survey encompassing 206 journalists across diverse media domains, spanning television, print, and digital platforms. The report's revelations expose the immediate concerns that not only

erode the caliber of media but also wield a profound influence on the lives it touches. Among the participants, the report discloses a notable representation, encompassing 41% Hindi journalists, 32% English journalists, and 27% professionals employing other regional languages. The report's release couldn't have been timelier, coinciding with the heightened global and national focus on media freedom. Instances of censorship, self-censorship, and assaults on journalists have prompted grave apprehensions about the integrity of press liberty in India. At its core, the report accentuates the pivotal role that media undertakes

in shaping public viewpoints and dialogues. With the swift evolution of media consumption patterns in the digital era, the report advocates for a proactive approach in addressing the emerging obstacles. The necessity for soul-searching and reform within the media sector becomes progressively more conspicuous.

As indicated by the report, an astounding 80% of journalists express the belief that the media demonstrates a bias in favor of the Narendra Modi-led government, while 61% sense that the media showcases unfair treatment towards the Opposition. Furthermore, the report underscores that 73% of journalists perceive media establishments to incline toward a specific political party. Within this category, a substantial majority (82%) pointed to the Bharatiya Janata Party as the recipient of such inclinations, with merely 3% indicating any partial-

ity towards the Congress. Intriguingly, 89% of freelance journalists and 81% of those affiliated with news organizations shared the consensus that the media presents the Modi government in a favorable light.

These unsettling revelations draw striking parallels with the seminal contribution of Noam Chomsky and Edward S Herman, as presented in their groundbreaking work “Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media,” initially published in 1988. Within this influential tome, the authors conduct a meticulous dissection of the mass media within the United States of America, illuminating its role as a vehicle for propagandistic endeavors that mold public perspectives while aligning with the interests of the influential. Chomsky and Herman introduce the concept of a “propaganda model,” positing that the media functions as a mechanism for steering public perception rather than offering impartial information. Their argument revolves around the sway of corporate interests, propelling the media to cater to prevailing political and economic powerhouses. Notably, this viewpoint resonates significantly within the context of the Indian landscape. Numerous media outlets, including Dinanik Bhaskar, Bharat Samachar, The Quint, The Wire, The Caravan, NewsClick, and Greater Kashmir, have encountered scrutiny from investigative agencies. The Lokniti-CSDS report corroborates these observations: 72% of journalists indicated a perception that news channels currently experience limitations in conduct-

ing their responsibilities, while 71% of independent journalists hold the view that newspapers nowadays encounter constraints in fulfilling their roles effectively. Moreover, 16% of journalists disclosed instances where individuals within their organizations were compelled to resign due to their political inclinations, and over half of the respondents expressed apprehensions about the prospect of job loss based on their political affiliations. These collective actions cast a pall over transparency, the freedom of expression, and the overall democratic vitality within the nation.

Amidst these troubling times, our nation is wrestling with communal strife, the stealthy infiltration of false information, a worrisome upswing in misinformation in the digital era, capricious alterations to educational content and curriculum adjustments, along with an unsettling rise in attacks on women. Concurrently, mainstream media appears to have hit a nadir as well, with journalists navigating either official scrutiny for their routine tasks or prioritizing sensationalism over matters of authentic import. In light of these formidable hurdles, one can't help but question: what vestiges of our democracy endure? The government bears the obligation to furnish explanations and assume accountability for the prevailing circumstances. As citizens, it becomes essential for us to come together, recognizing that in times of widespread animosity, fostering love and unity is the urgent requirement. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewsive@gmail.com)

Modi-Shah try to woo back Yediyurappa; while Sidda, DKS factions bicker

By: Arun Srivastava

Recent developments in Karnataka BJP send out the message that Amit Shah, despite his so-called ‘Chanakya’ fame, has lost grip on party affairs and also is running short of ideas. Only a week back, the BJP leadership appointed B Y Vijayendra, a first-time MLA, the younger son of the former Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa, as the president of the state unit. This is being perceived as a circuitous move to hand over the command of the party once again to the old Lingayat leader, B S Yediyurappa, who was sidelined by Modi and Shahin May this year, right in the middle of the state election, in their bid to move the party away from the shadow of the Lingayat strongman.

That decision by Modi and Shah proved to be suicidal, as the Lingayats shifted their loyalty to the Congress and ensured its victory in at least 30 constituencies. Though the BJP national leaders claim that taking lessons from assembly defeat, they have handed over the command to Yediyurappa, it has already had a damaging impact on the state unit. The state unit of the party has a large number of prominent Lingayat faces. They feel aggrieved at this move of Shah and Modi and openly say that they feel humiliated.

They have a valid argument. They respected B S Yediyurappa, as he was a senior leader and had revived the party in the state. But respect for him should not have been construed by Modi and Shah as confirmation for the senior Lingayats listening to the diktats of Vijayendra, who is a greenhorn. They resorted to this move as Lingayat vote weighs heavy on party after the May 2023 loss and ahead of 2024 national polls. These leaders also say that while the Lingayats indeed have high regard for the senior Yediyurappa, they too deserve respect from the party leadership. BJP nurses the hope that the installation of Vijayendra would bring back Lingayats to the party fold and help it replicate its 2019 Lok Sabha performance, when it had won 25 of the 28 seats in Karnataka.

Naturally, the BJP facing “dynasty politics” criticism, following the appointment of Vijayendra as state unit president. The senior Lingayat leaders hold the view that the national leadership are running short of ideas as how to expand the base of the party in the state and have probably abandoned the strategy to evolve a cadre-based leadership system, which it had tried to do by forcing out Yediyurappa mid-term as CM in 2021. In a message to the strongmen from dominant castes like Yediyurappa that they could no longer dictate terms to the party leadership, and citing its stand against dynastic politics, the BJP had in 2018 also denied a poll ticket to Vijayendra and denied him a ministerial post between 2021 and 2023.

Sources maintain that after the electoral Waterloo of May, the national leadership had decided to rope in the Vokkaliga community. But it did not succeed. They also pointed out that the idea was dropped after the JD(S) of H D Deve Gowda decided to have an alliance with the BJP as the Vokkaliga has been the main support base for Deve Gowda. “With the JD(S) coming into the NDA, the appointment of a Vokkaliga leader as the BJP chief was not viable. Obviously, the party was forced to have someone from the Lingayat community as the public face. Now after installing Vijayendra as the state chief, the leadership is looking for some prominent OBC leader to appoint as the legislative leader,” said a senior leader.

Yet another factor that has significantly come into play is the attitude of the Sangh Parivar. The RSS cadres of Karnataka never held senior Yediyurappa in high esteem. They feel that he might have been the face of the Lingayat community in the state, but he never tried to take all the castes and communities along with him. He never had a smooth and cordial relation with the state unit of RSS. Obviously, those loyal to RSS could not be expected to extend their support to Vijayendra. Some RSS leaders recall how Vijayendra

used to behave as a “super CM” when his father was the chief minister. They even allege that his style of functioning was a major factor for the disconnect of the lower rung cadres and leaders with the state leaders. This was a major reason for fall of the party in Karnataka. Lingayats are viewed as having anti-Hindutva orientation. It is said that Lingayatism was founded to disrupt Hinduism's Brahminical order. Centuries later, the community's social elite and new middle class has embraced the neoliberal and communal policies beloved of the Sangh Parivar. To endorse their views, they mention the statements of former BJP chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, that ‘hijab and halal are not election issues’ and also of senior Yediyurappa who had observed that he will not approve any socially polarising issue.

Unfortunately, the state Congress leaders, instead of striving to implement the ideological line of Rahul Gandhi, too are involved in a bitter power struggle. Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah has accused the BJP of attempting to destabilize the Congress government in the state through “Operation Kamala”. But there are few takers for his accusation. He had come out with this allegation following a complaint by Congress MLA Ravikumar Gowda that a BJP team had approached Congress legislators with offers of Rs 50 crore for each and a ministerial berth to switch to the saffron party.

Deputy CM DK Shivakumar also observed: “A big conspiracy is being hatched, but it will not bear fruit.” He said that BJP was actively working to destabilise the state government. He had claimed Congress legislators had informed him and the CM about who was in touch with them and the offers being made.

In fact, the scare of poaching is not acute. It is the infighting between two warring factions led by Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar that has been major source of worry for the Congressmen in the state. The supporters of Shivakumar are pressuring the party leadership to install Shivakumar as the chief minister. His supporters have even been holding dinners and get together to work out the strategy. On his part, Siddaramaiah has also been holding meetings of his supporters.

Recently, Siddaramaiah participated at a dinner party hosted by state home minister G Parameshwara, where Shivakumar was absent. Yet another dinner was organised coinciding with the earlier one where Mandya MLA Ravikumar Gowda claimed Shivakumar would become the CM after two-and-a-half years. Party insiders suggested the dinner aimed to pacify PWD minister Satish Jarkiholi, who has expressed dissatisfaction with Shivakumar's increasing involvement in Belagavi politics. Those who joined the Congress quitting BJP in the wake of the May assembly election have been key players in the game of infighting. Jarkiholi, in fact, had planned to travel to Dubai with around 20 like-minded legislators to send a message to party leaders, although a previous trip to Mysuru was cancelled after the intervention of the Congress high command.

The infighting has adversely affected the functioning of the government. Most of the pre-election promises made by Rahul and Priyanka are yet to see the day light as the ministers being senior leaders are busy garnering support for their respective leaders. Infighting has also held up party rejig ahead of Lok Sabha polls The Congress party in Karnataka is facing delays in restructuring the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) due to factionalism.

Following the advice of Rahul Gandhi, the decision was made to induct new young faces in the state committee. But it is not happening as both the leaders Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar are not willing for this exercise. The move to infuse ‘fresh blood’ in the party ahead of the Lok Sabha elections and to reduce the workload on ministers is yet to materialise. Though AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, in-charge of Karnataka and other central leaders will be holding meetings with the leaders to find a solution, the nature of animosity prevailing in the party sends a clear message that a major show down in near future between the two factions is imminent. (IPA Service)

Saudi oil cut extension fails to boost prices despite continuing Gaza conflict

By: K Raveendran

A Saudi decision to extend its voluntary oil production cut to the end of the year has passed off as a non-event, with the oil markets shrugging off the decision as of little consequence to the current demand-supply situation in the global market. The kingdom said on Sunday it will continue its additional voluntary output cuts to the end of the year as part of an Opec+ policy of acting to stabilise and balance the markets.

Oil was trading at around \$85 a barrel last week, despite weeks of conflict in Gaza that have raised fears of a regional war. The prices had hit a high of \$98 in September, raising the scare of another crisis for the oil importing countries. But the delicate demand situation in the wake of the prospects of sluggish growth in the global economy, prices began to cool off and the cuts by major producers, including Russia, have failed to hold prices at the desired level. A most important aspect is that the Palestinian conflict has also failed to add to any oil froth.

The cartel has reasons to feel worried as the market rally that pushed benchmark prices towards triple digits in September reversed sharply in October, despite continued tight crude supplies and an intensifying conflict in the Middle East. In early November, ICE Brent futures plunged to a four-month low around \$80 per barrel.

The abrupt sell-off came as market concerns shifted from supply risks to the global economy and oil demand. In addition, front month paper market trade has moved to the first quarter of next year when markets appear more or less in surplus, adding to the downward pressure on prices.

Fears that the war between Israel and Hamas would escalate into a wider regional conflict, disrupting oil supply flows, have yet to materialise. Barring large unforeseen outages, world oil supply is firmly on an upward trajectory.

Saudi Arabia, which has taken upon itself the burden of balancing the market by assuming the role of swing producer so as not to allow prices to sag, is facing a dilemma as the voluntary cuts have started affecting the kingdom's finances. Lower supply at lower prices is highly problematic for its economy, leading to fears of a massive drop in GDP estimates compared to the previous year.

Saudi Arabia and Russia have indicated the possibility of cuts extending to the next year. The cuts look set to keep the oil market in a significant deficit through year-end, with the OPEC+ alliance pumping below the demand. According to International Energy Agency (IEA), global observed crude oil inventories fell by a massive 140 million barrels over the third quarter to a fresh low, as refineries boosted activity ahead of seasonal maintenance. With demand growth set to slow, the market could shift into surplus at the start of 2024, IEA said. For now, with demand still exceeding available supplies heading into the Northern Hemisphere winter, market balances will remain vulnerable to heightened economic and geopolitical risks - and further volatility ahead, it added.

Russian oil exports eased by 70,000 barrels per day in October, to 7.5 million barrels as higher crude oil shipments failed to offset a decline in product flows. Estimated export revenues fell by \$25 million to \$18.34 billion as lower international oil prices more than offset a narrowing discount for Russian grades. Russian crude and product prices were above the G7 price cap.

IEA has slightly revised up its 2023 growth forecast to 2.4 million barrels per day, as US deliveries proved more resilient than indicated by preliminary data and Chinese oil demand in September set another all-time high above 17 million barrels per day, fuelled by a booming petrochemical sector. Those gains have come to the detriment of petrochemical producers elsewhere, most notably in Europe and advanced economies in Asia and Oceania.

Indeed, the two regions saw third quarter oil demand slump. This year's surge will take the world oil demand to 102 million barrels per day before growth eases as the last phase of the pandemic economic rebound dissipates and as advancing energy efficiency gains, expanding electric vehicle fleets and structural factors reassert themselves. Despite growth that is almost two-thirds lower than this year's increase, global oil demand is set to rise to a record annual high of 102.9 million barrels per day in 2024.

Refinery margins collapsed in October from the near-record levels achieved during the third quarter of this year. Weaker gasoline cracks drove much of the decline, but still-elevated middle distillate cracks ensured margins remain above the five-year average. Global crude runs are expected to rise by 1.9 million barrels per day this year and 1 million barrels in 2024, to average 82.6 million barrels and 83.6 million barrels respectively. (IPA Service)

Arvind Kejriwal's fall from grace

By: Mathew John

The incomparable James Baldwin pronounced with profound simplicity that "one writes out of one thing only – one's own experience," and from that experience tries to wrench out "the last drop, sweet or bitter it can give." How true of the writer's craft, even that of a lowly hack! This composition is, after a fashion, the upshot of an association of ideas, events and people relating to the experience of corruption. In the end, it is a story of a nemesis confronting hubris!

A recent essay on the monstrous corruption under the present regime provoked remonstrations from some critics who chastised me for describing the India Against Corruption (IAC) movement steered by Arvind Kejriwal as 'messianic' and a force for good, for ramming through the groundbreaking Lokpal Act in 2013. I was admonished for bestowing a halo on what was a sanctimonious and disingenuous middle-class uprising against political corruption that, in tandem with the infamous Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) Vinod Rai and his trumped-up national loss of Rs 1.76 lakh crores to the Exchequer apropos of the 2G spectrum allotment, cleared the way for the alleged but now absolved conductor of Gujarat 2002.

In my critics' view, it was ultimately not about fighting corruption but a deep-rooted RSS-backed plot to wrest control of the polity. One should have but didn't smell the rat when Kejriwal roped in Hindutva icons Ramdev and Sri Sri Ravishankar to the IAC fold. Much later, Prashant Bhusan, one of IAC's leading lights, conceded that his outfit was "propped up by the

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)".

Ironically, almost all my critics were at one time passionate devotees of Kejriwal and gang. Who wasn't? The entire country was initially suckered into believing the third-rate cops-and-robbers narrative spun by these self-righteous do-gooders.

A decade ago, Kejriwal and his cabal – with Anna Hazare as bewildered talisman – were perceived as starry-eyed idealists on a mission to awaken people to the rot in the system. Despite a host of seasoned professionals and intellectuals in the IAC, it was chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the upstart who usurped the leadership mantle through sheer ingenious guile. To give the devil credit, he was undoubtedly the moving force in the crusade against corruption.

