

6

WORLD

8

NATION



● China welcomes Arab foreign ministers for talks on war in Gaza

● Seoul warns North Korea not to launch a spy satellite



● 'Nothing more important than dynastic politics, corruption for Congress'

● Farmer bodies hold protest, seek withdrawal of cases

HT BRIEF

Simpler rules for activities at Deepor Beel

GUWAHATI: State environment and forest minister Chandra Mohan Patowary on Monday said the state government will 'simplify rules' to allow water sports and tourism-related activities in 'Deepor Beel', a perennial freshwater lake famed for its biodiversity. The state cabinet will soon take a decision in this regard, he said. Speaking at the closing ceremony of a fest at the Deepor Beel, located around 10 km from here, Patowary said the state government is exploring avenues to further encourage tourism activities in the water body. "We are contemplating simplifying some rules to make it easier to organise events for tourism... without the need for environmental clearance," Patowary said. Later speaking to reporters, the minister said at times, objections are raised by the state forest department for conducting certain events in the Deepor Beel. "We will work on how to make the rules easier so that more tourism potential can be realised. It will also be beneficial for Deepor Beel," he said. The freshwater lake was the venue for the four-day 'The Rising Sun Water Fest - Revisiting Saraihat', an event that paid tribute to the Battle of Saraihat in 1671.

25 crew members taken hostage

Yemen's Houthi rebels hijack Israeli-linked India-bound ship

JERUSALEM, Nov 20: Yemen's Houthi rebels have seized an Israeli-linked cargo ship, bound to India, in a crucial Red Sea shipping route and took its 25 crew members hostage, officials said, raising fears that regional tensions heightened over the Israel-Hamas war were playing out on a new maritime front.

The Iran-backed Houthi rebels said they hijacked the ship Sunday over its connection to Israel and would continue to target ships in international waters that were linked to or owned by Israelis until the end of Israel's campaign against Gaza's Hamas rulers.

"All ships belonging to the Israeli enemy or that deal with it will become legitimate targets," the Houthis said.

Mohammed Abdul-Salam, the Houthis' chief negotiator and spokesman, later added in an on-line statement that the Israelis only understand "the language of force".

"The detention of the Israeli ship is a practical step that proves the



seriousness of the Yemeni armed forces in waging the sea battle, regardless of its costs and costs," he added. "This is the beginning."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office had blamed the Houthis for the attack on the Bahamas-flagged Galaxy Leader, a vehicle carrier affiliated with an Israeli billionaire. It said no Israelis were on board.

The ship's Japanese operator, NYK Line, said the vessel had no cargo at the time of the hijacking. Its crewmembers are from the

Philippines, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and Mexico, NYK said.

Japan on Monday condemned the hijacking. Chief cabinet secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the Japanese government was doing its utmost for an early release of the crew through negotiations with Houthi rebels, while also communicating with Israel and cooperating with the governments of Saudi Arabia, Oman and Iran.

The Houthis said they were treating the crew members "in accordance (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

PM Modi reviews rescue operations in Silkyara tunnel

UTTARKASHI, Nov 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday spoke with Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to take stock of the rescue operation to save 41 workers trapped in the Silkyara tunnel and stressed on the need to keep their morale up.

An international tunneling expert, Arnold Dix, arrived at the disaster site to review the rescue efforts, now in its ninth day.

Dix heads the Geneva-based International Tunneling and Underground Space Association.

Necessary rescue equipment and resources are being provided by the Centre, and through mutual coordination between central and state agencies, the trapped workers will be safely evacuated, PM Modi said, according to a statement issued by the Uttarakhand chief minister's office.

It is necessary to keep up the morale of the trapped workers, the prime minister said.

It was for the third time that PM Modi spoke to CM Dhami about the rescue operations being carried out at the tunnel.

Dhami briefed PM Modi about the rescue operations in detail and

said all the trapped workers are safe with oxygen, nutritious food and water being constantly supplied to them.

All agencies are working in full coordination with each other in consultation with experts to carry out the rescue operations, he said, adding that he had inspected the site and was constantly monitoring the rescue operation.

Dix expressed hope that the trapped workers will be evacuated safely. He also expressed satisfaction at the rescue efforts done so far, saying "enormous amount of work" has been done.

"We are doing a lot of work at the moment to make sure what we do is safe and the people doing the evacuation are safe. I have just been down in the tunnel, enormous amount of work has been done there in preparation, and we are just coming up here at the top of the mountain to consider other options as well," Dix said.

"I only arrived yesterday but the work I have seen even between yesterday and today is extraordinary... Plan for today is working out the best thing to do to get the men out," (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



Assam Police goes 'blue' on World Children Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 20: The Assam police went 'blue' to express its solidarity with the global campaign on child rights on the occasion of 'World Children's Day' on Monday.

The Assam police headquarters, along with SP offices and all police stations across the state were beautifully illuminated in blue on the occasion. Its Child Rights Week campaign that started on the November 14 culminated with the "Go Blue" campaign.

The World Children's Day is observed globally on November 20. The 'Go Blue' campaign was initiated by UNICEF, the UN agency working on child rights across the globe. Participating in this international campaign, iconic landmarks world over are illuminated in the blue colour to express solidarity with the cause of child rights.

By going blue, the Assam Police reiterated its ongoing commitment towards promoting and protecting the rights of all children.

As first responders, the police have a frontline role in deciding the course of justice for children, who are victims of crime and for children who come into conflict with the law.

Through its flagship Sishu Mitra Programme, the Assam Police has been striving towards strengthening its (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

NIA files case against terrorist for threatening Air India passengers

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has registered a case against designated terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun and his banned organisation Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) for issuing video messages threatening people flying in Air India, a spokesperson of the agency said on Monday.

The case has been filed under the Indian Penal Code and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, the official said.

Pannun, the self-proclaimed general counsel of "unlawful association" SFJ, released the video messages on social media platforms on November 4.

In these, he asked Sikhs not to fly on Air India planes on and after November 19, claiming that there was a threat to their lives if they flew on the airline's aircraft. The listed terrorist also threatened that Air India would not be allowed to operate globally.

Following this, a high alert was issued and investigations started by security forces in Canada, India and certain other countries where Air India flies.

In his video messages, Pannun also issued a warning to the Indian government that the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in Delhi, one of the world's busiest airports, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Heavy fighting erupts near Gaza hospital as babies evacuated to Egypt

KHAN YOUNIS (GAZA STRIP), Nov 20: Heavy fighting erupted on Monday around a hospital in northern Gaza where thousands of patients and displaced people have been sheltered for weeks, as Israel pressed an offensive it says is aimed at eradicating Hamas and uprooting their militant infrastructure.

A shell struck the second floor of the Indonesian Hospital, killing at least 12 people, according to the health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza and a medical worker inside the facility. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

The advance came a day after the World Health Organization evacuated 31 premature babies from Shifa Hospital. At least 28 were transported to Egypt on Monday. More than 250 critically ill or

wounded patients remain stranded at the compound, which Israeli forces stormed days ago.

The plight of Gaza's hospitals is at the focus of a battle of narratives over the war's brutal toll on Palestinian civilians, thousands of whom have been killed or buried in rubble since the conflict was sparked by Hamas' Oct 7 rampage into southern Israel.

Israel says Hamas uses civilians as human shields and operated a major command hub inside and beneath Shifa, while critics say Israel's siege and relentless aerial bombardment amount to collective punishment of the territory's 2.3 million Palestinians.

Marwan Abdallah, the medical worker at the Indonesian Hospital, said Israeli tanks were operating less than 200 metres (yards) from the hospital, and that Israeli snipers

could be seen on the roofs of nearby buildings. As he spoke over the phone, the sound of gunfire could be heard in the background.

Abdallah said the hospital had received dozens of dead and wounded in airstrikes and shelling overnight.

Health ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra, who is now based in southern Gaza, said some 600 patients, 200 health care workers and 2,000 displaced people are sheltering there.

In a separate development that could relieve some of the pressure on Gaza's collapsing health system, dozens of trucks entered the territory from Egypt on Monday with equipment from Jordan to set up a field hospital. Jordan's state-run media said the hospital in the southern town of Khan Younis would be (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

IFFI generating global interest: I&B minister Thakur

PANAJI, Nov 20: Union minister for information and broadcasting Anurag Thakur on Monday said the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) has been attracting a lot of interest worldwide and the annual event has taken a "new flight".

He also said a new film policy will be unveiled by the central government soon.

Talking to reporters at the red carpet on the sidelines of opening ceremony of IFFI 2023 in Goa, he maintained the high-profile film festival has taken a "new flight" (naye udaan).

The minister informed that there were 3,000 film submissions from across the globe for the 54th edition of the festival which, he said, shows the interest in IFFI has increased.

Thakur said India's media and entertainment industry is clocking an annual growth rate of 20 per cent and added post-production work is creating different kinds of

interest in the country.

The minister informed that a new film policy will be in place soon and added the Cinematography (Amendment) Bill, 2023, passed recently by Parliament, has stringent provisions to curb piracy.

He said introduction of section "75 Creative Minds of Tomorrow" at IFFI will be entering the third edition this year.

"In this section budding talents get to attend master classes of world's best directors and also an opportunity to network with them," Thakur stated.

The minister said this time, 600 youths had submitted applications for the section of which 75 were selected.

IFFI is an annual event organized by the National Film Development Corporation of India Ltd (NFDC), Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, in collaboration with the Goa government through Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG) and the Indian film industry. (PTI)

1 held, 600 gm heroin seized in Kohima

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Nov 20: The police arrested one person and seized 600 gm heroin at the inter-state check gate at Khuzama in Kohima district of Nagaland.

According to sources, a team of Khuzama police, during routine checking of vehicles at the inter-state check gate on Sunday detected and recovered heroin weighing approximately 600 gm, which were concealed in 50 soap cases in a car. The Hyundai i20 vehicle was coming from Manipur.

The arrested has been identified as Md. Wahidur (30).

In another incident on November 18, the Kohima police arrested S Timothy Swu (28), an active member of NPGN/NNC (Non-Accord). He was apprehended along with his accomplice Nokget Konyak (25) for demanding money from business establishments in Kohima town.

Acting on a tipoff regarding extortionists demanding money from business establishments in the town, personnel of North police station and the district anti-extortion team, led by SDPO (North) Kohima, conducted an operation and arrested the duo.

Drugs, cash, liquor worth over ₹ 1,760 crore seized in poll-bound states

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: The Election Commission on Monday said that over ₹ 1,760 crore worth of freebies, drugs, cash, liquor and precious metals aimed at inducing voters in the five poll-going states have been seized so far.

The poll panel said the seizures made since the polls were announced on October 9 are over seven times (₹ 239.15 crore) the seizures made in the previous assembly elections in these states in 2018.

While assembly polls have already been held in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Mizoram, voting will take place in Rajasthan and Telangana on November 25 and November 30 respectively.

According to an EC statement, seizures worth over ₹ 1,400 crore were made in the past six state assembly elections held in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura and Karnataka, which was 11 times the seizures made in previous assembly elections in these states.

An EC functionary pointed out that while announcing the poll schedule for the five states, chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar had stressed on inducement-free elections to ensure a

level-playing field for all candidates and parties.

This time, the commission has also embedded technology into the monitoring process through the election expenditure monitoring system (ESMS), which is proving to be a catalyst, as it brought a wide array of central and state enforcement agencies together for better coordination and intelligence- (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

level-playing field for all candidates and parties.

This time, the commission has also embedded technology into the monitoring process through the election expenditure monitoring system (ESMS), which is proving to be a catalyst, as it brought a wide array of central and state enforcement agencies together for better coordination and intelligence- (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

This time, the commission has also embedded technology into the monitoring process through the election expenditure monitoring system (ESMS), which is proving to be a catalyst, as it brought a wide array of central and state enforcement agencies together for better coordination and intelligence- (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Rally focused on sensitizing public on development schemes

Diphu hosts 'Unity, Victory and Prosperity Rally'

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 20: The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) on Monday organized the 'Unity, Victory and Prosperity Rally' for Duarbagori Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency to highlight development scheme was held at the Deithor Mini Stadium in Diphu in Karbi Anglong.

The rally started with the laying of the foundation stone for construction of school buildings by chief executive member (CEM) of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang in presence of executive member (EM), KAAC's education department, Richard Tokbi and MLAs Bidyas-ing Englang and Darsing Ronghang.

The schools whose foundation stones were laid were the Dolamora Tea Estate Model Secondary School, to be constructed with an estimated cost of ₹ 2.766 crores under AWP&B 2023-2024, the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Avasiya Vidyalaya to be constructed with an estimated cost of ₹ 6.88 crores under AWP&B 2023-2024 and the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya to be constructed with an estimated cost of ₹ 6.42 crores under AWP&B 2023-2025.



The CEM and EMs also planted tree saplings at the sports complex. Speaking on the occasion, EM Tokbi said "Duarbagori has seen development with the blessings of CEM Ronghang. Roads, bridges

and school buildings are being constructed. Piped water to every household under Water Jal Jivan Mission (JIM) has been provided. Chokihola-Deithor-Kohora (CDK) road under infrastructure funds will be constructed."

The EM also mentioned horticulture activities in Duarbagori. The constituency produces pineapples and oranges, which are sold outside. The EM urged CEM for a cold (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

India, Australia discuss expansion of defence ties

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: Union defence minister Rajnath Singh on Monday held talks with his Australian counterpart Richard Marles during which they concurred that a strong bilateral defence partnership will "augur well" not just for the two countries but also for the overall security of the Indo-Pacific, officials said.

The two ministers agreed that deepening cooperation in defence industry and research would "give a fillip to the already strong relationship", according to a statement issued by the Indian defence ministry here.

Singh suggested that shipbuilding, ship repair and maintenance, and aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) could be the potential areas of collaboration.

The leaders reaffirmed the commitment towards further strengthening the defence relations between the two countries, the statement said.

Singh congratulated Marles on the maiden and successful conduct of multilateral exercise 'Malabar' by Australia in August this year.

Marles is also the Australian deputy Prime Minister.

"Both ministers underscored the importance of further enhancing cooperation in information exchange and maritime domain awareness between the two countries," it said.

"Both the ministers reaffirmed their commitment towards further strengthening the bilateral defence relations. They expressed satisfaction at the increasing military-to-military cooperation between the two countries, including joint exercises, exchanges and institutional dialogue," the ministry said.

The two sides are also in an advanced stage of discussion to conclude implementing arrangements on hydrography cooperation and cooperation for air-to-air refuelling, officials said.

Singh emphasised that the forces of the two countries should also look at cooperating in "niche training areas like artificial intelligence, anti-submarine and anti-drone warfare and cyber domain".

"The two ministers also discussed cooperation for joint research in underwater technologies. Collaboration between the defence start-ups of both countries, including that (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

GDP growth to dip slightly to 6.3% in 2024, LS polls key factor: Report

MUMBAI, Nov 20: India's real GDP growth will decline marginally to 6.3 per cent in 2024 from the 6.4 per cent estimated for 2023, an American brokerage firm said on Monday.

The next calendar year will be of two halves, wherein the government spending before the upcoming General Elections will be the key driver for growth, while after the elections, it will be the re-acceleration in investment growth, especially from the private sector, Goldman Sachs said in a report.

From a fiscal year perspective, the brokerage said it expects growth to accelerate to 6.5 per cent for FY25 from the 6.2 per cent it has projected for the ongoing FY24, it added.

"India has the best structural growth prospects in the region. We believe GDP growth is likely to stay robust at 6.3 per cent y-o-y (year-on-year) in 2024," the bro-



kerage said, adding the country is less sensitive to potential external shocks like longer rates globally, persistent dollar strength and geopolitical uncertainties.

The brokerage said risks around the growth outlook are evenly balanced but added that "the main domestic risk" is emanating from political uncertainty, with elections approaching in the April-June

quarter of 2024.

The election season is already underway with Assembly polls in five states, which will be followed by the General Elections later, it said, adding that outcomes of these elections will be "keenly watched" by investors from the standpoint of economic reforms and/or policy continuity.

It expects headline consumer

price inflation to come at 5.1 per cent for 2024, against 4.7 per cent estimated by the Reserve Bank. This will, however, be lower than the 5.7 per cent expected in 2023, it added.

"We expect the government to intervene through subsidies or other measures to keep a lid on food prices in an election year," it said.

The "somewhat elevated" inflation relative to the target will limit the room for monetary easing, and the RBI will cut rates by only 0.50 per cent to 6 per cent by early 2025, the brokerage said, adding that there will be a cut of 0.25 per cent each in Q4 2024 and Q1 2025.

The current account deficit will widen to 1.9 per cent of GDP in 2024 from the 1.3 per cent expected in 2023, but the rupee is set to appreciate to 82 against the dollar at 2024-end against the 83 level at the end of 2023, it noted. (PTI)

Bogus news meant to generate euphoria: Congress on claims of India's GDP crossing USD 4 trillion

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: The Congress took a swipe at the ruling BJP on Monday for claiming that India's GDP has crossed the USD 4-trillion mark and alleged that the "bogus" news is only for generating euphoria and doing headline management.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said some Union ministers and the Maharashtra deputy chief minister have made a "fake" claim.

"Between 2:45 pm and 6:45 pm yesterday, when the nation was glued to watching the cricket match, various drumbeaters of the Modi government, including senior Union ministers from Rajasthan and Telangana, the Deputy CM of Maharashtra, as well as the PM's most favoured businessman, tweeted that yesterday itself India's GDP had crossed the USD 4 trillion mark," Ramesh said.

"This was totally fake and bogus news meant to generate more euphoria and a pathetic attempt at both sycophancy and headline management," he alleged.

In a post on X, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said on Sunday, "This is what dynamic, visionary leadership looks like! That's what our New India progressing beautifully looks like."

"Congratulations to my fellow Indians as our nation crosses the \$ 4 trillion GDP milestone! More power to you, more respect to you Hon PM Narendra Modi ji," he said.



Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat shared a graphic on X and said, "India's moment of global glory as our GDP crosses USD 4 trillion. The rise of New India under PM Narendra Modi ji's leadership is truly unparalleled. #GDP"

Billionaire Gautam Adani was also among those who hailed India's gross domestic product (GDP) crossing the USD 4-trillion mark, though there was no official confirmation if the country had indeed achieved the landmark.

The finance ministry and the National Statistical Office did not immediately comment on the viral social media posts on the country's GDP crossing USD 4 trillion.

Highly-placed sources said the news is incorrect and India is still shy of the landmark. An unverified screen grab from the live-tracking GDP feed for all countries, based on the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) data, has been widely shared on social media by many, including senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders.

It is very difficult to have live tracking of the GDP figures of all countries as the numbers from various sectors of the economy are available with a lag.

"Congratulations, India. Another two years to go before India becomes the 3rd largest nation in terms of Global GDP by overtaking Japan at \$4.4 trillion and Germany at \$4.3 trillion. The Tricolour surge continues! Jai Hind," Adani said on X.

Cabinet minister G Kishan Reddy, in a post on the microblogging website, said, "Congratulations as the GDP touches \$4 trillion for the first time and marches ahead. On the course towards \$5 trillion economy -- Modi ki Guarantee."

Reddy is the Union minister for culture, tourism and development of northeast region as well as the Telangana BJP president.

Andhra Pradesh BJP chief D Purandeswari said, "Congratulations BHARAT on becoming a 4 trillion dollar economy! This phenomenal achievement has been made possible by the path breaking reforms introduced and implemented by Prime Minister Shri @narendramodiji government in the last 9.5 years."

India recorded a 7.8 per cent GDP growth during the April-June period of 2023-24, the highest in the last four quarters, on the back of double-digit expansion in the services sector, retaining its position as the world's fastest-growing major economy. (PTI)

Gold falls ₹50; silver declines by ₹300

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: Gold prices eased by ₹50 to ₹61,770 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday in line with weak global cues, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had settled at ₹61,820 per 10 grams. Silver also declined by ₹300 to ₹76,000 per kg. "Gold prices retreated as traders booked profit, after price advanced more than 20 per cent last week, supported by soft US economic data which fuelled optimism that the Fed's aggressive monetary policy campaign will come to an end," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities, HDFC Securities, said. (PTI)

Rupee falls 9 paise to close at all-time low of 83.35 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Nov 20: The rupee declined by 9 paise to settle at its all-time low of 83.35 against the US dollar on Monday, tracking a negative trend in domestic equities. Foreign fund outflows also weighed on the local unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.25 and settled at its lifetime low level of 83.35 against the dollar, registering a fall of 9 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee settled at 83.26 against the American currency. Earlier, the rupee closed at its lowest level of 83.33 against the dollar on November 13, this year. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.42 per cent lower at 103.48.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.66 per cent to USD 81.14 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex fell 139.58 points or 0.21 per cent to settle at 65,655.15 points. The Nifty declined 37.80 points or 0.19 per



cent to 19,694.00 points.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday as they sold shares worth ₹477.76 crore, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, India's forex kitty decreased by USD 462 million to USD 590.321 billion for the week ended November 10, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous week, the overall reserves had increased by USD 4.672 billion to USD 590.783 billion. (PTI)

Bengal's marquee business summit to begin today

KOLKATA, Nov 20: Business leaders from 28 countries, a host of prominent figures of corporate India as well as political dignitaries are expected to take part in the seventh edition of the Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) that will begin on Tuesday, officials said.

The participating countries include the US, UK, Japan, Poland, France, Australia, Germany, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Fiji, they said.

Corporate bigwigs from Reliance Industries, ITC, Ambuja Neotia and the Hiranandani Group are also likely to attend the state's marquee business summit.

The focus sectors at the two-day BGBS 2023 are MSME, textiles, engineering, energy, transport & urban infrastructure, real estate, agri, tourism and international trade & logistics, officials said. Over 250 international delegates are expected to participate, including senior representatives from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, they said.

"Reliance Industries Chairman & MD Mukesh Ambani is expected to attend this year's BGBS. Other industrialists such as Sanjeev Goenka, Sanjeev Puri, Purnendu Chattopadhyay, Harshvardhan Neotia and Sajjan Jindal will also be present," an official said.

"Numerous B2B and B2G meetings will be organised on the sidelines of the summit, highlighting trade and investment opportunities between the global community and West Bengal," he said.

The United Kingdom is set to bring the "largest-ever" delegation to the BGBS, the British Deputy High Commission said. A 55-member delegation from a wide range of businesses and institutions will represent the UK at the event, it said.

In the 2022 edition, a total of 137 MoUs, Letters of Intent (LoI) and Expressions of Interest (EoI) towards investment proposals of ₹3,42,375 crore were signed, according to state government data.

"These have a total employment potential of 40 lakh," the data showed.

Economist Debnarayan Sarkar said the chink in the armour remains the realisation of the investment proposals amid a relatively subdued investments scenario across the country and disruption in the global supply chains in view of the geopolitical conflicts.

"According to data on the implementation of Industrial Entrepreneurs' Memoranda up to December 2022, West Bengal with a share of 1.5 per cent is not among the top five states in terms of investments. These IEMs cover only large-scale investments. The investment trend is better in West Bengal if one con-



siders the small industries, a focus area of the state," Sarkar, a retired professor of Presidency University, told PTI. The state government organised various programmes in the run-up to the two-day event. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited Dubai and Spain in September to woo investors.

"In the last 10-12 years, Bengal has seen tremendous growth. The macroeconomic performance is one of the highest in the country. Bengal is a huge market with tremendous opportunity. Government policies are investor-friendly and proactive," said Shiv Siddhant Kaul, the eastern region chairman of CII, which is the national industry partner for the event.

