

6 WORLD

8 NATION

- More than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israel-Hamas war
- Foreign nationals among 14 killed after gunman opens fire
- Rahul immature, undemocratic; people trust 'Modi's guarantees': BJP
- Oppn MPs came with request for suspension: Pralhad Joshi

Government harnessing tech for smooth public services: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Union minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh on Friday said the Centre is making maximum use of technology to ensure hassle-free delivery of services to the citizens. He said that transparency, accountability and citizen-centricity became the hallmark of the country's governance model ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took over in 2014. "The era of working in silos is long over. The government is making maximum use of technology to ensure hassle-free delivery of services to the citizens. Capacity building programmes enable us to be ready for that," Singh said. Addressing Dr Rajendra Prasad National Convention III (series of memorial lectures) on 'G20 people centric governance and public policy', organised by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) here, the minister said citi-



zen-centric governance will evolve into an increasing role of the citizens in the decision-making process. Beginning with India's vaccine success story in January, Singh said, the year gone by with just a week left, witnessed Prime Minister Modi's citizen-centric governance model. "India's prestige as a space power was well-established by the flawless landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the virgin south polar region of the moon," he said. Talking about India's emergence in the comity of nations, Singh said that (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Birth centenary of freedom fighter Kanaklata Barua observed at Gohpur Himanta bats for economic security

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday emphasised the importance of economic security, stating that while the country enjoys political stability, the current focus is on ensuring economic security. Sarma highlighted the collaborative efforts of both the Central and state governments in actively working towards this crucial goal. "The country has political security and the need of the hour is economic security which both the Central and State government are actively working for," Sarma said while addressing a meeting at Gohpur in Sonitpur district to mark the birth centenary of freedom fighter Kanaklata Barua. Responding to the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the chief minister said that the women of Assam largely participated in the Amrit Kalash Yatra, which proves



their love and involvement for the country. On the occasion, Sarma also presented an appointment letter to the nephew of Kanaklata Barua Abhijit Barua for a government job in Health and Family Welfare department. Besides this, he also felicitated the family members of the swahid family Kalicharan Barua, Putuli Barua and Rohini Kakati. Additionally, he announced that the government would preserve the house of Swahid Kanaklata Barua. Speaking further Sarma said that influenced by Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi's slogan 'do or

die', Kanaklata Barua plunged in the Quit India Movement in the year 1942 and testified her patriotism. "The spirited involvement of Kanaklata Barua in the Quit India movement is a testimony that the women of Assam are in no way inferior to others. As a part of undivided Darrang district, the people of Gohpur fought valiantly to weed out the British from India," he added. Referring to the letter written by the brother of Kanaklata Barua to Sarma for celebrating the birth centenary of Kanaklata Barua, the Cultural Affairs Department is given the responsibility to celebrate the occasion in a befitting manner. "As we begin the birth centenary celebrations, may her valour and unquestionable love for Maa Bharti illuminate our path," he added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

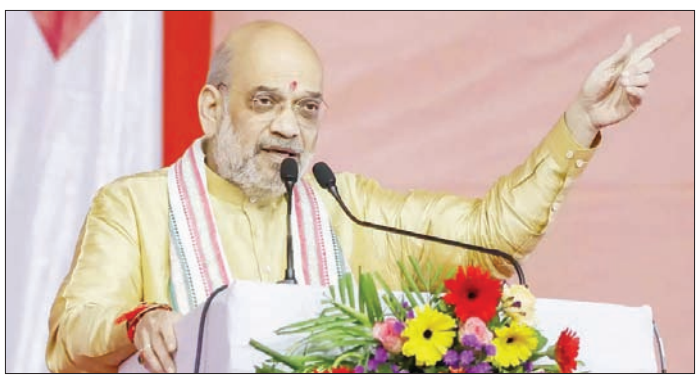
Himanta expresses concern over SP's misconduct towards forest dept employee

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 22: In a swift response to allegations of misuse of power by Golaghat SP Rajen Singh at Kaziranga National Park, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma taking immediate action, held discussions with Assam's director general of police, GP Singh, expressing his concern over the incident. The chief minister emphasised the importance of humility in public servants and disapproved of any arrogance in their conduct. "I spoke to the Director General of Police, Assam Sri @gpsinghps regarding the incident involving the Superintendent of Police, Golaghat. We do not endorse arrogance, and it is important for public servants to remain humble in their thoughts and actions," Sarma wrote on micro-blogging site X. Forest department employee, identified as Tarun Gogoi, was de-

tained by the Golaghat police for some time. The controversy unfolded when Golaghat superintendent of police, Rajen Singh, allegedly demanded five tickets for his family members for an elephant safari at Kaziranga National Park. In response to the unavailability of tickets, the SP reportedly detained forest ranger Gogoi, who had communicated the unavailability to Rajen. Gogoi also claimed that he received threats during a phone conversation with the SP. Taking to the micro-blogging site X, the DGP also said, "I've been made aware of the last evening's undue detention of Sri Tarun Gogoi of @assamforest by @GolaghatPolice I have spoken with Sri Gogoi and conveyed my regret". Singh said that the Golaghat SP Rajen Singh has also been suitably advised. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Solutions to all problems of society are in Gita: Amit Shah

KURUKSHETRA, Dec 22: The solutions to society's problems are in the Bhagavad Gita and its message should reach every corner of the country and the world, Union home minister Amit Shah said on Friday. He was addressing a gathering at the Sant Sammelan after visiting the International Gita Festival here in Haryana. The home minister said after 75 years of independence, many seers and mahatmas have revived the knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita. "I have met many scholars around the world, and all believe that solutions to all the problems of the whole world lie in the Gita's message," he said. "We are sitting here on the holy land of Kurukshetra. More than 5,000 years ago, Lord Krishna also gave the message of the Gita to Arjun," Shah said, referring to the Mahabharata.