What was unknown at that time was his absolute craving for power. And his unbridled ambition was far from quenched by bringing the venal UPA government to its knees and forcing through the Lokpal Act. Having got a taste of power, albeit without accountability, he lusted for more. Kejriwal realised that the anti-corruption movement had run its course and he needed to migrate to where the real power was to remain relevant in the public sphere.

In late 2012, Kejriwal broke away from Anna Hazare who had, in any case, expended his usefulness as titular head of the anti-corruption campaign. But the rumoured trigger for the parting of ways was the issue of converting the IAC movement into a political entity. Even as the old man faded into insignificance, Kejriwal formed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), determined to exploit the mass public support and goodwill generated by the



IAC movement. His instincts were spot on as the new kids on the block emerged ahead of the Congress and BJP with 28 of the 70 Assembly seats in the 2013 Delhi election.

In the 2015 Delhi assembly elections, this fledgling party won a resounding victory, claiming 67 of the 70 seats, decimating the two major political parties. AAP struck a chord among all sections of the masses with its message of a moral political order based on the sovereignty of the people and devolution of powers to the grassroots.

It denounced caste and community-based politics and upheld the dignity of the individual and her right to essential goods including free water and subsidised electricity. It purveyed an ideological neutrality that sought to absorb the best in capitalism and socialism. A party comprising academics, lawyers, technocrats, bureaucrats, actors, holy men, et al spoke an audacious democratic idiom that held out hope of a brave new form of governance free of corruption and based on the well-being and collective will of the people.

As it has turned out, AAP's success is based on a big lie! The Bible proclaims that God created man in his own image. Likewise, a powerful leader inevitably moulds his party into a mirror reflection of his personality and character. And when the leader is self-obsessive, the party is subsumed under the sheer weight of his egomaniacal persona. Both AAP and the BJP have been morally crippled by such supermen.

There are striking similarities between Kejriwal and the Vishwaguru. Although the bush shirted and muffled aam aadmi (common man) is sartorially very different from the dandy accounted in Maybach shades and flashy kurtas, they share much in common. They are machiavellian realists possessed of an all-consuming lust for power, who refuse to be distracted by considerations of right and wrong. They traffic in falsehoods and are so addicted to lying that exaggeration is their nearest link to the truth. They shamelessly parade religion in the public square for personal benefit, heedless of the damage it does to the secular fabric. They take credit when

things are going well but are deft at deflecting blame when anything bombs. The universe is only about them!

Very early in the piece, Kejriwal decided to hitch his lot to self-serving power politics. Autocratic to the core, he went about neutralising anyone who was seen as a competitor or pricked his conscience. Much like the Vishwaguru who, without ado, consigned BJP's veteran leaders L.K. Advani and M.M. Joshi to the margdarshak back burner, Kejriwal's first significant move was to banish Prashant Bhusan and Yogendra Yadav who represented the conscience of AAP and incessantly reminded him of the moral code that was the raison d'être of the party. In another cynical move, he nominated two nonentities – a businessman and a CA belonging to his caste – to the Rajya Sabha, ignoring luminaries who had slaved for the party, provoking allegations that he had traded the seats.

Perhaps the clearest pointer to Kejriwal's metamorphosis into an amoral, power-hungry politician has been his stance on the Lokpal as head of the Delhi government. The Jan Lokpal Bill passed in 2015 by the Delhi assembly has still not been ratified into law – the casualty in an unending saga of obfuscation and bitter recrimination between the AAP and the Lieutenant Governor, neither keen on an independent ombudsman. Another indicator of his transformation into a hardened, reprobate leader was his abortive attempt to wrest control of the Anti-Corruption Bureau of the state in direct contravention of the IAC's sacred credo that anti-corruption units should be independent of the political executive.

A man's real character is revealed in

dire adversity. Long ago, Dante said that the hottest places in hell are reserved for those who are non-aligned in times of grave crisis. The riots in North-East Delhi in 2020 called Kejriwal out for the diabolically amoral politician that he is. The mayhem over four nightmarish days was an awful exhibition of human depravity, perhaps the worst since the Sikh pogrom in 1984. At this critical time, the chief minister went missing, using the fig leaf that law and order was not his domain. A man who has sought the limelight in every situation, played the artful dodger when his people needed him most for the treacherous reason that any intervention would antagonise the majority community; so he let people die.

English revolutionary Thomas Paine had people like Kejriwal in mind when he observed that the cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the wolf.

A memorable quotation credited to Kejriwal reads: "Power does not corrupt men; fools (and I would add 'knaves'), however, if they get into a position of power, corrupt power." The author of the phrase is, in truth, Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw. Ironically, the Shaw quote that he usurped fits him like a glove. Having betrayed the enormous faith and goodwill of his people, the hubristic preacher on public morality is today running scared, fearful of being sent to jail for alleged corruption. Is it karma catching up?

And yet, in the next election, confronted with a Hobson's choice of deciding between the devil and a bigger devil, the elector might still opt for the devil. That's how far gone we are in the all-pervasive venality of our politics! (Courtesy: The Wire)

Bhutan-China: Settling border issues



By: Manoj Joshi

King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk of Bhutan's eight-day visit to India from November 3-10 is most likely aimed at mollifying India on the eve of a possible border deal with China. Recall that the King had visited New Delhi earlier this year in April as well. During the visit to New Delhi, the King met with Prime Minister Modi and senior officials of the government.

The government terms relations with Bhutan an "exemplary bilateral partnership" and the Joint Statement following the visit listed a range of areas in which the two cooperate. But the timing of the visit suggests that it is related to the fast-moving border talks between China and Bhutan. At the official level, though, there have been no indications that his subject has come up for discussions.

Going by the Joint Statements issued after the King's visits, there was nothing remarkable. The visits were about furthering the already close India-Bhutan relations and their focus was on the multiple areas of cooperation between the two sides, primarily on hydropower and connectivity. However, two visits by the heads of state in one year is somewhat unusual even if the country is Bhutan, and is most likely linked to the Bhutan-China border talks.

The key point of departure has been the "3-Step Roadmap", a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed by China and Bhutan in October 2021 during the 10th round of their Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in Kunming, China, which envisaged a three-stage process. This involves, first, the delimitation of the border on maps through talks between the two sides, followed by joint surveys which would finally lead to an actual demarcation of the 477 km border between them. India's response at the time had been that it had noted the signing of the MoU and that like Bhutan, "India has similarly been holding boundary negotiations with China."

Last month, China and Bhutan held their 25th round of border talks in Beijing. The previous 24th round had been held eight years earlier in 2016. The Bhutanese delegation was led by Lyonpo Tandi Dorji, the Foreign Minister of Bhutan and the Chinese one by Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of China. Sun is a former Chinese ambassador to India. Maj Gen (retd) V Namgyel, the Bhutanese ambassador to India and the Bhutan foreign secretary Pema Choden were part of the Bhutanese delegation.

Beginning in January this year, there has been a quick sequence of Expert Group Meetings, that culminated in the 25th round of their border talks. The 11th round of Expert Group Meeting was held in Kunming in January 2023. In May, the two sides held their 12th round of their Expert Group Meeting in Thimphu, Bhutan, and said that they had made progress in discussing the "3-Step Roadmap" towards settling their border issue. In August, they held the 13th Expert Group Meeting in Beijing, followed by the 25th round of talks last month in Beijing.

During the 25th round of talks, the two sides signed a Cooperation Agreement detailing the functioning of the Joint Technical Team on the delimitation and demarcation of the Bhutan-China boundary that had been agreed to after the 13th Expert Group Meeting.

Dorji also met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi and both sides indicated that they wanted a quick border set-

tlement.

According to a statement by the Chinese foreign ministry, Wang said that "the conclusion of boundary negotiations and the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Bhutan" would serve the fundamental interests of both countries. As of now, Bhutan does not have ties with any of the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

In an interview with The Hindu last month, the current Prime Minister of Bhutan, Lotay Tshering, whose term ends this month, had said that he expected progress to be made and confirmed that China and Bhutan were "inching" towards completing their 3-Step Roadmap and that the two sides had "managed two to three meetings and we feel we are nearing the completion of the three-step roadmap" and that the talks also included a possible tradeoff between Chinese claims in Doklam and the ones in northern Bhutan.

The main areas in dispute between China and Bhutan are 269 sq kms on the western border along the Chumbi Valley and two northern areas of Jakarlung and Pasamlung valleys measuring 495 sq kms. Since 2020, the Chinese have also raised an additional claim in eastern Bhutan. There are two important tri-junction points involving India, China, and Bhutan. The one in the west involves Doklam, and the one in the east is the eastern terminus of the McMahon Line which delineates the Sino-Indian border in the region. Doklam was also the site of an India-China standoff in 2017. This is the area where the India-China-Bhutan borders meet but India considers Doklam to be Bhutanese territory and is concerned that it could be ceded to China in the border settlement and enable them to overlook the sensitive Siliguri Corridor that links mainland India to the North-east region.

In April, the Foreign Secretary V M Kwatra had briefed the media on the visit. In response to direct questions as to whether there had been any discussions on the China-Bhutan border negotiations, especially Doklam, Kwatra noted that India and Bhutan remain in close touch and maintain "close coordination" relating to our national and security interests. As to the Doklam issue, he referred to the Ministry's earlier statements which "explicitly bring out our position on the determination of the trijunction boundary points."

He was referring to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) statement at the onset of the 2017 Doklam crisis which had laid out the Indian view of how the crisis had unfolded. Further, it had revealed that in 2012, India and China "had reached an agreement that the tri-junction boundary points between India, China and third countries will be finalised in consultation with the concerned countries." Adding that any attempt "to unilaterally determine trijunction violates this understanding."

In an interview with a Belgian newspaper in March, Tshering had more or less upheld the Indian position when he noted that "Doklam is a junction point between India, China and Bhutan. It is not up to Bhutan alone to fix the problem. There are three of us... We can discuss this as soon as the other two parties are ready."

The border settlement, if and when it comes, will mark a major change in Bhutan's geopolitical perspective. But as for the present, the Bhutanese seem determined to press ahead. Their problem is the lack of capacity to police its borders and the deliberate Chinese pressure to press their claims. (Courtesy: ORF)

How governments and global aid agencies use TB as a political tool

By: Chapal Mehra

Not long ago, as India concluded its G-20 events, among its statements was an oft-repeated commitment to end tuberculosis in India by 2025. This coincided with reports of anti-TB drugs being out of stock in India. This dichotomy underlines the many truths about TB in India.

This week, the global TB community will come together again for the Union Conference in Paris to discuss solutions to end the disease. The usual suspects will attend, more of the same issues will be discussed and some token gestures will be made by the foreign agencies to include global advocates and voices.

In truth, as such meetings unfold, rarely is any transformative work done on TB diagnosis, treatment or including communities in the discussions. Instead, such global conferences have become forums for neocolonial ambitions to play out and political posturing by international institutions and their domestic partner governments. In short, a meeting to maintain the power asymmetry in TB.

While talking innovation and rights, these global institutions and advocates quickly fall in line with domestic governments. A case in point being India, where even though reports of drug stockouts pile up, the government's efforts on TB continue to be applauded internationally.

TB has enormous political currency as it affects numerous poor countries. In India, the poorest and most vulnerable are affected by TB. So it is appropriate for foreign-funded institutions, universities and academics and also domestic leaders to be seen as engaged in the moral battle to fight TB. It has an emotive value for millions of those affected and earns their support, creating an illusion of cooperation. It also resonates globally as the killer disease that devastates the poor everywhere.

It is the ideal story to tell the media, to make survivors repeat their stories and make it seem like change is imminent. After all, how can one not like leaders and organisations that promise to end TB in India and elsewhere?

Despite the political attention, however, the progress has been small. This is not an idea, systems or administrative problem. Instead, it is a power issue where TB is being used as a tool of neo-colonisation with truth being the biggest casualty. Here, programmes are being set impossible targets, with international agencies and governments partnering to make it seem like action is being taken. Political considerations, not expertise, drive disease programmes.

Those affected still do not seem to have much-needed drugs and reliable tests, yet slogans talk of eliminating the disease. It's no surprise that curable TB kills an Indian every minute. Globally, communities are rallied to support and validate these efforts but they have little or no say in their design or implementation efforts.

For every issue that communities have raised over the past decade, domestic governments, with support from international partners, have converted it into clever campaigns about their work, parading community participation. It is evident that the commitment



to eliminate TB is unrealistic but it is a lie reiterated in meetings and policy documents. Yet, few know exactly how to do so.

Instead, at its core, the global and national strategy is focused on creating a positive media narrative that ignores and distracts from the realities of TB-affected communities. It is a way to implement ideas developed elsewhere, which can often be counterproductive. For instance in India, concrete action would mean revisiting how TB is diagnosed and treated and communities dealt with. This will require significant investment, reskilling and the reimagining of the entire system.

What, then, is the reality of TB? India's TB efforts, for instance, are underfunded, understaffed and also not trusted by the 50% of the country's TB affected who seek care in the private sector.

The first challenge often is TB diagnosis. Most Indians, even today, miss TB symptoms. India's healthcare providers routinely fail to order a TB test. TB is so stigmatised that many do not want to be tested fearing loss of job, family and community. In truth, even today, accurate and affordable diagnostics are highly delayed for most Indians. What no global partner ever asks is how India will eliminate TB if it does not diagnose it in time.

TB treatment remains equally challenging. As the current stockouts illustrate, public sector treatment can be unreliable and provides poor quality of care. The private sector, by comparison, gives the illusion of prompt diagnosis and treatment even though it is expensive and often inaccurate. Strategies that include neither communities nor the private sector abound, with foreign academics and institutions forcing definitions of what quality of care looks like. This represents cookie-cutter formulas that are presented to national governments and often adapted. Few ask the difficult questions – or even bother to ask the end user.

There have never been better options for treating TB. Numerous new shorter, more effective regimens promise reduced side effects and decreased suffering for TB patients. This, however, has been turned into a war field by pharmaceutical companies with support from international agencies to get governments to adopt them. They are needed

because TB treatment is exhausting and with numerous side effects. But how are they to be made affordable?

From mental health and stigma to neuropathy and long-term disability, the TB-affected struggle with side effects that most would barely tolerate. While talking of elimination, governments rarely announce plans to implement these new regimens. International agencies remain strategically silent on this as well. If India's commitment is real, there should be no struggle with stockouts or long toxic treatment.

Another case in point is the relationship between undernutrition and TB. How do hungry people eat toxic medicines? In India, the government's Nikshay Poshan Yojana gives a Rs 500 to those affected by TB. Despite requests, this amount has never been raised. What is troubling is that the state is now outsourcing these nutritional needs through the TB Mitra Scheme, describing it as a people's movement. This leaves the TB-affected helpless and reliant on the goodwill of fellow citizens.

What the government should be doing is providing food security to India's vast population as a preventive measure. Yet, international agencies cheer on official programmes as progress when it is an abdication and dilution of the state's ethical and legal responsibility.

While the political value of TB is clear, its route to elimination is not. Conversations need to be led by the global south but instead, these countries are merely offered a seat at the table. Even today in India, TB survivors are used as underpaid labour, with support from international agencies, to fight and end TB. The irony of this is not lost on them.

A final case is the growing use of community voices that are co-opted to make these efforts look good. Now and then, like at the TB conference, survivors are paraded to share their stories. When this is done, the governments and international agencies pat each other on the back for an inclusive media campaign well done.

While thousands die every day from this curable disease, governments and international agencies seem busy using it as a far-reaching political tool to maintain the status quo. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Biden said a lack of communication was 'how accidents happen' and added that both presidents could now 'pick up the phone and be directly heard immediately'

US and China agree to resume military communications during Biden-Xi summit

WOODSIDE, Nov 16: US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping have agreed to resume high-level military-to-military communication and counter-narcotics cooperation as they met for four hours in a bid to establish a working relationship amidst Beijing's aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific region.