By building social infrastructure, the state has ensured a harmonious and productive work culture, he said, adding that a politically stable environment ensures long-term visibility and viability of investments.

Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Gautam Ray said, "We are very passionate about sustainability and net zero, and advocate integrating these with core business decisions."

"Keeping this in mind, we will be organising three sectoral sessions on Sustainable Development Goals, Technical Education, Training & Skill and Manufacturing, and also organise a country session with the UK, and a B2B session with the US on Education & Healthcare," he said.

A state government official said that several new areas for investment will be showcased to industrialists at the event.

The state's proposed 4,000-acre Jangal Sundari Karma Nagari at Purulia, Dankuni-Haldia, Dankuni-Kalyani and Dankuni-Raghubarpur industrial growth corridors, and Bengal Silicon Valley Hub at New Town are among them, he said. (PTI)

Kolkata's residential market, I&L sector supply poised to witness 5-year high in 2023



KOLKATA, Nov 20: The residential market and industrial and logistics (I&L) sector supply in Kolkata are poised to witness a 5-year high supply in 2023, real estate consultancy firm CBRE said on Monday.

Officials said that the supply in the I&L sector is expected to nearly double to 5.2 million square feet in 2023, despite an estimated marginal decline in absorption during the same period.

In 2022, the supply was 2.7 million square feet in Kolkata.

This surge in supply is attributed to the completion of pending projects across the city and its peripheries, the consultancy major said. Kolkata boasts nearly 10 million square feet of Grade A logistics developments in the NH-2, NH-6, and Taratala regions.

Particularly in NH-2, industrial zones like Dankuni and Singur are emerging, and in NH-6, evolving areas like Uluberia are gaining prominence. Anshuman Magazine, CBRE's Chairman & CEO - India, Southeast Asia, Middle East & Africa, said, "The current real estate landscape in the state, particularly in Kolkata, is witnessing a transformative phase where the infusion of quality supply is fueling absorption, propelling the growth trajectory of the state's real estate sector." He also stated that the residential market in Kolkata is likely to witness a 5-year high in sales and launch unit-mark in 2023. It is estimated that the projected sales will cross 18,600 units in 2023, whereas new units launched will touch around 17,800 mark. (PTI)

Sensex, Nifty fall for 2nd day amid sell-off in auto, commodity stocks

MUMBAI, Nov 20: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty stayed on the back foot for the second straight session on Monday due to selling in auto, utility and commodity shares amid high valuation concerns and fresh foreign fund outflows.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 139.58 points or 0.21 per cent to settle at 65,655.15. During the day, it fell 246.93 points or 0.37 per cent to 65,547.80.

The Nifty dropped by 37.80 points or 0.19 per cent to 19,694 as 27 of its components closed in the red, 21 in the green and two unchanged.

Among the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Motors and JSW Steel were the major laggards.

Bharti Airtel, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services and Maruti were among the gainers.

"Elevated long-term interest rate trends and a weakening global economy continue to hurt inflows and market movement. While the recent softening of inflation in the US & India and the negative trend of crude



are expected to help the view on global equity and India in the short term.

"In that context, the ease in FII selling is helping the domestic markets but continues to consolidate primarily due to India's premium valuation relative to global peers," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit

Financial Services.

In this scenario, the IT sector is benefiting; however, valuation continues to be on the higher side compared to long-term history, suggesting a cautious approach in the sector in the medium term, he added.

A mixed trend was witnessed on the sec-

toral front wherein IT posted decent gains while auto and metal ended in the red.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.39 per cent and midcap index dipped 0.06 per cent.

Among the indices, auto fell 0.69 per cent, commodities declined 0.66 per cent, capital goods (0.43 per cent), realty (0.33 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.30 per cent).

Energy, healthcare, IT and tech were the gainers.

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

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

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.74 per cent to USD 81.21 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) of flooded equities worth ₹477.76 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark declined 187.75 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at 65,794.73 on Friday. The Nifty slipped 33.40 points or 0.17 per cent to 19,731.80. (PTI)

World shares mixed after Wall Street's 3rd straight winning week

HONG KONG, Nov 20: World shares were mixed on Monday after Wall Street closed its third straight winning week with a tiny gain.

In share trading, Germany's DAX fell 0.1% to 15,907.92 and the CAC 40 in Paris gained 0.3% to 7,256.93. Britain's FTSE 100 was down 0.3% at 7,481.86. The future for the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average were virtually unchanged.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index broke its September peak, hitting a 33-year high, and then fell to 33,388.03, shedding 0.6%.

The Hang Seng in Hong Kong added 1.6% to 17,732.36, and the Shanghai Composite index advanced 0.5% to 3,068.32. China announced on Monday that it would keep its benchmark lending rates unchanged as expected due to a weaker yuan and the need to assess the impact of recent stimulus measures on the economy.

In South Korea, the Kospi was 0.9% higher, at 2,491.20. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged 0.1% higher to 7,058.40. Taiwan's Taieq was little changed. The SET in Bangkok dropped 0.1% as the state

planning agency announced Monday that Thailand's economy grew slower than expected in the last quarter due to weakness in exports and agriculture, despite strong consumer spending and a recovery in tourism.

On Friday, the S&P 500 edged up 0.1% to 4,514.02 and is near its highest level in three months. The Dow Jones Industrial Average inched up less than 0.1% to 34,947.28 and the Nasdaq composite gained 0.1% to 14,125.48. Markets hope inflation has cooled enough for the Federal Reserve to finally stop its market-crunching hikes to interest rates.

The Fed has already raised its main interest rate to the highest level since 2001, trying to slow the economy and dent financial markets just enough to get inflation under control without causing a painful recession.

Now traders are trying to bet on when the Fed could actually begin cutting interest rates, something that can juice prices for investments and provide oxygen for the financial system. The Fed has said that it plans to keep rates high for a while to ensure that the battle against inflation is

definitively won, but traders are thinking cuts could begin early in the summer of 2024.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.47% early Monday from 4.44% late Friday. Just a few weeks ago, it was above 5%, at its highest level since 2007 and undercutting prices for stocks and other investments.

Too steep a drop in Treasury yields and too big a rally in stock prices could conspire to work against Wall Street. Chair Jerome Powell said after the Fed's last meeting on interest rates that it may not hike any more if the summer's jump in Treasury yields and fall in stock prices remained "persistent". That's because such pressures could act like substitutes for more rate increases on their own.

One source of potential worry about inflation has been receding in recent weeks. Oil prices have plunged amid worries about a mismatch between too much crude supply and too little demand.

A barrel of US crude for December delivery gained 50 cents to \$76.54. It rose \$2.99 to settle at \$75.89 on late Friday, recovering some of its sharp losses from ear-



lier in the week. But it's still well below its perch above \$93 in late September.

Brent crude, the international standard, rose 63 cents to \$81.24 per barrel.

In currency trading, the US dollar dropped to 148.85 Japanese yen from

149.58 yen. It had been trading near 152 yen to the dollar last week, but analysts said expectations for lower US interest rates are driving sales of dollars, pushing the yen higher. The euro cost \$1.0927, rising from \$1.0912. (AP)

Ranoj Pegu distributes funds for tribal economic upliftment

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Nov 20: Ranoj Pegu, the minister of education (Higher, Secondary & Elementary), Welfare of Plain Tribes and Backward Classes (non-BTC), Government of Assam, distributed a revolving fund of ₹ 1.63 cr and a supporting fund of ₹ 18 lakh to eighty-four Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters (VDVKCs) under the Prime Minister Janatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM).

The ceremony, held at the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati, aimed to boost the economic prospects of tribal communities engaged in collecting and processing natural forest produce.

The event witnessed the presence of dignitaries such as Mukesh Ch Sahu, principal secretary, government of Assam, Department of Tribal Affairs (Plain), Pamthing Keishing, deputy manager, TRIFED Regional Office, and Dr. Lalit Sharma, Director IIE. The funds distribution marked a significant step toward the socio-economic upliftment of forest dwellers.

In addition to the fund distribution, a crucial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Tezpur University and IIE, facilitating technological know-how



transfer for the production of a novel product—Pomelo Marmalade, set to be marketed under the TRISSAM brand. The event also featured the launch of the Millets range of products and the unveiling of a revamped trissam.com website with an e-commerce

platform.

Addressing the gathering, Ranoj Pegu emphasized the pivotal role of the Prime Minister Janatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM) in empowering forest dwellers to utilize funds for procuring raw materials and operational expenses, thereby producing high-quality goods with a national market reach.

Furthermore, three outstanding Van Dhan Vikas Kendras were felicitated by the minister, acknowledging their exceptional performance. Dr. Lalit Sharma, Director of IIE, provided a comprehensive overview of the PMJVM scheme and Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) scheme, emphasizing IIE's commitment to implementing these initiatives for the benefit of tribal women beneficiaries.

IIE, as the Resource Agency under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, plays a pivotal role in executing the PMJVM scheme and MSP for MFP Scheme. This flagship program by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, government of India, aims to enhance the livelihoods and socio-economic status of tribal communities through the value addition of Minor Forest Produce (MFPs).

Pijush initiates river erosion protection project in Kokilamari



HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Nov 20: Pijush Hazarika, the state water resources minister, laid the foundation stone for the protection of the Kokilamari Soniboria Bazar area of B/DYKE from the erosion of the River Brahmaputra in Kokilamari near Demow of Thowra Constituency on Monday. The estimated cost of the scheme is ₹ 8 crore, and it will be funded by NABARD.

The key provisions of the project include Geo-Bag protection work with a reach length of 561 meters, involving dumping silt-filled Geo Bags, PVC coated Wire-netting Gabion boxes, and continuous pitching with Geo Bags over Geo Fabric filter media on the trimmed

bank slope; launching of PSC Porcupine screens to choke the two off-shoot channels and at the upstream (U/S) and downstream (D/S) of the protection work.

The project aims to prevent river erosion in the Kokilamari Soniboria Bazar area. State water resources minister Pijush Hazarika was accompanied by Topon Kumar Gogoi, Jorhat MP, Thowra MLA Sushanta Borgohain, Bhairab Deori, CEM of Deori Autonomous Council, Mayor Borgohain, District BJP President, Engineers of the Water Resources Department, and Officials of district administration during his visit to Kokilamari on Monday.

Demise of youth in Guwahati following India's World Cup defeat

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 20: A youth in Guwahati, identified as Pranjal Majumdar, has allegedly died from shock following India's massive defeat to Australia in the World Cup final. Pranjal, a resident of Birubari locality and an IT student, reportedly went into a state of depression after watching the match and went to bed without having dinner. Family members revealed that Pranjal had gotten up from his bed several times during the night. Upon checking on him later, the family found Pranjal unresponsive. They rushed him to Hayat Hospital, where the doctor declared him dead. The body has been sent for post-mortem, and the actual cause of death is yet to be confirmed. While family members believe Pranjal died from shock over India's defeat, it's also stated that he was not known to have any terminal illness. The post-mortem report is awaited for further clarification. The family members' allegations raise the possibility of suicide, but a definitive conclusion awaits the post-mortem results.

Chhath Puja celebrations in Dibrugarh reverberate with traditional rituals

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Nov 20: Chhath Puja was celebrated in Dibrugarh with great fervour and adherence to traditional rituals. People dressed in vibrant attire and carrying baskets filled with offerings gathered at the riverside in Dibrugarh to observe the Chhath Puja, a festival dedicated to the Sun God.

Arghya, consisting of fresh fruits, vegetables, and sweets, were offered as part of the traditional rituals. Due to the elevated level of the Brahmaputra River, permission was granted to a few ghats to host the festival. Despite the challenges, people celebrated the festival with enthusiasm and joy.

Union minister MoS Rameswar Telu visited the ghats in Dibrugarh during the Chhath festival to witness the celebrations. Reflecting on the event, Jitendra Srivastava, a member of the Tinkonia Chhat Puja committee, stated, "This time, permission has been given to five ghats to conduct the puja due to the rising level of the Brahmaputra River. We have observed the Chhat puja with the utmost discipline and peacefulness at Tinkonia ghat. Following all traditional practices, we have celebrated the festival."

Similar scenes were observed in various areas of Dibrugarh as devotees, primarily from Hindi-speaking communities, gathered at the nearest water bodies to pay homage to the Sun God during the sunset, marking the culmination of the Chhath Puja festivities.

Two-day workshop on DRR kicks off

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Nov 20: A two-day district-level workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Mock Exercise to implement the Assam Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Roadmap 2030 is underway in Nagaon. The workshop is organised by the District Disaster Management Authority of Nagaon in collaboration with the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), government of Assam.

Manorama Marang, additional district commissioner, and CEO of DDMA Nagaon inaugurated the program. Bibek Mahato from Technical Support Unit (TSU), ASDMA, Midusmita Borah, project officer, DRR, ASDMA, and Bijayanta Goswami, district project officer of DDMA Nagaon, were present along with Field Officers (FOs), Heads of Departments (HoDs), and Nodal Officers from various line departments.

The workshop aims to provide insights into the Assam DRR Roadmap 2030, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and the implementation process in collaboration with the communities in the district. Mock exercises during the program will enhance the understanding of disaster risk reduction strategies.

Strike continues: Sivasagar Safai workers enter fourth day

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Nov 20: The strike by Sivasagar Municipality Safai workers is set to extend for several more days as the latest round of tripartite talks among the workers' leaders, Sivasagar Municipality Board (SMB), and Sivasagar district administration ended in failure. The workers are steadfast in their demand for a wage hike and CPF entry. Kankana Saikia, the SMB executive officer, stated that the workers' demands cannot be immediately implemented, as the daily-wage workers are unwilling to accept the PF contribution facility.

Protests erupt in Dibrugarh following fatal hit-and-run incident

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Nov 20: Hundreds of workers from Jalan South tea estate took to the streets in Dibrugarh on Monday, protesting a fatal hit-and-run incident that claimed the life of one of their co-workers the day before.

The protestors gathered and blocked the busy RKB road in front of the Dibrugarh police station, expressing their frustration against what they perceive as police inaction on rash driving incidents.

On Sunday, Labanya Tanti, a 55-year-old worker from Jalan South tea estate, lost her life in a hit-and-run incident. Five others, Junali Tanti (55), Mina Bawari (40), Monju Saikia (52), Adhir Dey (65), and Samir Goriak (5), suffered severe injuries and are currently receiving treatment at the Assam Medical College and Hos-



pital (AMCH).

According to the police, a car with registration number AS-06-W-7989 struck the pedestrians near the footpath vegetable market on Convoy road near Chowkidinghee Chariali around 3:15 pm. Witnesses reported that the speeding vehicle collided with a stationary van before hitting the pedestrians.

The driver fled the scene without stopping.

Police later apprehended Sashi Agarwal, the driver of the car during the incident.

"The incident occurred due to reckless driving in a crowded street. We urge the police to take decisive action against rash driving. The person responsible for this

tragic incident should face strict consequences," stated one of the protestors.

Protestors emphasized the need for the police to take stringent action against reckless driving, which has been a growing concern. They highlighted the importance of enforcing traffic rules to prevent such accidents in the future.

KVK Kokrajhar concludes five-day training on commercial nursery techniques



HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Nov 20: Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Kokrajhar, successfully wrapped up a five-day training program at Assam Agricultural University, Telipara, in Gossagaon, focusing on vocational training in commercial nursery raising and propagation techniques of major horticultural crops.

The training, which commenced on November 14th with the aim of providing technical skills on nursery raising and horticulture crop propagation to rural youth, concluded on November 18th. Thirty participants from rural areas in Kokrajhar district attended the training, which was conducted by Puja Basumatary, Subject Matter Specialist (Horticulture).

Dr. Sunil Kumar Paul, Senior Scientist and Head (i/c) of KVK Kokrajhar, inaugurated the session with a keynote address, offering a comprehensive demonstration on

nursery production. He emphasized the economic potential of nursery production and its role in fostering self-employment.

The five-day program covered essential topics related to commercial nursery practices, including hands-on training on methods of sexual (seeds) and asexual/vegetative propagation in horticultural crops (cuttings, layering, grafting, budding). Puja Basumatary, the trainer, provided insights into propagation using specialized organs such as bulbs, corms, tubers, rhizomes, runners, suckers, and offsets.

Rabi Kanta Das, a progressive farmer and entrepreneur, interacted with the trainees, sharing his experiences and encouraging rural youth to consider commercial nursery raising for better livelihoods. The training concluded with the distribution of certificates to the participants.

Assam Agricultural University aims for self-sustainability by 2035

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Nov 20: The Assam Agricultural University is on a path to achieve self-sustainability by 2035, according to Vice Chancellor Dr. Bidyut Chandan Deka. Several initiatives have been launched to generate revenue, including the creation of a 3 km walking zone along a water stream within the campus, offering boating facilities, and developing heritage stay experiences in former vice-chancellor bungalows. The university has also introduced innovations in rice and mustard varieties, poultry vaccines, and other products, generating revenue through sales.

Installation of solar panels has significantly reduced the monthly electricity bill, and excess power is sold to the power grid. Plans include promoting startups among students and faculty, setting up a technology park, and exploring carbon finance and credit through an MoU with TERI and Renew. The university aims to leverage its agricultural colleges, horticulture college, sericulture college, fishery college, community science college, and veterinary colleges to achieve financial sustainability. Dr. Deka highlighted the university's achievements in teaching, research, and extension, aiming to rank among the top five agricultural universities in India within the next few years.

Sonitpur DC inaugurates Arun Nath's solo painting exhibition

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Nov 20: District commissioner of Sonitpur, Deba Kumar Mishra, inaugurated a three-day solo art exhibition featuring the work of renowned Assamese film and stage actor Arun Nath. The exhibition, organised by Karunamoyee Kala Niketan and headed by Krishna Das Nath, took place at the Baliram Lahkar auditorium of Asomiya Club in Tezpur. In his inaugural address, district commissioner Mishra praised Arun Nath's transition from acting to painting, opening new possibilities for people to explore his unique artistic forms. Mishra announced the upcoming establishment of an art gallery in the newly constructed district library building premises.

Young women engineers symposium at TU explores sustainable development solutions for NER

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Nov 20: Tezpur University, in collaboration with the Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE), orchestrated a two-day symposium, commencing on November 20, 2023, emphasizing the pivotal role of engineering in crafting sustainable solutions for the Northeast region (NER). The event targeted young women engineers under 45 years of age from engineering institutions and universities across the NER.

In his inaugural address as the Chief Guest, prof Shambhu Nath Singh, Vice Chancellor of Tezpur University, lauded the initiative, expressing that the symposium's deliberations by domain-specific expert scientists would contribute valuable insights into emerging and advanced technologies. He emphasized the growing importance of women's contributions in



science and technology for the nation's progress.

Dr. Sharmila Mande, Fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering (FNAE) and Coordinator of INAE, outlined the symposium's objectives. The event featured eight distinguished scientists and experts covering two

main themes: 'High-value Agri-based products' and 'Rejuvenation of natural resources.' The symposium provided a dynamic platform for young women engineers to engage in discussions, share insights, and explore innovative solutions to address the unique challenges faced by the

Northeastern region in the context of sustainable development.

The invited speakers included Prof. Rekha S. Singhal from the Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai, Dr. Ng Iboyma Singh from Central Agricultural University, Imphal, Prof. Saroj K Barik from North-Eastern Hill University, Dr. Shashi Bhushan from CSIR - Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology, Palampur, Dr. Virendra M Tiwari from CSIR-National Geophysical Research Institute, Dr. Atya Kapley from CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, Dr. Swapnil Hazarika from CSIR-North East Institute of Science & Technology, and Prof. Charu Lata Mahanta from Tezpur University. The symposium aimed to foster discussions on innovative solutions for sustainable development challenges in the Northeastern region.

'Print Journalism: Footsteps of Women from Assam' unveiled in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Nov 20: Nabajyoti Dutta's latest book, 'Print Journalism: Footsteps of Women from Assam', was unveiled in a special ceremony at DHSK Commerce College in Dibrugarh on November 16. Renowned journalist Ikbal Ahmed, attending as the chief guest, praised the book for filling a significant gap in documenting the history of women's participation in journalism in Assam.

Ahmed highlighted the book's research-based approach, covering the chronological history of women's involvement in the challenging profession through various newspapers and magazines. He commended the efforts to portray the evolution of women's roles in journalism from the beginning in Assam until the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. Ahmed, a trustee of the Assam Media Trust and advisor of the All Assam Journalists' Association, expressed hope that the book would be a milestone in the state's journalism world.

The event, jointly organized by the Assamese Department of the College and the state-level voluntary body 'S. I. Media Foundation, Assam' (SIMFA), was chaired by Dr. Khanindra Mishra Bhagawati, the College's Principal. Sanjit Bordoloi, Secretary-General of SIMFA, and other local dignitaries from education and journalism graced the occasion as special guests. Dr. Bidisha Mahanta, Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at the college, anchored the function.

Dr. Nabajyoti Dutta, the author and head of the Assamese department at the college, expressed his satisfaction with the book's release, emphasizing that it was the result of his long-standing desire and effort. He also expressed his commitment to enriching future editions of the book.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them. - Khalil Gibran

Growth narrative: A blatant lie?

In the midst of November's election campaigns, a controversial narrative dubbed "Modi Guarantee" has surfaced, claiming that India has already become the fourth richest country globally under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. This unverified assertion gained momentum, reaching its peak on November 19, as influential figures, including Union minister of law and justice Arjun Ram Meghwal and industrialist Gautam Adani, propagated the false news. Adani went as far as predicting India's rise to the third-largest global economy in two years, overtaking Japan and Germany. Notably, the narrative persists in election-bound Rajasthan and Telangana, where the BJP aims to sway voters in favour of PM Modi. Criticism led some participants, including Meghwal and Adani, to delete their posts. The false narrative was accompanied by fabricated screenshots displaying live GDP data for over 190 countries, positioning India as the fourth largest economy. Surprisingly, there has been no official statement from the Indian government or any national/international institution to confirm or deny these figures. It's crucial to highlight that the Rajasthan election, concluding on November 23, is heavily focused on development issues. The Congress party, led by CM Ashok Gehlot, emphasises social development, while the BJP counters with a false growth narrative. Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, a key participant from Rajasthan, is actively contributing to this misleading campaign.

As the rumour mill churns, the government's silence adds to the uncertainty surrounding the authenticity of the claims. Even as India is set to release its GDP data for Q3 2023 by the end of November, the source behind this false narrative remains elusive. Economists estimate India could breach the USD 4 trillion mark by 2024-25, according to government data. However, the IMF suggests achieving a USD 5 trillion economy by 2026-27, contingent on favourable economic conditions. Politically, the rumour machine weaves a deceptive growth narrative, leaving citizens questioning why PM Modi is promoting initiatives like "Garib Kalyan Ann Yojna" if India is indeed the fourth richest country. The contradiction deepens as PM Modi, in violation of the election code, extends free ration until 2028, raising concerns about the real economic status. In this context, PM Modi's Guarantee takes on a nuanced meaning – wealth creation for the privileged few at the expense of the masses. Despite claims of poverty alleviation, India remains home to the largest number of poor globally. The National Food Security Act, designed to cover 81.35 crore people based on 2011 Census Data, has failed to identify all those in need a decade later in 2023.

Under the PMKAY initiative, only 80.48 crore people are currently identified, leaving a gap in addressing the nutritional needs of the vulnerable population. World Bank data further underscores the plight of over 97 crore people in India who cannot afford healthy food, prompting scrutiny of the Modi Guarantee's impact on the common people. As the country approaches the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, these controversies surrounding false narratives and unverified claims underline the need for a discerning electorate. Amidst the clamour for development, the electorate must weigh the rhetoric against concrete actions and factual data to make informed decisions. The unchecked spread of misleading narratives during election campaigns raises concerns about the integrity of information in the public sphere. Citizens must remain vigilant, demanding transparency and verified facts from political leaders.