Solutions to problems of people and society as well as the nation and the world lie in the message of the Gita, he said. The minister said that in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had expressed his desire to hold the Gita festival, and since 2016, this festival is being organised at an international level. Assam is the partner state of the festival this year, he said. The message of the Gita should reach every corner of the country and the world, Shah said and added that for the past seven years, the festival is being successfully organised. The BJP comes out with its poll manifesto with the belief that the country's great culture should always be taken forward, he said. Policies (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Former BJYM general secretary Alom Rongpi joins Congress

HT Bureau DIPHU, Dec 22: In a significant development, the former general secretary of Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), Karbi Anglong District Committee (East), Alom Rongpi, joined the Indian National Congress (INC) on Thursday. His father, Prodir Rongpi, an executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) ruled by the BJP, also resigned from the BJYM a month ago. In a press conference at his residence here on Friday, Rongpi said, "I resigned from the post of general secretary of East Karbi Anglong District Committee Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (EKADC-BJYM) of the BJP on November

21, and yesterday i.e., December 21, I, along with two other BJP members from Chinthong in West Karbi Anglong, joined the Congress in the presence of WKADCC president, Sing Teron." "I had been in the party for six years and during this period had attended several meetings. In one of the RSS core meetings, the statement made by one of the RSS leaders hurt me," he added. Rongpi further accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of corruption and said that contractors under Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) have not received payments. "The KAAC is now operating a single window system where all funds (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



302 people died in tiger attacks in 5 years: Govt data

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: A total of 302 people died in tiger attacks in the country over the last five years with Maharashtra accounting for over 55 per cent of these deaths, according to official data. The Centre has disbursed ₹ 29.57 crore as compensation to the families of the victims. While 112 people died in tiger attacks in 2022, 59 died in 2021, 51 in 2020, 49 in 2019 and 31 in 2018, the government told the Lok Sabha earlier this week. During this period, Maharashtra alone recorded 170 such deaths -- 85 in 2022, 32 in 2021, 25 in 2020, 26 in 2019 and two in 2018. Uttar Pradesh reported 39 deaths due to tiger attacks in the last five years -- 11 each in 2022 and 2021, four in 2020, eight in 2019 and five in 2018. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

IIT-Guwahati unveils model to understand water flow in braided river

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati (IITG) in collaboration with the Brahmaputra Board, under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, have developed a model to understand the flow of water in large braided rivers. The initiative is aimed at providing valuable insights to engineers to design sustainable structures for river bank protection measures, a researcher said on Friday. The model - BRAHMA-2D (Braided River Aid: Hydro-Morphological Analyzer) - was successfully validated on the Brahmaputra river near Majuli Island, the second largest freshwater river island in the world and prone to river bank erosion. It will help understand how fast water moves at different depths in a river, he said.



The research, led by Prof Arup Kumar Sarma of the Department of Civil Engineering, has developed the comprehensive mathematical model to help predict river flow variations across depths, which is "crucial for flood and erosion control, agriculture, water supply intake design and energy production". "Our model combines highly complex mathematical modelling with field-based research on large braided rivers. With this river flow model, we can understand how fast water moves at different depths in a river and its circulation around a structure (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

At INDIA meet, Nitish sought seat-sharing finalisation by January: Key aide

PATNA, Dec 22: Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar stressed the need to finalise seat-sharing arrangements by January at the recent meeting of the INDIA bloc, a key aide disclosed on Friday. JD(U) national general secretary Sanjay Kumar Jha, who had attended the meeting along with Kumar in Delhi on December 19, briefed reporters at the party office here. "Nitish Kumar expressed the view that seat sharing should be complete by January. After that all parties should come out with a common minimum programme, since to challenge the current regime we must have a counter-narrative, and plunge into the campaign," said Jha, a close aide of the Bihar CM, who holds key portfolios in the state government. He, however, refuted reports in a section of the media that Kumar grew "upset" over the coalition's reluctance to name him the convener of INDIA and had skipped the post-meeting press conference to register his protest. "As someone who was present at the nearly three and a half hours



long meeting, I can say with authenticity that all the deliberations took place in a cordial atmosphere. It was decided that only a few leaders brief the media. We are appalled at the misleading reports", claimed the JD(U) leader. There is "no truth in the speculations that Nitish Kumar wanted to be named as the convener", Jha said, adding that the JD(U) supreme leader has "played a key role in the formation of INDIA bloc and is satisfied with having done so". Replying to a query, Jha said, "We are confident that the proposed deadline of January, for seat-sharing, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Extortionists held in Diphu for demanding ₹ 1 crore as bribe

HT Bureau DIPHU, Dec 22: The Karbi Anglong police on Friday nabbed two alleged extortionists near Lumding road in Diphu, said Deputy Superintendent of Police. As per the police, the duo was apprehended while they were on their way to collect extortion money. Upon receiving the inputs from a businessman claiming that they had demanded ₹ 1 crore from him, the police launched an operation. The police, led by Deputy Superintendent of Police (Headquarters), Dilip Mili, launched a search operation on the evening of December 21 at Lumding Road and apprehended the 30-year-old Borsing Tokbi, alias Risim Kathar, self-styled chairman of Defence of Karbi Liberation Army (DKLA), and 22-year-old Thomas Tokbi. As per the police, they are brothers, sons of Longki Tokbi from Sarthe Engli village, 8 km away from Lumding road. Police also recovered four mobile handsets and one motorbike from their possession. Later, the arrested (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

'It aims to create a platform for cultural exchange and appreciation' KNP authorities promote conservation awareness through visitor engagement

BOKAKHAT, Dec 22: The Kaziranga National Park (KNP) authorities to sensitise visitors towards conservation activities and popularise the Kohora Centenary Museum have decided to host an enriching and immersive programme titled 'Kajir Ronghangpi Tales' on each Saturday during the tourist season. KNP director Sonali Ghosh told PTI that visitors to the park will get an opportunity to meet the persons behind the conservation efforts of the heritage park and delve into the cultural and rich heritage of the region. The event will showcase the park's treasure trove of natural beauty and biodiversity through live talks and screening of insightful documentaries at the museum,



she said. The 'Kajir Ronghangpi Tales' programme is an initiative to honour the cultural legacy and narratives that enrich the fabric of Kaziranga and its surrounding regions, the KNP director said. It aims to create a platform for cultural exchange and appreciation, inviting visitors to embark on a journey of discovery and connection with roots to the Kaziranga.