The two leaders also affirmed the need to address the risks of advanced artificial intelligence (AI) systems and improve AI safety through US-China government talks during their meeting on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco.

Biden said since their last meeting in Bali, on the sidelines of the G20, the key members of the two governments have had important discussions on issues that matter to both the nations and to the world.

"But as always, there's no substitute for face-to-face discussions. I've always found our discussions straightforward and

frank, and I've always appreciated them," Biden said. Observing that he has known Xi for a long time, Biden said they haven't always agreed, which was not surprising to anyone.

"But our meetings have always been candid, straightforward, and useful. I've never doubted what you've told me in terms of your candid nature in what you speak. I value our conversation because I think it's paramount that you and I understand each other clearly, leader to leader with no misconceptions or miscommunication," said the US president.

The two leaders exchanged views on key regional and global challenges, the White House said.

President Biden underscored the United States' support for a free and open Indo-Pacific that is connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient.

The President reaffirmed the United States' ironclad commitment to defending our Indo-Pacific allies. The President



emphasised the United States' enduring commitment to freedom of navigation and overflight, adherence to international law, maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea and East China Sea, and the complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, it said.

While the Chinese official media has announced the agreements reached between Xi and Biden, the Chinese leader in opening remarks at his meeting with the US President pitched for reducing the stifling tensions between the top two economies, especially at a time when the

Chinese economy was facing a slowdown which his government is struggling to fix.

"It is unrealistic for one side to remodel the other. Conflicts and confrontations have unbearable consequences for both sides. I'm still of the view that major country competition is not the prevailing trend of current times and cannot solve the problems facing China and the United States," Xi said.

Xi also spoke of his concerns about the US policy towards Taiwan. The Taiwan issue has always been the most important and sensitive issue in Sino-US

relations, the US should hold on to its promise of not supporting "Taiwan independence", stop arming Taiwan, and support China's peaceful reunification, Xi told Biden.

"China will eventually be reunified and will inevitably be reunified", Xi said according to an official press release here.

On Taiwan, Biden repeated to Xi that he would not change the one-China policy, which he said previous US presidents had also upheld. He said he believes China will not interfere in the upcoming Presidential elections in Taiwan.

"I didn't expect any interference, any at all. We had that discussion as he was leaving," Biden said. For his part, Xi called on the United States to "not scheme to suppress or contain China" during Wednesday's extensive talks, Chinese state media reported.

"China has no plans to surpass or unseat the United States, and the United States should not scheme to suppress or contain

China," Xi said. Biden was asked, given that his relationship with Xi goes back more than a decade, whether he trusted him.

"I trust but verify, as the old saying goes," he said. "We're in a competitive relationship, China and the United States, but my responsibility is to make this rational and manageable so it doesn't result in conflict."

In his opening comments, Xi called on China and the US to find the right way to get along with each other.

The problems facing human society cannot be solved without cooperation between major countries, Xi told Biden, according to an official press release here.

Both the countries should lead by example, step up coordination and cooperation on international and regional issues, and provide more public goods for the world, he said.

The two sides should keep their initiatives open to each other, or coordinate and connect them for synergy, Xi said. (PTI)

Biden says he still believes Xi Jinping is a dictator

WOODSIDE (CALIFORNIA), Nov 16: US President Joe Biden has once again called his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping a "dictator", just hours after they met for the first time in more than a year and held candid and productive discussions to revive bilateral ties.

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in San Francisco.

"Well, look, he is (a dictator)," Biden told reporters in response to a question when reminded about the similar remarks he had made about Xi early this year.

"I mean, he's a dictator in the sense that he is a guy who runs a country that is a communist country that's based on a form of government totally different than ours," Biden, 80, said.

"Anyway, we made progress," he said about the four-hour-long meeting, the first in-person summit since they met on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia in November 2022.

Biden previously compared Xi, 70, to dictators during a June political fundraiser in California as he discussed Xi's reaction to US fighter jets shooting down a Chinese spy balloon over American airspace in February.

The latest remarks could spark a possible backlash from China. The last time Biden called Xi a dictator, at a June fundraiser in Northern California, Chinese officials called the remarks absurd and a provocation. Biden's comment could also threaten to derail the positive energy coming out of the meeting, which Biden described earlier in the news conference as "some of the most constructive and productive discussions we've had." (PTI)

3 police constables taken hostage by armed men: Balochistan

KARACHI, Nov 16: Heavily-armed men have taken three police constables hostage after they attacked a security checkpoint in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, officials have said. The incident took place on Wednesday at the police checkpoint in Turbat. The armed men, besides taking three constables hostage, also took away their official submachine guns and ammunition.

There were around 6-8 heavily armed men who attacked the checkpoint, officials said.

However, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack. Meanwhile, in the capital city of Quetta, security forces arrested a man who forcibly entered the cantonment area late on Wednesday evening without stopping at the entry checkpoint and proving his identity, officials said.

They said the suspect, identified as Essa Khan, drove a Suzuki van into the Quetta cantonment area without stopping for identification at the security post at one of the entry points.

After he drove through the main gate, security was put on high alert, and he was later arrested inside the cantonment area with the vehicle.

Bordering Afghanistan and Iran, Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province and has frequently been hit by terror groups, including the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic State group. (PTI)

26 killed in Chinese coal company office fire

BEIJING, Nov 16: At least 26 people were killed and more than 60 injured after a fire tore through a building of a coal mine company in north China's Shanxi province on Thursday, state media reported.

The fire started at the second floor of the five-story building located in Lishi District of Luliang City at around 6.50 am (local time).

Twenty-six people were killed in the fire and more than 60 people have been sent to a local hospital for treatment, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The fire has been brought under control and rescue efforts are underway, the Global Times newspaper reported.

The building belongs to a private coal mine company.

Industrial accidents are common in China due to lax safety standards and poor enforcement. (PTI)

Driver arrested after a car struck a barricade near the Israeli Embassy in Tokyo

TOKYO, Nov 16: Police in Japan said on Thursday they arrested a driver after a vehicle crashed into a temporary barricade near the Israeli Embassy in Tokyo, injuring one police officer.

Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department said they arrested a 53-year-old man on suspicion of obstructing official duties. The man was unemployed and a member of a right-wing group, police said.

Tokyo police said the suspect suddenly drove into the street where police officers were on duty at the barricade set up to secure the Israeli Embassy, injuring an officer in his 20s. His injury was not life-threatening, police said. Media reports said he had a hand injury.

The alleged motive and whether the embassy was targeted are not known. Demonstrators often gather to protest Israel's attacks on Gaza, and the street near the embassy has been barricaded by Japanese police.

Photographs and video footage showed a black compact vehicle crashed into a guardrail by the sidewalk, with debris scattered on the street. The crash site is near an intersection about 100 meters (yards) from the embassy and in an area with many offices and restaurants.

The Kyodo News agency reported that the suspect admitted to police he rammed into the barricade, and that he was sorry that the police officer was injured. (AP)

Israel signals wider operations in southern Gaza as search of hospital has yet to reveal Hamas base

KHAN YOUNIS, Nov 16: Israeli forces dropped leaflets warning Palestinians to flee parts of southern Gaza, residents said on Thursday, signaling a possible expansion of operations to areas where hundreds of thousands of people who heeded earlier evacuation orders are crowded into U.N.-run shelters and family homes.

Meanwhile, soldiers continued searching Shifa Hospital in the north, in a raid that began early Wednesday but has yet to uncover evidence of the central Hamas command center that Israel has said is concealed beneath the complex. Hamas and staff at the hospital, Gaza's largest, deny the allegations.

Broadening the offensive to the south — where Israel already carries out daily air raids — threatens to worsen an already severe humanitarian crisis in the besieged territory. Over 1.5 million people have been internally displaced in Gaza, with most having fled to the south, where food, water and electricity are increasingly scarce.

The war, now in its sixth week, was triggered by a wide-ranging Hamas attack into southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which the militants killed over 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and captured some 240 men, women and children. Israel responded with a weeklong air campaign and a ground invasion of northern Gaza, vowing to remove Hamas from power and crush its military capabilities.

More than 11,200 Palestinians have been killed, two-thirds of them women and minors, according to Palestinian health authorities. Another 2,700 have been reported missing, with most believed to be buried under the rubble. The official count does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths.

Israeli troops on Wednesday stormed into Gaza's largest hospital, searching for traces of Hamas inside and beneath the facility, where newborns and hundreds of other patients have suffered for days without electricity and other basic necessities.

Troops were searching the underground levels of the hospital on Thursday and detained technicians responsible for running its equipment, the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said in a statement.

After encircling Shifa for days, Israel faced pressure to prove its claim that Hamas was using the



patients, staff and civilians sheltering there to provide cover for its fighters. The allegation is part of Israel's broader accusation that Hamas uses Palestinians as human shields.

The military released video from inside Shifa showed three duffel bags it said it found hidden around an MRI lab, each containing an assault rifle, grenades and Hamas uniforms, as well as a closet that contained a number of assault rifles without ammunition clips. The Associated Press could not independently verify the Israeli claims that the weapons were found inside the hospital.

Hamas and Gaza health officials deny militants operate in Shifa — a hospital that employs some 1,500 people and has more than 500 beds. The Palestinians and rights groups accuse Israel of recklessly endangering civilians.

Munir al-Boursh, a senior official with Gaza's Health Ministry inside the hospital, said that for hours, the troops ransacked the basement and other buildings, including those housing the emergency and surgery departments, and searched the grounds for tunnels. Troops questioned and face-screened patients, staff and people sheltering in the facility, he said, adding that he did not know if any were detained.

"Patients, women and children are terrified," he told the AP by phone Wednesday.

The military said its troops killed four militants outside the hospital at the start of the operation, but through days of fighting there were no reports of militants firing from inside Shifa. There were also

no reports of any fighting within the hospital after Israeli troops entered.

The military said it was carrying out a "precise and targeted operation" in a specific area of the hospital, and that its soldiers were accompanied by medical teams bringing in incubators and other supplies.

At one point, tens of thousands of Palestinians fleeing Israeli bombardment were sheltering at Shifa, but most left in recent days as the fighting drew closer. The fate of premature babies at the hospital has drawn particular concern.

The Health Ministry said 40 patients, including three babies, have died since Shifa's emergency generator ran out of fuel Saturday. There was no immediate word on the condition of another 36 babies, who the ministry said earlier were at risk of dying because there is no power for incubators.

The leaflets, dropped in areas east of the southern town of Khan Yousif, warned civilians to evacuate the area and saying anyone in the vicinity of militants or their positions "is putting his life in danger." Similar leaflets were dropped over northern Gaza for weeks ahead of the ground invasion.

Two local reporters who live east of Khan Yousif confirmed seeing the leaflets. Others shared images of the leaflets on social media.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said Wednesday the ground operation will eventually "include both the north and south. We will strike Hamas wherever it is."

The military says it has largely consolidated its control of the north, including seizing and demolishing government buildings. Video released by the army Thursday showed soldiers moving between heavily damaged buildings through holes blown in their walls.

On Thursday, the military said it had blown up a residence belonging to Ismail Haniyeh, a senior Hamas leader based abroad. It was unclear if anyone was inside the building.

Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people have already crowded into the territory's south, where a worsening fuel shortage threatens to paralyze the delivery of humanitarian services and shut down mobile phone and internet service. (AP)

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron meets Zelenskyy in first overseas visit as top UK diplomat

KYIV, Nov 16: British Foreign Secretary David Cameron met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday in his first overseas trip in his new job and pledged to continue providing military support for Ukraine's war effort for "however long it takes."

Cameron, a former prime minister who returned to government in a surprise appointment Monday in a Cabinet shuffle, said he wanted to make the trip to Kyiv his first

diplomatic visit.

"I admire the strength and determination of the Ukrainian people," he told Zelenskyy, according to a video posted by the president.

Cameron said the UK would continue to provide moral and diplomatic support "but above all, the military support that you need not just this year and next year but however long it takes."

Zelenskyy thanked Cameron for visiting. Zelenskyy has tried to keep the



world's focus on Ukraine's fight as attention has turned to the Middle East and Israel's war against Hamas.

"A good meeting," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram. "Weapons for the front, strengthening of air defense,

protection of our people and critical infrastructure. I am grateful to the UK for its support!"

The U.K. has been one of the strongest supporters of Ukraine in defending itself from Russia.

As of last month, the U.K. said it was second to the U.S. in providing military funds to Ukraine, giving 4.6 billion pounds (\$5.7 billion) worth of assistance and training 30,000 Ukrainian troops on British soil. (AP)

Secularism does not mean non-religious, but equal respect to all faiths: Jaishankar



LONDON, Nov 16: Secularism for India does not mean being non-religious but an equal respect to all faiths, but the "appeasement" government policies of the past made the biggest religion of the country feel like it had to be self-deprecatory in the name of equality, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

During an interaction entitled 'How a Billion People See the World' at the Royal Overseas League in London on Wednesday evening, Jaishankar was asked if India had changed since the Nehruvian era to become less liberal and more "Hindu majoritarian" under the BJP-led government.

While asserting that India had certainly changed, Jaishankar was categorical that the change did not mean India being less liberal but rather "more authentic" about expressing its beliefs.

"Has India changed from the Nehruvian era? Absolutely, because one of the assumptions of that era which very much guided the thinking of the polity and its projection abroad was the way we define secularism in India," said Jaishankar, in response to a question by journalist-author Lionel Barber.

"For us, secularism doesn't mean being non-religious; for us secularism means equal respect to all faiths. Now, what happened in reality in politics was beginning with equal respect for all faiths, we actually got into a sort of politics of minoritarian pandering. That, over a period of time, I think, created a backlash," he said.

Jaishankar referenced "appeasement" as a very powerful word in the Indian political debate, which guided the direction in which politics went.

"More and more people started feeling that in a way, in the name of equality of all religions, in fact, the biggest religion had to be self-deprecatory and play itself down. A big part of that community felt it was not being fair," he noted.

The senior BJP leader said the political and social changes seen in India in the last few years have partly been a reaction "at an intellectual and political level" to this sense of unfairness.

Specifically asked if tolerance had gone down in India as a result, he responded: "I don't think so; I think on the contrary. I think people today are less hypocritical about their beliefs, about their traditions and their culture."

"We are more Indian, more authentic. We are not today, either currying favour before a global audience or really trying to live up to some kind of left-wing liberal construct which a lot of Indians felt was not us."

The question-and-answer session, organised by foreign policy agency Wilton Park in partnership with the High Commission of India in London, marked the minister's final engagement in London as he concluded his five-day UK visit.

The discussion covered a wide range of topics, including India-China relations, the ongoing diplomatic row with Canada and the socio-political scenario in the country. (PTI)

Chinese president signals more pandas will be coming to the United States

The bears have long been the symbol of the US-China friendship since Beijing gifted a pair of pandas to the National Zoo in Washington in 1972

SAN FRANCISCO, Nov 16: Chinese President Xi Jinping signaled on late Wednesday that China will send new pandas to the United States, calling them "envoys of friendship between the Chinese and American peoples."

"We are ready to continue our co-operation with the United States on panda conservation, and do our best to meet the wishes of the Californians so as to deepen the friendly ties between our two peoples," Xi said during a dinner speech with business leaders.

The gesture came at the end of a day in which Xi and President Joe Biden held their first face to face meeting in a year and pledged to try to reduce tensions. Xi did not share additional details on when or where pandas might be provided but ap-

peared to suggest the next pair of pandas are most likely to come to California, probably San Diego.

The bears have long been the symbol of the U.S.-China friendship since Beijing gifted a pair of pandas to the National Zoo in Washington in 1972, ahead of the normalization of bilateral relations. Later, Beijing loaned the pandas to other U.S. zoos, with proceeds going back to panda conservation programs.