Food scarcity adds to the woes of Awami League govt as the country goes for elections

By: Arun Kumar Shrivastav

In Bangladesh, where national elections are scheduled for January 7, political issues are taking a backseat, and the scarcity and high prices of essential food items such as potatoes, onions, eggs, edible oil, and sugar are taking centre stage. In an emergency meeting held at the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Office (PMO) on November 11, the government took a series of decisions to ensure these commodities are available at affordable rates in the market.

The government has instructed the country's central bank – Bangladesh Bank – and state-owned Sonali Bank to ensure an adequate supply of US dollars to facilitate imports of these items. Besides, deputy commissioners have been asked to depute government officials at all cold storages and ensure official instructions on the supply and prices of potatoes and other food items are followed. These orders were implemented with immediate effect, beginning on November 12.

As the ruling Awami League is going to the polls seeking continuity in power, the opposition, in recent months, brought immense pressure on the government through well-attended rallies and agitations that often resulted in violence. With Western powers putting Bangladesh on notice for human rights violations, the January elections would expectedly have these issues at the centre of the political debate, both inside and outside the country. The current Bangladesh government has been in power since 2009.

But the political discourse is shifting to food scarcity, which looms large in the country with nearly 170 million people. Given this, political issues will likely be relegated, and food scarcity will come to the fore in the election rallies. The main opposition party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is demanding an interim government to conduct the general elections saying that Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina will not ensure free and fair polls. But the ruling party is saying that this is not permitted by the Constitution and already the country's Supreme Court has made the position clear.

The food scarcity in Bangladesh became evident in August when eggs began to disappear from the market. They were selling for Bangladesh Taka (BDT) 15 apiece, and the government tried to contain the price to BDT 12. The country, which produced about 400 million eggs, saw the number drop significantly after many poultry farms were closed during the pandemic.

Around the same time in August, potato prices began heating up. Bangladesh is a major potato-

producing country, accounting for roughly 10 million tonnes out of a global annual production of 65 million. The country saw the retail potato prices skyrocketing to BDT 60-65 per kg, more than double the price in the Indian market.

Realising that these developments may dent the electoral prospects of the ruling Awami League, the Bangladesh government opened the imports of eggs and potatoes before the PMO meeting allowed the same for other food items. According to local media reports, despite placing import orders, Bangladesh has been waiting to receive the promised amounts of eggs for about two months now.

The commerce secretary of the Bangladesh government, Tapan Kanti Ghosh, after the November 11 PMO meeting, stated that due to the import of 62,000 pieces of eggs, the market has started to ease, local news reports said. "Permission has been

given to import 25 crore eggs, but imports were delayed due to legal complications. The process has now been simplified, and letters of credit have been opened for egg imports, so more eggs will be arriving soon," media reports quoted him. The status of potato imports needs to be more encouraging. The government has allowed 200,000 tonnes of potatoes to ensure this staple vegetable sells at average prices of around BDT 35 per kg. So far, the country has received about 1095 tonnes of potatoes from India's West Bengal, where farmers faced a glut and low prices, while a new potato sowing season that begins in November was at their doors. Ordinary people in Bangladesh are worried that potato imports may also follow the egg import path.

Bangladesh is also facing a scarcity of edible oil and has allowed its imports to improve the supply situation. India imports 60% of the edible oil it consumes. The entire Indian sub-continent imports edible oil heavily due to its food habit of oil-heavy and fried foods.

Experts believe that Bangladesh needs more essential food items due to inadequate data on the country's stock. For example, the agriculture and commerce ministries announced potato production at 11.2 million tonnes against the annual consumption of 9 million tonnes. The Bangladesh Statistics Bureau said the production was 10.4 million tonnes, while the Bangladesh Cold Storage Owners Association said the country produced only 8.5 million tonnes of potatoes.

With food scarcity claiming more of the collective mind space in Bangladesh in the coming days, chances are that by the time the elections are held in early January next year, food scarcity will become a compelling concern, impacting voting trends. (IPA Service)



Ram Janmabhoomi – The movement and its political momentum

Finally the Ram Temple at Ayodhya is going to be a reality. Its consecration being scheduled for January 22, 2024, the majority of India's population is going to witness a dream fulfilling moment. Of course, the journey to the effect of its consecration did not come with happy negotiations and peaceful deliberations. It has a long history of struggle and the world witnessed India's political weather constantly changing ever since the Ram Janmabhoomi movement for a grand temple at the birth place of Lord Ram at Ayodhya became an outcry.

A society that remained silent and passive until then began to sense a purpose for its unity and the effect of such a movement had seriously delivered a great deal of unforeseeable political outcome that the electorate in the country once thought would never be a reality. That was the real fact, the history of the rise of the saffron politics in India's political courtyard. Almost all parties from the strongholds of the ruling and opposition camps believed that the minority consolidation of votes would ensure their success leap to the power corridors of the country. And the majority, they thought, would remain a divided group and well calibrated attempts to further divide and dismantle it were always afoot.

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement, a socio-cultural one- found reasons to demand and purpose to churn the sleepy sensations of the major chunk of the country's population. It restructured the political belief systems that otherwise was busy in appeasement politics. All through its journey, the movement for the temple at Ayodhya steadily progressed while adversities wove barriers. But the level of accept-

ance it could garner was profound.

A significant event needs a special reference here. The BJP kept itself out of the entire scenario in the beginning but later became calculative and found chances of fortunes breaking its floodgates of insignificance. It decided to drive its organizational acumen to directly enhance the movement while mixing it with spirituality and politics. The flavor it discovered was well received. The party, in its National Executive meeting at Palampur in Himachal Pradesh in June 1989 decided to officially launch its involvement in the movement. The movement caught fire when the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) in September 1989 announced its plan to carry consecrated bricks from across the country for the shilanyas (the foundation laying) at Ayodhya. A soft breeze at that began to turn into a terrible storm with a large segment of the country's population supporting and mobilizing the cause that was buried under the dust of submissiveness and a lethargic forgetfulness.

In his poetic resonance Atal Bihari Vajpayee called the temple a "national aspiration" which according to him should have become a reality without enmity shrieking from the sides of Hindus and Muslims. Other than Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi also demanded emancipation. All three were equally important for the Hindus and the process of rejuvenation of Kashi could almost be finished under the Modi regime. But the conflict which is under the purview of the court on Gyan Vapi is yet to be resolved.

Political climate in the country does not insist on one more movement. The BJP kept itself out of the entire scenario in the beginning but later became calculative and found chances of fortunes breaking its floodgates of insignificance. It decided to drive its organizational acumen to directly enhance the movement while mixing it with spirituality and politics. The flavor it discovered was well received. The party, in its National Executive meeting at Palampur in Himachal Pradesh in June 1989 decided to officially launch its involvement in the movement. The movement caught fire when the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) in September 1989 announced its plan to carry consecrated bricks from across the country for the shilanyas (the foundation laying) at Ayodhya. A soft breeze at that began to turn into a terrible storm with a large segment of the country's population supporting and mobilizing the cause that was buried under the dust of submissiveness and a lethargic forgetfulness.



ment in the line of Ram Janmabhoomi. Neither Mathura nor Kashi would call for it. This could be better viewed from a precise political angle. Through the transformation of the agitation into an earth shattering sensation all over the country, Ayodhya held the real sense of necessity and the fight for the shrine gained Himalayan strength. Veterans in the BJP discovered future prospects as its basic ideological leaning remained with Hindutva. Though not suddenly, the party's involvement in the movement had made it a recognizable partner that jumped into the fray for a holy temple for Lord Ram in his birthplace in the same way as Kaaba in Mecca has for Muslims worldwide. This was mainly because the parties that existed in India those days chose not to directly be involved in it.

Obviously, the Congress party which ruled the country for decades had failed to respond to what the sleeping souls of the Hindu population had been demanding. An aspirational political class emerged from the classic calculative move of the BJP with its firm belief that the emancipation of Ayodhya was possible only if the BJP came to power. Its subsequent manifestos decreed its vision and mission for the same. Undoubtedly, the party was slowly rising from the debris of its failures, piling more and more bargaining power in its political exchequer.

Elections to the 9th Lok Sabha were held in November 1989 and the results threw the ruling Congress out of power with the Janata Dal emerging as the largest single party and V.P. Singh with the help of the BJP placed at the helm. In its meticulously calculated move, the BJP with its veteran L.K. Advani mounting on the chariot started the Ram Rath Yatra from Somnath in Gujarat to Ayodhya. Ever since the consecrated bricks were being carried to Ayodhya by the VHP, the Rath Yatra further pushed the BJP into a more advantageous position. Hundreds of villages and millions of villagers found a spiritual reason behind the politically motivated Rath Yatra by L.K. Advani. The party could convince the electorates across the country to principally believe that the BJP's intervention would make the 'Mandir dream' materialize.

Ultimately, an angry mob toppled the dilapidated controversial building into dust on 6 December 1992, bringing the questionable social cohesion of India into the attention of the world and Political

flip flops and rise and fall of governments followed. The movement also burst into instances of chaos and skirmishes and agony as it unfolded.

January 22, 2024 is going to be crucial for the BJP and its opposition. While BJP has reasons to celebrate the opposition is yet to make up its mind. Having completed a decade in the government, the party and its most popular leader are going to seek a hat trick opportunity this time. What needs to be seen is the impact of the Ram Temple, the plank that the BJP kicked off most of its political campaigns. Would the inauguration of the temple give the party a "what next" moment? Elated with its accomplishment but devoid of a fresh subject that could single handedly alter the electoral arithmetic in India, the BJP is least likely to once again harp on to an issue in line with Ayodhya. It is not fair to conclude that the party would run short of fresh topics to entice the electorate. It has enough stars in the sky to finger-point, most of them shining bright and effervescent with its successful initiatives.

A feeble consolidation of the opposition preoccupied with biting lumps out of each other and with its withering aspirations might further light up the saffron party's hat trick comeback. And Rahul Gandhi, the scion of the principal opposition would have shrunk into a dwarf size distant shadow in front of Modi, who would initiate the consecration of the temple with his unquestionable spiritual grandeur. However, who would Lord Ram stand by this time would be an interesting moment to wait and watch. (The author is a freelance journalist who can be reached at mrlalu30@gmail.com)

Israeli genocide is on in Gaza strip as super powers play geopolitical games

By: Nitya Chakraborty

The Israeli-Hamas war entered its 43rd day on Saturday as the battle has turned by now one sided with Israeli defence forces going all out in bombing the Gaza strip including the civilian areas and the hospitals in the name of eliminating the Hamas militants who launched the 'terror' attack on Israelis including civilians on October 7. As on November 17, the death toll of Palestinians totalled more than 11,400 and the injured around 30,000.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backed by the unambiguous support from United States President Joe Biden has openly declared that there would be no halt to the Israeli attacks till the complete elimination of the Hamas forces. In the process, what has happened is the killing of the civilians, especially women and children who account for 70 per cent of the death toll, according to the United Nations agencies. Out of the 28 hospitals in Gaza strip, 18 have been shut down due to the unprecedented shortage of medicines and cut off of power and water, while ten hospitals are functioning in a truncated manner without having the minimum necessity including oxygen cylinders.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) director general was virtually in tears on Friday in TV when he said that unless the ceasefire is implemented and normal medical supplies reach the Gaza residents under seize, thousands would die without treatment. In the biggest Al-Shifa Hospital, all the ICU patients died in the last two days due to the non-availability of the essential medical devices.

What is the military situation right now? On October 7 Hamas attacked the Israelis and as per the Israeli Government statement, 1200 were killed including 300 soldiers. Since then, in the last 43 days, the widespread rocket and bomb attacks at the Hamas hideouts, many of which are in the civilian areas, led to lot of destruction of Hamas weapons including sophisticated rocketry, but the number of Hamas soldiers killed had not been more. One military estimate put at less than six hundred.

Hamas has a fighting strength of 30,000 including 6,000 super fighters at whom the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have targeted. In the last two weeks, the US agencies have frozen the accounts of some of the outfits abroad, including those in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Algeria and even the US. The supplies of new sophisticated weapons to Hamas have been stopped as a result.

The Hamas fighters are dedicated but the Israelis are using the latest high level weaponry and targeted rocketry and that has been used to identify the tunnels built by Hamas over the years to face any future Israeli attack. Now, those tunnels have become vulnerable as IDF through its highly sophisticated mechanism have been able to identify the various parts of the tunnel. Hamas fighters, at the moment are at the receiving end of the IDF which is getting constant supplies from the US pentagon.

For Prime Minister Netanyahu, the October 7 attack gave him the opportunity to turn Palestine into a vassal state of Israel. The far right leader took full advantage of his people's sentiments after the horrific killing of civilians including those attending a programme in a music hall and opted for implementing a full scale annihilation programme of Hamas militants. The



entire defence forces are equally motivated to take the revenge against Hamas, thereby against Gaza residents in full. Some UN observers who talked to the Israeli officers were amazed to hear them talking of total annihilation of Hamas. Netanyahu will not opt for ceasefire unless he is compelled by big power, mainly the USA.

The United Nations bodies excepting the Security Council have passed resolutions calling for ceasefire. The WHO and other bodies are just crying for the end of the genocide of the civilians, but who cares. The UN is toothless as usual. Israel is caring little for UN sermons since the US is backing. Other western nations are more or less supporting Israeli position pointing at the viciousness of Hamas attack.

As regards China and Russia, both have their own geopolitical games where the Palestinian tragedy gets backyard treatment compared to their respective bilateral relations with the USA. Chinese President Xi Jinping had a four hour meeting with US President Joe Biden on November 15 in San Francisco. The Chinese leader was focusing on making the point that this planet is large enough to accommodate two super powers. Xi talked in general terms about the Israeli-Hamas war. No report was there that the Chinese president put much pressure on the US president for persuading Netanyahu to declare immediate ceasefire.

Significantly, October 7 was the 71st birthday of the Russian President Vladimir Putin. He was busy in his festivities during the day. He reacted three days later but that was more against the USA rather than Israel. President Putin is looking at the possibility of US failure in the West Asian region and the prospect of Russia filling up the part of the gap. Russia is in the process of improving its bilateral relations with Israel in the recent years. It does not welcome any sudden deterioration in its relations with Israel. Russia is not expected to render any assistance to Hamas directly. Putin can use Iran for facilitating some help, if needed.

Overall, Palestinians have been left in the lurch by both Hamas and their friendly nations including two big powers. Gaza has a population of 2.3 million. Out of this, more than 1.2 million have been displaced. The remaining population will face the brunt of the Israeli attacks if the Israeli forces are allowed a free hand to operate in Gaza strip. Up to now, Palestine people have paid a heavy price for the gross error of Hamas militants. The retaliation by the Israelis has been much more in terms of the killings.

Only a few of the Global South countries have shown the guts to take some action against Israel government. South Africa has referred Israel to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for an investigation into alleged war crimes committed in Gaza. President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Thursday. This statement of crucial geopolitical importance came as the illegal Israeli assault on the largest hospital in Gaza took place. Israel said that the command centre was housed in the hospital premises but so far, the IDF could not find any such site. This was a sort of repetition of the scenario that happened with the US bombing of Baghdad in 2003 on the plea that the nuclear bomb materials were hidden in a specific place. Finally, the US troops could not find any such thing but the massacre was already committed.

South African lawmakers agreed to a motion tabled by the Economic Freedom Fighters opposition party and supported by the ruling African National Congress on calling for the closure of the Israeli embassy in South Africa and the cutting of all diplomatic ties with the country until it agrees to a ceasefire in Gaza. President Ramaphosa said that the Government went ahead with the motion because the government and the African National Congress believed that Israel had committed war crimes.

Brazilian President Lula also strongly warned Israel and made fervent call for immediate ceasefire. Other left wing Latin American regimes including Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, Bolivia, Guatemala and Chile have instructed their respective ambassadors to the UN to work for immediate ceasefire. As against this strong moves by some of the global south countries, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, even in his last statement on Friday at the Global South meeting talked of stopping civilian casualties, but did not mention that Israel was mainly responsible for the civilian killings including bombing the hospitals full of patients. PM was acting as a full-fledged ally of the US these days.

Right now, every day's delay in ceasefire means death of few hundreds more Palestinians. Massive pressure has to be built on the US president and his accomplices in the West for persuading the Prime Minister Netanyahu to agree to immediate ceasefire and avoid further genocide of the innocent residents of Gaza strip. Netanyahu will not listen to anybody excepting President Biden.

If ceasefire does not take place within next few days, it is going to be a humanitarian disaster all the way. (IPA Service)

Navigating the maze of India's abortion realities

By: Tarini Kakkar

With a curtain of stigma pulled over the topic, abortion, despite being an essential aspect of reproductive health, is talked about in hushed tones and whispers. With stringent laws on the term of pregnancies that women are allowed to terminate, India is ahead of a few countries and yet, still very behind in terms of the possible facilities and required aftercare related to abortion. Due to the country's deeply-ingrained culture of pushing sexual and reproductive healthcare issues to the backseat and gaps in the legal system's frameworks regarding the same, hindrances such as lack of information and awareness obstruct people's access to abortion services. The need to break the silence and taboo surrounding abortion and cultivate a society where it is no longer a topic draped in shame is ever-increasing.

The last century has seen the evolution of debate on abortions across the world. In the early 20th century, when abortion was criminalised in numerous countries and completely shunned by society, women would use unsafe procedures to terminate their pregnancies – ones that often posed fatal risks to their health. Around the 1960s, there was a political shift in the conversation of human rights caused by the Second Wave Feminist movement. As women fought for reproductive autonomy and accessibility to healthcare on the policy level, they were winning a simultaneous fight for equal pay, an end to domestic violence and distribution of housework and family responsibilities in the United States.

This led to a worldwide change in the perception of women's rights. Landmark cases such as Roe v. Wade, which, though now overturned, is still an extremely important example of advancements in the discussions on abortion in the past, led to legal changes and a certain level of protection of women. The constant battle between culture and religion against science played a major role in the 'debate' on abortion, and continues to raise questions related to morality and science. There is still no global consensus on abortion, as some countries continue to restrict access to safe healthcare facilities for abortion while others have taken steps towards ensuring legal and mental protection as well as other services for those requiring access to the same.

A look back at the timeline

In India, until the 1970s, abortion was punishable under Section 312 of the Indian Penal Code, with the repercussions being years of imprisonment and a heavy fine. Around 1964, the conversation around the liberalisation of abortion laws in India began and in 1971, The Medical Termination of Pregnancy

(MTP) Act was enforced. This act allowed abortion carried out by registered doctors under certain terms and conditions, permitting the termination of unwanted pregnancies for up to 20 weeks with the approval of one or more doctors. While it technically allowed abortions on the grounds of grave risk to the physical and mental health of women, unplanned pregnancies or pregnancies as a result of rape, any requests for abortions post the 20 week timeline were made subject to legal discussions. Amended in 2003 and then again in 2021 to allow medical termination of pregnancies for up to 24 weeks for special categories of women, the law has been seen as a step towards ensuring women's reproductive rights are protected.

However, the lack of clarity surrounding the outdated gestational limit (that many have argued for an extension for,) the conditions under which termination of a pregnancy should be allowed, the various interpretations of what exactly can be called a 'threat to life' and its need for an approval process from one or more medical practitioners has led to years of legal battles and contradictory verdicts due to this act. Additionally, the availability of safe and legal abortion services is not uniform across the country and the lack of protection towards ensuring the same in all areas results in disparities across the population, as the resource-constraint and rural areas face hardships in gaining access to these facilities.

Further, the lack of public awareness and education about the MTP Act, the issues related to anonymity and confidentiality in legal cases regarding the act and lastly, the fear caused by social discrimination and stigma are unignorable reasons that deter women from seeking abortion services. Cultural and religious beliefs that view abortion as morally unacceptable, deep-rooted patriarchal norms that suppress women's political power, embedded culture of 'What will people say' and ostracization, and lack of information about abortions that perpetuate myths about reproduction and sex all play a role in creating this stigma.

The lack of sex education and constant misrepresentation of reproductive issues even in the media also contribute to creating an image of abortion in India as an act that is inherently 'unethical' or against our culture. In these ways, the lack of accessibility of abortions, the potential social implications of alienation, and the constant misinformation surrounding the MTP Act have caused significant and unignorable detrimental impact on women's autonomy and safety. A recent decision in 2023 by the Supreme Court has brought the act back into the forefront of the news, and led our country to question the extent to

which reproductive autonomy lies with women today.

16/10/2023 – The SC's decision

In October 2023, the Supreme Court rejected a woman's plea to abort her pregnancy on the grounds that she had previously suffered from postpartum psychosis in 2022 and was also not in a position to raise a third child. Due to her pregnancy crossing the 26 week mark, the court noted that there was 'no immediate threat to the mother' and this was not a case of foetal abnormality, the two conditions to terminate a pregnancy at this point.

Despite AIIMS providing a confirmation that the petitioner had suffered from postpartum psychosis after her last pregnancy and the claim that she was not in a financial, emotional, or physical state to raise another child, the court ruled against an abortion, stating that the cost of all medical procedures would be borne by the state and the petitioner would retain the right of keeping the child, or giving it up for adoption.

Threat to life

The definition of a 'threat to life' should be defined as anything that poses a risk to one's safety and security, both physically and mentally. So why is it that severe implications to the petitioner's mental health are not considered a genuine threat to their safety in this case? In this case, despite medical opinions stating the fact that the petitioner's mental health is a threat to her wellbeing, the State seems to consider the unborn foetus more valuable than the life of the mother.

In this attempt to 'save' the foetus, the State reduces the autonomy of the mother and contributes to their declining economic, emotional, and mental state at the time of their request. This underscores the need for increased sensitivity towards ensuring that the law continues to place focus on safeguarding the health of women, rather than fixating on the 'protection' of the unborn foetus at the cost of the mother. Additionally, the implications this case has for future mothers is undeniable, making us question what the landscape of reproductive rights in the country will look like over the next few years. With over 25 million unsafe abortions taking place annually according to the WHO, with a major part of them being in developing countries, the Supreme Court's verdict may lead to fewer women approaching the State with requests for abortions and instead, carrying out illegal abortions that cause deaths and disabilities that are often preventable. The Court's current decision indicates reduced bodily autonomy for women, which upon continuation, may force women to seek out unsafe abortions – violating their human rights and risking their prosecution.

On one hand, India's legal framework for abortion, as outlined in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, can be considered a step in the right direction for recognizing reproductive autonomy to a great extent. Despite the deep-rooted religious and moral debate and lack of gender sensitivity in the country, the act provides a relatively supportive legal environment for abortion. However, with its restrictions regarding the 20 week gestation period and its lack of recognition for the need for literacy about abortion services, there is a long way for it to go. In contrast, countries such as Canada and the Netherlands offer much longer periods of gestation to provide full autonomy to the mother.

Similar steps must be taken in India to ensure that the MTP Act is comprehensive and provides adequate support to those who wish to terminate their pregnancy, regardless of what their reason may be. Introducing a longer gestation period under which an abortion is allowed is just one possible solution – the accessibility of abortion services must also be made easier, beginning with changes in the requirement of 'approval' from multiple practitioners and the introduction of more approved facilities. Further, the need for abortion healthcare education and awareness programs has never been more stark. Literacy plays a crucial role in empowerment, and fulfilling the citizens' democratic right of making informed decisions about their health. With the cultural and economic climate of India, which varies from area to area, the importance of the same cannot be ignored – regardless of their financial or social status, every single person must be informed of their reproductive rights and the legal framework which protects them so they can access these services.