The Kohora Centenary Museum, a bastion of regional history and culture, serves as an ideal venue for this event, offering a fitting backdrop to explore and showcase the unique tales of Kaziranga. The premises also house the PD Stracey library which has a good collection of wildlife-related books and tourist information centre. Eminent local people, experts, and storytellers will converge for an engaging talk show, sharing anecdotes, legends, and the rich oral traditions of the Kaziranga. "We hope that their captivating narratives will help the visitors in exploring the historical tapestry woven by generations of inhabitants", Ghosh said. The documentaries to be screened during the programme (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

India's new envoy says committed to strengthening special friendship with Sri Lanka



COLOMBO, Dec 22: India's new High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Santosh Jha, on Friday presented his credentials to President Ranil Wickremesinghe and vowed to work to further strengthen the special friendship with the island nation. Jha replaces Gopal Baglay, who has been appointed

as the next High Commissioner of India to Australia. Jha, a senior diplomat, was India's Ambassador to the European Union, Belgium & Luxembourg before taking up his assignment in Colombo. He has the experience of serving as a member of negotiating teams for Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with Sri Lanka and the European Union respectively. As the new High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, Jha is poised to further strengthen the bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka, fostering cooperation and collaboration in various domains, the Sri Lankan President's Media Division said in a press release. The newly appointed Indian High Commissioner wrote in the guest book of President Wickremesinghe that India and Sri Lanka share deep-rooted bonds in history, geography, culture and people-to-people ties. He highlighted the growth (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Commercial LPG rate cut by ₹ 39.50 per 19-kg cylinder

State-owned oil firms last hiked the price of commercial LPG by ₹ 21 on December 1

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Commercial cooking gas (LPG) prices were on Friday cut by ₹ 39.50 per 19-kg cylinder in line with softening international benchmarks.

However, the price of domestic LPG -- used in household kitchens for cooking purposes -- remained unchanged at Rs 903 per 14.2-kg cylinder.

Commercial LPG -- used in various establishments such as hotels and restaurants -- will now cost ₹ 1,757 per 19-kg cylinder in the national capital as against ₹ 1,796.50, oil firms said in a price notification.

State-owned oil firms



last hiked the price of commercial LPG by ₹ 21 on December 1.

Commercial LPG will now cost Rs 1,710 per 19-kg cylinder in Mumbai, ₹ 1,868.50 in Kolkata, and ₹ 1,929 in

Chennai. Rates differ from state to state based on incidence of local taxation.

Saudi contract price (CP), the benchmark used for pricing of LPG, has softened in the last

few weeks' oversupply concerns.

State-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) revise cooking gas and ATF prices on the 1st of every month, based on the average international price in the previous month. The revision on Friday is an outlier.

Petrol and diesel prices continued to remain on freeze for a record 21st month in a row. Petrol costs ₹ 96.72 per litre in the national capital, and diesel comes for ₹ 89.62 per litre. (PTI)

Jewellery retail trade expected to grow at 10-12 per cent in FY'24: ICRA

Almost 14 per cent higher as compared to the price levels in the preceding first half



KOLKATA, Dec 22: The domestic jewellery retail industry, in value terms, is expected to grow at 10-12 per cent during the current financial year on the back of elevated gold prices, credit rating firm ICRA said in a report. In the last financial year, the industry had grown by more than 15 per cent.

ICRA said that demand volumes remained stable in the current festive season despite higher prices.

The research firm said organised jewellery retailers are expected to outperform the industry over the medium term, driven by planned retail expansion and tailwinds from the accelerated formalisation of the trade.

After remaining volatile between December 2022 to April 2023, gold prices were relatively stable in the range of ₹ 5,600 to ₹ 5,700 per gram in the first half of the current fiscal.

This was almost 14 per cent higher as compared to the price levels in the preceding first half. The rating firm said the elevated price levels supported the revenue expansion of most jewellery retailers in the face of muted volume growth on a high base and persistent inflation.

It also projected that the jewellery industry to grow by 6-8 per cent year-on-year in the second half of the current fiscal due to stable demand. (PTI)

Modi to chair third national conference of chief secretaries from Dec 27-29



NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair the 'third national conference of chief secretaries' in the national capital next week, a senior government official said on Friday.

The third national conference of chief secretaries will be held in Delhi from December 27-29 and it will be a significant step towards further strengthening the partnership between the Centre and state governments, the official told PTI.

Several officials, including young district collectors and magistrates, from states and Union Territories as well as several Union ministries are likely to attend the conference. (PTI)

Wells Fargo workers at New Mexico branch vote to unionise

MEXICO, Dec 22: Employees at a Wells Fargo bank in New Mexico have voted to unionise, the first time that workers at a major U.S. bank have attempted to organise in the modern era.

The vote comes after a series of extraordinary gains for unions in the U.S., with organized labor sealing huge contracts in industries that have historically had strong labor representation, and inroads in those that have not.

Bankers and tellers at the Wells Fargo branch in Albuquerque, New Mexico will join the Communications Workers of America's Wells Fargo Workers United, the Committee for Better Banks said in a prepared statement Wednesday. And employees at other bank locations like Daytona Beach, Florida, have already filed for a vote to unionize with the National Labor Relations Board, according to the committee, which is made up of current and former employees of banks including Wells Fargo, US

Bank, Santander, Bank of The West, and Bank of America. The workers say they are understaffed, underpaid, and mismanaged.

"This stands as a testament to workers in the financial services industry who know we need a collective voice to improve the industry we are integral to," said Sabrina Perez, a banker at the Wells Fargo branch in Albuquerque that just voted to unionize.

The bank employees join others in a push to unionize in places that have not had a strong presence of organized labor.

Workers at more than 200 U.S. Starbucks locations walked off the job last month in what organizers said was the largest strike yet in the 2-year-old effort to unionise the company's stores.

Starbucks, which opposes the union effort, has also tried to shift the conversation on that issue. Earlier this month, the company announced it was committed to bargaining with

its unionized workers and reaching labor agreements next year.

Workers at a small number of Apple stores are seeking to organise and there are nascent attempts to introduce unions at Amazon warehouses.