The National Zoo's three giant pandas, Mei Xiang, Tian Tian and their cub Xiao Qi Ji, eight days ago began their long trip to China. After their departure, only four pandas are left in the United States, in the Atlanta Zoo.

"I was told that many American people, especially children, were really reluctant to say goodbye to the



pandas, and went to the zoo to see them off," Xi said in his speech. He added that he learned the San Diego Zoo and people in California "very much look forward to welcoming pandas back."

Xi is in California to attend a summit of Indo-Pacific leaders and for his meeting with Biden. He made no

mention of the pandas during his public remarks earlier in the day as he met with Biden.

When bilateral relations began to sour in the past few years, members of the Chinese public started to demand the return of giant pandas. Unproven allegations that U.S. zoos mistreated the pandas, known as

China's "national treasure," flooded China's social media.

But relations showed signs of stabilization as Xi traveled to San Francisco to meet with Biden. The two men met for about four hours Wednesday at the picturesque Filoli Historic House & Garden, where they agreed to cooperate on anti-narcotics, resume high-level military communications and expand people-to-people exchanges.

The National Zoo's exchange agreement with the China Wildlife Conservation Association had been set to expire in early December and negotiations to renew or extend the deal did not produce results.

The San Diego Zoo returned its pandas in 2019, and the last bear at the Memphis, Tennessee, zoo went home earlier this year. (AP)

Sikkim CM greets media fraternity on National Press Day

GANGTOK, Nov 16: Sikkim chief minister Prem Singh Tamang on Thursday greeted the media fraternity on National Press Day and urged them to serve as the watchdog of democracy.

"The press serves as the watchdog of democracy and works tirelessly to uphold the principles of transparency and accountability," he said in a message.

"It is through diligent efforts of journalists that the civil society gets all the information about unfolding events which shaping our world views," Tamang said.

The Sikkim chief minister urged the media persons to reflect on the evolving nature of journalism in the digital age in view of the rise of online platforms, which he said has transformed the way of dissemination of information presenting both opportunities and challenges to the media fraternity.

Exhorting the journalists to adapt to new mediums and strive to maintain the highest standards of journalism in an ever-changing landscape, he extended all possible support for a free and responsible press by recognising its vital role in shaping a just and informed society. (PTI)



Govt committed to welfare of journalists, says Arunachal Deputy CM

'Advertisement policy for newspapers is in place to support media houses'

ITANAGAR, Nov 16: Arunachal Pradesh deputy chief minister Chowna Mein on Thursday said the state government is committed to look after the welfare of journalists.

Addressing the National Press Day celebration at Arunachal Press Club (APC) here, Mein said the government had implemented several schemes and policies for the welfare of scribes including introduction of journalists' welfare fund to assist them and their families for medical treatment.

"The journalist pension scheme is under process and we are committed to implement it. Moreover, the advertisement policy for newspapers is in place to support media houses," he said.

The deputy chief minister added that a separate advertisement policy for electronic media has been



approved. "Media acts as the mirror of society. What you broadcast or highlight reflects the image of society."

That is where responsible journalism comes into play," he said.

The deputy chief minister said critical and analytical reporting helps to open the eyes of the government.

Information and Public Relations Minister Bamang Felix said, "Media should serve society without any bias. The state government has been trying its best to bring reforms in the media industry and many more plans and policies are in the pipeline."

Advisor to IPR Laisam Simai lauded the media for functioning efficiently despite all odds.

On the occasion, three scribes from the electronic media were awarded with the Taro Chatung media awards for their investigative, politics and governance and human interest stories, respectively. (PTI)

Army builds bailey bridge Flood-ravaged Chungthang reconnects to rest of Sikkim

GANGTOK, Nov 16: Indian Army, with assistance from the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), constructed a bailey bridge to connect flood-ravaged Chungthang to the rest of Sikkim, a defence release said on Thursday.

Chungthang in north Sikkim was among the worst affected areas in the Himalayan state that was hit by a flash flood in Teesta River triggered by a cloudburst over Lhonak Lake on October 4.

At least 78 people were killed in Sikkim and northern West Bengal in the deluge.

The 200-foot bridge will now pave the way for seamless movement of vehicles and provision of relief material to the flood-affected areas, the release said.

The bridge was inaugurated by state minister for roads and bridges Samdup Lepcha in the presence of officials of the Indian Army, BRO and civil administration. (PTI)

Police station inaugurated at Seyochung town

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 16: Seyochung Police Station was inaugurated recently at Seyochung town by MLA & chairman DPDB Kiphire, C Kipili Sangtam. The new police station is the fourth police station to be established in Kiphire district.

C Kipili Sangtam in his speech stated that inaugurating the police station is not only about development but also a big responsibility for the people as well as for police personnel. He requested the people of Seyochung to co-operate with one another and give support to the police personnel for the smooth functioning of the police station. He also appealed to the police personnel to utilise the police station in a proper manner and to fully support the public in all the aspects.

The programme was chaired by NPS, Addl SP Kiphire, Lanu Aier and short speeches were delivered by dy inspector general of Police, M James Humtsoe IPS, DC Kiphire, John Tsulise Sangtam and Chairman Joint community Seyochung Town, Atoka T Yephthomi.

The programme was attended by all the 26 village Council chairmen under Seyochung Town, Head GBs, ADC Seyochung and the Heads of Offices from Kiphire Hq.

Nagaland to strictly enforce 'no work, no pay' policy

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 16: Nagaland chief secretary J Alam stated that the state government would strictly enforce "no work, no pay" policy.

He laid stress on importance of regular attendance of officers and staff in the secretariat and directorates.

According to an official bulletin, the chief secretary, who chaired a meeting of administrative heads of departments (AHOs) and heads of departments (HoDs) at the secretariat Conference Hall, Kohima recently, urged AHOs and HoDs to strictly monitor attendance in secretariat departments in the coming days.

The chief secretary also instructed HoDs of all departments to provide clear instructions to district officers to be present and maintain close coordination with district administration for proper implementation of various schemes and programmes.

Special instructions were given to district officers to give equal attention to all districts in case of holding charge of more than one district. It was also decided that a new system of APARs would be introduced whereby deputy commissioners of respective districts would assess the performance of the officer holding charge of more than one district.

On the implementation of e-office, the chief secretary acknowledged that the e-office system was being launched on pilot basis in four departments. However, he said that gradually the system would be implemented in other departments also. At the meeting, the IT department made a presentation about the new online platform avail-



able at services.nagaland@gov.in for hosting government services in an online mode.

The chief secretary encouraged the departments providing public services to make full use of the platform as it was the future.

Alam also commended departments for proactively working with IT&C departments to update their websites. The IT&C department presented a PowerPoint on the status of the updating of departmental websites. It was noted that almost all the 75 departmental websites were being regularly updated.

The meeting also covered various agendas, including preparations for Statehood Day, preparations for Hornbill Festival 2023, the facility of temporary PIMS granted to ease hardship for various government employees in getting their salaries, the implementation of centrally sponsored schemes, their monitoring, and timely submission of UCs.

The finance department briefed on the new system of placing central and state share funds of centrally sponsored schemes together leading to faster releases departments and timely execution of targeted developmental schemes.

5-day Tribal Art and Crafts Mela

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Nov 16: A five-day Tribal Art and Crafts Mela 2023 began at the Gorkha community panchayat hall at Chandmari in Kohima on Thursday. Director of tribal affairs department I Sino Phom inaugurated the mela. Organised by the Nagaland tribal affairs department on the occasion of Janjatiya Gaurav Divas 2023, altogether 94 artisans, 16 males and 78 females, under 17 societies/SHGs from all the districts of Nagaland are participating in the mela.

Mizoram: Student protest over delay in scholarship disbursement enters third day

AIZAWL, Nov 16: A student protest in Aizawl over the delay in the disbursement of scholarships entered the third day on Thursday.

Agitators, under the aegis of Mizoram's apex student body Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), have been staging a sit-in demonstration outside the Mizoram Scholarship Board office here since Tuesday demanding the immediate disbursement of the second installment of scholarship money to over 19,000 beneficiaries.

The protesters on Thursday prevented scholarship board officials from entering the office.

Chief minister Zoramthanga has held a meeting with scholarship board officials and leaders of MZP over the matter. The outcome of the meeting, however, is yet to be known.

MZP president H Lalthianghlina claimed that the state government has received over ₹ 17.87 crore funds for the disbursement of scholarships on September 25.

He alleged that the officials did not make sincere efforts to release the scholarship money and negligence on their part has affected thousands of students. He claimed that 19,495 students, including 3,010 studying outside the state, are entitled to receive the money under the second installment of the scholarship.

Scholarship board officials, however, claimed that the money was not disbursed due to the imposition of the model code of conduct in view of the state assembly polls held on November 7.

They said that they were waiting for permission from the Election Commission to release the scholarship amount.

Earlier, on Tuesday, leaders of MZP also met the state joint chief electoral officer and sent a letter to the election commission over the matter. They also met Chief Secretary Renu Sharma on Wednesday and informed her of the problems faced by students. (PTI)

Nagaland State Pavilion inaugurated

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 16: Joint resident commissioner (JRC) Nagaland house, New Delhi, Wennyei Konyak inaugurated the Nagaland State Pavilion at Pragati Maidan New Delhi, Hall no-3 recently. From Nagaland there were 25 Entrepreneurs taking part for showcasing the best local product of Handloom crafts Handicraft and wood craft, banana basket crafts, varieties of local soaps, and various products of Nagaland state.

The 42nd India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2023, with the theme "Vocal for Local, Local to Global" has Thirteen (13) countries participating in the event this year, with nearly 3500, exhibitors to showcase products at India International Trade Fair (IITF).

Partner states for the events are Bihar State and Kerala State, while focus States are Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh States. During the Inauguration the officials present include, Nagaland State Pavilion director Kikhumthong, Areninla, Asst. Pavilion Director, Kuolie Mere dy Director and Sr PRO (IPR) Nagaland House Delhi and Thomas Thailu OSD Planning Nagaland House, New Delhi.

MISSING PERSON



Jonnot Begum - 17 years old.

The above is a photograph of missing minor girl namely Jonnot Begum-17 years old, complainant: Injamamul Hussain, S/O: Lt. Abdul Hussain, vill: Gaspara, PS- Dhubri, Dist- Dhubri, Assam who has been missing from her home as reported by the complainant at Dhramsala WP.

On receipt of the information, a missing entry rides Dhramsala WP GDE No.208, dated 14/11/2023 was made and investigated into for tracing out the missing girl.

The descriptive roll of the missing minor girl is as follows:-

1. Height - 5.1 feet.
2. Complexion - Fair.
3. Hair - Black.
4. Age - 17 years.
5. Wearing - Black and pink salwar.
6. D/O - Abul Hussain Sk.
7. Religion - Islam.

All efrom may kindly be taken to trace out the above minor girl with intimation to the undersigned.

Sd/-
Superintendent of police,
Dhubri, Assam

Janasanyog /D/13574/23/17-Nov-23

GOVT. OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER P.W.D UMPANAI ROAD DIVISION, ULUKUNCHI

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender with a validity period of 180 (one hundred eight) days from the date of receipt in prescribed form subsequently to be drawn up in printed "F-2" form enclosing money receipt of Rs.10.00 (rupees ten) only from the authority of District Council against each group are hereby invited from the bonafide PWD contractor of class-I and II Category for execution of the following work under PWD, Umpantai Road Division, Ulukunchi and will be received by the undersigned upto 12.00PM on 28.11.2023 and will be opened on the same day. Detailed notice can be received from the office of undersigned before the specified time.

The contractor or his authorised representative may remain present at the time of opening tenders which will be done on the same date hours in the office of the undersigned. Contractors will have to deposit 2(two) percent earnest money, 1(one) percent in case of ST/SC/OBC of the tender amount.

In case the date of opening of the tenders remains a holiday/bandh day the next working day will be treated as the date of opening of the tender.

The undersigned reserve the right to cancel the tenders (Partly or wholly) without assigning any reason of thereof.

Willing contractors should quote up-to-date registration number with full address and name in capital letters in the tender. The up-to-date K/A T/L number (for Non-Tribal) only should be quoted in their tender otherwise their tender will be rejected.

Detail of Tender-

| Sl. No | Name of Project | Approx. Value of Work | Time of Completion |
|--------|---|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Construction of road from Patengteli to Tipali by providing GSB, earthwork ni cutting etc. under AAP for the year 2023-24 (Ch.0.00 m to 4000.00m, L=4.00km) | Rs. 27,00,000.00 | 3 (Three) Months |
| 2 | Maintenance/repairing of SPT Bridge No.5/1 (L=10.10m) under SOPD for the year 2023-24(Emergent work) | Rs. 2,47,459.00 | 3 (Three) Months |

Note-

1. Rate should be quoted on flat percentage basis as per/above/below the schedule of Rates for Rural Roads for All Divisions under PWRD, Assam for the year 2020-21
2. Clause of F-2 form are binding

Sd/-

Executive Engineer, P.W.D.
Umpantai Road Division, Ulukunchi
Date:- 15/11/2023

Memo No:- EE/UMP/TECH/2022-23/1727

GOVT. OF ASSAM OFFICE OF JOINT DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES, KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT DIPHU — 782460

No. KA/Esstt/H&FW/Post/Advt./2023-24/1597

Dated, Diphu the 15th Nov' 2023

WRITTEN EXAMINATION/ VIVA-VOCE TEST NOTICE

In reference to the Advertisement No. KA/Esstt/H&FW/Post/Advt./2023-24/1475 Dated 19/10/2023, it is hereby informed to all concerned that the date of written examination and Viva-Voce Test for Grade-III & Grade-IV of different categories of post under Joint Director of Health Services, Karbi Anglong District, Diphu as mentioned below:-

| Sl. No. | Name of the post (s) | Date of Examination | Timing | Examination Venue |
|---------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Staff Nurse | 30-11-2023 | 09:00 am to 12:00 Noon | GNM Nursing School, Diphu |
| 2. | Store Keeper | 30-11-2023 | 09:00 am to 12:00 Noon | GNM Nursing School, Diphu |
| 3. | Ophthalmic Asstt. | 30-11-2023 | 01:00 pm to 4:00 pm | GNM Nursing School, Diphu |
| 4. | Leprosy Injector | 30-11-2023 | 01:00 pm to 4:00 pm | GNM Nursing School, Diphu |
| 5. | Dresser | 07-12-2023 | 01:00 pm to 4:00 pm | GNM Nursing School, Diphu |
| 6. | OT Attendant | 07-12-2023 | 10:00 am to 4:00 pm | O/O- Jt. DHS, Diphu |
| 7. | Outdoor Attendant | 07-12-2023 | 10:00 am to 4:00 pm | O/O- Jt. DHS, Diphu |
| 8. | Ward Boy | 07-12-2023 | 10:00 am to 4:00 pm | O/O- Jt. DHS, Diphu |
| 9. | Peon | 07-12-2023 | 10:00 am to 4:00 pm | O/O- Jt. DHS, Diphu |
| 10. | Cook | 07-12-2023 | 10:00 am to 4:00 pm | O/O- it. DHS, Diphu |
| 11. | Mali | 07-12-2023 | 10:00 am to 4:00 pm | O/O- it. DHS, Diphu |

The candidate who have applied for the above-mentioned category of posts shall have to appear for the written examination and Viva-Voce Test as per schedule date, time and venue. Admit Cards will be issued from 20th November 2023 and may be collected from the office of the Joint Director of Health Services, Karbi Anglong District, Diphu during office hours. No separate calling letter will be sent to the candidate.