This awareness will also break the barrier of social stigma by dispelling misconceptions, challenging stereotypes, and promoting healthy discussions on abortion. Additionally, this will equip the people with the information required to physically, mentally, and emotionally protect their wellbeing and navigate the decision. This awareness will also have an impressive impact on contributing to public health by reducing the rates of fatal unsafe abortions and mortality of mothers due to unsafe practices. Intrinsically connected with reproductive autonomy and gender justice, everyone should have the right to make their own reproductive decisions without the fear of punishment or prosecution. Access to safe abortion services, aftercare, and legal protection must retain its position as a human right, and we must continue to protect the welfare of those seeking abortions in the future. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

The Children of the Olive Branches

By: Malvika Sharma

As the world wakes up to the horrendous violence unleashed on the people of Gaza by the state of Israel through its ongoing genocidal siege, the pictures are a stark reminder to the world, put in terms of UNICEF spokesperson James Elder, that "Gaza has become a graveyard for children and a living hell for others". While the alarm bells have been ringing worldwide for an immediate ceasefire, the live telecast of the barbarity meted out to innocent lives, land, water, air, cannot at all be put to words. From carpet-bombing of refugee camps, to residential compounds, schools, hospitals and places of worship sheltering people, Gaza has seen it all as collective-punishment by the Israeli-state in response to the October 7 attack by Hamas militants Israeli civilians. Nowhere is safe in Gaza at the moment, and people struggle to keep their families and children alive while simultaneously coping with the huge lack of medical and food supplies, along with the growing burden this adds on healthcare providers and first-responders, every day.

Gaza has become the purgatory of all good that has been left of humankind. The arrogance of war, blockades and borders has been so nerve-wrecking that people are strangled, forcibly locked up in a strip, their flesh pounded to smithereens, with no immediate options for rescue and recovery. The massacre is a humanitarian disaster especially for children, as parents have taken to writing the names and whereabouts of children on their bodies lest they should die anonymously.

All this has been unfolding in the season of olive-picking, otherwise known to be a venerated time, a season of cultural harvest, that starts in October every year and goes on till December. Over the past many years, olive harvesting has transformed into a struggle for Palestinians due to continuing and growing settler attacks that hamper their access to fields, planting, caring and harvesting olive trees. Attacks on Palestinians are simultaneously occurring in the occupied West Bank as Gaza is under siege right now. A few days ago, in another round of settler-violence many Palestinians were killed with Israelis particularly attacking farmers harvesting olives.

Volunteers from around the world have been arriving in Palestine to pay 'witness' to harvesting every year, an act believed to assist farmers in wake of rising threats from settlers especially in those Palestinian fields located in close proximity to illegal Israeli-settlements. Olives have always been a sacred fruit, in Islam, Christianity, Judaism – the prominent religions of the three people in the region, since ancient times. A lot of folklore, myths and stories associated with olives are present in key religious books of the three religions, making it a tree of peace, a divine sacred fruit, whose oil burns the divine light.

The scriptures in Christianity, especially the gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke, records the significance of the Mount of Olives, one of the peaks in Jerusalem, separating the Temple Mount/ Dome of the Rock from the Judea-desert on the eastern side.

Mount of Olives becomes this significant place that is frequented by Jesus especially during the last leg of his journey to the cross. He is found praying, weeping in anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane along with his disciples after the last supper, in an act of what came to be seen as the passion, brought to life by the imaginations of various key artists in history, such as in, 'The Agony of the Garden' painted by various artists in different times. Jesus is betrayed by Judas, one of his disciples, who tells on him and arrives with an army of priests, elites and soldiers from Jerusalem to capture him, on this very mount.

For Jews, it is the Mount of Anointment, as the pressed oil from its olives was used to anoint Israelite kings in the ancient past. A large part of the mount is covered with what is today known as the Jewish cemetery, and most of the Jews want to be buried here for the sake of several scriptural prophecies their faith revolves around.

Olives are also considered a blessed fruit in Islam. Prophet is believed to have been very fond of olives and in fact encouraged people to grow, use and cherish the tree's fruits, especially applauding the oil's medicinal values. In, surah-an-noor, the lamp that guides humankind towards light in darkness, is lit by the oil of the blessed tree.

The spread of olive trees around the Mediterranean and in the rest of the world is believed to have occurred from Asia Minor, Levant, Egypt and Palestine (trees like Noah's sisters in Lebanon and Al-Badawi in Palestine are estimated to be 6000 to 2000 years old). Mount Sinai in Egypt, sacred to all three Abrahamic religions, has a lot of olive tree scriptural references. The sixth century St. Catherine's monastery at the northern foot of Sinai has olive trees growing in its courtyard. Another verse in Quran, surah-at-tin, speaks of zaytoun at tur-Sinai, olives at mount Sinai, "by the fig and the olives..."

The dove with an olive branch in

Genesis, has become a symbol of reconciliation between the human and the divine. In the old-testament, Noah, now having taken refuge in the ark for seven months, sends the birds, a raven and a dove to go see if the waters of the flood had subsided. The raven never returned and kept flying until dry land emerged at the end of the floods. The dove does return without finding dry land anywhere.

After seven days, he sends the dove out again, only this time she returns with an olive-twig in her beak, signalling Noah that the waters have receded, and living creatures can finally come out of the ark and repopulate the earth. It symbolises the beginnings of life after deluge akin to life and growth emerging after the darkness, the earth becoming habitable and peaceful again.

Olives have always been a part of Palestinian economic trade and sustenance besides being a shared cultural entity. They continue to be so in both Palestinian and Israeli societies. The cultivators of olives, the Palestinian farmers who owned most of the lands with olive-groves until 1947, had always shared an extended kinship with the trees – some of trees being hundreds and thousands of years in age – so much so that they look at them as no less than their kins, as one of their own, as families with whom they share an ancestral relation.

Apart from the socio-cultural investment where harvesting months have always been celebrated as festivities, with families taking time off work and gathering to pick olives together for weeks. The emotional and sentimental investment in olive-trees became more pronounced as the settler attacks on farmers increased manifold in the last few decades.

Olive-trees, since then have become symbol of resilience, attachment and belonging, one without which the idea of home/homeland cannot be complete. People have been fighting legal battles to get a permit issued in their names so that they can access land that belongs to them but one that lay inaccessible by separation walls, settler only roads, proximity with the settlements and so on.

The planting, grooming and harvesting season that once was a source of shared cultural and historic importance has now become a source of anxiety. This has led to many social organizations around the world, and in Israel and West Bank, getting involved through volunteering. People from around the world come during the harvest season and stay with the families for weeks, picking olives and paying 'witness' to any sort of settler violence and intimidation that Palestinians farmers are no now highly exposed to.

Amidst all of this, olives continue to thrive as a cultural symbol of three people who belong to one land and have shared the socio-cultural and religious significance of trees that are rendered blessed in each of their scriptures. It is, as if, the olive trees have stood in testimony to shared multi-religious co-existence as three religions and a shared civilisation flourished in the region in the ancient, Byzantine and Roman times till that of Ottomans.

People across religions have a bond with them, both religious and psychological, and the cultural economic value of these trees continues to shape and inform people both in Israel and Palestine, of a past that nurtured natural and human, material and immaterial life equally. By continuing to engage in the 'us vs them' discourse, the settler violence is particularly harming these trees and causing a forced displacement of Palestinians and is completely blind to their own history that regards olive trees as sacred.

Forms of eco-cultural attachments are widely found especially in displaced populations who are made to live like refugees in and outside their homelands. The material concrete stories of land, home, fields, rivers, wind, clothes, food, become bed-time stories that each new generation grows up with. The idea of home, though lost, is not forgotten but instead becomes stronger and alive as years pass by. Nowhere has this been more profound than in the post-colonial Partition and separation stories.

The children of Partition in South Asia have been living with these every day, especially those of us who belong to the families of the displaced. Stories in my own life have been shaping my idea of home for a very long time now. The sense of belonging gets rooted firmly in the ecological, cultural and material belongings, and myths, folktales and scriptural stories, all have a profound role in shaping attachments across borders and barriers, unnaturally and artificially created to keep people separated.

The idea of 'a sentient being' is rooted in 'an eco-cultural being' as much as it is rooted in other identity markers and expressions such as language, religion, gender, territory etc. For Palestinians, who have been at the receiving end of so much violence, the trees have always been their children, a part of their everyday lives. So much so that it shapes not only their idea of home, but also their idea of resistance. (Courtesy: The Wire)

What are the 6 essential nutrients?

By: Jenna Fletcher

Essential nutrients are crucial in supporting a person's reproduction, good health, and growth. These essential nutrients are divided into two categories: micronutrients and macronutrients. Micronutrients are nutrients that a person needs in small doses. Micronutrients consist of vitamins and minerals. Although the body only needs small amounts of them, a deficiency can cause ill health. Macronutrients are nutrients that a person needs in larger amounts. Macronutrients include water, protein, carbohydrates, and fats.

Vitamins

A diet rich in vegetable, fruits, and lean proteins should provide a person with plenty of vitamins. Vitamins are micronutrients that offer a range of health benefits, including:

- boosting the immune system
- helping prevent or delay certain cancers, such as prostate cancer
- strengthening teeth and bones
- aiding calcium absorption
- maintaining healthy skin
- helping the body metabolize proteins and carbs
- supporting healthy blood
- aiding brain and nervous system functioning

There are 13 essential vitamins that nutritionists divide into two groups: fat soluble and water soluble.

Fat soluble vitamins are:

- vitamin A
 - vitamin D
 - vitamin E
 - vitamin K
- Water soluble vitamins are:
- vitamin B-1 (thiamine)
 - vitamin B-12 (cyanocobalamin)
 - vitamin B-6
 - vitamin B-2 (riboflavin)
 - vitamin B-5 (pantothenic acid)
 - vitamin B-3 (niacin)
 - vitamin B-9 (folate, folic acid)
 - vitamin B-7 (biotin)
 - vitamin C

Typically, a person who eats a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, and lean proteins can get all the

vitamins they need in their food. However, those who eat less fruit and vegetables, and those with digestive conditions may need to take a vitamin supplement to reduce or avoid a deficiency.

Minerals

Minerals are the second type of micronutrients. There are two groups of minerals: major and trace minerals. The body needs a balance of minerals from both groups for optimal health.

Major minerals are:

- magnesium
- calcium
- phosphorus
- sulfur
- sodium
- potassium
- chloride

Major minerals help the body to do the following:

- balance water levels
- maintain healthy skin, hair, and nails
- improve bone health

Trace minerals are:

- iron
- selenium
- zinc
- manganese
- chromium
- copper
- iodine
- fluoride
- molybdenum

Trace minerals help with:

- strengthening bones
- preventing tooth decay
- aiding in blood clotting
- helping to carry oxygen
- supporting the immune system

- supporting healthy blood pressure

A person can ensure they consume enough minerals by including the following foods in their diet.

- red meats (limit their use and choose lean cuts)
- seafood
- iodized table salt (less than 2,300 milligrams a day)
- milk and other dairy products
- nuts and seeds
- vegetables
- leafy greens
- fruits
- poultry
- fortified bread and cereals
- egg yolks
- whole grains



- beans and legumes

Protein

Protein is a macronutrient that every cell in the body needs to function properly.

Proteins carry out a variety of functions, including:

- ensuring the growth and development of muscles, bones, hair, and skin
- forming antibodies, hormones, and other essential substances
- serving as a fuel source for cells and tissues when needed

The following foods are good sources of protein:

- red meats (limit their use and choose lean cuts)
- poultry, including chicken and turkey
- fish and other seafood
- beans and legumes
- eggs
- dairy products
- soy
- nuts
- some grains, including quinoa

Although meats and fish tend to contain the highest levels of protein, vegans and vegetarians can get enough protein from various plant products.

Fats

People often associate high fat foods with bad health. However, a person needs certain fats to help maintain optimal health. Fats provide the body with energy and help it carry out a range of functions. However, it is essential to consume healthful fats, such as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats and limit or avoid saturated and trans fats. Healthful fats help with the following functions:

- cell growth
- blood clotting
- building new cells
- reducing the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes
- muscle movement

- balance blood sugar
- brain functioning
- mineral and vitamin absorption
- hormone production
- immune function

According to recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a person should consume 20–35% of their calories from healthful fats. A person can find healthful fats in several foods, including:

- nuts
- fish, such as salmon & tuna
- vegetable oils
- seeds

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are essential to the body. They are sugars or starches that provide energy for all the cells and tissues in the body.

There are two different types of carbohydrates: simple and complex. People should limit their intake of simple carbohydrates, such as white bread, pasta, and rice. However, the body needs complex carbohydrates to support the following:

- the immune system
- brain function
- the nervous system
- energy to perform tasks
- digestive function

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend a person consumes 45–65% of their daily calories from complex carbohydrates. The following foods contain complex carbohydrates:

- quinoa
- brown rice
- vegetables
- whole grain pasta, bread, and other baked goods
- oatmeal
- fruits
- barley

People should avoid overly processed products that contain bleached, white flour, and foods with added sugar.

Water

Water is probably the most important essential nutrient that a person needs. A person can only survive a few days without consuming water. Even slight dehydration can cause headaches and impaired physical and mental functioning. The human body is made up of mostly water, and every cell requires water to function. Water helps with several functions, including:

- flushing toxins out
- shock absorption
- transporting nutrients
- preventing constipation
- lubrication
- hydration

The best source for water is to drink natural, unsweetened water from the tap or bottled sources. For people who do not like the taste of plain water, they can add a squeeze of lemon or other citrus fruits.

Also, a person can get extra water by consuming fruits that contain a large amount of water.

People should avoid getting their water intake from sugary drinks. Sugary drinks include sweetened teas, coffees, soda, lemonade, and fruit juices.

A person needs to consume all six types of essential nutrients to ensure the best possible health. These nutrients support vital functions, including growth, the immune, the central nervous system, and preventing disease.

Typically, a person who eats a healthful, balanced diet that includes lean proteins, vegetables, fruits, complex carbohydrates, and water will get the nutrients they need.

People with digestive issues, who take certain medications, or have other conditions may require supplements to help them get the body's essential nutrients.

An individual should speak to their doctor about any medical conditions and the medications they are taking before they start to take any supplements. Also, they may want to see a dietitian or nutritionist to discuss their nutritional intake before they begin taking any supplements. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

Seoul warns North Korea not to launch a spy satellite

'2018 peace deal could be suspended'

SEOUL, Nov 20: South Korea's military warned North Korea not to go ahead with its planned spy satellite launch, suggesting on Monday that Seoul could suspend an inter-Korean peace deal and resume frontline aerial surveillance in retaliation for a launch.

North Korea failed in its first two attempts to put a military spy satellite into orbit earlier this year and didn't follow through with a vow to make a third attempt in October. South Korean officials said the delay was likely because North Korea is receiving Russian technological assistance and that the North could conduct a launch in coming days. Senior South Korean military officer Kang Hopil urged North Korea to cancel its third launch attempt immediately.

"Our military will come up with necessary measures to protect the lives and safety of the people, if North Korea pushes ahead with a military spy satellite launch despite our warning," Kang said in a televised statement.

South Korean Defence Minister Shin Wonsik said in an interview with public broadcaster KBS on Sunday the launch was expected later this month and that South Korean and US authorities were monitoring North Korea's moves.

The UN Security Council bans any satellite launches by North Korea because it views them as a disguised test of its missile technology. Kang said while North



Korea needs a spy satellite to improve its monitoring of South Korea, its launch is also aimed at bolstering its long-range missile programme.

South Korea has accused North Korea of receiving Russian technologies to enhance its nuclear and other military capabilities in return for supplying conventional arms to support Russia's war in Ukraine. Both Moscow and Pyongyang have dismissed as groundless the alleged arms transfer deal, but both nations — locked in separate, protracted security tensions with the United States — have been openly pushing to expand bilateral cooperation.

In September, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un travelled to Russia and met President Vladimir Putin in Cosmodrome, Russia's most important domestic launch

centre. When Putin was asked by Russia's state media whether his country would help the North build satellites, he said that "that's why we have come here. The (North Korean) leader shows keen interest in rocket technology."

Kang, the South Korean officer, didn't explicitly say what retaliatory steps South Korea could take if North Korea makes a third launch. But he strongly hinted the steps could include a suspension of 2018 inter-Korean military agreements requiring both Koreas to halt aerial surveillance activities and live-firing drills along their tense border.

Kang asserted that North Korea has already violated the 2018 agreement numerous times. He cited the North's destruction of an unoccupied inter-Korean liaison office in North Korea, flying

drones into South Korean territory and staging firing drills along the maritime border.

"Despite the North's repeated violations of the agreement, our military has been patiently abiding by clauses in the military agreement, but that has caused considerable problems in our military's readiness," Kang said.

He said South Korea has avoided firing exercises at a buffer zone created near the rivals' disputed western sea boundary. Kang said South Korea's operation of aerial reconnaissance assets designed to monitor North Korea's forward-deployed artillery guns and other equipment has been significantly restricted due to the 2018 deal as well.

The military deal, reached during a short-lived rapprochement between South Korea's then liberal President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, created buffer zones along land and sea boundaries and no-fly zones above the border to prevent accidental clashes.

Relations between the rivals have later strained after the breakdown of broader nuclear diplomacy between Kim and then US President Donald Trump in 2019. North Korea has since been focusing on enlarging its nuclear arsenal, prompting South Korea's current, conservative president, Yoon Suk Yeol, to expand military drills with the United States. (AP)

China welcomes Arab and Muslim foreign ministers for talks on ending the war in Gaza

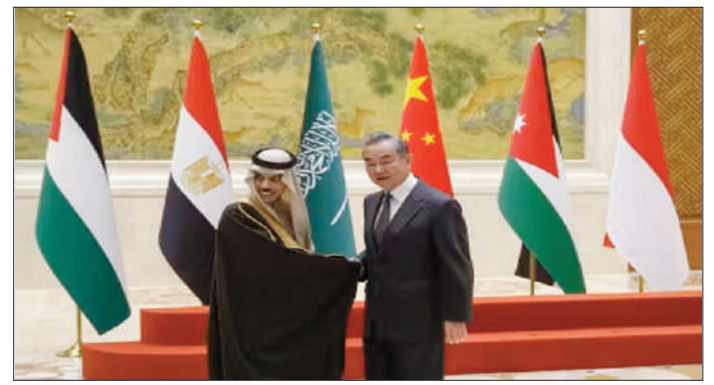
BEIJING, Nov 20: China's top diplomat welcomed four Arab foreign ministers and the Indonesian one to Beijing on Monday, saying his country would work with "our brothers and sisters" in the Arab and Islamic world to try to end the war in Gaza as soon as possible.

The ministers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and Indonesia chose to start a tour of world capitals in Beijing, a testament to both China's growing geopolitical influence and its longstanding support for the Palestinians.

Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi told the foreign diplomats that their decision to start in Beijing shows their high level of trust in his nation.

"China is a good friend and brother of Arab and Islamic countries," Wang said in opening remarks at a state guest house before their talks began. "We have always firmly safeguarded the legitimate rights and interests of Arab (and) Islamic countries and have always firmly supported the just cause of the Palestinian people."

China has long backed the Palestinians and been quick to denounce Israel over its settlements in the occupied territories. It has not criticised the initial Hamas attack on October 7 — which killed about 1,200 people — while the United States and others have called it an act of terrorism. However, China does have growing economic ties with Israel. The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, called for an immediate cease-fire and the entry of humanitarian aid and relief to the Gaza Strip.



"There are still dangerous developments ahead of us and an urgent humanitarian crisis that requires an international mobilization to deal with and counter it," he said.

He added they appreciated the resolution issued by the United Nations Security Council, calling for urgent and extended humanitarian pauses in Gaza, "but we still need more efforts and cooperation."

China — the world's second-largest economy after the US — has become increasingly outspoken on international affairs and even gotten directly involved in some recently, albeit cautiously. In March, Beijing helped broker an agreement that saw Saudi Arabia and Iran reestablish ties after seven years of tension in a role previously reserved for longtime global heavyweights like the US and Russia. The five foreign ministers will visit a number of capitals in an effort to pursue a cease-fire, get aid into Gaza and end the war, Prince Faisal said last weekend. The secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Hissein Brahim Taha, is also accompanying them to Beijing. Israel's retaliatory strikes on the

Gaza Strip have so far killed more than 11,500 people, according to Palestinian health authorities. Another 2,700 have been reported missing, believed buried in rubble.

"This isn't Israel's first war against the Palestinian people," said Riyad Al-Maliki, the Palestinian Authority foreign minister. "However, Israel wants this to be its last war, where it takes full control of the Palestinian people's presence on what's left of the historical land of Palestine."

Israel's ambassador to China, Irit Ben-Abba, said Monday, that her country is allowing sufficient humanitarian aid into Gaza in collaboration with international organizations and that "putting pressure on Israel in this regard is politically motivated and is not conducive to the humanitarian assistance which is needed."

She also said that they hoped for "no one-sided" resolution by the Security Council and that they expected a clear statement calling for the "unconditional release of the 240 hostages" who were abducted by Hamas during its attacks, "rather than calling for a cease-fire." (AP)

Pak PM Kakar says those involved in attacks on military installations on May 9 must not go unpunished

ISLAMABAD, Nov 20: Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has said that those involved in the unprecedented attacks on security installations on May 9 this year must not go unpunished and should be tried by military courts. In an interview with Geo News on Sunday, Kakar referred to the May 9 incidents in Pakistan following the arrest of former prime minister Imran Khan in an alleged corruption case.

Kakar said that if the people attack an institution, which is responsible for saving the country from anarchy, they should be tried in military courts as per the law.

On the government's appeal against the Supreme Court's decision to strike down military trials of civilians allegedly involved in the May 9 violence, Kakar said: "It is quite justified that if anybody attacked any military installation, he or she must be tried in military courts."

The prime minister also dispelled the impression that his government is biased against some political parties, underlining that holding general elections and handing over responsibilities to the elected government was his utmost priority.

Reacting to concerns voiced by two major political parties about the "transparency" of the upcoming general election in Pakistan, Kakar on Sunday night said the "victim card" could be a "narrative" of any political party.

He said political parties normally tried to attract their voters in different ways and such allegations might be their tactics.

Pakistan is going to the polls on February 8 next year.

As the general elections draw closer, former prime minister Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and former president Asif Ali Zardari-led Pakistan People's Party (PPP) have repeatedly been complaining that they are being denied a level-playing field in the run-up to polls.

The two mainstream parties alleged the caretaker government was giving "preferential treatment" to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party and that attempts were being made to pave the way for PML-N's return to power.

Earlier, PPP Vice-President Bilawal

Bhutto-Zardari had complained about his party never receiving a level playing field, saying the PPP had been persistently voicing concerns regarding the absence of equal opportunities to prove itself ahead of the polls.

On the other hand, amid reports of minus Imran Khan elections, the PTI had also accused the interim government of denying them a level playing field.

The PTI chairman is behind bars in Adiala Jail and his party's leadership claims that they are not allowed to run even an election campaign.

In a bid to clear the air, Kakar in an interview with the Geo News on Sunday night said: "Holding the elections at the earliest is our utmost priority."

"We want to hand over the responsibilities to the [upcoming] elected government," he said.

Responding to a question about the allegations levelled against his government by the two mainstream parties, the premier asked: "What have we done that [a negative] impression is being given that we have a biased [attitude against] any political party?"

He asked if his government had "imprisoned the former prime minister [Imran Khan]?"