In places where unions have a strong history, it was a huge year.

In August, UPS workers voted to approve a five-year contract putting a final seal on contentious labor negotiations that threatened to disrupt package deliveries for millions of businesses and households nationwide. And workers at automakers General Motors, Ford and Stellantis agreed to terms in October that ended six weeks of targeted strikes.

The UAW and the Teamsters have vowed to seize on that momentum and broaden their base, pushing organized labor into factories that have not unionized and into sectors that have not traditionally been represented by unions. (AP)

Rupee rises 12 paise to settle at 83.15 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Dec 22: Rising for the first time this week, the rupee appreciated by 12 paise to settle at 83.15 against the US dollar on Friday amid a weak American currency and positive equity market sentiment.

The Indian currency, however, remained under pressure due to continuous upward movement in the crude oil price triggered by evolving geopolitical situation and outflow of foreign funds, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic currency opened at 83.25 and traded in the range of 83.11 to 83.27 against the greenback during intra-day. The local unit finally settled at 83.15

(provisional), registering a gain of 12 paise over its previous close.

On Thursday, the domestic currency settled 9 paise lower at 83.27 against the dollar. On Wednesday, the unit traded in a flat note and settled at 83.18, a day after ending the session at the same level with a loss of 8 paise on Tuesday. On Monday, the currency had declined 7 paise to close at 83.10.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said, "The dollar index trending weak has been a major support for rupee as dollar has fallen from 104 to 101.70 in a matter of 10 sessions. However, the overall trend for the rupee remains sideways within the range of 82.90-83.40 zones."

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.07 per cent lower at 101.41 on Friday.

Global oil price benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.97 per cent to USD 80.16 per barrel.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 241.86 points or 0.34 per cent to settle at 71,106.96. The broader NSE Nifty soared 94.35 points or 0.44 per cent to 21,349.40.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the equity market on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 1,636.19 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

Asian shares are mixed after a rebound on Wall Street

BANGKOK, Dec 22: Shares were mostly higher in Asia on Friday after several strong profit reports helped Wall Street claw back most of its sharp losses from day before.

Benchmarks fell in Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney and Bangkok but rose in Tokyo and Mumbai. US futures fell while oil prices advanced.

Japan's core inflation rate fell to 2.5 per cent in November from 2.9 per cent a month earlier as energy costs eased, the government reported. The decline, if it augurs further weakening of prices, might counter expectations that the central bank will tighten its lax monetary policy in coming months.

Bank of Japan officials have indicated they want to ensure inflation is sustained near a 2 per cent target level and that wages are also rising before adjusting the central bank's longstanding minus 0.1 per cent benchmark interest rate.

"Nonetheless, it would be wrong to conclude that inflationary pressures are now firmly on the decline," Marcel Thieliand of Capital Economics said in a commentary. With global inflation waning, "weakening in underlying inflation largely reflects the pass-through of falling import costs which is weighing on price rises of processed food products and other industrial products," it said.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index edged 0.1 per cent higher to 33,169.05 and the Kospi in Seoul was flat at 2,599.51.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index gave up 1.4 per cent to 16,391.02 and the Shanghai Composite index lost 0.1 per cent to 2,914.78. In Sydney, the S&P/ASX 200 was nearly unchanged, at 7,501.60.

Bangkok's SET slipped 0.3 per cent and the Sensex in Mumbai was up 0.2 per cent.

On Thursday, the S&P 500 climbed 1 per cent to 4,746.75. It is within 1 per cent of its all-time high after suffering its worst tumble in nearly three months. The Dow Jones Industrial Average advanced 0.9 per cent to 37,404.35, nearing yet another record. The Nasdaq jumped 1.3 per cent to 14,963.87.

Micron Technology leaped 8.6 per cent for one of the market's biggest gains after reporting stronger results for the latest quarter than analysts expected and saying it sees business conditions improving throughout its fiscal year.

CarMax rose 5.2 per cent after it beat profit expectations despite what it called "persistent widespread

pressures in the used car industry." And cruise operator Carnival steamed 6.2 per cent higher after reporting better quarterly results than expected.

The trio helped lead a widespread rally where more than 90 per cent of the stocks within the S&P 500 climbed.

Reports on Thursday painted a mixed picture of whether the Federal Reserve can pull off its long-odds tightrope walk of bringing about a slowdown in the economy powerful enough to conquer high inflation but not so strong that it causes a recession.

One report showed that slightly more US workers applied for unemployment benefits last week, but the number was still below expectations and low relative to history.

Another report showed manufacturing in the mid-Atlantic region is weakening by more than expected. Manufacturing has been one of the hardest-hit areas of the economy. And a third report said the US economy's growth during the summer wasn't quite as powerful as earlier estimated.

Investors are ebullient about potential rate cuts and a resilient economy in 2024. Both would help buoy stock prices. The S&P 500 has charged 15 per cent higher in roughly two months on anticipation for those twin supports, and the index is on track for an eighth straight week of gains.

That's despite Fed officials having pencilled in far fewer rate cuts for 2024 than Wall Street. Critics say the number of rate cuts traders are expecting is unlikely unless the economy falls into a recession, which some still see as an inevitable consequence of all the rate hikes already instituted by the Federal Reserve.

That's raised criticism that stocks have gone too far, too fast and become too expensive relative to profits that companies are earning. Even before Wednesday's 1.5 per cent drop for the S&P 500, several strategists on Wall Street were forecasting at least a pause in the rally in the short term.

In other trading Friday, US benchmark crude oil added 67 cents to USD 74.56 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It gave up 33 cents to USD 73.89 on Thursday.

Brent crude, the international standard, advanced 58 cents to USD 79.74 per barrel.

The US dollar rose to 142.33 Japanese yen from 142.12 yen. The euro slipped to USD 1.0999 from USD 1.1012. (AP)

Stock markets climb for 2nd day on buying IT shares

MUMBAI, Dec 22: Stock markets extended gains for a second day on Friday following buying in IT stocks and firm trends in the US markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 241.86 points or 0.34 per cent to settle at 71,106.96.

During the day, it jumped 394.45 points or 0.55 per cent to 71,259.55. The broader Nifty went up by 94.35 points or 0.44 per cent to 21,349.40.