Sd/-

Jt. Director of Health Services,
Karbi Anglong District, Diphu.
Dated, Diphu the 15th Nov' 2023

Memo No. KA/Esstt/H&FW/Post/Advt./2023-24/1597(A)

Rajasthan polls: BJP pledges LPG subsidy, completion of Eastern Canal Project

'Mahila thana' will be set up in every district and 'mahila desk' in every police station besides an anti-romeo squad in every city

JAIPUR, Nov 16: The BJP on Thursday released its manifesto for the Rajasthan assembly polls, promising to provide LPG cylinder for ₹ 450 each to Ujjawala scheme beneficiaries, 2.5 lakh government jobs in five years and increasing the financial assistance to farmers under the PM-Kisan scheme.

Releasing the 'sankalp patra' here, party chief J P Nadda also said that if the BJP forms the government in the state, a Special Investigation Team will be formed to probe paper leaks and other alleged scams in the Congress government.

The manifesto said an arrangement to procure wheat at ₹ 2,700 per quintal, including bonus above MSP, will be made and financial assistance under PM Kisan Samman Nidhi will be increased to ₹ 12,000 per year.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan), which aims to support farmers in meeting their agricultural and other incidental needs, a financial assistance of ₹ 6,000 per year is at present transferred to bank accounts of farmers in three equal installments.

The manifesto also promises completion of the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP) in a time bound manner in collaboration with the Centre.

The Congress has been demanding national project status to the ERCP which was envisaged by the former BJP government to address irrigation and drinking water problems in a 13 eastern Rajasthan districts.

Nadda said a compensation policy for farmers whose land was auctioned will be brought and noted that land of 19,400 farmers was auctioned.

Pledging a slew of schemes for girls and women, he said a 'mahila thana' will be set up in every district and 'mahila desk' in every police station besides an anti-romeo squad in every city.

He also announced a savings bond of ₹ 2 lakh on birth of girl child under Lado Protsahan Yojna, skill training to nearly six lakh rural women under Lakhpati Didi scheme, scooty to meritorious girls on clearing class 12 exam, free education from KG to PG to girls of poor families, three Mahila Police Battalions and increase in financial assistance under the PM Matru Vandan scheme from ₹ 5,000 to ₹ 8,000.

For the youth, the party announced 2.5 lakh government jobs in five years, annual assistance of ₹ 12,000 for students of poor families to purchase school bags, books and uniform and setting up of Rajasthan Institute of Technology and Rajasthan Institute of Medical Sciences in every division.

In the health sector, the party pledged an investment of ₹ 40,000 crore through the Bhamashah Health Infrastructure Mission and appointment of 15,000 doctors and 20,000 paramedical staff.

Besides a white paper on corruption cases of the Congress government and strict action, the party promised round-the-clock electricity supply in domestic sector, expansion of Jaipur Metro, transparent transfer policy, free ration to poor families under PM Garib Kalyan Yojna for five years, increase in old age pension and pension of ₹ 1500 per month for the disabled.

The party said in the manifesto that it is committed to make Rajasthan a 350 billion



dollar economy.

In the manifesto, the party also promised to set up the Rajasthan Economic Revival Task Force for the revival of the state economy.

"We will make Jaipur, Udaipur, Kota, Ajmer, Bharatpur, Jodhpur and Bikaner smart cities in collaboration with the central government," the manifesto said.

A special police cell for investigating sleeper cells of anti-national forces and anti-gangster task force to stop gang wars was also among the promises made.

For minority welfare, the party announced land allotment for 'Chaturmas' related events of Jain monks and adequate police protection, conservation and development of historical Sikh religious places, CM Sharmarhi Kalyan Yojna for Hindu migrants, colonies for Hindu migrants in Jodhpur whose houses were demolished by the Congress government and subsidised loans to start business, scholarship for school and college students.

For OBC welfare, the party promised distribution of OBC certificates in a time bound manner, collateral free education loan up to

₹15 lakh and a welfare board to redress problems.

Various other announcements for tribal welfare, street hawkers and gig workers, auto drivers, SC and ST welfare, were also made.

Before releasing the manifesto, Nadda attacked the Congress, charging it was known for corruption, crime against women, insult to farmers, paper leaks and scams and said the precious time of Rajasthan has been wasted.

Nadda also alleged that in the name of "pseudo-secularism", bulldozers were run on religious places of some people.

He claimed that those who raised slogans like 'sar tan se juda' - threatening beheading - were encouraged. The apparent reference was to the murder of an Udaipur tailor Kanhaiya Lal for allegedly insulting Islam.

The BJP chief charged that the Congress made new records in corruption and scams and that the family of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot got contracts.

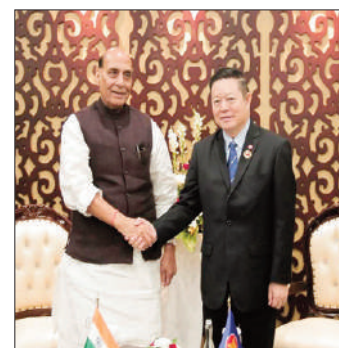
Convener of the manifesto committee and union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said suggestions from individuals across all 200 constituencies in digital and physical mode were taken and discussions with various groups, professionals were also held in order to make a comprehensive manifesto.

BJP's election in-charge for Rajasthan and union minister Pralhad Joshi, BJP in charge for Rajasthan Arun Singh, state president CP Joshi, former chief minister Vasundhara Raje and other leaders were present during the release of the manifesto.

Rajasthan goes to polls on November 25 and the results will be declared on December 3. (PTI)

Defence min Rajnath holds conversation with US counterpart Austin in Jakarta

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: Defence minister Rajnath Singh held a brief conversation with his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, in Jakarta on Thursday, focusing on the India-US strategic ties and ways to strengthen the common efforts towards a more secure world.



In the interaction that took place on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), Singh and Austin discussed how India and the United States could contribute together to ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific region, officials said.

Ten-nation regional grouping ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is a major stakeholder in the Indo-Pacific.

The ADMM-Plus is a platform comprising the 10-nation ASEAN and its eight dialogue partners -- India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the US.

Indonesia is hosting the meeting as the current chair of the ADMM-Plus.

The Singh-Austin conversation came less than a week after the two ministers held wide-ranging talks in New Delhi that centred around an ambitious agenda to deepen the India-US bilateral strategic ties in the face of China's increasing military assertiveness.

Indian officials said both leaders used the opportunity in Jakarta to quickly review the "tremendous progress" achieved in the India-US defence partnership in recent years.

They discussed how the two countries could contribute together to ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific and to advance "peace, prosperity and security".

Singh and Austin also discussed ways to expand the India-US partnership to address emerging challenges and further strengthen the common efforts towards a more secure world, the officials said.

The two leaders met in New Delhi on November 10 and resolved to advance the defence technology cooperation with joint research in emerging areas.

US secretary of state Antony Blinken and defence secretary Austin travelled to India last week to attend the fifth edition of the "2+2" ministerial dialogue with their Indian counterparts.

Ways to expand the cooperation between India and the US figured in the "2+2" dialogue as well.

There have been growing global concerns over China's military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. (PTI)

Guv Ravi returns Bills, TN govt set to adopt them again

CHENNAI, Nov 16: Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi has returned bills sent to him by the government for his assent and the state is all set to get them passed again in a special sitting of the Assembly on November 18. Speaking to reporters at Tiruvannamalai, Speaker M Appavu said a special sitting of the Assembly will be held on Saturday.

On the purpose of the special meet, he said he has learnt that Governor Ravi has returned to the government several bills sent to him for his assent. The state government intends getting such bills adopted again immediately, and hence the Assembly will meet on November 18, he added. The DMK regime has recently approached the Supreme Court accusing the Raj Bhavan of sitting over bills passed by the Assembly.

At least 12 bills were pending besides, 4 official orders and a file related to the premature release of 54 prisoners. The number of bills returned to the government by Governor Ravi is not clear. The Assembly had been adjourned sine die in October. (PTI)

Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena writes to ECI, takes exception to BJP's election promise in MP

MUMBAI, Nov 16: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday said that after Union Home Minister Amit Shah promised that the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh will arrange a trip to Ayodhya for the state's people if it retained power, the Sena has written to the Election Commission of India asking whether it has relaxed the Model Code of Conduct.

The letter written by the Shiv Sena (UBT) accused the ECI of practising "double standards" in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Speaking at a news conference here, Thackeray said the 1987 bypoll in Vile Parle constituency in Maharashtra was fought on the issue of Hindutva which led to the poll body revoking Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray's voting rights.

"We feel the Model Code of Conduct has been relaxed (this time around). If that is the case, we should know about it," the former Maharashtra chief minister said.

"Giving the BJP a free hit and dismissing us as a hit wicket does not amount to holding free and fair elections," Thackeray further said, using cricket terminology.

Union minister Shah had said earlier this week that if the BJP retained power in Madhya Pradesh, its government will arrange 'darshan' at the Ram temple in Ayodhya for people from the state. The consecration of Lord Ram's idol in Ayodhya has been scheduled for January 22, 2024.

His colleague and another senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh also made a similar promise during the MP campaign. Thackeray also referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking people during the Kamataka poll campaign in May to say 'Jai Bajrangbali' while casting their vote to "punish" the Congress as the BJP targeted the opposition party over its poll promise of banning the Bajrang Dal.

"The double standards applied by the Election Commission are intriguing, yet understandable, given the fact that the commission is publicly perceived to be in alignment with whatever the BJP does during elections and even otherwise," the Shiv Sena (UBT) letter to the poll body said. (PTI)

Fresh attempt to rescue workers trapped in Uttarkashi tunnel, new machine drilling escape passage

UTTARKASHI, Nov 16: A heavy-duty drilling machine flown in by the IAF from Delhi began boring through the rubble of a collapsed tunnel on the Char Dham route in Uttarakhand Thursday, in a fresh attempt to create an escape passage for 40 workers trapped inside for four days.

Workers outside the Silkyara tunnel performed a puja before the America-made auger machine began work.

Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways V K Singh had arrived at the site to take stock of the rescue operation when the drilling by the new machine began.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) had flown in the equipment in parts on their C-130 Hercules transport planes to an airstrip 30 kilometres away, after previous efforts to insert steel pipes into the rubble with the help of a smaller auger machine failed.

"I have been told that the new drilling machine has already penetrated 5-7 metres through the debris. We hope it would soon reach the trapped workers, drilling at the rate of 5-10 metres every hour," chief minister Pushkar Dhami told reporters in Dehradun.

Officials had earlier said that a 30-40 metre stretch of the under-construction had collapsed on Sunday. The collapsed section is 270 metres from the mouth of the tunnel from the Silkyara side.

The workers are stranded on the other side of debris. They are safe, and being provided with oxygen, electricity, medicines, food items and water through pipes, Navayuga Engineering Company's spokesperson G L Nath said. The company is building the tunnel on behalf of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

Sections of mild steel pipes of

800-mm and 900-mm diameter will be inserted -- one after the other -- into the drilled passage. Once this happens, the workers trapped inside can crawl out to safety.

A six-bed makeshift health facility has been set up and 10 ambulances with expert doctors stationed outside the tunnel to provide immediate medical care to the trapped workers after their evacuation, officials said.

The state government is providing all support to the technical experts supervising the rescue operations on the spot, Dhami said and added that they are in touch with international specialists.

He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is constantly monitoring the situation.

The Uttarakhand government has decided to review all under-construction tunnels in the state, Dhami said.

"We need such tunnels and many of them are being built in the state. We will review wherever they are being constructed," he said.

The auger machine was flown in after the first drilling machine turned out to be too slow and technical issues developed, the officials said. Also, falling debris inside the tunnel damaged the first equipment and injured two rescue workers on Tuesday.

The 25-ton new auger machine has a capacity to drill 4-5 metres per hour, NHIDCL director Anshu Manish Khalkho said earlier. After being brought to the site, the machine was installed through the night and made operational on Thursday.

The portion of the tunnel, part of the ambitious Char Dham all-weather road project, collapsed due to a landslide on Sunday. (PTI)

K'taka CM's son embroiled in controversy after viral video; JD(S) & BJP target Siddaramaiah

BENGALURU, Nov 16: Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah found himself embroiled in a controversy on Thursday after a video, where he was seen issuing certain instructions on the phone, went viral on social media.

Hurling corruption charges against him, former chief minister and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy hit out at the chief minister Siddaramaiah, alleging that the conversation was related to the "transfer (of government servants) business".

Chief minister Siddaramaiah, his deputy D K Shivakumar and others from the ruling party said the phone conversations were regarding development of four to five schools using the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds.

Siddaramaiah even said that he would retire from politics if even one instance is presented with proof that he had made money by transferring officials.

In the video, Yathindra, a former Congress MLA, is heard saying, "Hello Appa (Father), Vivekananda! To where? No I didn't give that. Give it (phone) to Mahadeva. I had given only five."

Then he speaks to Mahadeva, saying, "Ma-

hadeva, why are you giving something...? Who has given that? Nothing but whatever 4-5 I have given, that alone should be done."

According to Kumaraswamy, Yathindra spoke to R Mahadeva, a sub-registrar at Gangannagar in Bengaluru, who has been appointed as the CM's Officer on Special Duty.

Demanding an investigation into the whole episode, the JD(S) state president sought to know which list Yathindra was speaking about and who was Vivekananda in the conversation.

Directing his questions at Siddaramaiah, Kumaraswamy asked, "Why did you call him (son Yathindra) and which list is that?"

Taking a dig at the CM, Kumaraswamy said, "What is his (CM's) role? Is it his job to call his son and ask him what to do?"

The BJP too came down heavily on the Chief Minister and his son Yathindra.

"This shadow CM (Yathindra) is more powerful than CM! The ex-MLA Yathindra gave an order to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah that he should do only what 'I have given him' and not more than that,"

the BJP posted on social media platform X.

Chief minister Siddaramaiah is only occupying a nominal position and all power and administration belongs to his son Yathindra, the BJP alleged, remarking that the post of chief minister is "vacant in the state".

Speaking to reporters, Siddaramaiah clarified that the conversation was related to the school buildings being constructed with CSR funds. He claimed that social welfare minister H C Mahadeva had given the list.

Talking about the video, the chief minister said he would retire from politics if it was shown that he had made money through transfers in his political career.

Shivakumar, also the Karnataka Congress chief, too said the conversation was related to school development with CSR funds.

Yathindra being the member of the Karnataka Development Programme and chairman of the Ashraya Samiti was talking about utilisation of CSR funds to provide benches and other furniture in the schools he had chosen, he said. (PTI)

NCB team picks up 4 students from Koraput in ganja trafficking case

KORAPUT, Nov 16: A Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) team detained a panchayat samiti member and four college students from Jeypore in Odisha's Koraput district for their alleged involvement in ganja trafficking, police said. A team from the NCB regional office in Bengaluru conducted a raid on a rented residence in the Parabeda area of Jeypore, where the students were residing. The operation took place on Tuesday night.

The NCB had recently apprehended some ganja traffickers in Karnataka. During interrogation, the arrested traffickers in Karnataka disclosed their links with the students in Odisha, identifying them as their suppliers. Superintendent of Police, Koraput, Avinash Sonkar said that the NCB team did not inform them about the raid.

"Currently, we are in contact with them to obtain further details of the case," the SP said. (PTI)

Rooftop solar potential could be critical to energy transition in India, should be incentivised: Study

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: Over 25 crore households across India have the potential to deploy 637 GW of solar energy capacity on rooftops, according to a new independent report by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) released on Thursday.

The CEEW report said that deploying just one-third of this total solar technical potential could support the entire electricity demand of India's residential sector (about 310 TWh).

However, the technical potential reduces to one-fifth (118 GW) after factoring in the current electricity consumption of households.

"Most residential consumers fall into low-consumption slabs and solar may not be economically feasible for them without financial support even though it is technically possible."