Kakar further clarified that the deposed prime minister — who was removed from office in April last year via a no-confidence motion — was apprehended before the caretaker setup was formed in August.

Khan, a cricketer-turned-politician was arrested from his Zaman Park residence in Lahore soon after being convicted in the Toshakhana case on August 5.

However, Kakar — a former senator and a leader of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) — took oath as the eighth caretaker prime minister of Pakistan on August 14. The premier said that Khan was legally arrested and facing the charges in the court.

Kakar said it would have been wrong had Khan been "acquitted of all the charges via a royal decree".

The caretaker prime minister said that they could not do so legally. "Think 10 times before hurling allegations," he added.

"The PTI chairman is safe in jail," he said, adding that it is their legal responsibility to ensure the safety of the incarcerated former premier.

"Nobody has personal enmity with the PTI chairman," Kakar said while rejecting reports claiming a threat to his life.

Responding to a question, he also rejected the allegations that the caretaker government was seeking to "take personal revenge" on 71-year-old Khan.

Like other political parties, PTI leaders are engaged in electioneering in their respective areas in the run-up to the February 8 polls, he added. In a strong message to the government in Kabul, Kakar asked the Afghan Taliban to decide whether they themselves would take action against those terrorists who were using their soil to carry out attacks in Pakistan or hand them over to Islamabad.

Terror activities in cash-strapped Pakistan have soared by 79 per cent during the first half of 2023, according to a statistical report released by the independent think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS).

These figures represent a staggering increase in militant attacks compared to the corresponding period last year.

Pakistan blamed the incumbent government in Kabul for the recent spike in terrorism in the country and asked the Taliban regime multiple times to stop the cross-border attacks and use of Afghan soil against the neighbouring country.

Kakar said the interim Taliban government's inaction over terror activities against Pakistan was unacceptable.

To a question about the rising tensions between Islamabad and Kabul, Kakar said: "My prime role is as a citizen of Pakistan and my loyalty is connected with the State."

Stressing the need for action against the terrorists, the prime minister said the Afghan government knew about the hideouts of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the war-torn country.

Speaking about the government's crackdown against illegal foreigners after the November 1 deadline, Kakar said tough decisions had to be taken to run the state affairs. (PTI)

More than 400,000 Afghans back home from Pak following crackdown on migrants

ISLAMABAD, Nov 20: More than 400,000 Afghans returned to their home country following the ongoing crackdown on illegal foreigners in the country, Pakistani authorities said Monday.

Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesperson of the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan, confirmed the number and told The Associated Press that the majority have been using the border crossings of Torkham and Spin Boldak to return home.

An estimated 1.7 million Afghans had been living in Pakistan when authorities announced its nationwide crackdown, saying that anyone without proper documents had to leave the country by October 31 or else get arrested.

However, Pakistani officials said the other 1.4 million Afghans registered as refugees need not worry as only people without proper documentation were sought after.

In the 1980s, millions of Afghans fled to neighboring Pakistan during the Soviet occupation of their country. The numbers witnessed a spike after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

Pakistan also introduced plans under which hundreds of thousands of residents in the southwestern border town of Chaman would need visas to cross between the two countries. They previously had special permits.

On Monday, hundreds briefly blocked a key road leading to the Chaman border, disrupting traffic and the repatriation of some of the Afghans.

Residents in Chaman have been protesting repeatedly, asking Pakistan to allow them to continue using the special permits for business purposes and to meet with relatives who live in the Afghan border city of Spin Boldak.

Since November 1, police in Pakistan have been going door-to-door to check migrants' documentation. Pakistani officials had said before that the crackdown involves all foreigners in the country, but most of those affected are Afghan nationals.

The latest development comes days after the World Health Organization warned that about 1.3 million Afghans were expected to return to their country of origin from Pakistan despite the onset of cold weather. Such expulsions have drawn widespread criticism from international and domestic human rights groups.

The Taliban-led administration in Afghanistan said it was providing shelter and food to returnees. (AP)

US defence secretary Austin makes unannounced visit to Ukraine

WASHINGTON, Nov 20: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin made an unannounced visit to Kyiv on Monday in a high-profile push to keep money and weapons flowing to Ukraine even as US and international resources are stretched by the new global risks raised by the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Austin, who travelled to Kyiv by train from Poland, is scheduled to meet with senior Ukrainian officials and publicly press Ukraine's urgent military needs as it enters another tough winter of fighting.

This is Austin's second trip to Kyiv, but he's making it under far different circumstances. His first visit occurred in April 2022, just two months after Russia's large-scale invasion. At the time, Ukraine was riding a wave of global rage at Moscow's invasion, and Austin launched an international effort that now sees 50 countries meet monthly to coordinate on what weapons, training and other support could be pushed to Kyiv.

"I'm here today to deliver an important message — the United States will continue to stand with Ukraine in their fight for freedom against Russia's aggression, both now and into the future," Austin posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

But the conflict in Gaza could pull attention and resources from the Ukraine fight. The US has worked feverishly since the October 7 attacks by Hamas on Israel, and the weeks of devastating bombardment on Gaza by Israel that has followed, killing more than 10,000 civilians, to keep those attacks from turning into a regional war. The US has already committed two carrier strike groups, scores of fighter jets and thousands of US personnel to the Middle East, and has had to shift its force posture and conduct airstrikes against Iranian-backed militant groups who are now hitting US bases in Iraq and Syria on a regular basis.

To date, Ukraine has received more USD 44 billion from the US and more than USD 35 billion from other allies in weapons, ranging from millions of bullets to air defence systems, ad-

vanced European and US battle tanks and, finally, pledges for F-16 fighter jets.

But Ukraine still needs more, and after almost 20 months of shipping arms to Ukraine, cracks are beginning to show. Some European countries such as Poland have scaled back support, noting their need to maintain adequate fighting ability to defend themselves. Ukrainian officials and publicly press Ukraine's urgent military needs as it enters another tough winter of fighting. Further complicating the support is that the Pentagon has only a dwindling amount of money left in this year's budget to keep sending weapons to Ukraine, and Congress is months late on getting a new budget passed and has not taken up a supplemental spending package that would include Ukraine aid.

Since the war began in February 2022, the US has provided more than USD 44.2 billion in weapons to Ukraine, but the funding is nearly gone. The Pentagon can send about USD 5 billion more in weapons and equipment from its own stocks. But it only has about USD 1 billion in funding to replace those stocks. As a result, recent announcements of weapons support have been of much smaller dollar amounts than in months past. (AP)

However, as winter sets in it will become more difficult for either side to make large gains due to ground conditions. That could further work against Ukraine if US lawmakers perceive there's time to wait before more funds are needed.

Further complicating the support is that the Pentagon has only a dwindling amount of money left in this year's budget to keep sending weapons to Ukraine, and Congress is months late on getting a new budget passed and has not taken up a supplemental spending package that would include Ukraine aid.

Storm sinks cargo ship; 1 dead, 11 missing

ANKARA, Nov 20: Turkish rescuers on Monday recovered the body of a crew member of a cargo ship that sank off Turkey's Black Sea coast in severe storms, officials said. Eleven other crew were reported missing. The Turkish-flagged Kalkameller sank on Sunday after hitting a breakwater outside the harbor off the town of Ereğli, some 200 kilometers (124 miles) east of Istanbul. Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said the vessel, which was on its way to the western Turkish port of Izmir, lashed into the breakwater several times before it sank. The search-and-rescue operation was delayed by several hours because of the severe weather. But as the condition eased, rescuers on Monday found the body of the ship's cook, Uraloglu said. The severe storms that hit northwestern Turkey caused widespread damage and disruption on Sunday, including the breakup of another cargo ship and the evacuation of a prison. (PTI)

Weeklong negotiations for landmark treaty to end plastic pollution close, marred in disagreements

NAIROBI, Nov 20: The latest round of negotiations to craft a treaty to end global plastic pollution closed late on Sunday after strained talks in Nairobi, Kenya, where delegates failed to reach a consensus on how to advance a draft of the treaty after a week of negotiations. Environmental advocates criticised the outcome of the weeklong United Nations-led meeting on plastic pollution, saying oil-producing countries successfully employed stalling tactics designed to weaken the treaty.

Delegates were expected to discuss a draft published in September that represented the views from the first two meetings. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for Plastics is mandated with creating the first international, legally binding treaty on plastic pollution in five rounds of negotiations.

Member states decided to move

forward with a revision of the draft, which has become longer during this third round of negotiations and will be even more difficult to advance, participants said. States also failed to reach a consensus on interessional work to discuss crucial parts of the draft to be done ahead of the fourth round of negotiations.

"These negotiations have so far failed to deliver on their promise," said Ana Lè Rocha, the director of the global plastics program at the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives. "The bullies of the negotiations pushed their way through, despite the majority countries, with leadership from the African Bloc and other nations in the Global South, in support of an ambitious treaty."

Throughout the week, delegates suggested options to strengthen proposed global rules

across the entire lifecycle of plastic from production to disposal.

A coalition of "high-ambition" governments led by Rwanda and Norway hope to eradicate plastic pollution by 2040 by having a treaty that guarantees interventions throughout the whole life cycle of plastics, including reducing output and restricting some chemicals used in the plastics industry.

But some oil-producing countries advocated for shifting previously agreed mandates of the treaty, like changing the focus from the full lifecycle of plastic to waste management, and having voluntary measures at national levels to fight plastic pollution, instead of global measures. Environmentalists disagree.

"The science is very clear, the data is very clear, and the moral imperative is very clear," said Graham Forbes, global plastics

campaign lead at Greenpeace. "You cannot solve the plastic pollution crisis if you do not massively cut plastic production."

But Stewart Harris, a spokesperson of the International Council of Chemical Associations, sees an opportunity for the treaty to accelerate circularity, or the reuse of plastics. He hoped the agreement will set up "something like a requirement for governments to establish circularity targets as part of their national action plans".

The world produces more than 430 million tons of plastic annually, and two thirds of that are products that are disposed of soon after use, becoming waste and, often getting into the human food chain, according to the United Nations. Global plastic waste is expected to nearly triple by 2060, according to the Organ-

isation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Plastics are often made from oil, or other planet-warming fossil fuels.

More than 1,900 participants from 161 countries, including government officials, representatives of intergovernmental organisations, and civil society members, took part in the talks. A total of 143 lobbyists registered for the negotiations, according to an analysis by the Centre for International Environmental Law.

Tadesse Amara, co-chair of the International Pollutants Elimination Network, worried that lobbyists could "divert science from independent science to industry-based science" and "prevent the treaty from protecting human health in the environment".

This week's negotiations were the third of five rounds. The next talks will take place in Ottawa,

IRB jawan among 2 tribal men shot dead in Manipur; shutdown call in Kangpokpi district



IMPHAL, Nov 20: A security force personnel and his driver were shot dead by suspected members of the Imphal Valley-based terror groups in Kangpokpi district of Manipur on Monday, officials said here.

The duo were travelling in a vehicle when suspected terror group members belonging to the state's majority community carried out an ambush between Haraothel and Kobsha villages, the officials said.

One of the deceased was working with the India Reserve Battalion (IRB), the officials said.

The incident took place in an area adjacent to the Singda dam, which has become a hotspot for insurgent groups to target tribal community members during the ongoing ethnic violence in the northeastern state.

A tribal organisation claimed that the Kuki-Zo community people were attacked without provocation and declared a "shutdown" in Kangpokpi district.

The area witnessed several incidents of gunfight between armed villagers since the ethnic strife between Meitei and Kuki communities began in the northeastern state in early May.

Additional forces have been deployed in the area and a search is underway to arrest those involved in the incident, a police official said.

Condemning the "unprovoked attack" on the Kuki-Zo community people, the Kangpokpi-based Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU) declared an "emergency shutdown" in Kangpokpi district.

The COTU, at a meeting, also demanded that the government make arrangements for a separate administration for tribals.

More than 180 people have been killed since the violence erupted on May 3 after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

The Meitei account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts. (PTI)

ECI does not respect Mizo sentiments: Congress

AIZAWL, Nov 20: Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee on Monday slammed the Election Commission for not changing the date for counting votes cast in the state assembly poll despite numerous appeals and said it does not respect Mizo sentiments.

The Congress in a press release said that numerous appeals have been made by political parties, including it, to re-schedule the December 3 poll counting date as it falls on a Sunday, which is a sacred day for the majority Christians in Mizoram.

Blaming the Election Commission for its "deafening silence" on the issue and "disrespecting the sentiments of the Mizo people", it said the Congress felt that "injustice" is being done in Mizoram as the poll body had changed the polling date for Rajasthan due to a Hindu festival though it refused to do comply with similar requests made in the north eastern state. "The ECI does not only care about hurting the sentiments of the Mizo people. It is deliberately trying to hurt their sentiments," the Congress statement alleged. Last week state Chief Electoral Officer Madhup Vyas, who discussed the matter with the EC recently, said that the Commission will not reschedule the counting date in Mizoram.

Mizoram Congress president Lalsawta had written to the Election Commission on October 9 saying that the counting date be changed as no official programmes or businesses are transacted on Sundays in Mizoram. He had asked the poll body to reschedule

the date of counting after December 3.

He wrote to the state chief electoral officer on November 13 again requesting that the EC reschedule the counting date to December 4 or 5 as a small state like Mizoram will be able to complete all election processes within the time frame set by it.

Votes cast in all the five states - Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan and Mizoram - in the recent assembly polls will be counted on December 3. Political parties, civil society organisations, churches and a church-sponsored poll watchdog in Mizoram opposed it and sent numerous pleas to the Election Commission. Christians constitute about 87 per cent of Mizoram population according to the 2011 census.

Meanwhile, Mizoram NGO Coordination Committee, a conglomerate of major civil society organisations and student bodies, has threatened to stage a massive protest if pleas to reschedule counting are not responded to.

The committee, which comprises of five major organisations of Mizoram, including Central Young Mizo Association and Mizo Zirlai Pawl, decided to send a delegation to Delhi to discuss the matter with the EC. If the discussion does not yield positive results, the NGO coordination committee will organise a protest. Polling for the 40-member Mizoram assembly was held peacefully on November 7 and more than 80 per cent of over 8.57 lakh voters cast their votes to decide the fate of 174 candidates. (PTI)



Nagaland aims to eliminate measles-rubella by Dec JAC formed to seek justice for victims of Laikot accident

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Nov 20: Nagaland is working towards achieving measles-rubella (MR) elimination in the state by December 2023.

The objective is to attain and sustain measles-rubella elimination with zero transmission of endemic measles and rubella cases and target vaccination coverage of 95%, according to an official report on Monday.

The state has conducted a coverage analysis to identify areas with suboptimal measles-rubella vaccination coverage.

The report said measles-rubella elimination drives were executed in April-May and August-September with a mop-up vaccination schedule from November 20 to November 30.

Measles-rubella vaccines are administered as a two-dose vaccine at nine months (MR1) and at 16-24 months (MR2). For children who miss either dose, the vaccine can be given until the child is five years old.

The measles-rubella elimination drive focuses on children aged nine months to five years for the MR1 dose and those who missed the MR2 dose.

While the state on average reported 96% coverage for MR1 and 92% for MR2, inter-district variations exist, emphasising the goal of achieving over 95% coverage in all districts, the report said.

It said addressing left-outs and drop-outs is a priority to ensure comprehensive vaccination. The state has conducted Intensified Mission Indradhanush rounds and regular routine immunisation to bridge the gap. Fear of side effects and lack of awareness were identified as reasons for incomplete immunisation.

The report stressed that community involvement is crucial for awareness and demand generation.

It said advocacy efforts are underway to emphasise the importance of timely vaccination while reminding that vaccines are available free of cost in all government health facilities.

The state government has sought collaboration with allied departments, faith-based organisations, civil society organisations, village council chairpersons and various community groups to ensure that all children under five years of age receive their MR dose during the mop-up round in government health units.

IMPHAL, Nov 20: In response to the tragic accident at Laikot under Sapermeina police station in Kangpokpi district on November 15, 2023, where two family members from Tamenglong lost their lives, a Joint Action Committee (JAC) has been formed to advocate for justice for the victims. The committee, formed during an emergency meeting at Namdilong, Imphal East district, expressed its commitment to fight for justice for the family of the deceased.

The accident occurred when a Bolero carrying four family members was hit by an empty goods carrier truck. The Bolero, with registration No. MN06LB-5312, was struck by the truck, bearing registration No. AS01PC-9144 (owned by Bishwajit Dey, registered in Kamrup, Assam), due to drunk, rash, and negligent driving on the part of the truck driver. The victims were identified as Z. Asongbou, 43 years (father), and Mrs. Amangliu Pamai, 44 years (mother). Lavner Chawang is the convener of the JAC, with Ch Paul serving as its secretary, and Mawangbuibou Newmai as the joint secretary. The committee includes members such as Masanbou, Mathiuchunbou Rimai, Timothy, Humaliabou, Rofica, Tadsongwibou, Maithindinbou, Romeo, Vicky Hugou, and Lungbenwangliu.

Two other occupants of the Bolero, Joshibou Zuinamai, 22 years, and Pousanwibou Zuinamai, 21 years, sustained multiple injuries and are currently undergoing medical treatment. The JAC has resolved to work persistently until justice is delivered to the victims' family, according to a statement from the committee. (NNN)

East Garo Hills marks closing ceremony of 70th All India Cooperative Week

HT Correspondent
WILLIAMNAGAR, Nov 20: The Cooperation Department of Meghalaya, in collaboration with the Meghalaya Cooperative Apex Bank (MCAB) Limited and the Meghalaya Livelihoods and Access to Markets Project, Meghalaya Basin Management Agency (MBMA), celebrated the closing ceremony of the 70th All India Cooperative Week. The event took place at DC's Park, Williamnagar, on November 20. Marcuise N Marak, Meghalaya Minister for PHE, Soil

and Water Conservation, Housing, etc., was the chief guest for the occasion. In his address, he highlighted the vision of the chief minister, emphasising the challenge to propel the state towards comprehensive development to achieve a 10 billion-dollar economy. He urged the people to support government programs for infrastructural development. Additionally, he shared information about financial assistance provided to cooperative societies under FOCUS and FOCUS+ in collaboration with Bakdil NGO. The

day featured workshops on various topics, including Computerization of PACS, Knowledge sharing on Business Activities undertaken by MMCS, Marketing Strategies for PACS, and CM-Elevates, with resource persons from MCAB and MBMA. The chief guest released a booklet for PACS and felicitated three high-performing PACS in the region. The event aimed to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among cooperative societies, contributing to the overall economic development of the state.

Tripura govt makes uniforms must for doctors, staff at state-run hospitals

AGARTALA, Nov 20: The Tripura government has made wearing uniforms for doctors, lab technicians and other staffers at state-run hospitals mandatory, an official said on Monday. A section of medical officers, faculty members and lab technicians are not wearing the uniform during duty hours, Director of Health Services Supriya Mallik told PTI. "Dresses for all medical professionals have already been prescribed but some don't follow the guidelines. That's why the Health Department is stressing that they wear proper dresses -- from doctors to nurses to housekeeping staff," he said, adding that they should also wear their identity cards. The heads of the state-run hospitals and the chief medical officers of the districts have been asked to implement the direction in a month, Mallik said. "We will observe the situation for the next one month. Thereafter, contempt of the order will be dealt with strictly," he said. (PTI)

Pema Khandu marks one-year anniversary of Donyi Polo Airport

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Nov 20: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu celebrated the first anniversary of the Donyi Polo Airport, commemorating the significant milestone in the state's connectivity and growth. In a video shared on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter), CM Khandu reflected on the airport's journey, from its inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi one year ago to its construction phase and eventual operation. "Celebrating one year of Donyi Polo Airport! Ever since the inauguration of Donyi Polo Airport by Hon PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji a year ago on this day, it has served as a catalyst for growth & gateway of opportunities through robust air linkages," stated CM Khandu. The chief minister highlighted the airport's transformative impact on businesses, tourism, and cultural exchange, positioning Arunachal Pradesh on the global map.

'Most successful' Cherry Blossom Festival concludes with grand finale in Shillong

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Nov 20: The Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival 2023 reached its zenith on the final day, enchanting attendees with a mesmerizing blend of music, cultural richness, and the breathtaking beauty of nature. The RBDSA Sports Complex, bathed in the warm glow of a successful festival, hosted the grand finale, making it a truly unforgettable experience.

The concluding day of the festival was graced by the presence of the Honourable Tourism Minister, Bah Paul Lyngdoh. The RBDSA Sports Complex came alive with musical magic, wrapping up a day filled with vibrant festivities.

The grand finale featured an impressive lineup of artists, both international and local, creating an atmosphere of pure musical enchantment. Renowned artists like Sanam, Ronan Keating from Boyzone, Jonas Blue, Lou Majaw, Blue Temptation, and others took center stage, delivering performances that resonated with the diverse audience bidding farewell to this extraordinary celebration.

Honourable Tourism Minister Shri Bah Paul Lyngdoh, reflecting on the success of the festival, stated, "This edition of the Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival has been the most successful in terms of tourist footfall and artist lineup. Around 70% of the total festival-goers are visiting Meghalaya specifically for our excit-



ing lineup. The convergence of music, nature, and culture has been heartening to witness in such a beautiful way." The Minister expressed gratitude to the artists, sponsors, and the vibrant community that contributed to the festival's success.

Sanam, known for their genre-defying music, expressed gratitude for the warm reception, saying, "Shillong, with its Cherry Blossom Festival, is just exceptional. It's been an honor to be part of this incredible festival. Meghalaya's love for music truly stays unparalleled." Local talents also showcased the rich musical talent of Meghalaya and the Northeast, adding unique flavors to the grand finale.

The festival, set against the backdrop of Meghalaya's cherry blossoms, transformed into a vibrant mosaic of colors, providing a fitting backdrop to the final day. The two-day musical extravaganza, featuring international artists like Ne-Yo for the first time in India, created an atmosphere like no other. The festival also served as a platform for local entrepreneurs, promoting stalls with indigenous products, handicrafts, food, and handloom.

The Shillong Cherry Blossom Festival 2023 celebrated the convergence of global sensations and local artists, making it a resounding success.

NOTICE FOR WALK-IN-INTERVIEW

MOITRI society associated with Assam Police intends to conduct Walk-in-Interview for selection of one contractual post mentioned below, to be held at Assam Police Headquarters, Ulubari, Guwahati-781007. The position will be initially engaged for a period of 11 (Eleven) months, which is extendable for further period based on the requirement and subject to satisfactory performance.

Sl. No	Name of the Post	Qualification and Experience	Remuneration per month	Type of Engagement
1	IT/Technology Advisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> B.E./B.Tech. in Computer Science/Information Technology from any recognized institute or university. Minimum 15 years of experience in IT domain in design, development and implementation of IT product and services. Experience of working in the Government sector is desirable. Experience of working in Police related project is desirable. Proficient in use of various IT tools and Office productivity software packages. Knowledge of English, Hindi and local language. 	As per industry standards for part time engagements.	Part Time (Intermittent)

Interested candidates having the requisite qualification and experience should report at the address mentioned above with resume, original certificates and supporting documents. Registration for interview will be held from 10.00 AM to 11.00 AM on the date of interview.

Registration will be closed at 11.00 AM sharp and no candidate will be entertained after 11.00 AM. The date of interview :11-12-2023.