Among the Sensex firms, Wipro jumped over 6 per cent, the most among the frontline companies. HCL Technologies, Tata Motors, Maruti, Tata Steel, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro and JSW Steel were the other major winners.

State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank and IndusInd Bank were among the laggards.

Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services, "The 'buy on dips' strategy continues to drive investors during the subdued week. Mid and

small caps remain in the limelight, benefiting from ease in oil prices and the anticipation of a potential rate cut in CY24, supported by slower-than-expected US GDP growth and weakness in the dollar, signalling early rate cuts."

In Asian markets, Tokyo settled with gains while Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong Seoul ended lower.

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

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.01 per cent to USD 80.19 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,636.19 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark jumped 358.79 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 70,865.10 on Thursday. The Nifty rallied 104.90 points or 0.50 per cent to 21,255.05. (PTI)

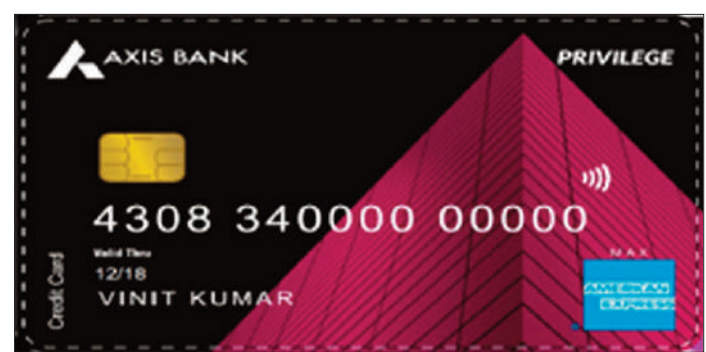
Axis Bank strengthens collaboration with American Express

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Axis Bank, a prominent player in India's private banking sector, has strategically partnered with American Express to introduce the Axis Bank Privilege Credit Card on the American Express network.

This collaboration aims to provide Axis Bank customers with both local and global benefits associated with the American Express network.

The newly launched Axis Bank Privilege Credit Card on the American Express network boasts a range of enticing benefits.

Cardholders can enjoy an activation benefit worth ₹ 5000 along with two complimentary domestic lounge accesses per calendar quarter. Additionally, users will receive activation vouchers from marquee merchants based on defined spend thresholds on the card. The card also offers instant discounts on



popular online platforms such as Swiggy, Blinkit, and Zomato.

Sanjeev Moghe, President & Head of Cards & Payments at Axis Bank, expressed the bank's commitment to delivering enhanced value to customers through constant innovation. He stated, "This partnership will further strengthen our commitment towards servicing the affluent and premium customer segments."

Anurag Gupta, Vice President & Head of Global Merchant & Network Services, India at American Express, expressed excitement about expanding their partnership with Axis Bank on the card issuing side. With this expansion, Axis Bank becomes both the issuing and acquiring partner for American Express, providing an extended reach for Card Members and enabling spending in more locations.

Swastik Investments conducts Successful Investor Awareness Session

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: In a commendable initiative to enhance financial literacy and empower the younger generation, Swastik Investments recently concluded a highly successful Investor Awareness Session. Attended by over 40 enthusiastic individuals, the event aimed to equip participants with valuable insights into the dynamic realm of investments. The session commenced with an insightful address by Narendra Surana, a renowned industry expert celebrated for his profound knowledge of investment strategies and market trends.

The participants were guided through various investment avenues, gaining a nuanced understanding of emerging opportunities. The interactive nature of the session allowed for questions and engaging discussions, fostering a conducive learning environment.



Surana underscored the importance of adapting to changing market conditions and provided informed strategies to mitigate risks effectively. The session went beyond theoretical concepts, incorporating practical case studies to offer real-world insights. Swastik Investments showcased a strong commitment to investor education, contributing to the broader goal of creating a financially literate community in the re-

gion. As financial markets evolve, the significance of empowering individuals with knowledge becomes paramount. The success of this enlightening session demonstrates Swastik Investments' dedication to financial literacy. As participants disperse armed with newfound knowledge, the positive impact of this session is expected to resonate in their investment journeys, fostering a community of informed and confident investors.

Tesla moves forward with a plan to build an energy-storage battery factory in China

New factory will initially produce 10,000 of Tesla's Megapack units annually for sale worldwide

BEIJING, Dec 22: American electric automaker Tesla's plans to produce energy-storage batteries in China moved forward on Friday with a signing ceremony for the land acquisition for a new factory in Shanghai, China's state media said.

Construction is scheduled to start early next year with production to come on line by the end of the year, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The factory won't build batteries for cars but for electric utilities and other companies to store power. Such storage units have become increasingly important with the growth in solar power and wind energy, which only generate electricity when weather conditions are favorable and need to store it for when residential and commercial users need it.

The new factory will initially produce 10,000 of Tesla's Megapack units annually for sale worldwide, Xinhua said.

The Tesla project is a rare piece of good news for the Chinese economy, which has



seen a sharp drop in foreign investment this year. The Commerce Ministry said this week that foreign investment in the first 11 months of this year was down 10% compared with the same period last year.

Foreign companies are worried about the Chinese government's increasing control over business on national security and other grounds, as well as growing U.S. restrictions on technology trade with China.

China is a major market and manufacturing center for Tesla, and the company's

CEO, Elon Musk, has built close ties with Chinese officials even as U.S.-China relations soured. In May, he met the commerce minister and the then foreign minister in Beijing.

Tesla built an electric vehicle plant in Shanghai in 2019 that assembles cars for China, Europe and other overseas markets. It is the No. 2 seller in the booming Chinese market for electric vehicles. The market leader is Chinese auto company BYD, which announced plans Friday to build electric vehicles in Hungary in what will be its first car factory in Europe.

Tesla sold 464,654 vehicles in China in the first 10 months of the year, up 37.5% over last year and accounting for 12% of China's electric vehicle sales, according to the China Passenger Car Association, the research arm of the China Automobile Dealers Association.