"The potential reduces further to 11 GW when no capital subsidy is considered, the payback period for rooftop solar is restricted to five years and we factor in consumers' willingness to buy rooftop solar," the report said.

Currently, India has installed 11 GW of rooftop solar capacity, of which only 2.7 GW is in the residential sector.

The CEEW report did a bottom-up analysis across 21 Indian states that cover 97 per cent of the country's population.

It found that 60 per cent of the residential rooftop potential was concentrated in just seven states -- Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Odisha, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.

India's rooftop solar potential is spread geographically across states in contrast to other renewable technologies like utility-scale solar and wind projects, and could be critical to the energy transition ambitions of states.



Moreover, rural areas show higher technical potential based on residential rooftop area (363 GW) compared to urban areas across states (274 GW).

Arunabha Ghosh, the CEO of CEEW, said that India's solar energy revolution -- going from 2,000 MW of solar power capacity in 2010 to 72,018 MW now -- must reach households too to achieve its full potential.

"CEEW's study shows the mammoth capacity of solar systems that both rural and urban households can deploy to guarantee not only a transition to clean energy but also fulfil a basic need -- access to power."

"But to get there, residents must get the right price and attractive incentives

and enjoy a convenient experience, which can then spur the markets to create the right products and capacities for homes," he said.

The CEEW report also found that residential awareness of rooftop solar systems was less than 50 per cent at the national level in FY 2020.

Awareness in most states was clustered between 30 and 50 per cent.

When it came to willingness to install rooftop solar systems, residential consumers in Gujarat showed the highest willingness at 13 per cent, compared to the national average of 5 per cent.

However, residents across states perceive rooftop solar systems to be costly investments, impacting their willingness to pay.

According to another CEEW study released on Thursday, solarising residential households also offers huge economic benefits to power distribution companies (discoms).

The study on solarising rural households in Bihar and Meghalaya highlights lifetime economic gains to the tune of ₹ 2,700 crore per 100 MW of solar capacity to discoms.

The benefits will be due to reduced cross-subsidy burden, improved transmission and distribution losses, and lower average cost to serve consumers.

The CEEW study recommended introducing targeted capital subsidies for consumers, particularly for rooftop solar system sizes of 0-3 kW, and recognising systems below 1 kW in policies and regulations.

Further, for consumers, states should create a one-stop platform for rooftop solar to provide basic, reliable, and compelling information about rooftop solar. At the national level, there is a need to roll out awareness campaigns to generate demand. (PTI)

Kerala capital to be developed into digital hub: CM Vijayan

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Nov 16: Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said the state capital will be developed into a major digital hub and a premier destination for startups.

This would be a step in the direction of creating a future with innovation and entrepreneurship as the key drivers, the CM said after inaugurating the beachside startup conclave Huddle Global 2023 at Adimalathura near Vizhinjam here.

Huddle Global 2023 is a three-day event organised by Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) for bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, a government release said. Addressing the gathering at the event, Vijayan said that Kerala already stands as a pioneer in India's vibrant startup ecosystem that has been consistently ranked at the top for the last three years due to the state government's proactive initiatives.

Some of the initiatives that he referred to were -- Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centres (IEDC) for colleges, Young Entrepreneurship Programme (YIP) and incubation and acceleration programmes.

Vijayan also highlighted KSUM's achievement of securing the top position as a public business incubator in the UBI Global World Benchmark study in 2021-22 and said it cements its pivotal role in transforming the state into a thriving startup hub.

The CM further said that work



has already begun for establishing an 'Emerging Technology Startup Hub' in the capital city.

It is one of the steps in converting the state capital into a digital hub, he said.

Vijayan also said that through initiatives like Startup Infinity, the state has created collaborative projects that bring together local entrepreneurs, business leaders and Pravasi Malayalis as an inclusive approach. This approach not only fosters innovation but also welcomes participation of the global Malayali community in nurturing startups and entrepreneurship and innovation to thrive limitlessly, he said at the event where Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram Shashi Tharoor was also present.

The inaugural of the flagship event saw the exchange of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)

between KSUM and Belgium, Australia and the State Bank of India (SBI), the release said.

Tinku Biswal, Principal Secretary of Revenue and Housing in the government of Kerala, presented a report at the event stating that the state has close to 5,000 startups, it said.

KSUM CEO Anoop Ambika welcomed the gathering and said that this edition of Huddle Global assumes added significance due to its choice of venue away from the city, demonstrating the inclusivity of Kerala's startup ecosystem centred on the idea of 'equitable distribution'.

Belgium's Ambassador to India, Didier Vanderhasselt, who exchanged the MoU with the KSUM CEO, noted that the agreement will lead to KSUM setting up its Startup Infinity Centre in Brussels

which would open up vast opportunities for startups from Kerala, the release said.

The pact will facilitate Kerala startups to collaborate with the European tech hub in areas like digital technology and life sciences to scale up their product range and expand the market, Vanderhasselt said.

Catherine Gallagher, Minister Commercial and Head of Austrade South Asia, said, according to the release, the MoU with KSUM was a significant step as it comes at a time when the ties between India and Australia are marked by a strong and comprehensive strategic partnership.

The agreement will also facilitate Kerala Startups to leverage the top class technological and research and development ecosystem of Australia in a wide range of areas, she is quoted as having said in the release.

"Now into its fifth edition, Huddle Global 2023 has a convergence of around 15,000 delegates from within the country and abroad, besides showcasing cutting-edge products from emerging sectors such as robotics, artificial intelligence..." the release said.

An expo on the sidelines of the event displayed products from 100-plus nascent companies and provided an opportunity for them to interact with experts from technology and industry for advice on investment opportunities, it said. (PTI)

Delhi govt sends Bannoli land acquisition report to CBI, ED; seeks probe

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: The Delhi government has sent to the CBI and the ED a report of Vigilance Minister Atishi alleging "prima facie complicity" of Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar in the Bannoli land acquisition matter, requesting a probe, government sources said on Thursday. Kumar has denied any wrongdoing and alleged that "mudslings" was being done by people with "vested interests" against whom vigilance action was taken for corruption.

On Wednesday, the 670-page report of Vigilance Minister Atishi was submitted to Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's office. It has demanded Kumar's suspension and claimed that the scale of "undue benefits" in the matter was more than Rs 897 crore.

"The report was referred to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) after the chief minister gave his go ahead," a source said. Compensation for 19-acre land in southwest Delhi's Bannoli village for the NHAI's Dwarka Expressway project was allegedly raised from ₹ 41 crore to ₹ 353 crore but the report claimed that the "scale of undue benefits" in the deal was more than ₹ 897 crore. The vigilance minister's report was an outcome of an inquiry into a complaint that alleged that the chief secretary's son was employed by a person, who was a relative of beneficiary landowners in Bannoli. The sources said Atishi wrote to the directors of CBI and ED that it was understood that certain aspects related to the matter, including the action of the then southwest Delhi District

Magistrate Hemant Kumar in enhancing the land compensation "exorbitantly", were already referred by the Delhi LG to the CBI. However, according to the report, the then district magistrate "may just have executed the unlawful directions of his superiors" and, therefore, the chief secretary's role too should be investigated, the minister pointed to the CBI and the ED in her letters.

The government sources said the vigilance minister mentioned in her letter to the CBI director that after the preliminary investigation, it appeared that in view of the scale of the alleged corruption and "prima facie" establishment of the "abuse of authority" by the high-ranking officials, this case should come under the purview of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988.

Reacting to the latest development, sources in the chief secretary's office said the CBI inquiry was already ordered by the Government of India in October on his recommendations as chief vigilance officer of Delhi government.

"There is nothing new in it and it seems they (AAP government) want to take credit for the same. It is a well known fact that whenever any instance of money laundering is observed by CBI, it refers the same to the Enforcement Directorate also," said a source in the CS office. The sources in the CS office also alleged that every attempt was being made for his (Kumar's) removal since his reports paved way for exposures of "several scams" like those related to excise policy, power sector and construction of chief minister's residence. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

New Delhi confident of positive

In May Al-Dhara Global closed its operations in Doha and all those working there (primarily Indians) have since returned home. In the past, the Navy had taken up the case of the former naval personnel with top brass of the government for securing their release. (PTI)

India not ruling out

Consulate General, and said Indian diplomats were intimidated in public, with no action from the Canadian authorities against culprits. When asked if Jaishankar thought Nijjar was a terrorist, the foreign minister replied: "He has a track record which is there on the social media. That's a pretty graphic track record. I would let everyone form their own opinions." Giving a comparison, Jaishankar said people know of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing but India faced a bigger incident involving Khalistani terrorists who threatened three Air India flights.

Last week, Prime Minister Trudeau underlined that a "fight" with India was not something Canada wanted to have right now but reiterated his allegations and said Ottawa wants to "work constructively" with New Delhi on this "very serious matter". Foreign secretary Vinay Kwatra said India has conveyed to the US side its serious concerns over increasing activities of pro-Khalistani elements in Canada. "Insofar as Canada is concerned, we have been having very consistent conversations with all our friends and partners. Our position on this matter has been enunciated and explained in full detail on multiple occasions," Kwatra said in New Delhi recently. Days after Trudeau's allegations in September, India temporarily suspended the issuance of visas to Canadian citizens and asked Ottawa to downsize its diplomatic presence in the country to ensure parity.

India resumed some visa services in Canada last month, more than a month after they were suspended. On China, Jaishankar said that the 2020 deadly clash in the Galwan Valley has vitiated the relationship between the two countries. He said China did not adhere to the agreements of 1993 and 1996 not to amass troops at the Line of Actual Control as he asserted that such acts of not following pacts have consequences in terms of credibility.

"It is important that agreements are kept. And then that doesn't happen that has consequences in terms of credibility and cost," he said. On updates on resolving the border issue with China, Jaishankar said: "Since September 2020, we have solved a number of these situations, but there are some which are still under discussion. So this is still under discussion." On another question, he said India helped in managing global inflation through a strategic approach to oil purchases amid the Russia-Ukraine war. While the West imposed sanctions and restrictions on Russia's oil exports since its war on Ukraine, India's refiners have been snapping up discounted Russian oil. "So we've actually softened the oil markets and the gas markets through our purchase policies. We have, as a consequence, actually managed global inflation. I'm waiting for the thank you," Jaishankar said.

The minister underlined India's strategic approach to oil purchases as a crucial factor in preventing a potential surge in global oil prices, thereby safeguarding the country's position in the international market against European competition. "When it comes to the purchase...I think the global oil prices would have gone higher because we would have gone into the same market to the same suppliers that Europe would have done and as we discovered Europe would have outpriced us," Jaishankar said.

"We saw that in the LNG markets where actually many supplies which were traditionally coming into Asia were diverted to Europe and in fact at least India was a big enough country to command some respect in the markets but there were much smaller countries who didn't even get responses to their tender in Paris because the LNG suppliers were no longer interested in dealing with them," he said. Speaking on America's power in the context of the changing world, Jaishankar said that America today is "reinventing itself" and becoming more open which is shaping the Indo-Pacific and creating multilateral bodies like the Quad.

"I would say a divided America or a divided country would obviously be a less effective player on the international scene...America is the premier power of our times...I would say America has been actually, in the last few years, quite effective abroad in a variety of ways...I would say America today is a power which is reinventing itself. I don't think it's a power which is declining," he said.

On India's relations with Taiwan amid tensions with China, Jaishankar said, "We have substantial technology and economic and commercial relations with Taiwan and certainly Taiwan has a reputation when it comes to electronics and of course, more recently with semiconductors. So, there has been an upswing in the levels of cooperation." On another question, Jaishankar said that the tolerance in India has not gone down but Indians today are "more authentic" and less hypocritical about their beliefs, traditions and culture.

"For us, secularism does not mean being non-religious, but equal respect to all faiths. But what happened...we got into vote bank politics, a minoritarian pandering, that created backlash. In the name of equality of all religions, the biggest religion had to be self-deprecatory, and play itself down," he said. "I'll say we are more Indian, we are more authentic," he said. (PTI)

TMC, AAP seek sacking

deputy speaker Numal Momin campaigned in Mizoram for the BJP and now it's Kataria. This is a serious violation of constitutional norms. As head of the state, the governor should not support any political party," the Assam TMC said in the statement. These two examples show that the BJP is misusing its power to run an autocratic and undemocratic government, it added.

"We demand immediate intervention of the President and the Election Commission of India for sacking Governor Gulab Chand Kataria," the statement added. AAP Assam coordinator Bhaben Choudhury said a governor should uphold the Constitution irrespective of caste, creed and religion by keeping himself above politics. "However, Kataria has indulged in anti-constitutional activities by campaigning for a political party in an election. It has demeaned the post of a governor. It has blackened Indian politics," he added. Demanding his immediate resignation, Choudhury said the party will write to the ECI for taking action against Kataria. (PTI)

EC sticks to Dec 3 as poll

Political parties, including the ruling Mizo National Front (MNF) and the BJP, church and student bodies had written to the EC urging the poll panel to reschedule the counting date. The NGO Coordination Committee, a conglomerate of major civil society organisations, also did the same.

Appeals had been made to change the counting date to December 4 or 5 to ensure that it does not fall on a Sunday. According to the 2011 census, Christians constitute 87 per cent of the population of Mizoram. (PTI)

Drugs worth ₹ 15 crore

a Swift Dzire car, AS01FN5844, 28 identical plastic cases containing heroin was recovered. In this connection Habibur Rehman, resident of Mangaldai and Jehernul Ali, resident of Hajo were arrested. The contraband weighs 334 grams. Further investigation is going on.

India committed to unimpeded

India became the dialogue partner of the ASEAN in 1992 and the inaugural ADMM-Plus was convened in Hanoi in October 2010. Since 2017, the ADMM-Plus ministers have been meeting annually to bolster regional security cooperation. (PTI)

Prez asks CAG, others

bilingual national online essay writing competition on theme 'Celebrating the resilience of the Indian Democracy and the role of the CAG of India' were awarded on the occasion. (PTI)

KAAC EM calls on media

National Press Day, District Press Club of Karbi Anglong (DPCKA) has organised a friendly cricket match with Karbi Students Association (KSA - Inglongpho) at Diphu Sports Complex.

In the 20 over match the KSA won the toss and decided to bat first. The KSA set a target of 121. Chasing the target the DPCKA could score 49 runs losing all wickets. The KSA won the match by 71 runs. The winning team received a trophy and cash award, while DPCKA also received a trophy and a cash prize.

The prize distribution ceremony was attended by one of the senior journalist of district Nogen Bora along with DPCKA advisers Long Teron, Kangbura Senar, senior journalists Sanju Bora, Propid Nath, editor cum publisher Samphri Kimi, a Karbi vernacular daily, Kiri Ronghang etc.

They seem to have set up tours and travels dept: Raj's dig at BJP over Ayodhya visit promise



THANE, Nov 16: MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Thursday took a dig at the BJP over its top leaders' promise of taking people to Ayodhya for a visit to the Ram temple once it is over, saying the ruling party seems to have set up a "tours and travels department".

His statement comes in the wake of union home minister Amit Shah promising in Madhya Pradesh that the BJP government will arrange a trip to Ayodhya for the people of the state if it retains power there. Mumbai BJP president Ashish Shelar has also said a special train to Ayodhya will run after January 24 next year for Mumbaikars to visit the newly-constructed Ram temple.

"It appears to me that they have started setting up a tours and travels department...You should contest elections on the basis of the work you have done. Why are they luring voters with the promise of 'darshan' at the Ram temple," Thackeray told reporters during his visit to Thane.

He also questioned why the

Maratha quota issue was being raised when elections were round the corner, and expressed suspicion that there was someone else behind Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange's protest.

"This (Maratha) reservation will never become a reality. I have said this earlier as well...Is there anybody else behind (activist Manoj) Jarange?...Attempts to disturb the peace in Maharashtra through caste politics are on. All this is happening when elections are round the corner. This is not simple and straightforward...We will come to know who is behind all this later."