Janasanyog /D/13759/23/21-Nov-23

Sd/-
Inspector General of Police (Admn.)
Assam:: Guwahati.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICER KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT:::DIPHU

No. DSWO (KA)Esstt.SIU/135/2014-2022/722 Dated, Diphu the 20th November,2023

WRITTEN EXAMINATION

In reference to the Advertisement No. DSWO(KA)Esstt.SIU/135/2014-2022/679 Dated, Diphu the 12th October,2023,It is hereby informed to all concerned that the date of written examination for Grade-III of different categories of vacant sanctioned post under District Social Welfare department, Karbi Anglong District, Diphu as mentioned below:

Sl. No	Name of the Post	Date Examination	Timing	Examination Venue
1.	LDA	03/12/2023	9.00 am to 12.00 Noon.	Girls College, Dharamnala, Diphu, Karbi Anglong
2.	Instructress Ladies	03/12/2023	9.00 am to 12.00 Noon.	Girls College, Dharamnala, Diphu, Karbi Anglong
3.	Skilled Helper	03/12/2023	9.00 am to 12.00 Noon.	Girls College, Dharamnala, Diphu, Karbi Anglong

The candidates who have applied for the above-mentioned category of posts shall have to appear for the written examination as given time and venue. Admit cards will be issued from 21st November, 2023 and may be collected from the office of the District Social Welfare Officer, Diphu, Karbi Anglong during office hours. No separate calling letter will be sent to the candidate. The candidate who have applied for the post of Ayah ladies have to appear viva-voce test and they can also collect Admit card from O/o DSWO office, Diphu, the time & date of interview viva-voce test for all the category of post will be published through local News paper.

Sd/-
District Social Welfare Officer
Karbi Anglong District, Diphu

Memo No. DSWO(KA)Esstt.SIU/135/2014-2022/722(A) Dated, Diphu the 20th November,2023

Farmer bodies hold protest, seek withdrawal of cases against farmers for burning stubble

AMRITSAR/LUDHIANA/HOSHIARPUR, Nov 20: Several farmer bodies in Punjab on Monday held protests at the offices of deputy commissioners and sub-divisional magistrates at many places, seeking withdrawal of cases registered against farmers for burning stubble.

The protesting farmers, who also demanded a long-lasting solution for paddy straw, brought stubble-laden trolleys to several offices of DCs and SDMs.

The call for the four-hour protest was given by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (non-political) and 18 other farmer bodies.

The agitating farmers demanded withdrawal of legal actions, including registration of FIRs and rollback of the fine imposed on farmers for burning crop residue.

They also demanded an increase in sugarcane rates and a fair compensation for land acquisition under the Bharatmala projects.

In Moga, a group of farmers, who were bringing stubble in tractor-trolleys, said they were stopped from entering the DC office complex for staging a 'dharna'. One of the farmers even lied in front of a police vehicle, demanding they be allowed to go to the DC complex.

"Where should we take this stubble?" one of the protesters asked. The protesters, while condemning the legal action against farmers for burning straw, said 75-80 per cent pollution was caused by industry and vehicles. But the action was being taken against farmers, they said.

In Sangrur, the protesting farmers brought stubble in their tractor-

trolleys and parked their vehicles near the DC office.

Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher said demonstrations were held at 34 places in the state. He demanded that penalties imposed on farmers be withdrawn and sought a long-lasting solution for managing stubble.

In Ludhiana, protesting farmers were not allowed to enter the city. Two groups of farmers were stopped at Verka Milk Plant Chowk and near the Sangowal village, respectively.

Later, a delegation of farmers reached the mini secretariat and presented a memorandum to the additional deputy commissioner.

In Hoshiarpur, farmers under the banner of Azad Kisan Committee Doaba staged a 'dharna' against punitive actions towards farmers involved in burning stubble.

Led by Harpal Singh Sangha, the president of Azad Kisan Committee Doaba, the farmers gathered in front of the district administrative complex.

They submitted a memorandum to the Hoshiarpur DC outlining their concerns and demands.

Paddy-straw burning in Punjab and Haryana is considered one of the reasons behind the spike in air pollution levels in the national capital in October and November.

Police on Sunday had said that over 930 FIRs had been registered against farmers for burning stubble since November 8, besides, a fine of ₹ 1.67 crore had been imposed in 7,405 cases and red entries were made in the revenue records of 340 farmers. (PTI)

Nothing more important than dynastic politics, corruption for Congress: PM in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, Nov 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the Congress government in Rajasthan cannot think of anything except appeasement politics and wants to eradicate sanatana dharma. Ahead of the November 25 assembly polls in Rajasthan, the prime minister addressed rallies in Pali district and in Pilibanga in Hanumangarh district on Monday.

At the election rally in Pali district, he asserted that Rajasthan needs a government which gives top priority to development, whereas for the Congress there is nothing more important than corruption and dynastic politics.

He also accused the Congress and its allies of having an anti-women mindset.

"Ever since the law giving reservation to women (in Lok Sabha and state assemblies) was passed, they have started a campaign against women. The leaders of 'ghamandiya' alliance have made very objectionable comments about our mothers and sisters," he charged.

Prime Minister Modi has often targeted the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) as "ghamandiya" (arrogant) alliance.

The prime minister said the Bihar chief minister used derogatory words against women in the assembly but no Congress leader said anything about this. "This is the real face of Congress, which the people of Rajasthan have recognised," he said.

Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, while emphasising the im-



portance of education among women to control the population, had recently put forward a vivid description in the state assembly of how an educated woman can restrain her husband during intercourse. He had later apologised for his remarks.

Modi said the Bihar chief minister also used derogatory language against a former chief minister because he was from a very backward family.

"...because he (the former CM) comes from a very backward family, hence he (Kumar) took pleasure in insulting him. Congress does not have the wisdom to tell (him) that it was wrong," he said.

The prime minister also accused the Congress of turning a blind eye to incidents of atrocities against Dalits.

"Congress closes its eyes when it sees those committing atrocities against Dalits," he said.

"The Congress government here

thinks of nothing except appeasement," he said and added that because of this policy, those with the mentality of riots and terrorism flourished in the state in the past five years.

He alleged that the Congress and its allies want to destroy sanatana dharma.

"Destroying Sanatana means destroying the culture of Rajasthan," he added.

Tamil Nadu minister for Youth Welfare Udhayanidhi Stalin had stirred a row in September by alleging that sanatana dharma is against social justice and it should hence be eradicated. He had also likened sanatana dharma to the coronavirus and malaria.

Holding the Congress responsible for high petrol prices in Rajasthan, Modi said when the BJP forms the government, it will review petrol prices in the state.

In Rajasthan, he said, petrol was being sold at prices higher than in

the BJP-ruled Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat.

The Prime Minister said that during the Congress regime, tax used to be collected on an income of ₹ 2 lakh annually but now no tax is collected on income of up to ₹ 7 lakh.

"Due to the reduction in direct tax, ₹ 2.5 lakh crore has been saved," he said.

Modi said if the price of mobile data was the same as during the time of the Congress government, one would have to spend ₹ 5,000 more today on mobile data every month.

Today, the entire country is working day and night for the goal of development and Rajasthan will play a huge role for India to attain a new height in the 21st century.

"There is a need for a government in Rajasthan which gives top priority to the development of the state," he said.

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

In Pilibanga of Hanumangarh district, PM Modi said that corruption and nepotism were priority wherever the Congress is in power. Now it is also patronising drug smugglers in Rajasthan.

"Wherever Congress is in power, its priority is corruption and nepotism. Congress is never concerned about your needs. Now Congress is also promoting drug smugglers in Rajasthan," he said.

He said that this addiction "will destroy not only our children but also our future" and it will ruin every family.

"I assure you that as soon as the BJP government is formed here, such action will be taken against drug smugglers that even other people will shudder after hearing and seeing them," he said.

Talking about the "Cancer Train" -- called so as a large number of cancer patients travel in it -- that runs to Bikaner from Hanumangarh and Sri Ganganagar, he noted that the train runs full and seats are not available in it.

"It is said that polluted drinking water is one of the reasons for the spread of cancer. I have also sent thousands of crores of rupees to Rajasthan under the Jal Jeevan Mission. But the Congress government here orchestrated a scam in this too and left you to drink poisonous water," he said.

Before 2014, PM Modi said, the money of honest taxpayers was looted in scams and the poor middle class got nothing and Padma awards were given to those who had access to people in power.

He said that on one side is the service spirit of the BJP government at the Centre and on the other side is the loot system of the Congress government in Rajasthan.

"Farmers, employees and businessmen of Rajasthan all paid taxes honestly. But in return they got dilapidated roads, streets, drains, lack of electricity and water, back-breaking inflation and unemployment," he said.

The money which should have been used for the welfare of the poor, middle class and farmers was looted by MLAs and ministers, he asserted. (PTI)

KCR promises to set up food processing units across Telangana if BRS is voted power again

MANAKONDUR (TELANGANA), Nov 20: As Telangana became successful in producing huge quantities of paddy, BRS, if voted to power, will be setting up food processing industries everywhere which will become employment resources for local youth, chief minister K Chandrababhu Naidu said on Monday.

Addressing a poll rally, Naidu also promised to abolish the "fitness certificate" system which is required to be taken by autorickshaw drivers every year.

Hitting out at the Congress, he said it was that party which merged Telangana with Andhra Pradesh (in 1950s) against the people's will.

The BRS chief reiterated that the former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's tenure was plagued by starvation deaths, naxal movements and encounters.

He recalled that until former Chief Minister N T Rama Rao (undivided Andhra Pradesh) came to power and offered rice at ₹ 2 per kg to people, it was only a life of starvation.

He also slammed the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for allegedly not sanctioning even one medical college and Navodaya School to Telangana.

"Since we have been producing crores of tonnes of paddy, we will be setting up food processing units wherever they are required so that local people will get employment. We will be constructing double bedroom houses on a war-footing, in the next five years we will construct houses," he said.

Rao said due to the measures and pro-farmer welfare schemes by his government, the state now tops with three crore tonnes of paddy production annually in the country annually.

"As many as 7,500 procurement centres were set up across the state to purchase paddy from farmers, though the government incurred loss to some extent. Today, we are producing three crore tonnes of paddy," he said, listing out the measures taken for the growth of the agriculture sector.

Attacking the Congress, he said leaders of that party say that KCR is wasting taxpayers money and giving Rythu Bandhu (a support scheme for ryots) to farmers.

"Is Rythu Bandhu a wasteful expenditure, he asked people,



who enthusiastically shouted "no."

If the BRS is voted to power again, not only continuing the Rythu Bandhu scheme, but the amount will also be increased to ₹ 16,000 gradually from the existing ₹ 10,000, he promised.

He charged that the Congress leaders were making irresponsible statements that 24-hour free power to farmers is not required and just three hours is sufficient.

He said the grand old party says if voted to power, it will abolish "Dharani," an integrated land administration portal which will lead to the regime of corrupt officials and middlemen.

Alleging that the NDA Government had asked the state government to fix meters to agriculture pump sets, Rao said he refused to implement it and as result the state lost ₹ 25,000 crore fund from the Centre during the last five years.

"Why should we vote for the BJP which has not given even a single medical college and Navodaya school?... voting for the BJP is dropping your vote in the drain," he said.

Exuding confidence that the BRS will be coming back to power for a third time, KCR said he got some survey results indicating the party's victory in the November 30 Assembly polls. (PTI)

SC seeks responses from Centre, ED on AAP leader Sanjay Singh's plea against arrest

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and the Enforcement Directorate on AAP leader Sanjay Singh's plea challenging his arrest and remand in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

A bench of justices Sanjay Khanna and SVN Bhatti issued notices to the Centre and the ED, asking them to submit their responses before December 11.

The bench ordered that if Singh files a petition for regular bail in the interregnum, then it should be considered independent of the observation made in the Delhi High Court's judgement dated October 20.

In its order, the High Court had refused to interfere with his arrest in the case, saying it could not impute a political motive to a premier investigating agency in the absence of material on record.

The apex court bench questioned senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Singh, as to why the AAP leader has not filed any plea for regular bail.

Singhvi replied that bail is not the appropriate remedy at this time and referred to Section 19 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), which deals with the ED's powers to arrest.

The bench said as per the high court verdict, Singh was given six pages of grounds of arrest.

Singhvi contended that he was referring to the ED's powers to arrest under Section 19 of the PMLA and the power of the magistrate to send the person to judicial remand under Section 167(2) of the CrPC.

Justice Khanna said that as per his understanding, bail jurisdiction is broader and it is up to Singh to file for regular bail.

"I don't think filing of bail application will deprive you from approaching this court. But, filing of bail application is up to the petitioner and nobody can push for it," Justice Khanna said while posting the matter for further hearing in the week commencing December 11.

Singh, who was arrested on October 4 in the case, had moved the top court challenging the High Court verdict.

In its order, the High Court had said that Singh's was not a "prima facie case of no evidence at all".

"At a premature stage

when the investigation is at a nascent stage, this court does not find any ground to interfere at all with order of remand or arrest. Dismissed," the high court had said.

It further said that deciding whether a case is politically motivated essentially involves deciding whether an investigating agency was under the control of a political party, and it cannot decide the same without any material on record.

The ED's money laundering case stems from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) FIR.

According to the CBI and the ED, irregularities were committed while modifying the now-scrapped Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22 and undue favours were extended to licence holders.

It is alleged that Singh played a key role in the formulation and implementation of the policy, which benefited certain liquor manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers, for monetary considerations.

After his arrest, the trial court had sent Singh to ED custody. He has been in judicial custody since October 13. A Delhi court on November 10 extended his judicial custody till November 24. (PTI)

Not 'even a single paisa' for drought relief to state: K'taka CM

VIJAYAPURA (K'TAKA), Nov 20: Accusing the central government of not releasing funds for drought relief to Karnataka, chief minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said his letters to the union government seeking assistance and enhancement of employment days for those affected have gone unanswered. The Karnataka government has declared 223 out of the total 236 taluks in the state as drought hit.

"We have started all the drought relief works, like -- supplying drinking water, providing fodder for livestock, giving employment to people," Siddaramaiah said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said the state has decided to increase the employment days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) from 100 days to 150 days a year in view of the severe drought in the State, but the central government has to give permission for this.

"We have written a letter to the Centre, but there is no reply till today," he said.

Noting that it has been more than a month since the state government submitted its drought memorandum seeking relief from the Centre, following which a central team too visited the state for inspection, Siddaramaiah said that till today they have not given even a single paisa as drought relief. (PTI)

Murmu urges writers to create awareness among tribals

BARIPADA (ODISHA), Nov 20: President Droupadi Murmu Monday stressed on creating awareness among tribal communities and urged writers to be involved in it.

The President said that literature is a mirror to the culture of a community and urged writers to write about the lifestyles of tribal communities so that others know about their life values.

Most of the Santali literature is available in the oral tradition and writers play a big role in popularising any language, she said addressing the 36th Annual Conference and Literary Festival of All India Santali Writers' Association.

"Authors are vigilant watchdogs of the society. They make society aware and guide it through their works. Many litterateurs showed the path to our national movement during the freedom struggle ... Building a strong and vigilant society is possible only through continuous awareness," the president said. Murmu, who spoke in Santali during the entire programme, said language and literature are subtle threads that bind the nation together. Literature is enriched by



extensive exchange between different languages which is possible through translations.

"Readers of Santali language should also be introduced to the literature of other languages through translation. Similarly, there is a need to make Santali literature reach the readers of other languages," she said.

Murmu said natural co-existence of humans with nature is seen in tribal lifestyle as the tribal communities believe that the forest does not belong to them but they belong to the forest. This is important as climate change is a

huge problem in modern times and nature-friendly living is very important to tackle it.

Appreciating writers and researchers who are contributing to Santali language and literature, she said the use of the language has increased in government and non-government sectors since its inclusion in the eighth schedule of the Constitution in December 2003. She also appreciated that All India Santali Writers' Association for promoting Ol Chiki since its establishment in 1988 and remembered former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

during whose tenure Santali language was included in the eighth schedule.

Paying her tribute to Pandit Raghunath Murmu, who invented the Ol Chiki script and also enriched it by composing a number of plays, Murmu said there are others like Damayanti Besra and Kali Pada Saren who have enriched Santali literature.

She urged Santali writers to focus on children's literature so that the language can be popularised. The work could be done by publishing magazines in the language for the children and regularly interacting with them.

Santali has the potential to expand as an Indian language, the president said and called upon Santali writers to carry forward their writing for the overall development of the language.

"First we should ourselves give importance to our Santali language before expecting others to recognize it. Santali children should be encouraged to interact in the language among themselves," the president said. The President said that language and literature are the subtle threads that bind the nation together and literature is enriched by extensive

exchange between different languages which is possible through translations.

"Readers of Santali language should also be introduced to the literature of other languages through translation. Similarly, there is a need to make Santali literature reach the readers of other languages," she said.

Murmu said that there is need for self-study among children so that they become good readers and highlighted the need to create entertaining and comprehensible children's literature not only in Santali literature but in all Indian languages.

Odisha Governor Raghunath Das, many prominent Santali academicians from Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Assam attended the conference. Odisha ministers Sudam Marndi and Jagannath Saraka were also present.

Earlier in the day, Murmu reached Baripada in an Indian Air Force helicopter. She was received by Odisha Governor Raghunath Das, union minister of state for tribal affairs Bishweswar Tudu, who is also the local MP, and state ST and SC development minister Jagannath Saraka. (PTI)

Health ministry releases draft National Pharmacy Commission Bill

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: The Centre has proposed a National Pharmacy Register with details of all pharmacy professionals as part of a draft Bill that seeks to repeal the nearly 75-year-old Pharmacy Act and replace the Pharmacy Council of India with a national commission.

The Union Health Ministry uploaded a draft National Pharmacy Commission Bill, 2023, on its website on November 10, seeking comments from the public.

The draft Bill aims to provide for a pharmacy education system that improves access to quality and affordable pharmaceutical education, ensures availability of adequate and high-quality professionals in all parts of the country, promotes equitable and universal health care and makes services of pharmacy professionals accessible to all citizens.

It also calls for periodic and transparent assessment of pharmacy institutions, facilitating maintenance of a pharmacy register for India and enforcing high ethical standards in all aspects of pharmacy services.

According to the draft Bill, the Pharmacy Ethics and Registration Board will maintain a National Pharmacy Register, which will contain details of pharmacy professionals to ensure transparency.

"The Pharmacy Ethics and Registration Board shall maintain an online and live National Pharmacy Register (NPR) containing the name, address, all recognised qualifications possessed by a pharmacy professional and such other particulars as may be specified by regulations," according to the draft document.

The board shall make available the National Pharmacy Register to the public in the form of a digital portal accessible on the website of the Pharmacy Ethics and Registration Board/Commission in such manner and form as may be specified by regulations.

The Bill also proposes that every state chapter shall maintain and regularly update, in digital form, the State Pharmacy Professional Register and the State Pharmacy Register in the specified digital format and supply a digital and physical copy to the Pharmacy Ethics and Registration Board/Commission within three months of the commencement of the act.

The draft Bill also encourages pharmacy professionals to adopt the latest research in their work and to contribute to research.

It proposes flexibility to adapt to changing needs and seeks to set up an effective grievance redress mechanism. (PTI)

Those who invoke religion, caste during elections can't ask for votes on basis of work: Priyanka in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, Nov 20: Hitting out at the BJP, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Monday that those who invoke religion or caste during elections are never in a position to ask for votes on the basis of their work.

Addressing a rally at Ajmer's Kekri in poll-bound Rajasthan, the Congress general secretary asked the voters to exercise their franchise after evaluating the work done by different political parties.

She asserted that the Congress is united in Rajasthan and claimed that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is completely fragmented in the desert state.

"If someone asks for votes in the name of religion or caste, it means he cannot seek votes on the basis of work," Gandhi said.

"In Rajasthan, all Congress leaders and workers have entered the electoral battlefield unitedly, whereas the BJP is completely fragmented," she added.

Gandhi claimed that the saffron party has sidelined its leaders in the state and is searching for a chief ministerial face for the November 25 Assembly polls.

She alleged that the BJP's policy is to benefit big industrialists and it does not think about the poor and middle class.

Gandhi told the gathering that if the BJP comes to power in Rajasthan, it will discontinue all the public welfare schemes launched by the Congress government led by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot.

She claimed that sectors, such as health and education, are in a poor state in the BJP-ruled states.

Referring to the BJP's poll campaign in Madhya Pradesh, Gandhi



said the saffron party has been ruling the state for 18 years but still, it sought votes in the name of religion and not in the name of work.

She claimed that only 21 jobs were given in Madhya Pradesh in the last three-and-a-half years.

"Look at what is happening in the BJP-ruled states. Their policies are breaking the back of people. Inflation is at its peak. The Rajasthan government has protected you from their policies," the Congress leader said.

"When they talk about gas cylinders, it is not the states but the Centre that decides the price of petrol and diesel. The (Narendra) Modi government decides it in Delhi. The GST money goes to the Centre. It was his (Prime Minister Modi's) responsibility to reduce the petrol prices and control inflation, but he did not do so," she said.

"The Congress government has protected you from their (BJP's) policies. If you bring a BJP government, you are going to suffer a

lot. The rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. Whatever situation you are facing, your state government is helping you a lot.

"Do not stop the work that is happening in Rajasthan today, the facilities that are being provided. If you vote for the BJP, what happened to the people of Madhya Pradesh will happen to you as well," Gandhi said.

By casting votes on the basis of religion and caste, the voters are causing harm to themselves, she said, adding, "Your emotions are being evoked."

Gandhi said wherever the BJP is in power, its leaders think that they do not need to do any work because they will get votes on the basis of religion and they are not accountable to people.

"This has become a habit of the BJP leaders. They have lost accountability towards you. The Congress has shown its work. Due to the problems caused by the Centre, the prices of commodities have gone up, but the state government

has helped you. Be aware and vigilant," she added.

"You are being harmed and they are benefiting from this. Have you ever seen a leader getting injured in riots? Never. Do understand that these things are causing harm to you. Politics should be for development. The biggest duty of a leader is to serve the people and this is what the Congress has been doing," Gandhi said.

Targeting the prime minister over issues facing farmers, the Congress leader said the farmers agitated for nearly a year and a Union minister's son crushed them under the wheels of his vehicle, but they were not heard by the Modi government.

She said the government had no money for farmers but spent crores of rupees on a new Parliament building.

"You are standing at a crossroads. You can see how the BJP's policies will be implemented. The free electricity given by the Congress and the old pension scheme implemented by it will be stopped," Gandhi said.

She also said extensive advertising does not necessarily mean that the country is progressing.

"If the country is portrayed as one that is progressing, then why is the poor not progressing?" she asked.

Gandhi asserted that people witness progress in the states governed by the Congress due to the policies implemented by the grand old party. The 200-member Rajasthan Assembly will go to polls on November 25 and the counting of votes will be taken up on December 3.(PTI)

KCR is number one in corruption in the country, alleges Shah

HYDERABAD, Nov 20: Alleging that Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu is "number one in corruption" in the country, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said the BJP would conduct a probe into the BRS government's "corrupt deals" if it comes to power in the state and put those who indulged in corruption behind bars.

Addressing a poll rally at Jangaon, he also referred to alleged scams during the BRS regime, including the Kaleshwaram project, liquor scam and land deals at Miyapur in Hyderabad.

"KCR is number one in corruption in the country. By conducting an inquiry into all their corrupt deals, the BJP will put those who indulged in corruption behind bars," he said.

The BJP's manifesto released two days ago said the party, on assuming power, would appoint a commission of enquiry to probe into various projects commissioned in the name of development, including Kaleshwaram and Dharani, that have seen huge cost escalations and corruption.

Shah reiterated the BJP's promise to make a backward caste leader the chief minister of the state if the party is voted to power in the November 30 elections and also arrange darshan free of cost at the Lord Ram temple at Ayodhya.