China is also by far the world leader in installing wind and solar capacity, making it a major market for energy storage. (AP)

STRENGTHENING OF BRIDGE APPROACH AND PROTECTION WORK

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/129 of 2023, Dated: 19-12-2023. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN.1. Brief Description of Item:** Provision of strengthening of bridge approach and its protection work of Br. No. 20, 21 & 29 in Haibargaon - Mairabari section under ADEN Jagjriod. **Tender Value:** ₹ 22,55,62,780.84. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 2,77,800.00. E-tenders will be closed 15:00 hrs. on 16-01-2024 and opened 15:00 hrs. on 17-01-2024. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 16-01-2024 in website www.ireps.gov.in. **DRM (W), Lumding**

ENGINEERING WORKS AT LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/129 of 2023, dt. 20-12-2023. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Brief Description of Item:** Improvement of water supply in Hill section between Daothuhaja & Damchura under the jurisdiction of ADENHGS. **Tender Value:** ₹ 1,41,74,349.35. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 2,20,900.00. Date & time of Closing of above tender at 15:00 hrs. on 16-01-2024 and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 17-01-2024. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 16-01-2024 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. **DRM (W), Lumding**

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

State cabinet approves township policy for planned urban development

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: The state cabinet has approved the state township policy for ensuring systematic and planned urban development in the state.

The policy will regulate and guide the growth of urban areas in an organised manner, thereby cutting down exploitation of resources. Health and Family Welfare minister Keshab Mahanta said at a media briefing after the cabinet meeting on Thursday.

The council of ministers gave its nod to the notification of the Assam State Township Policy, 2023 for "implementation across the state for ensuring systematic and planned urban development", he said.

The policy will ensure that essential services such as roads, healthcare facilities and others are adequately planned and implemented through private capital investment. It will also address the need for affordable housing within the townships with provisions for regulation and incentivisation of such projects, he said.

The cabinet also green-lighted the draft Guwahati Central Area Local Area Plan (LAP) within the metropolitan area for publication to seek public objections and suggestions.

The proposed LAP aims at mak-



ing provisions for the redevelopment and upgrade of infrastructure facilities and open spaces and ensuring better connectivity to each plot and optimum utilisation of urban land in Guwahati.

The cabinet also approved the guidelines for implementation of 'Mukhya Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin' (MMAY-G) in line with the framework of the central scheme - Pradhan Mantri Awaas

Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).

MMAY-G aims at providing houses to 1,30,000 eligible beneficiaries in 2023-24 with assistance of similar amounts as of PMAY and 13,000 houses will be constructed in tea garden labour lines, the minister said.

The council of ministers decided to settle land issues in favour of 1,540 landless indigenous families in 13 districts in both urban and

rural areas.

The cabinet also gave the go-ahead to 946 proposals for the settlement of land to indigenous families across the state, conversion of annual patta to periodic patta land, and allotment to various government institutions.

The cabinet, in a bid to ensure a proper balance between the written examination and viva-voce test for the Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) conducted by the Assam Public Service Commission, approved the scaling down the marks of the viva-voce from the existing 275 to 180 of the total written examination.

The decision complies with the recommendations of the MP

Bezbaruah Committee and Supreme Court judgement.

The council of ministers also approved a 15 per cent hike in the existing stipend for postdoctoral, post-graduate doctors, senior and non-PG residents, internee doctors, and pre-registered internees of government medical and dental colleges, effective from April 1, 2024.

The cabinet also gave its nod to the construction of a sports complex at Chandrapur and the establishment of an old age home and childcare institution at Boko for a combined amount of ₹ 205 crore, Mahanta added. (PTI)

Grandparents Day celebration in Kendriya Vidyalaya ONGC, Sivasagar



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Dec 22: In a heart-warming celebration, Kendriya Vidyalaya ONGC, Sivasagar, observed Grandparents Day, embracing the cherished values of family bonds and tradition in Indian society. The event witnessed the presence of approximately 250-300 grandparents, creating an atmosphere of joy and nostalgia within the school campus.

Punyadhar Kalita, the chief guest, and Nandeshwar Gogoi, the guest of honour, graced the occa-

sion, where students extended a warm welcome to the grandparents and honored guests by applying tilaks.

Ajit Singh, the principal of KV ONGC, expressed gratitude in his welcome address for the pivotal role grandparents play in shaping the character and virtues of the students. He stated the importance of preserving family traditions and values in the fast-paced modern world.

The cultural highlight of the program was a series of performances

by the students, including soulful songs and lively dances, all centered around the theme of honouring grandparents. The auditorium resonated with applause as grandparents, the chief guest, and the school faculty appreciated the heartfelt efforts of the young performers.

Head teacher Nutan Singh delivered the vote of thanks, emphasising the importance of respecting elders. The success of the program was attributed to the efforts of dedicated teachers, including Dipamoni Das, Sunita Gogoi, Akanksha Gupta, Vaishali, Kusum, Sneha, Neeraj Bansal, Ajay Kumar, Ankur Biswas, Deepak Kumar, Bijeshwar Pratap Singh, Pranam Sharma, Korobi Bora, Vijayalakshmi Aarshi Gupta, and Priyankhi Das.

Kendriya Vidyalaya ONGC, Sivasagar, reaffirmed its commitment to holistic education by celebrating events that not only promote academic excellence but also instill a sense of cultural and family pride in its students. The Grandparents Day celebration serves as a testament to the school's dedication to nurturing well-rounded individuals within a supportive and loving community.

Nehru Yuva Kendra registers youth for 'Mera Yuva Bharat'

HT Correspondent

MORIGAO, Dec 22: As part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Mera Yuva Bharat', aiming to engage and activate youth for the development of India, the Nehru Yuva Kendra in Morigaon district has embarked on a mission to register 12,000 youths. This nationwide campaign targets youth aged 15 to 29 years, integrating them into 'Mera Yuva Bharat (MY Bharat)' platform.

Led by district youth officer Bikash Pradhan and accountant and program officer Dhananjay Talukdar of Nehru Yuva Kendra Morigaon, volunteers successfully registered over 200 youths in Morigaon. The initiative aligns with the government's vision to harness the energy and potential of the youth for the nation's progress.