Jarange, who was on a hunger strike in Jalna district to press for the Maratha quota issue called off his protest earlier this month. He has set the deadline of December 24 before the government to implement reservation for his community.

Thackeray alleged that since the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) was founded in 1999, the caste politics and hostility among people

from different caste groups started in the state.

He accused the ruling parties of diverting the attention of voters ahead of the elections.

"The attention of voters is diverted...Wrong people are elected by people and ultimately, it is the voters who suffer for five years after the elections," he added.

But one should not forget that nobody remains in power forever, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena president said.

He said political parties and candidates take voters for granted.

"The voters should not only be educated, but also be wise and choose right candidates," Thackeray said. Talking about his party's opposition to collection of toll on roads, he said, "All the data is ready and I am waiting for the (Diwali) festival to get over."

He said he will hold a meeting with the persons concerned and prepare a roadmap, he said.

Referring to the Supreme Court's direction to shopkeepers in Mumbai to install new Marathi signboards, Thackeray said the state government has not bothered to implement the order, which was passed in the last week of September, so far.

"The MNS had approached the court on the issue of Marathi signboards and was surprised that a section of traders went to courts against the decision. I am surprised that people who live in the state, who earn livelihood here, approached the court against Maharashtra's language."

"But I thank the SC as it has decided that the native language of the state should be respected," he said. (PTI)

NITI Aayog official chairs review meet in Thane for 'Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra'

THANE, Nov 16: A top NITI Aayog official chaired a review meeting of the Centre's 'Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' in Thane on Thursday.

The focus of the Yatra is to reach out to people and create awareness as well as provide benefits of welfare schemes like sanitation facilities, essential financial services, electricity connections, access to LPG cylinders, housing for the poor, food security, nutrition etc. The meeting chaired by NITI Aayog Director Jagriti Singla was attended by Thane Collector Ashok Shingare, said a release from district information officer Manoj Sanap.

"The Vikasit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is underway from November 15 till January 26. This campaign is going to be implemented across the country with the concept of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It will strengthen the relationship between the government and the beneficiaries. For this, the officers and employees of every government department are expected to work enthusiastically in this campaign," the release quoted Singla as saying. "Efforts will be made at all levels to deliver the benefits of 34 flagship schemes of the Union government to target beneficiaries in time," she added.

The Yatra will initially visit 110 districts with significant Schedule Tribe population and remaining districts from the third week of November to January 26, the release informed. (PTI)

Delhi's air quality severe, vehicular emissions largest contributor

NEW DELHI, Nov 16: Delhi's air quality worsened within the severe category on Thursday as unfavourable meteorological conditions hindered the dispersion of pollutants.

Recent findings from a joint project by the Delhi government and IIT-Kanpur found that vehicular emissions accounted for about 38 per cent of the capital's air pollution on Wednesday. This reduced to 25 per cent on Thursday.

Secondary inorganic aerosols -- particles such as sulfate and nitrate that are formed in the atmosphere due to the interaction of gases and particulate pollutants from sources like power plants, refineries, and vehicles -- is the second major contributor to Delhi's foul air, accounting for 30 to 35 per cent of the air pollution in the city over the last few days.

Calm winds and low temperatures are allowing accumulation of pollutants and relief is unlikely over the next few days, an official at the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

An improvement in the wind speed November 21 onwards might bring air pollution levels down, he said.

Delhi's 24-hour average Air Quality Index, recorded at 4 pm every day, stood at 419 on Thursday. It was 401 on Wednesday, 397 on Tuesday, 358 on Monday and 218 on Sunday, 220 on Saturday and 279 on Friday.

Neighbouring Ghaziabad (376), Gurugram (363), Greater Noida (340), Noida (355) and Faridabad (424) also recorded very poor to severe air quality. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered good, 51 and 100 satisfactory, 101 and 200 moderate, 201 and 300 poor, 301 and 400 very poor, 401 and 450 severe and above 450 severe plus.

Delhi's air quality dropped over the last few days despite the state government implementing stringent measures, including a ban on construction work and the entry of diesel-guzzling trucks into the city, to control pollution. According to IQAir, a Swiss company that specialises in air quality monitoring, Delhi was the most polluted city in the world on Thursday, followed by Baghdad and Lahore.

A system developed by the Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology to identify the contribution of different pollution sources

showed stubble-burning accounted for 7.5 per cent of the air pollution in the capital on Thursday. It is likely to come down to 3.5 per cent on Friday and 3 per cent on Saturday.

An official of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) had earlier said stringent measures, including a ban on construction work and the entry of polluting trucks in the national capital, under the final stage of the central government's air pollution control plan called the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) will continue until further orders.

The Delhi government on Thursday set up a six-member special task force to ensure strict implementation of measures outlined in the GRAP in the capital. Delhi's special secretary (environment) will head the STF whose members include senior officials from the departments of transport, traffic, revenue, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and Public Works Department (PWD).

The STF will coordinate with all the departments involved in the enforcement of pollution control measures and submit a report to the government daily, Environment Minister Gopal Rai told reporters.

Earlier this week, Rai had said the city government may implement the odd-even car rationing scheme if the AQI crosses the 450 mark.

The government last week postponed the implementation of the scheme, which permits cars to operate on alternate days based on the odd or even last digit of their registration numbers, after a notable improvement in the city's air quality due to rain on Friday.

Doctors say breathing in the polluted air of Delhi is equivalent to the harmful effects of smoking approximately 10 cigarettes a day.

Prolonged exposure to high levels of pollution can cause or exacerbate respiratory problems such as asthma, bronchitis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and dramatically raise the risk of cardiovascular disease, they said.

Unfavourable meteorological conditions, combined with vehicular emissions, paddy-straw burning, firecrackers and other local pollution sources, contribute to hazardous air quality levels in Delhi-NCR during winters. (PTI)

Cinema not school but imparts values, spreads awareness on medical conditions: Dimple Kapadia



NEW DELHI, Nov 16: Actor Dimple Kapadia says cinema is "not a school" but still imparts values and spreads awareness about medical conditions and other issues.

Kapadia was speaking to PTI on the sidelines of an event here on Wednesday to mark the 25th anniversary of India's first liver transplant.

Asked what role cinema can play in raising awareness on medical conditions, the actor said, "I am sure cinema does whatever it can, in its own way, sort of spreading awareness about every aspect of life, not just medicine... I can say this for myself, having grown up seeing cinema all my life. There are some great values that come and they just get imbibed... And, it gets imbibed because you are bombarded with good values."

"That is what our cinema is all about, actually. I think that is what I got from it, to do for others, do your best, so much one has learned from cinema without actually trying (to preach)... it's not a school, it's not preaching. But it imparts a lot. And I hope it will go on like this," Kapadia, 66, added.

Indian cinema history is filled with movies that highlight various types of medical issues, often using them as a plot device to drive the narrative of the stories.

Films such as "Sadma" (1983), starring Kamal Haasan and Sridevi, revolved around amnesia, while the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer "Paa" (2009) was a story about a child with a rare genetic disorder called progeria.

The plot of "Anand", a 1971 classic starring Rajesh

Khanna and Bachchan, revolved around lymphosarcoma, a type of cancer.

Kapadia attended the event to felicitate Sanjay Kandasamy, the receiver of India's first-ever successful liver transplant on the 25th anniversary of the historic operation that was conducted at an Apollo hospital in Delhi.

In 1998, a team of doctors performed a liver transplant on Tamil Nadu native Kandasamy, who was 20 months old at that time. Now a doctor himself, Kandasamy had received a portion of liver from his father. He and his parents attended the event.

One-and-half-year-old Prisha -- the recipient in Apollo hospital's 500th paediatric liver transplant surgery -- also attended the event with her parents, who hail from Bihar. (PTI)

Salman Khan's 'Tiger 3' earns ₹ 271 crore at global box office



MUMBAI, Nov 16: Action thriller "Tiger 3" has collected Rs 271.50 crore in global gross box office collection in four days of its release, said the makers on Thursday.

Directed by Maneesh Sharma and produced by Yash Raj Films (YRF), the film stars Salman Khan, Katrina Kaif and Emraan Hashmi. It released on November 12 on the occasion of Diwali festival in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

"With its phenomenal opening collections of Rs 44.50 crore, the film emerged as the best Diwali day opener so far at the box office. "Moreover, the audi-

ence also got to witness Salman Khan's best performance of his career in the film. After having set its strong feet at the box office in India, the film also went on to rule the global box office by collecting Rs 271.50 crore gross in just 4 days," the makers said in a press note.

The film's gross worldwide collection stood at Rs 240 crore on Wednesday.

"Tiger 3", set after the events of "Pathaan", is a sequel to the 2017 film "Tiger Zinda Hai". The latest film in the YRF Spy Universe follows Salman's eponymous spy as he races against time to save his family and country. (PTI)

ANUSHKA CALLS VIRAT 'GOD'S CHILD' ON HIS 50TH CENTURY RECORD

MUMBAI, Nov 16: Actor-producer Anushka Sharma on Thursday said she is grateful to watch her husband, "God's child" Virat Kohli grow from strength to strength while being honest to himself and to the sport of cricket.

Virat became the first batter in the history of the game to score 50 ODI centuries, going past his idol Sachin Tendulkar during the ICC Cricket World Cup semifinal against New Zealand here on Wednesday. India registering a thumping victory against the Kiwis by 70 runs was the icing on the cake. Anushka shared a heartwarming note on her Instagram Stories hours after India won the semifinal at the Wankhede Stadium.

"God is the best scriptwriter! Utterly grateful to him for blessing me with your love, and to watch you grow from strength to strength and achieve all that you have and will, being honest to yourself and to the sport always. You are truly God's child," the actor wrote in the post. In another Instagram Story, she congratulated the entire Indian cricket team on the win. "This. gun. team," she wrote. Virat's world record 50th ODI hundred and an exemplary century by Shreyas Iyer propelled India to an imposing 397 for four against New Zealand in the first semifinal of the World Cup here on Wednesday. (PTI)



KATRINA KAIF, VIJAY SETHUPATHI'S 'MERRY CHRISTMAS' to now release in January 2024



MUMBAI, Nov 16: Filmmaker Sriram Raghavan's upcoming directorial "Merry Christmas" has a new release date of January 12, 2024, the makers announced on Thursday. The Katrina Kaif-Vijay Sethupathi starrer has been delayed multiple times and it was last slated to come out in theatres on December 12 this year.

Presented by Tips Films and Matchbox Pictures, the upcoming film is described as "a genre-defying tale" shot in Hindi and Tamil with a different set of supporting actors, according to a press release. In a statement, the film's team expressed their deep love for the project and their unwavering commitment to delivering a truly exceptional cinematic experience. "We have made this film with a lot of love & passion like every filmmaker does however with the back to back movie releases and packed last two months of 2023, we have taken the decision to extend the season of joy and bring our film to the theatres on 12th January 2024," they said. While the Hindi version of "Merry Christmas" co-stars Sanjay Kapoor, Vinay Pathak, Pratima Kannan, and Tinnu Anand, the Tamil iteration has Radhika Sarathkumar, Shanmugaraja, Kevin Jay Babu, and Rajesh Williams in the same roles.

The film also introduces Pari, a child actor. Produced by Ramesh Taurani, Jaya Taurani, Sanjay Routray and Kewal Garg, "Merry Christmas" also features cameos by Ashwini Kalsekar and Radhika Apte. (PTI)

We're entering a new dawn of what being Indian in music means: Raghav Mathur

BENGALURU, Nov 16: Indo-Canadian pop singer Raghav Mathur, known for hits like 'Angel Eyes' and 'Desperado', says best is yet to come for the Indian-influenced soundscape in global pop music.

Mathur, who has just released 'Chingari', his second single this year, featuring Mumbai-based rapper Divine, has been one of the pioneers to introduce Indian-influenced hooks and samples from old Bollywood songs, redefining the sound of global pop music.

"I think we're entering a brand new dawn of what being Indian in the arts means. The Western record labels are threatened by the impact of the numbers and the way our culture can take a record to the top of the charts around the world. I think the best is yet to come for us," Mathur told PTI in a Zoom interview.

In 'Chingari', Mathur has also sampled a couple of lines from Kishore Kumar's song, 'Aadmi Jo Kehta Hai' from the 1974 film 'Majboor', starring Amitabh Bachchan.

"Divine is the most instrumental artist in the subcontinent in terms of legitimising hip-hop as a sound that is the future of pop music. It's such a privilege to work with him," says Mathur.

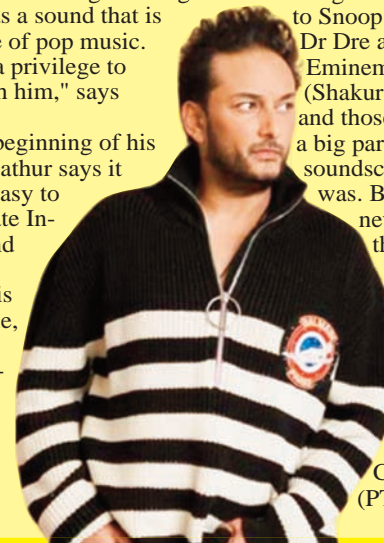
In the beginning of his career, Mathur says it was not easy to incorporate Indian sound into pop music. His first single, 'So Confused', released in 2003, in fact, had no traces of his Indian roots. But it gained a foothold for him in the pop music world by reaching number 6 in the UK Singles Charts.

"On the back of that, I was able to put out some of my more Indian-centric work, starting with 'Can't Get Enough', which samples 'Kabhi Aar, Kabhi Paar' from 'Aar Paar'. A few more singles and an album kind of changed my trajectory," says Mathur.

In 'Angel Eyes', which he released as a music video in 2004, he found his groove -- and what he says is known as 'Raghav sound' among his fans. Instead of sampling old songs, he says he opted for Indian-influenced original hooks and tabla beats.

This method, he says, came handy in the late 2000s, when sampling Bollywood songs became a complicated affair. He also collaborated with other artists -- reggae singers Jucy and Frankey Maxx -- for the first time. Later, collaborations, mostly with hip-hop artists, became his signature approach to a song.

"I think hip-hop is the most influential genre of our lifetime. I grew up listening to Snoop Dogg and Dr Dre and later, Eminem and Tupac (Shakur) and Biggie and those were such a big part of the soundscape of who I was. But I could never perform that on my own. So, I started collaborating," says Mathur, who grew up in Calgary, Canada. (PTI)



Tom Blyth on playing Coriolanus Snow in 'Hunger Games' prequel: Exciting to explore why he became bad



NEW DELHI, Nov 16: Everybody loves to hate "a good bad guy", says "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes" star Tom Blyth, who is happy to have portrayed the younger version of villainous Coriolanus Snow, a role made popular by Hollywood veteran Donald Sutherland in the original movie franchise. Blyth, 28, said he was a teenager when he saw the Jennifer Lawrence-led "Hunger Games" films and Sutherland's performance as the tyrannical leader of the dystopian country of Panem stayed with him.

"I was a big fan of the original films

when I was a teenager, and I'm probably a bit embarrassed to admit that Donald Sutherland's character was my favourite in the franchise. He was so naughty that you're not supposed to admit that. But I think it was because his performance was so deliciously evil," Blyth told PTI in a virtual interview.

The story of "The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes" is set decades before the events of the first "Hunger Games" movie, based on author Suzanne Collins book series of the same title that explored the world of a dystopian country and the simmering conflict between the Capitol

and its 12 Districts.