Alleging that the Congress and BRS had opposed the Ram temple at Ayodhya for years, Shah said PM Modi would perform 'pran pratishtha' at the temple on January 22, 2024 and told the gathering to visit Ayodhya for darshan of 'Ram Lalla'.

The BRS, AIMIM and Congress are 'parivara' parties,



Shah said, describing them as '2G, 3G and 4G' parties respectively.

He said 2G means two generations of KCR and his son K T Rama Rao, 3G means three generations of Asaduddin Owaisi, his father and grandfather and 4G means four generations of Congress, including Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi.

BJP is neither a 2G nor 3G or 4G party but it is the party of Telangana people, he said, adding that under the leadership of PM Modi, who is not a dynast unlike the others, respect for India reached great heights in the world.

Speaking about the BJP's aims if brought to power, he said the government would abolish the four per cent reservation given to Muslims in Telangana and increase the quota for BC, SC and STs.

He highlighted the BJP's election promises, saying four free

LPG cylinders will be provided to each family if the party is voted to power, and that paddy will be procured from farmers by the government at ₹ 3,100 per quintal.

Recalling the history of the princely state of Hyderabad's accession to India after the country gained Independence, he said a grand memorial would be built at Bairanpally village near Jangaon for those who sacrificed their life during the fight against 'Razakars' (armed supporters of Nizam rule).

Shah also said that the BJP would revive three sugar factories fulfilling the request of Nizamabad MP Arvind Dharmapuri.

For the benefit of beedi workers, a 500-bed hospital would be established in Nizamabad, he added.

Later in the evening, Shah participated in a roadshow in Hyderabad in support of the BJP candidate from Uppal constituency, NVSS Prabhakar. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

25 crew members taken

with their Islamic values," but did not elaborate on what that meant. Netanyahu's office condemned the seizure as an "Iranian act of terror". The Israeli military called the hijacking a "very grave incident of global consequence".

Israeli officials insisted the ship was British-owned and Japanese-operated. However, ownership details in public shipping databases associated the ship's owners with Ray Car Carriers, founded by Abraham "Rami" Ungar, who is known as one of the richest men in Israel.

Ungar told The Associated Press he was aware of the incident but couldn't comment as he awaited details. A ship linked to him experienced an explosion in 2021 in the Gulf of Oman. Israeli media blamed it on Iran at the time.

Authorities confirmed Monday that the captain and the first mate on the Galaxy Leader were Bulgarians.

Bulgaria's top police officer, Zhivko Kotsev, told reporters that they were in touch with their families. "Nobody has sought contact with us up to this moment," he said.

International shipping often involves a series of management companies, flags and owners stretching across the globe in a single vessel.

Two US defence officials confirmed that Houthi rebels seized the Galaxy Leader in the Red Sea on Sunday afternoon local time. The rebels descended on the cargo ship by helicopter, the officials said, confirming details first reported by NBC News. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to publicly discuss the matter.

The ship's seizure resembles others previously conducted by Iran, which has long armed the Houthis.

Twice in the last month, US warships have intercepted missiles or drones from Yemen that were believed to be headed toward Israel or posing a threat to American vessels. The USS Carney, a Navy destroyer, intercepted three land attack cruise missiles and several drones that were launched by Houthi forces toward the northern Red Sea last month.

On November 15 the USS Thomas Hudner, another destroyer, was sailing toward the Bab-el-Mandeb strait when the crew saw a drone, reported to have originated in Yemen. The ship shot down the drone over the water. The officials said the crew took action to ensure the safety of US personnel, and there were no casualties or damage to the ship.

Satellite tracking data from MarineTraffic.com analysed by the AP showed the Galaxy Leader travelling in the Red Sea southwest of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, more than a day ago. The vessel had been in Korföz, Turkey, and was on its way to Pipavav, India, at the time of the seizure reported by Israel.

It had its Automatic Identification System tracker, or AIS, switched off, the data showed. Ships are supposed to keep their AIS active for safety reasons, but crews will turn them off if it appears they might be targeted or to smuggle contraband, which there was no immediate evidence to suggest was the case with the Galaxy Leader.

The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which provides warnings to sailors in the Persian Gulf and the wider region, put the hijacking as having occurred some 150 km (90 miles) off the coast of Yemen's port city of Hodeida, near the coast of Eritrea.

It later cited a security officer with the ship's company saying the vessel had been taken to Hodeida.

The Red Sea, stretching from Egypt's Suez Canal to the narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait separating the Arabian Peninsula from Africa, remains a key trade route for global shipping and energy supplies. That's why the US Navy has stationed multiple ships in the sea since the start of the Israel-Hamas war on Oct 7.

Since 2019, a series of ships have come under attack at sea as Iran began breaking all the limits of its tattered nuclear deal with world powers. As Israel expands its devastating campaign against Hamas in the besieged Gaza Strip following the militant group's unprecedented attack on southern Israel, fears have grown that the military operations could escalate into a wider regional conflict.

The Houthis have repeatedly threatened to target Israeli ships in the waters off Yemen. Such attacks both back its Iranian benefactors, as well as bolster the Houthis' position in Yemen as anger has grown against their rule in recent months as that country's civil war grinds on without resolution, said Gregory D Johnsen, a Yemen expert with the Arabian Gulf States Institute in Washington.

"The Houthis view the war between Israel and Hamas as an opportunity to mute some of this domestic criticism," Johnsen wrote in an analysis earlier this month. "If they are attacking Israel, their local rivals will be less inclined to attack them." (AP)

PM Modi reviews rescue

he said. Dix did not spell out a timeline as to how long the rescue operation would last. "We are trying to make sure all men are safe, they get out alive, and the rescuers are safe. As for how long it takes, everyone here agrees we want the men out safe and the rescue safe as long as it takes," he said.

Medical teams are also stationed at the site and a team from the Prime Minister's office (PMO) is also keeping an eye on the operations after visiting the tunnel for an on-the-spot review, the state government's statement added. Rescue operations are being carried out since portions of the tunnel which is part of the Char Dham all-weather road collapsed following a landslide on November 12, leaving 41 workers trapped behind a huge mound of debris.

The Uttarakhand government will bear the travel, food and lodging expenses of relatives of the 41 workers trapped at the Silkyara tunnel in the Uttarkashi district, Dhani said on Monday.

Assuring the families of the trapped workers that they will be rescued soon, the chief minister said officials have been asked to stay in touch with the relatives of the trapped workers so that they do not face any inconvenience. Psychiatrists have also been roped in to maintain the morale of the trapped workers, he said.

The Silkyara tunnel is about 30 km away from the district headquarters of Uttarkashi and a seven-hour drive from Dehradun. (PTI)

Assam Police goes 'blue' on

response mechanisms, so as to ensure the protection of child rights across the state.

The programme is a collaborative partnership of the Assam Police with UNICEF and UTAH Child Rights Org. It is one of the largest child friendly policing programmes in the country.

Harmeet Singh, special DGP of Assam, who is also the convenor, Sishu Mitra Programme, said, "We wish all the young ones a very Happy World Children's Day. Under the leadership of our chief minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, the Sishu Mitra Programme has been able to bring about a remarkable transformation on the ground level. From infrastructure development to timely investigation, the Assam Police has made major strides in the arena of child-friendly policing across the state in its endeavour to provide justice for every child."

Heavy fighting erupts near

up and running within 48 hours. Egypt's state-run media said babies evacuated from Gaza's embattled Shifa hospital have arrived in Egypt after the Palestinian Red Crescent rescue service said it was transporting 28 premature babies from a hospital in southern Gaza to another across the border in Egypt. It was not immediately clear where the other three babies were.

Following the evacuation from Shifa, over 250 patients with severely infected wounds and other urgent conditions remain in Shifa, which can no longer provide most treatment after it ran out of water, medical supplies and fuel for emergency generators amid a territory-wide blackout.

Israeli forces battled Palestinian militants outside its gates for days before entering the facility in Wednesday. Four babies died in the two days before the evacuation, according to Mohamed Zaqout, the director of Gaza hospitals.

Israel's army said it has evidence supporting its claims that Hamas maintained a sprawling command post inside and under the hospital's 20-acre (8-hectare) complex, which includes several buildings.

On Sunday, the military released a video showing what it said was a tunnel discovered at the hospital, 55 metres (60 yards) long and about 10 metres (33 feet) below ground. It said the tunnel included a hole for gunmen to fire out of, and ended at a blast-proof door that troops have not yet opened.

Israeli forces also released security camera video showing what they said were two foreign hostages, one Thai and one Nepalese, who were captured by Hamas in the October 7 attack and taken to the hospital. Hamas said its fighters brought them in for medical care.

The army also said an investigation had determined that Israeli army Cpl Noa Marciano, another captive whose body was recovered in Gaza, had been wounded in an Israeli strike on November 9 that killed her captor, but was then killed by a Hamas militant in Shifa.

The military has previously released images of several guns it said were found inside an MRI lab and said that the bodies of two hostages were found near the complex.

The Associated Press was not able to independently confirm the military's findings.

Hamas and hospital staff have denied the allegations of a command post under Shifa. Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan dismissed the latest announcement, saying, "The Israelis said there was a command and control centre, which means that the matter is greater than just a tunnel."

On the other hand, Israel has repeatedly ordered Palestinians to leave northern Gaza and seek refuge in the south, which has also been under aerial bombardment since the start of the war. Some 1.7 million people, nearly three quarters of Gaza's population, have been displaced, with 900,000 packing into crowded UN-run shelters, according to the UN.

International aid group Doctors Without Borders said 70 people were killed and at least 52 wounded, including children, in strikes in the southern town of Khan Younis on Saturday. It said it was performing 10 burn surgeries a day at the town's overwhelmed Nasser Hospital, where hundreds of people need such operations.

More than 11,500 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, according to Palestinian health authorities. Another 2,700 have been reported missing, believed buried in rubble. The count does not differentiate between civilians and combatants, and Israel says it has killed thousands of militants.

Violence has also surged in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where attacks by Jewish settlers are on the rise and where more than 200 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war, mostly in gun battles triggered by Israeli military raids.

About 1,200 people have been killed on the Israeli side, mainly civilians during the Oct 7 attack, in which Hamas dragged some 240 captives back into Gaza. The military says 66 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza ground operations.

Hamas has released four hostages, Israel has rescued one, and the bodies of two were found near Shifa.

Israel, the United States and Qatar, which mediates with Hamas, have been negotiating a hostage release for weeks. Israel's three-member war Cabinet is to meet with representatives of the hostages' families on Monday evening. (AP)

Drugs, cash, liquor worth over

sharing, the statement said. Interestingly, according to the EC, no cash or precious metal was seized in Mizoram, but drugs worth ₹ 29.82 crore were recovered by authorities.

The poll panel has deployed 228 officers from various services as expenditure observers. For close monitoring, 194 assembly constituencies were marked as "expenditure sensitive" seats.

The commission said the figures of seizures are expected to rise. (PTI)

NIA files case against terrorist

would remain closed on November 19. The NIA spokesperson said Pannun has been under the NIA's lens since 2019, when the anti-terror agency registered its first case against him.

In September, the NIA had confiscated his share of a house and land in Amritsar in Punjab and Chandigarh, the spokesperson said, adding that non-bailable arrest warrants were issued against Pannun by a NIA Special Court on February 3, 2021.

He was also declared a proclaimed offender" on November 29 last year, the official said.

As part of his concerted plan to promote terror acts to revive terrorism in India, the official said, Pannun has been creating a false narrative around issues prevailing in Punjab, particularly with regard to Sikhism and by promoting enmity between Sikhs in the country and other communities.

"The latest threat is in line with the same narrative, which Pannun has actively promoted in the past by threatening and attempting to disrupt essential transportation network systems, including the railways, as well as thermal power plants in India," the spokesperson said.

On July 10, 2019, the Union ministry of home affairs had banned the SFJ as an "unlawful association" under UAPA for its activities. On July 1 in the next year, Pannun was listed as an "individual terrorist" by the ministry. (PTI)

India, Australia discuss

for solving challenges jointly, was discussed by the ministers. "They concurred that a strong India-Australia defence partnership will augur well not just for the mutual benefit of the two countries but also for the overall security of the Indo-Pacific," it added. Both Australia and India are part of the Quad or Quadrilateral coalition that is focused on working towards ensuring a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. The other two members of the Quad are the US and Japan. (PTI)

Diphu hosts 'Unity, Victory

storage facility at Kekang Adong to facilitate horticulture farmers. Diphu MLA Bidyasing Engleng referring to the joining of former BJP MACs and EMs of KAAC, Jagatsing Engti and Pradip Diphusa, said the gathering of Congress at the Diphu Club on Sunday was minimal and had no impact on the BJP.

MLA Engleng said in spite of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president, Bhupen Kumar Borah attending the joining programme, it had no impact. The India Block alliance between Congress and All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHL) in Karbi Anglong are not in good terms. MLA Darsing Ronghang said the Congress has no clear cut decision on autonomous state, but BJP at the state has it. MLA Ronghang asked the attendees in the rally to start preparing for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections so that the BJP wins with a larger margin than that of MP Horensing Bey in 2019.

CEM in his speech said, "We are working in one of the strongest political party, BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and in Assam under the leadership of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Durbagori has received much development. The Dolamora Tea Estate Model Secondary School, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Avasiya Vidyalaya and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya are coming up in Durbagori."

Countering Congress mass joining at the Diphu Club, the CEM said, "The sitting capacity in Diphu Club is hardly 200 then how can thousands people gather there. The Congress is misleading the people. All municipal boards in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong are won by BJP. 26 MACs, four MLAs and one No. 3 Diphu (ST) Parliamentary seat is won by BJP. Congress has no more base here. I want to tell APCC president, Bhupen Kumar Borah that it will be of no use coming here."

He said ration cards would be distributed to all BPL families, water facility under JJM will be provided to every household and the Anurodhohi scheme will be made available to people who qualify for it. The road from Chokihola to Kohora will be constructed. He blamed Congress for past ethnic clashes, violence and insurgency.

Spraying machines for agriculture purposes were also distributed to beneficiaries during the programme.



ZEE5 ANNOUNCES SEASON 4 OF 'AAM AADMI FAMILY'

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: Comedy-drama series "Aam Aadmi Party" will return for its fourth season on ZEE5, the streaming platform said on Monday.

Directed by Himali Shah, the new chapter is set to premiere on ZEE5 on November 24. It stars Brijendra Kala (Satendra Sharma/Papa), Lubna Salim (Madhu Sharma/Mummy), Gunjan Malhotra (Sonu), and Chandan Anand (Bobby).

"Aam Aadmi Family" will continue to bring to life the everyday adventures and misadventures of the endearing Sharma family, the makers said in a press release.

Shah said the fourth season talks about how a family copes up with the loss of a loved one.

"It's a familiar situation, but less talked about. It's second innings for Mummy and Papa, while Bobby is trying to find his calling, career wise, Sonu is dealing with long distance marriage."

"It's the coming together of the entire family, despite their own problems. A big thank you to Arunabh Kumar, Shreyansh Pandey, Apoorv Singh Karki and ZEE5 for their guidance and partnership," the director said.

Manish Kalra, Chief Business

Officer, ZEE5 India said the streamer is happy to introduce the next installment of "Aam Aadmi Family".

"With its inspiring humour and interesting family dynamics, this series certainly develops a relatable intuition for our viewers," Kalra said.

"We are delighted to present season 4 of 'Aam Aadmi Family', a show that takes inspiration from the everyday lives of middle-class Indian families. This show is very special as it finds magic in the ordinary," added Nimisha Pandey, Chief Content Officer - Hindi Originals, ZEE5. (PTI)

coming soon

Vijay-starrer 'Leo' to have digital premiere on Netflix

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: Tamil action thriller "Leo", starring Vijay, will be available to Netflix subscribers abroad from November 28, following its India digital premiere on November 24.

The South India arm of Netflix made the announcement on its official X page.

"The wait is finally over!! We have some Bloody Sweet news for you. Naa Ready! Are you? #Leo is coming to Netflix on 24th Nov in India and 28th Nov Globally in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada & Hindi," the streamer said in the post on Monday.

Directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj, "Leo" was released in cinema halls on October 19.

The film opened to mixed reviews but emerged as the highest-grossing Tamil film of 2023 with over ₹ 500 crore in worldwide box office collection.

It also stars Trisha, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Sarja, Mansoor Ali Khan, Priya Anand, Mysskin and Gautham Vasudev Menon. (PTI)



54th IFFI: Madhuri Dixit to receive Special Recognition for Contribution to Bharatiya Cinema award

PANAJI, Nov 20: Film star Madhuri Dixit will be presented with the Special Recognition for Contribution to Bharatiya Cinema award at the 54th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting Anurag Thakur said on Monday.

The 2023 edition of the film gala kickstarts today with a ceremony to be held at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium here. Dixit will also perform on a medley of her chartbuster songs during the event.

"An icon across the ages, @MadhuriDixit has graced our screens with unparalleled talent for four incredible decades. From the effervescent Nisha to the captivating Chandramukhi, the majestic Begum Para to the indomitable Rajjo, her versatility knows no bounds. "Today, we are filled with admiration as we present the 'Special Recognition for Contribution to Bharatiya Cinema' Award to the talented, charismatic actress who has re-defined excellence in cinema, at the 54th International Film Festival of India. A celebration of an extraordinary journey, a tribute to an everlasting legacy," the minister said in a post on X. Dixit was bestowed with the Indian Film Personality honour at IFFI last year.

The 54th edition of IFFI will conclude on November 28. (PTI)



Amitabh Bachchan retrospective part of France's Festival des 3 Continents

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: The 45th edition of France's Festival des 3 Continents has set a film retrospective on Indian screen icon Amitabh Bachchan, the organisers said on Monday.

The film gala will run in Nantes from November 24 to December 3. The segment, titled 'Amitabh Bachchan, Big B Forever', will showcase nine films from the 1970s and 1980s starring the legendary actor: "Trishul", "Amar

Akbar Anthony", "Satte Pe Satta", "Sholay", "Don", "Kabhi Kabhie", "Deewaar", "Kaala Patthar", and "Abhimaan". The retrospective is being conducted in partnership with the Film Heritage Foundation (FHF) and with the support of the French Embassy in India.

Bachchan said he is pleased to hear that FHF is co-presenting a selection of nine of his early films at the Festival des 3 Continents, "one of the oldest and most reputed film festivals".

"Many of these films gave me an opportunity to play a diverse range of characters and work with some of the most significant filmmakers of the time including Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Manmohan Desai, Yash Chopra and Ramesh Sippy.

"I hope that the festival audience will enjoy the selection of films that continue to give so much joy to viewers even half a century since they were made. Even though I will not be there in person, I am delighted

that my daughter Shweta will be in Nantes to represent me at the festival," the 81-year-old star said in a statement.

Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, director, FHF, said the foundation is proud to have its name associated with the 'Amitabh Bachchan, Big B Forever' retrospective. On Bachchan's 80th birthday last year, the Mumbai-based organisation also hosted a four-day national event 'Bachchan Back To The Beginning'. (PTI)

SRK after Australia's WC win: Team India showed great spirit and tenacity

MUMBAI, Nov 20: The way Team India played at the World Cup 2023 showed great "spirit and tenacity", said superstar Shah Rukh Khan after Australia won the trophy in the finals.

Australia won by six wickets in the CWC 2023 final held in Ahmedabad on Sunday, ending the host team's undefeated run in the tournament.

The Australians chased 241 in just 43 overs with Travis Head scoring 137 off 120 balls.

Shah Rukh, who was present at the stadium along with his family, thanked the Indian squad for making everyone proud of the country's sporting legacy in cricket.

"The way the Indian team has played this whole tournament is a matter of honour and they showed great spirit and tenacity."

"It's a sport and there are

always a bad day or two. Unfortunately it happened today. But thank u Team India for making us so proud of our sporting legacy in cricket. U bring too much cheer to the whole of India. Love and respect. You make us one proud Nation," the superstar posted on X.

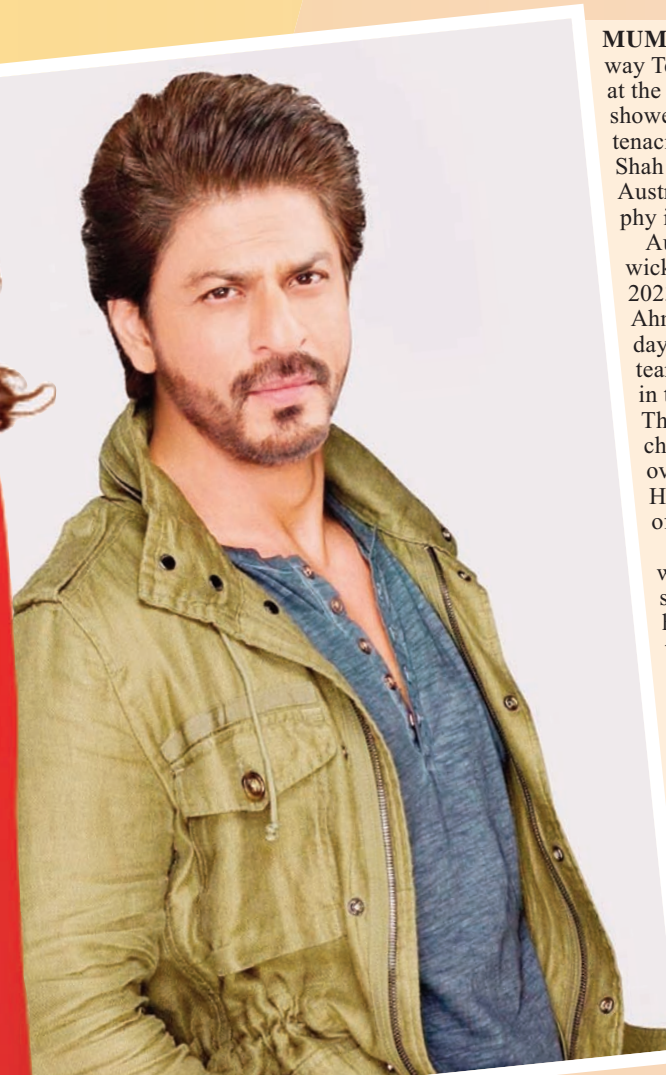
Shah Rukh was accompanied by wife-entrepreneur Gauri and children Aryan, Suhana and AbRam.

Also present at the stadium were Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone along with their families.

Ranveer lauded the Indian team for "giving it their all".

"Some highs, some lows. Some good days, some bad days. Some wins, some losses. That's sport. That's life. We are all gutted, but let's applaud our boys for giving it their all," the actor posted on Instagram Stories. Deepika also shared the Indian flag on her Instagram Stories.

Ayushmann Khurrana, Ajay Devgn, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Dia Mirza and others also praised the Indian team's valiant effort throughout the tournament. (PTI)



India seek inspiration from famous 2019 stalemate against Qatar in rematch against same opponents

BHUBANESWAR, Nov 20: India will take inspiration from their famous goal-less draw against Asian champions Qatar four years ago when they face the same opponents in a 2026 FIFA World Cup second round qualifiers match here on Tuesday.

Their confidence boosted after the 1-0 away win against Kuwait on November 16, India will hope to give a tough fight to Qatar, though the fancied visiting side will start as firm favourites.

India had surprised the football fraternity when they soaked up waves of attacks to hold Qatar 0-0 on September 10, 2019 in their 2022 World Cup second round qualifiers in Doha. Qatar were then in red-hot form, having won the Asia Cup title in early 2019.