The registration event was attended by key officials, including deputy director of NYKS Mahendra Kumar Sharma, deputy director of Guwahati Regional Office Pramathesh Chakraborty, assistant director of Headquarters Shikhar Virmani, and principal of College of Education Dr Dolly Buragohain. They provided guidance to the registration process and offered encouragement to the enthusiastic youth.

NCC plays vital role in utilising youth power for national development: Guv Kataria

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria marked the beginning of a mega cyclothon organised by the National Cadet Corps (NCC) at Raj Bhawan on Friday. The cyclothon, commencing in Guwahati, will culminate in New Delhi, showcasing unity and fitness demonstrated by the girls of NCC cadets.

Governor Kataria interacted with the contingent of the mega cyclothon, motivating and congratulating the team members for their selection in this inspiring event. During the interaction, he praised the NCC for standing as a beacon of discipline, leadership, and patriotism. The Governor highlighted the pivotal role of women in the nation, stating that the Naari Shakti initiative reflects the incredible potential and capabilities of women in every sphere of life.

Highlighting the significant role of NCC in utilising youth power for national development, the Gov-



ernor stated that NCC training instills discipline, grounded values, and fosters love for the nation. He extended his best wishes to the cyclists for a successful expedition.

The National Cadet Corps (NCC), the world's largest uniformed youth organisation, is celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2023. The mega cyclothon is a national-level cycling expedition aimed at showcasing Naari Shakti. Led by marathoner Col Anjan Sengupta, a team of 15 cyclists, including 14 girl cadets from NCC UP Directorate, will cover a distance of 2107 kms

across four Indian states - Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh - before culminating in New Delhi. The cyclists will cover the challenging journey in 23 riding days, averaging almost 90 to 100 kms per day.

The event was attended by Maj Gen Gagandeep, ADG, North Eastern Directorate of NCC, Brig Rajendra Kumar DDG ADG of NCC UP Directorate, commissioner and secretary to the Governor SS Meenakshi Sundaram, and several NCC and Raj Bhawan officials, offering their encouragement and support to the cadets.

Governor chairs meetings with chancellor's nominees



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria convened two significant meetings with the chancellor's nominees of Assam Women's University and Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva Sports University at Raj Bhawan. The nominees, holding key positions and court memberships, engaged in discussions centered on the development and well-being of the respective institutions.

Governor Kataria accentuated the vital role of Assam Women's University in promoting women's empowerment through higher education. He urged the chancellor's nominees in the executive council and academic council to play a pivotal role in advancing the government's objectives in this regard.

Acknowledging the university's uniqueness as the sole women's university in the entire north-east, he stressed the need for special attention to ensure its holistic development.

During the meetings, Governor Kataria encouraged a proactive approach in aligning the curriculum with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. He also underscored the importance of a rigorous selection process for faculty and non-teaching staff, ensuring strict adherence to all norms. The Governor directed the nominees to undertake frequent visits to the university, overseeing administration and academic activities. Various crucial issues, including the application of Information Technology, integration of

online/MOOC courses, and the introduction of physical education and home sciences, were discussed.

In the meeting with the chancellor's nominees of Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva Sports University, Governor Kataria highlighted the pivotal role of sports in overall human well-being, emphasising its positive impact on steering individuals away from negative habits. He envisioned the university contributing significantly to the holistic development of the youth population in the north-east of India.

The nominees for Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva Sports University demonstrated a keen focus on the institution's well-being, presenting valuable suggestions to enhance its reputation and play a significant role in sports education. Proposals included the establishment of a multipurpose hall accommodating 18 sports throughout the year, collaboration with Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in Assam for developmental activities through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and the promotion of traditional sports in the university's curriculum.

Advisor to the Chancellor's Secretariat, Prof Mihir K. Chaudhuri, commissioner & secretary to the Governor SS Meenakshi Sundaram, and other key officials from Raj Bhawan participated in the meetings.

Rangpur Sahitya Sabha celebrates platinum jubilee

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Dec 22: The Yuva-dal auditorium witnessed the vibrant inauguration of the platinum jubilee and mid-term session of Rangpur Sahitya Sabha on Friday. The event featured a series of symbolic ceremonies, enlightening speeches, and reflections on the rich literary heritage of Assam.

Hem Baruah, the president of Rangpur Sahitya Sabha, commenced the day by hoisting the Sabha flag, followed by Dipali Bhattacharjya Baruah, former president, performing the smriti tarpan. Anjali Hazarika added radiance to the occasion by lighting ceremonial lights, and Meghali Kakoty Hazarika unveiled the quarterly issue of 'Navamallika'.

Dipali Swargiary, a distinguished litterateur, inaugurated the open session. In a thought-provoking address, Ranjan Phukan advocated for the publication of the original script of Madhava Kandali Ra-

mayana by Asom Sahitya Sabha, underscoring its fundamental significance in showcasing the distinctiveness of the Assamese language.

Phukan delved into the evolution of Assamese language and literature, tracing its journey through pre-Vaishnavite and Vaishnavite literature to its current form, enriched by diverse modern schools of thought. He explored complex themes embedded in modern poems from Ajit Barua to Nilim Kumar.

Dr Nirupoma Mahanta, president of Sivasagar Jila Sahitya Sabha, highlighted the unique position of Rangpur Sahitya Sabha within Assam Sahitya Sabha, and spoke about its illustrious history since the mid-20th century. She also shed light on the transition from the old era to the modern era. Former president Manoj Kr Borthakur urged the committee to organise seminars on modern poetry and contemporary literary trends, aiming to enlighten the younger generation.

STF conducts raid, apprehends two drug peddlers

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Acting on specific information, a raid was carried out near Railway Gate No 3 under Panbazar PS Jurisdiction by the Special Task Force (STF) of the state. The operation resulted in the apprehension of two habitual drug peddlers, including a woman, and the recovery of various items, reinforcing the commitment to combat illegal narcotics trade.

Recovered items from the operation include 31 vials containing suspected heroin, weighing 53.5 grams, 7 empty vials, one syringe, and one mobile phone.