The actor, known for starring in British shows and movies such as "Benediction" and "Billy the Kid", has played Snow as a charmer. The new film's story is adapted from Collins' 2020 novel. "I think everyone loves to hate a good bad guy, right? If a bad guy is played well enough, then you really love to hate them. And he (Snow) is one of those and makes these choices that nobody else could have made. "So, getting to come back and play him 64 years before, lift the lid on why he has become so bad... As an actor, that's just

the most exciting thing because you get to see him as a full-fledged human being who has all this depth and all these layers," Blyth said. The Francis Lawrence-directed film follows Snow as the last hope of a failing lineage that has fallen from grace in a post-war Capitol. Snow reluctantly accepts the assignment to mentor Lucy Gray Baird (Rachel Zegler), a Tribute from the impoverished District 12, in the 10th Hunger Games. But after Lucy's charm captivates the audience of Panem, Snow sees an opportunity to shift both their fates. (PTI)

EDEN GARDENS CROWD LEND VOICE TO SOUTH AFRICAN CHARGE

Miller's fighting century propels South Africa to 212 against Australia

KOLKATA, Nov 16: David Miller absorbed extreme pressure with phenomenal ease on way to a rear-guard 101, allowing South Africa to post a fighting 212 against Australia in the second World Cup semi-final here on Thursday.

Under gloomy and windy conditions, South Africa showed familiar signs of choking when their top-four Quinton De Kock (3), Temba Bavuma (0), Rassie van der Dussen (6) and Aiden Markram (10) departed cheaply to have them reeling at 24/4 in 12 overs.

Mitchell Starc (10-1-34-3) and Josh Hazlewood (8-3-12-2) were breathing fire making full use of the conditions, but after a 40-minute rain delay, it was the Miller show.

Miller's 116 ball-effort was his sixth ODI century and the first one for Proteas in a World Cup knock-out game. The southpaw took a blow on his finger from a Josh Hazlewood snorter, but he remained steady and unleashed his 'Killer-mode' smashing eight fours and five sixes. On a turning wicket, Miller had little trouble and was brutal especially against Adam Zampa who leaked 55 runs from his seven overs.

He reached the three-figure mark by hitting Pat Cummins over square leg for a 94-metre six.

His 95-run partnership with Heinrich Klaasen (47 off 48) gave South Africa the much-needed respite before part-time off-spinner Travis Head turned it on taking two wickets in two balls to dent South Africa's recovery. After Klaasen, Gerald Co-



etzee (19) gave a fine support to Miller as they put together quick fifty-plus partnership for the seventh wicket. But it had a nightmarish end as Coetzee fell on the pull to Cummins flicking off the glove through to Josh Inglis. Replays showed the ball only hit his elbow, but he didn't take the review.

Running out of partners, Miller finally perished in the 48th over. Having lost two of their matches while chasing, South Africa skipper

Temba Bavuma backed their strength to bat first but it turned out to be a pace bowlers' paradise.

Australian new-ball bowling duo of Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood revelled in the conditions, letting the ball do the talk in a sensational bowling display up front to reduce the power-packed South Africa to 17/2 inside powerplay, their slowest since 2008.

There was ominous swing, steep bounce and South African openers

looked timid against Starc and Hazlewood, consuming as many as 50 dot balls in first 10 overs.

They both bowled 13 overs in tandem and by the time they finished their first spell, South Africa's most-hated 'C-Word' started to haunt them with 24/4 on board. Starc's figures read 7-1-18-2 and Hazlewood's of 6-1-12-2. It's not just the bowling duo, but Australia's razor sharp fielding by Marnus Labuschagne and David Warner saved at least 15-

20 runs inside the ring. Out of form Temba Bavuma played without being 100 per cent fit, and looked tentative in the first over against Starc, finally perishing for a four-ball duck when he poked one behind the stumps.

The packed Eden spectators who came sporting De Kock jerseys were in for a disappointment as the team's best batter of the tournament Quinton De Kock (3) succumbed to scoreboard pressure. (PTI)

Virat's hunger and intensity inspire me: Shubman Gill

MUMBAI, Nov 16: Being a youngster in a group of senior pros, opener Shubman Gill says batting maestro Virat Kohli's hunger and intensity on the cricket field inspires him, and he also strives to learn from Rohit Sharma when the skipper is at the crease with him. Virat's record-breaking 50th ODI century against New Zealand powered India into the World Cup final here on Wednesday with the young Gill watching the legend achieve the historic feat from the dressing room after he had to retire hurt due of cramps at 80. "Every time he comes on to the park, he does something special, and just how consistently he has been able to do it for the past 10-15 years is what is really inspiring," Gill told the media here after India defeated New Zealand by 70 runs. "For me, it is not so much about the skill that he has but it is more about the hunger when he goes there and the intensity with which he plays the game, is what inspires me. To be able to have that consistently for as long as he has been doing, it is what really inspires me," said Gill.

Gill, who is billed to take over the mantle from the senior pro, said he shares some of the batting traits with Kohli.

"Honestly, we just talk about the situation and how we want to play. I think our game is a little similar in style, because, he and I, we also like to keep (the scoreboard) running," Gill said. (PTI)

Not surprised to see India going hard from get go in WC semis: Mitchell

MUMBAI, Nov 16: New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell was not surprised by India's aggressive brand of cricket in the World Cup semifinals and credited the seamers for making the ball talk after his lionhearted effort had kept them alive in the daunting run-chase. India captain Rohit Sharma set the tone with a brisk 29-ball 47 before Virat Kohli (117) scored his record 50th ODI century. Shreyas Iyer scored 105 from 70 balls and Shubman Gill hit an unbeaten 80 to power India to a mammoth 397 for 4.

It was the highest total for any team in semifinals of World Cup contests. In reply, New Zealand folded for 327, led by Mitchell's 134. "That is the way they have played throughout the World Cup," Mitchell told reporters after New Zealand's loss.

"(India are) pretty true to what they have been doing. No sur-



prises there, we had plans to try and combat it but credit where credit is due, they played pretty well. "Disappointed to not get across the line. (At the) halfway mark I was hoping it would dew up a little bit and we might be able to chase it down with 10 overs left. But credit to India. To make almost 400 and bowl the way they

did, credit to them."

Mitchell said India pacers led by Mohammed Shami, who claimed 7 for 57 to take his wickets tally in the World Cup to a high of 23, had the ball talking in the game. "All their seamers had the ball talking tonight. And in the first 10 overs have it swinging around and doing some things.

They are all world class bowlers and there is a reason they are what they are," he said. Like many other players at this venue who suffered cramps during the day-night games here, Mitchell too had to deal with the issue. At one stage, New Zealand appeared to be giving India a real threat but quick wickets in the middle coinciding with his cramps derailed them completely.

"There were a few things more than cramps that ensured we could not get over the line. Anytime a team puts on a total batting first, you need a lot of things going your way to be able to chase those totals down," said Mitchell.

With scores of 130 at Dharamsala and 134 in Mumbai against what has been the best bowling attack in this World Cup, Mitchell will return home with the distinction of dominating the home team's bowlers. (PTI)

Rohit Sharma is India's real hero: Nasser Hussain

MUMBAI, Nov 16: Former England captain Nasser Hussain has hailed skipper Rohit Sharma as the "real hero" for changing the culture of this Indian side by playing "fearless cricket" in the ongoing World Cup.

India faced the flak for playing timid cricket during the last two T20 World Cups where they failed to cross the Super-12 stages in 2021 and were blown away by England in the semifinal in the last edition.

However, India have been re-

lentless this World Cup as they reached their first final in 12 years on the back of 10 wins on the bounce, the latest being their 70-run hammering of New Zealand in the semifinal on Wednesday.

"The headlines tomorrow will be about (Virat) Kohli, will be about Shreyas Iyer, and will be about Mohammad Shami. But the genuine hero of this Indian side, who has changed the culture of this Indian side is Rohit Sharma," Hussain said on Sky

Sports.

"Dinesh Karthik was with the side when India played England in the semifinal of the T20 World Cup in Adelaide, where they played meek, timid cricket, got a below-par score and England knocked them off by 10 wickets. He told DK that we gonna have to change."

The semifinal win was set up by Virat Kohli's record-breaking 50th ODI hundred and Shreyas Iyer's 70-ball 105 as India posted a massive 397 for 4 and returned

to dismiss New Zealand for 327, riding on Mohammed Shami's 7 for 57.

India's batting unit has played attacking cricket with skipper Rohit leading from the front all throughout the tournament with his aggressive batting setting the platform.

On Wednesday too, Rohit smashed four sixes and four fours in his 29-ball 47 to give India a flying start.

"I think that the real hero today was Rohit," Hussain said. (PTI)



body language, his calmness at the crease (in this WC). I have seen him come out in previous World Cups where he's like a cat on a hot tin roof.

"He wanted to get on with it

straight away. None of that sort here. He's taken his time, marked his guard, soaked the pressure, given himself time, and understood his role of batting deep in the innings. He's

just been wonderful," he added.

Shastri had worked closely with Kohli during his reign as the coach and pointed out that with a strict diet cardio and fitness control, he maintains his fitness at the top level, allowing him to run between the wickets freely. "One of the features of his batting has been his running between the wickets. The fact that he doesn't have to hit boundaries and sixes, he can run hard between the wickets because of his physical fitness.

"That takes the pressure off him. Even when he's not getting the boundaries, he's still rotating the strike. He always has that uncanny ability of making it up towards the back end of the innings," he added. (PTI)

'Incredible' Shami one of the top operators, India is the best team in the world: Williamson



MUMBAI, Nov 16: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson doffed his cap to pacer Mohammed Shami and the India team after his side was outplayed in the World Cup semifinal here, saying that the bowling stalwart was one of the best in the world and Rohit Sharma's side the "best team".

India crushed New Zealand by 70 runs to book their place in the final to be played on Sunday, with their opponents in the summit clash to be decided after the Australia-South Africa showdown in Kolkata on Thursday.

New Zealand could only manage 327 in 48.5 overs chasing 398, with Shami producing a magical seven-wicket spell for his unprecedented third five-wicket haul in World Cup matches.

Shami also took his tally to 23 wickets despite missing four matches at the start of the tournament to become the leading wicket-taker in the World Cup.

"He has been incredible. He has only played probably half the games and he might be close to top wicket-taker (position) and coming on first change, behind two outstanding new-ball bowlers," Williamson told the media after the loss. "He is, without a doubt, one of the top operators in the world and the way he moves the ball and he keeps bringing the stumps into play. It has been quite phenomenal, really, the amount of wickets he has got in such a small amount of games in this tournament. "That Indian team in all departments are firing without a doubt and I am sure they will be looking forward to their next opportunity in a few days' time," the Kiwi skipper added.

Terming India as the 'best team in the world', Williamson said it is "tough" on the opposition to see all

home team cricketers playing their best cricket. "They are the best team in the world and they are all playing their best cricket, so that is tough. They have not missed a beat really," he said. "To come into a semifinal, you go through your round-robin and you try and get to the stage and it starts again but the way they came out and played, yeah, shows the mindset that they have and the space that they are in," he added. With Virat Kohli entering the record books by notching up his 50th ODI century and surpassing Sachin Tendulkar in the process, Williamson said it was tough to find words to describe the modern-day great's brilliance.

"(I am) trying to find the words to describe it really, and not just that, actually the way he goes about it, it is about winning games for his team and he is getting close and there is a lot of attention and that comes with a lot of his success," he said.

"He is the best, isn't he? And he seems to be getting better, which is a worry for opposition all around the world, but you admire it," he added.

Williamson brushed aside the controversy around the pitch on which the match was played on Wednesday. Hours before India's semifinal at the Wankhede, reports had emerged that the Indian cricket team management has sought a "slow pitch" for the game. According to a report, a fresh pitch was originally planned for the first semifinal but later an "used" surface was used to assist the home team's spinners, leading to pitch alteration.

"It was a used wicket, but a pretty good surface really, as we saw. I mean, they got plenty (of runs) out of it in the first half of the match," he said. (PTI)

Teammates a divided lot in reaction after Babar Azam quits Pakistan captaincy

KARACHI, Nov 16: Babar Azam's decision to step down from Pakistan captaincy has evoked a mixed reaction from his teammates, with a few of them taking to social media to praise the 29-year-old's contributions as the leader while some others remained silent.

Babar on Wednesday had announced his decision to relinquish Pakistan leadership roles across formats after the team failed to enter the semifinals of the ongoing World Cup.

Pacer Naseem Shah, who had missed the marquee event with an injury, took to X to extend his support for Babar.

"Four years of pure joy, it has been an absolute honour to have played and made my white ball debut under your leadership.

"You have always led from the front and made us believe in 'One Team, One Dream.'

"Inshah Allah, we will watch you break many batting records for our beloved Pakistan," wrote Shah.

Wicketkeeper batter and often a deputy to Babar, Muhammad Rizwan too penned an emotional tribute.

"You are definitely one of the greatest batsmen Pakistan has ever seen.

"Your honesty, love, integrity, thoughts, and efforts for Pakistan as the captain are the things to look up to. May you continue to shine for Pakistan," wrote Rizwan. Middle-order batter Iftikhar Ahmed too was effusive in praise for Babar's captaincy.

"It's been an honour to have

represented Pakistan under your captaincy. I've been part of many highs and many lows during that period, but your resilience and determination always came on top.

"Looking forward to seeing you score heavily for Pakistan and that too from the best seat of non-striking end," said Iftikhar.

There were talks of a rift in the Pakistan squad after their modest run in the World Cup, with a few players unhappy about the way Babar led the side.

Perhaps, it reflected in the silence of some of the other teammates such as Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, as all of them were backed strongly by Babar in the last three years.

A few former players such as Muhammad Hafeez, Saeed Ajmal, Azhar Ali and Azhar Mahmood too appreciated Babar for leading the team well during his four-year tenure.

However, two discarded Pakistan players and Babar's teammates at Karachi Kings, Imad Wasim and Muhammad Amir made it clear that they didn't believe that the right-hander warranted a place in the national T20 side.

"It is a tough call but Babar doesn't deserve a place in T20s," said Wasim.

Amir, echoed the sentiment, stating bluntly, "Babar doesn't deserve to be in T20."

After Babar's decision to move away, the Pakistan Cricket Board had appointed Shan Masood as Test captain and Shaheen Shah Afridi as T20I skipper. (PTI)

Kohli capable of breaking Tendulkar's record of 100 centuries: Ravi Shastri

MUMBAI, Nov 16: Star batsman Virat Kohli might now be holding the record for most ODI hundreds, but former India head coach Ravi Shastri firmly believed that the 35-year-old is well on his way to break another big landmark -- Sachin Tendulkar's 100 international hundreds.

Along with his 50 ODI centuries, Kohli also has 29 hundreds in Tests and one in T20Is for a total of 80 scores above 100. Kohli had broken Tendulkar's mark of 49 one-day hundreds against New Zealand in the World Cup semifinals here on Wednesday.

"Who would have thought when Sachin Tendulkar got 100 hundreds that anyone would

come close? And, he's got 80; 80 international hundreds, 50 of them in the one-day game, which makes him the highest. Unreal," said Shastri during The ICC Review.

"Nothing's impossible because such players, when they start reeling off hundreds, then they score them pretty quickly. His next 10 innings, you might see another five hundreds.

"You have three formats of the game, and he's part of all those formats. To think that he still has three or four years of cricket ahead of him is simply mind-boggling."

Shastri was also in awe of Kohli's ability to soak in the pressure.

"I think his composure, his



মহিলাৰ সুৰক্ষা, নিৰাপত্তা আৰু সবলীকৰণৰ ওপৰত বৃহৎ জনসজাগতা সভা

আন্তৰ্জাতিক কন্যা শিশু দিৱসৰ লগত সংগতি ৰাখি অসমৰ চাহ বাগিচা অঞ্চলত মাহজোৰা কাৰ্যসূচী

মহিলা আৰু কন্যা শিশুসকলৰ সুৰক্ষা আৰু সবলীকৰণৰ অৰ্থে

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