Talismanic India captain Sunil Chhetri was absent in that match as he was indisposed and he would be eager to show his class at the Kalinga Stadium on Tuesday, though scoring chances for the hosts are expected to be far less than the visitors.

Goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, who had captained the team that night in Doha in front of a partisan expatriate crowd, will have to be at his best again on Tuesday to thwart the marauding Qataris as he had done four years ago.

Ranked 61 in the world, Qatar are coming off a 8-1 thrashing of Afghanistan in their earlier match in Doha on November 16, and they would be looking to make the record of the drawn game in 2019 straight with a dominating win against the 102nd-ranked India.

Qatar were 1-0 victors in the reverse fixture of the two teams in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers.



Star striker Almoez Ali, who struck four times against Afghanistan the other day and was the top-scorer for Qatar at the 2019 Asian Cup with nine goals, would be the man to watch out for as he can create trouble at the Indian defence, which looked weak in the absence of Anwar Ali.

Sandhu would remember that he and India were lucky in Doha in 2019 as Ali was denied by the upright and the Indian custodian will have to marshal the defence, along with veteran Sandesh Jhinghan.

Head coach Igor Stimac could not use the services of both Ali and defensive midfielder Jeakson Singh in the Kuwait match due to injuries, and it was a blow to the plans of the Croatian tactician though India won the match.

Ali had suffered an ankle injury in Mohun Bagan's AFC Cup match against Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh last month. Kerala Blasters player Jeakson suffered a shoulder injury in an Indian Super League match against Mumbai City FC and he had under-

gone a successful surgery early this month.

Midfield mainstay Sahal Abdul Samad and Manvir Singh, who scored the lone goal for India against Kuwait, were there in Doha four years ago and they would look to make life difficult for the Qataris, more so after the duo's good outing in Kuwait City.

Stimac was just a few months into India head coach's job in the 2019 match, and after four years, he feels a positive result against Qatar is "not unfeasible".

"We have analysed Qatar from every angle and position and know very well what they are capable of in terms of speed and strength. Their defensive and offensive positions are immaculate, which they demonstrated against Afghanistan by scoring eight goals," Stimac said.

"It is going to be very difficult, Qatar are one of the pre-tournament favourites from the group. We do not have high expectations but we know we have a chance and we have to grab that with both hands.

"The first and bigger part was accomplished by winning against Kuwait, now I want the boys to show their quality against Qatar," he said.

India are placed in Group A alongside Qatar, Kuwait and Afghanistan with the top two from the group progressing to the third round of the FIFA World Cup qualifiers.

The top two teams from each group will also secure qualification to the 2027 AFC Asian Cup.

The Blue Tigers have never advanced to the third round of AFC's FIFA World Cup qualifiers but they now have a high chance of doing so after their 1-0 win over Kuwait. (PTI)

India look at young guns to take their legacy forward after WC heartbreak



BENGALURU, Nov 20: An expressionless Virat Kohli gave a quick handshake and hug to an equally expressionless Shubman Gill before going to collect his runners-up medal. It was the most poignant moment of a tearful Sunday night for the Indian cricket team.

It, perhaps, was the most visible sign of the imminent generational shift in Indian cricket after the hosts failed to grasp a third World Cup.

Of course, veterans such as Kohli, Rohit Sharma and Mohammed Shami might be around for some more time, but now it is up to a younger crop to take the team forward and build a new legacy unscarred from the past failures.

Gill (24), Shreyas Iyer (28), Ishan Kishan (25), Ruturaj Gaikwad (26) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (21) will soon, hopefully, be joined by a recovering Rishabh Pant (26) as India will hit the road to the T20 World Cup 2024 and beyond.

These players already have considerable experience at top level cricket and have showcased their talent more than once, but living up to the heritage of titans like Kohli and Rohit is not a simple task.

These players have built some tall edifices over the last decade and half, symbolising their skill, durability and mental fortitude in the high-pressure world of modern-day sports.

That they had to cope with the extra burden of captaincy on their shoulders, makes their achievements all the more glittering. An empathetic leader with conviction is the driving force behind a team in any sport.

So, in whom India should make investment as the future leader?

Former India batsman Robin Uthappa thought Shreyas could be the one who fits into that role.

"Shreyas Iyer has demonstrated significant dedication and confidence. He appears quite impressive, particularly at the No. 4 position.

"If he keeps up this level of performance, it wouldn't be astonishing to see him lead the Indian team, especially in white-ball cricket," said Uthappa in his YouTube channel.

However, that is just one part of the journey into the future. With the T20 World Cup in the USA and the West Indies fast approaching, the temptation would be high for tunnel thinking with just that tournament in mind.

But that could be the biggest mistake the powers that be can commit.

Apart from next year's T20 World Cup, the current international cycle (2023-2027) will see India competing in three major global white-ball events – the Champions Trophy 2025, co-hosting 2026 T20 big bash with Sri Lanka and then in the 50-over World Cup in 2027.

So, India will require careful team building around the players who can sustain themselves under pressure and last the race.

"That's right. India might not have the services of their big players for a long time now. The authorities will have to plan well in advance for the next three or four years, give consistent chances to young players like Jaiswal and Gaikwad so that they are mentally ready when a big tournament comes around," a former India selector told PTI. (PTI)

Gavi's knee injury overshadows Spain's 3-1 win against Georgia

VALLADOLID, Nov 20: Ferran Torres scored and had an assist for Spain in its 3-1 home win against Georgia in a European Championship qualifying game on Sunday that was overshadowed by a potentially serious knee injury for midfielder Gavi.

Gavi was in tears when he limped off in the 24th minute in Valladolid.

Gavi's goal for Spain in a 1-0 win at Norway in October had already secured spots for both Spain and Scotland at next year's tournament in Germany.

The 19-year-old Barcelona player took a hard hit to the side of his right knee when he collided with an opponent. He kept playing for a few minutes and appeared to hurt the same leg while trying to control the ball. After that he immediately signalled to the team that he could not continue.

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente embraced his young player before Gavi was taken into the locker room with team doctors.

Robin Le Normand gave Spain the lead four minutes into the game when Torres curled a cross to the second post for the Real Sociedad central defender to head home.

Georgia's Khvicha Kvaratskhelia equalized on a counterattack in the 10th after some hesitant defending by Le Normand and Dani Carvajal.

Giorgi Mamardashvili kept the score level at halftime after the Georgia goalkeeper, who plays for Spanish club Valencia, made a reflex save to parry Alvaro Morata's point-blank shot.

Torres scored from José Gaya's cross in the 55th with his header bouncing off the turf and beyond the reach of Mamardashvili.

Torres ran to the dugout and held up Gavi's jersey during his celebrations to dedicate the goal to his club teammate. (AP)

Mbappé reaches 300 career goals faster than Messi or Ronaldo

PARIS, Nov 20: Kylian Mbappé has scored 300 career goals faster than Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi. Former France great Thierry Henry has nothing but admiration. Mbappé achieved the feat over the weekend in a 14-0 rout of Gibraltar at the age of 24 years and 333 days. Both Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, the game's two biggest stars in the 21st century, were older when they reached the milestone.

"What this kid is doing is really out of this world," said Henry, who is now in charge of leading the new generation of France's players as coach of the Under-21 team. "It's just unbelievable."

Mbappé was often compared to Henry earlier in his career. Both attended France's Clairefontaine academy before playing as left wingers at Monaco, where each won the French league titles as a teenager. Mbappé then replicated another of Henry's accomplishments when he won the 2018 World Cup in his first major tournament.

Henry was often compared to Mbappé earlier in his career. Both attended France's Clairefontaine academy before playing as left wingers at Monaco, where each won the French league titles as a teenager. Mbappé then replicated another of Henry's accomplishments when he won the 2018 World Cup in his first major tournament.

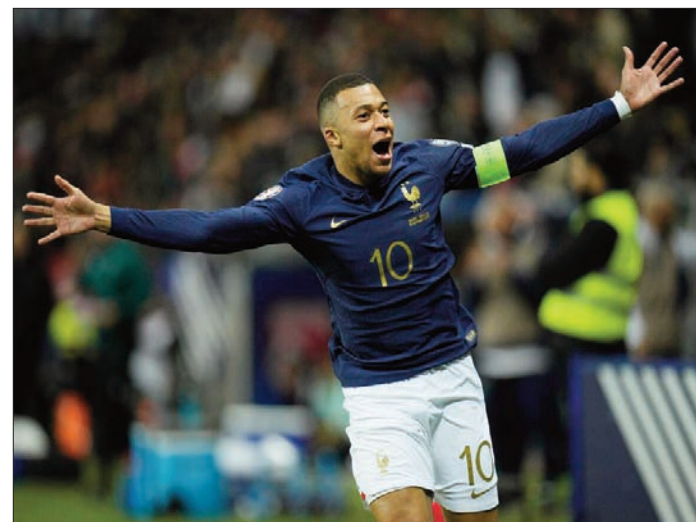
Henry was often compared to Mbappé earlier in his career. Both attended France's Clairefontaine academy before playing as left wingers at Monaco, where each won the French league titles as a teenager. Mbappé then replicated another of Henry's accomplishments when he won the 2018 World Cup in his first major tournament.

Henry was often compared to Mbappé earlier in his career. Both attended France's Clairefontaine academy before playing as left wingers at Monaco, where each won the French league titles as a teenager. Mbappé then replicated another of Henry's accomplishments when he won the 2018 World Cup in his first major tournament.

Henry was often compared to Mbappé earlier in his career. Both attended France's Clairefontaine academy before playing as left wingers at Monaco, where each won the French league titles as a teenager. Mbappé then replicated another of Henry's accomplishments when he won the 2018 World Cup in his first major tournament.

Henry was often compared to Mbappé earlier in his career. Both attended France's Clairefontaine academy before playing as left wingers at Monaco, where each won the French league titles as a teenager. Mbappé then replicated another of Henry's accomplishments when he won the 2018 World Cup in his first major tournament.

Henry was often compared to Mbappé earlier in his career. Both attended France's Clairefontaine academy before playing as left wingers at Monaco, where each won the French league titles as a teenager. Mbappé then replicated another of Henry's accomplishments when he won the 2018 World Cup in his first major tournament.



name with France. Henry won the 1998 tournament.

Mbappé has also been compared with Brazil great Pelé for his precocity. But in terms of style, with his devastating speed and skills, he is closer to Henry.

"He's a goalscorer, he delivers

assists, he knows how to do everything," Henry said. "Of course, there's room for improvement, but that's not the point."

With his 17th career hat-trick, Mbappé brought his season tally to 21 goals in 19 matches. It was the PSG star's 46th goal in 74 interna-

tional appearances. He is now just five goals behind Henry on France's all-time scoring list and 10 off teammate Olivier Giroud's national record total.

The exact number of goals in Pelé's career will forever be a topic for debate. He often said one of the reasons he should be considered the greatest player of all time was because of his feat of scoring more than 1,000 goals. But many dispute his count because Pelé included goals scored in friendlies or matches against semi-professional or even amateur teams.

When asked how many goals Mbappé could reach, Henry jokingly hinted at the 1,000 mark, then said "it's up for him to decide."

"He's a guy who breathes soccer, who prepares himself well, who doesn't do everything and anything, his professionalism and desire to play are always there," Henry said. "300 goals? There are some who haven't even managed that in training." (AP)

"We're very sympathetic for everyone with what's going on," Australia coach Graham Arnold said of the Gaza conflict. "But again, it's a game of football and that brings a lot of joy to everybody."

Australia can take a big step towards the final round of qualification for soccer's 2026 World Cup if it defeats the Palestinians. After beating Bangladesh 7-0 in the opening game, the Socceroos would take control of Group 1 with another victory against a Palestinian team that drew 0-0 against Lebanon.

Palestinian coach Makram Daboub has been unable to call all his usual squad as three of his players were unable to get out of Gaza to report for a training camp in Jordan. Those that have made it are, the Tunisian said, struggling to focus.

"The players are in the hotel or on the bus most of the time following the news on their phones and communicating with their families," Daboub said. "They are in a constant state of anxiety with the continued aggression and war in Palestine."

Despite the concerns, Daboub was happy with the performance against Lebanon. "We should have won the game but it is a good point for us. We know that Australia is a strong team and we need to focus on that as best we can."

South Korea has a much shorter journey to take on rival China in Shenzhen. Both teams won opening games in Group C with South Korea, aiming for an 11th successive World Cup appearance, beating Singapore 5-0 and China, going for a second, winning 2-1 in Thailand. Coach Aleksandar Jankovic is expecting a tough test against South Korea, a team that China has only defeated twice in 36 past meetings. (AP)

"The result last night was really unfortunate. I know India have not performed in finals consistently (over last decade) but this team was head and shoulders above others in the tournament. It is their sheer hard luck that they could not go all the way. "Credit must be given to Australia. They played excellent cricket and I feel India were 40-50 runs short. Then the evening dew made it much easier for the Aussie batters," said Prasad. (PTI)

"India were just unfortunate" Former chief selector MSK Prasad, whose tenure saw India falling short in the 2017 Champions Trophy and 2019 ODI World Cup semifinal, acknowledged that the team has been losing knockout games consistently but it is not down to crumbling under pressure.

"The result last night was really unfortunate. I know India have not performed in finals consistently (over last decade) but this team was head and shoulders above others in the tournament. It is their sheer hard luck that they could not go all the way. "Credit must be given to Australia. They played excellent cricket and I feel India were 40-50 runs short. Then the evening dew made it much easier for the Aussie batters," said Prasad. (PTI)

"India were just unfortunate" Former chief selector MSK Prasad, whose tenure saw India falling short in the 2017 Champions Trophy and 2019 ODI World Cup semifinal, acknowledged that the team has been losing knockout games consistently but it is not down to crumbling under pressure.

"The result last night was really unfortunate. I know India have not performed in finals consistently (over last decade) but this team was head and shoulders above others in the tournament. It is their sheer hard luck that they could not go all the way. "Credit must be given to Australia. They played excellent cricket and I feel India were 40-50 runs short. Then the evening dew made it much easier for the Aussie batters," said Prasad. (PTI)

"India were just unfortunate" Former chief selector MSK Prasad, whose tenure saw India falling short in the 2017 Champions Trophy and 2019 ODI World Cup semifinal, acknowledged that the team has been losing knockout games consistently but it is not down to crumbling under pressure.

"The result last night was really unfortunate. I know India have not performed in finals consistently (over last decade) but this team was head and shoulders above others in the tournament. It is their sheer hard luck that they could not go all the way. "Credit must be given to Australia. They played excellent cricket and I feel India were 40-50 runs short. Then the evening dew made it much easier for the Aussie batters," said Prasad. (PTI)

Not an epic choke, just a bad day in the office, say sports psychologists

NEW DELHI, Nov 20: The murmurs around India's inability to land the knockout punch in a global event have grown since the ill-fated Sunday night but did the team, which looked invincible heading into the World Cup final, actually crack under pressure or was it just a bad day in the office? Fears of a billion plus came true as Australia stitched together a perfect game to deny a rampant India who had not put a foot wrong during their stormy march to the final.

After 10 wins in a row, India's unstoppable run came to a crashing halt in yet another trophy clash. Since winning the Champions Trophy in 2013, India have lost five ICC finals and three semifinals.

Considering India's dominance heading into the final, the dejected look on faces of skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli after the six-wicket defeat was understandable. The two greats of the game perhaps knew deep down that they might not get another shot at the crowning glory.

The dust has not yet settled but India's repeated failures on the world stage does warrant the question: did they choke or was it just an off day in an otherwise near perfect campaign?

Speaking to PTI, sports psychologist Gay-

atri Vartak, who works with elite Indian athletes, felt it was not a case of buckling under pressure and Australia were just tactically superior on the day.

"I don't think there was any pure evidence of the team cracking mentally. I don't think they choked or could not perform under pressure.

"All of them came into the tournament positively and had great build up to the final. As a player your reference point (over your mindset) becomes your last game and not what happened in a final three years ago. The last game was the semifinal which they won," said Vartak.

Diya Jain, a sports psychologist at Fortis Hospital, said the big match pressure can take a toll on elite athletes but India's performance should be celebrated.

"Any team can have a bad day, it's important to accept it and learn from it. Australia had a plan and they stuck to it, believed in themselves and were zoned-in. The pressure of big matches can take a toll, and mental preparation is key.

"That said, this is not the time for analysis, it's time to celebrate. Being a World Cup finalist and winning 10 matches on the trot is a remarkable feat," said Jain.



Life of an Indian cricketer makes winning a tad harder

India's larger than life cricketers often talk about shutting the "outside noise" to focus on the job at hand.

Having said that, it is only human to get distracted when they are reminded of winning the coveted trophy in their fleeting public appearances at airports, hotels and stadiums, which is something they experienced over the course of the World Cup at home even with the "head phones" plugged at all times.

On the other hand, the feisty bunch of Australian cricketers, who excel at the art of winning, are not treated as demigods back

home. The fans undoubtedly make Indian cricket special and provide unconditional support to the players but their non-stop attention does add to the pressure. Matthew Hayden, a member of the all-conquering Australian team and someone who is well versed with Indian cricket, spoke about the added pressure created by fans ahead of the World Test Championship final in June, another high-stake contest that India lost.

"It's certainly not a question of skill. So, it has to be a question of just the opportunity and the mindset going in. I mean, cricket is life here, it is the DNA of sport and has no other competitors.

"In Australia I could walk down the street

and largely be unrecognised, here in India it's very insular and there's a lot of pressure," Hayden had told PTI back then.

Vartak too agrees with Hayden that performing amid a constant frenzy does make winning a tad harder. "For athletes, the Indian fan acts as a big fuel, they come from an emotional space, they can be very critical but they are also very, very supportive. "I don't think it is specific to India but fan behaviour tells us that typically they tend to worship their athletes (which is not the case with cricketers in Australia).

"With that in mind, the fan following of cricket is so high here and it is a religion for all of us. I would agree that it is harder for an Indian cricketer (to be insulated from pressure)," said Vartak.

Not fair to compare this Indian team with teams of the past

The series of knockout defeats over the last 10 years tells a compelling story but Vartak also believes that it is not fair to compare Indian teams of the past with the current lot. "I am sure the composition of the Indian team was different over those games in the last 10 years. There is a tendency to talk about mental block when there is a defeat but when the team is winning no one talks about

the mindset. It is a little unfair on the cricketers. "Technically you can also fail at times and that was the case with India yesterday. Australia were the superior team technically and tactically, but it doesn't become a mental issue.

"They did very well under pressure through the tournament and even won a knockout game. It was a just a bad day I would say," she added.

"India were just unfortunate" Former chief selector MSK Prasad, whose tenure saw India falling short in the 2017 Champions Trophy and 2019 ODI World Cup semifinal, acknowledged that the team has been losing knockout games consistently but it is not down to crumbling under pressure.

"The result last night was really unfortunate. I know India have not performed in finals consistently (over last decade) but this team was head and shoulders above others in the tournament. It is their sheer hard luck that they could not go all the way. "Credit must be given to Australia. They played excellent cricket and I feel India were 40-50 runs short. Then the evening dew made it much easier for the Aussie batters," said Prasad. (PTI)



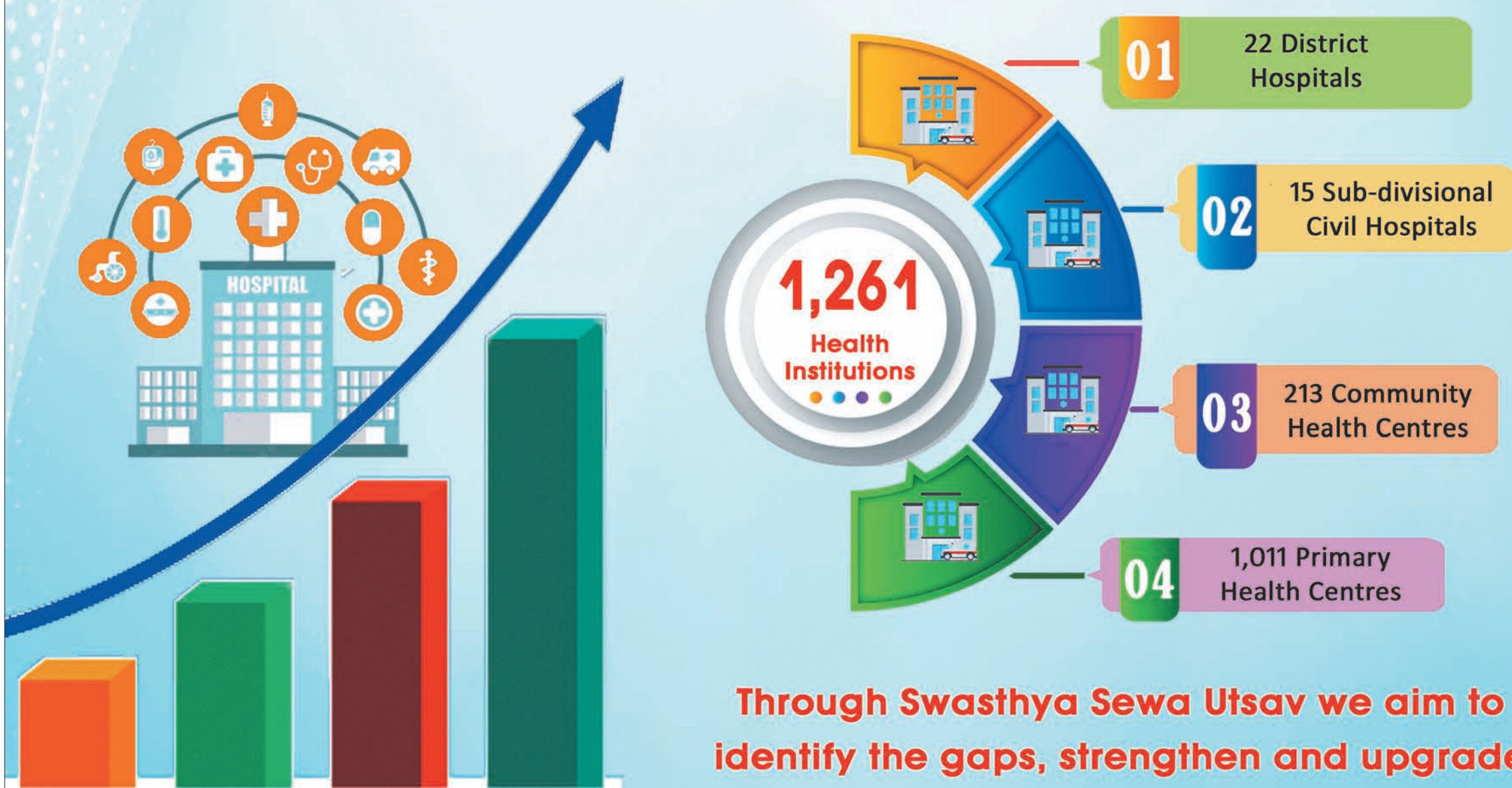
SWASTHYA SEWA UTSAV-2

20 to 22 November 2023



A first-of-its-kind initiative in the country with a vision to strengthen Public Health Infrastructure and Healthcare Service delivery for the people of Assam.

Under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister **Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma** and guidance of Minister of Health & Family Welfare **Shri Keshab Mahanta**, Swasthya Sewa Utsav – 1 was successfully conducted in Assam in April 2023. Now, the Health & Family Welfare Department will conduct Swasthya Sewa Utsav – 2 from 20 to 22 November 2023.



Through Swasthya Sewa Utsav we aim to identify the gaps, strengthen and upgrade healthcare facilities to Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS), 2022.

A noble step for ensuring effective, safe & efficient service delivery through patient-centric approach