The individuals captured during the operation are identified as Suresh Sonar (18), son of Dilbahadur Sonar from 4 No Railway Gate, Panbazar, Guwahati, with a permanent address in Mornoi village, Goalpara; and Meena Rahman (60), widow of Late Abdul Ali from 4 No Railway Gate, Panbazar, Guwahati, with a permanent address in Bhelaapara Gaon, Lanka, Hojai.

Balipara Foundation Awards conferred to environmental champions

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: The 11th edition of the Annual Eastern Himalayan NaturenomicsTM Forum, organised by Balipara Foundation, concluded in Guwahati with a focus on the theme 'The Great People's Forest 2030'. The forum brought together a diverse group of 60 participants from over 15 countries to address key challenges and formulate a restoration agenda for the Eastern Himalayan region. The theme, inspired by the ambitious Great People's Forest initiative, aims to restore 1 million hectares of forests and farmlands by 2030 in collaboration with Conservation International.

Distinguished figures such as Dr Vandana Shiva, environmental activist; Chanakya Chaudhary, director, Tata Steel Foundation; Gautam Mukhopadhyaya, senior visiting fellow, Center Policy Research; Dasho Paljor Benji Dorji, environmentalist; Ram Madhav, president, India Foundation; Dr Sonali Ghosh, current director of Kaziranga National Park; and Monica Kishore Pasupuleti, IFS, Deputy Conservator of Forests in Assam, were part of the event.

Ranjit Barthakur, founder of Balipara Foundation, underscored the ecological significance of the Himsagar region, emphasising its role in maintaining overall environmental balance. He expressed the foundation's commitment to supporting and regenerating the Great Eastern Himalayas.

The highlight of the forum was the presentation of the Balipara Foundation Awards, acknowledging outstanding contributions to environmental conservation. A total of 16 awards were conferred, adding an extra layer of celebration to the event. The awardees spanned various categories, recognising individuals and organisations from different parts of the Eastern Himalayan region.

The list of awardees included Neela Guring from Nepal, recipient of the Rural Futures Rewilding Award, Silluk Village, Women's Welfare Society of Arunachal Pradesh, awarded the Naturenomics Award, and Choki Wangmo of Bhutan, honored with the Green Journalist Award. The Green Guru Award went to Saibal Sengupta of Darjeeling and Dr Sushanto Gouda

of Mizoram, while the Young Naturalist Award was bestowed upon Morningstar Khongthaw of Meghalaya.

Further awards included the Food for the Future Award, presented to Seineng Singnit of Manipur, and the Forests Guards & Rangers Award, recognising individuals and entities from Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Assam. Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury of Assam received the Lifetime Service Award, and Dr Ashok Khosla was honored with the Great Himalayan Star Award.

Additional recognitions included the Rewilding the Eastern Himalayan Grant to Zhimohli and Shikali of Nagaland, the Special Recognition Award to Green Entrepreneur Biswajit Goyari of Assam, and the Special Recognition Award - Honouring the Champions of Rescue and Rehabilitation to Azzedine Downes.

In the spirit of fostering sustainable practices, the Food for the Future Award was also presented to Seineng Singnit of Manipur, and the Special Recognition Award - Green Agripreneur was conferred upon Tenzing Gyatso Lepcha of Sikkim.

Tezpur University hosts workshop for school students

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Dec 22: The department of Mathematical Sciences at Tezpur University, in collaboration with the Assam Academy of Mathematics, organised a full-day hands-on workshop on mathematics for secondary school students on Friday. The aim of the workshop was to make mathematics enjoyable and inspire young students to consider mathematics as a fulfilling career.

This initiative was part of the celebrations for National Mathematics Day, observed annually on December 22 to commemorate the birth anniversary of the legendary mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan.

Professor Shambhu Nath Singh, vice chancellor of Tezpur University, served as the chief guest and highlighted Ramanujan's significant contributions to the field of mathematics. Professor Singh highlighted Ramanujan's remarkable achievements within a short lifespan, despite facing personal and professional adversities.

Professor Robin K. Dutta, dean of the School of Sciences and guest of honour at the event, noted that the department of Mathematical Sciences has been actively researching various aspects of Ramanujan's work. He expressed that National Mathematics Day provides an ideal opportunity for the university to reaffirm its commitment to promoting mathematical excellence and encouraging young students to pursue the subject with passion and dedication.

NFR unveils world-class executive lounge at Guwahati Railway Station

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has introduced a state-of-the-art executive lounge on the ground floor of Platform Number 1 at Guwahati Railway Station, enhancing the passenger experience for both incoming and outgoing travelers. The inauguration ceremony was officiated by Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, general manager, NF Railway, along with other senior officials from the headquarters and division.

The newly opened executive lounge at Guwahati Railway Station boasts a seating capacity of 92 persons, offering superior facilities for passengers awaiting their trains. The lounge features fully air-conditioned amenities, comfortable sofa sets, LED televisions with a musical system, a travel desk, free Wi-Fi, a mini-cloakroom, and beverage-cum-snack stalls.

NF Railway has strategically developed executive lounges at various railway stations within the zone to provide a comfort-



able and quality waiting experience for both national and domestic travelers. Guwahati Railway Station, being a pivotal transportation hub in the north-east, has now added another feather to its cap with the introduction of this world-class executive lounge.

Passengers, including business class travelers, can avail themselves of airport-like lounge facilities at a nominal charge of Rs 30 for the first hour and an additional Rs 20 for each subsequent hour. The executive lounge offers paid bath and change facilities, as well as options for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

As the largest city in the north-east region and a gateway to the northeastern states of India, Guwahati plays a crucial role in connectivity. The newly inaugurated executive lounge further elevates Guwahati Railway Station's reputation by providing world-class amenities to passengers, aligning with the station's commitment to excellence in passenger services.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference. - Robert Frost

Indian Democracy at Crossroads

In a recent display of political tension, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's actions have raised questions about the government's allegiance to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its potential impact on India's democratic principles. The suspension of opposition MPs has sparked a nationwide call for safeguarding democracy. On December 21, the INDIA bloc orchestrated a "Save Democracy" march from the old Parliament building to Vijay Chowk, underscoring concerns about the suspension of opposition MPs and its implications for the democratic process. The absence of Home Minister Amit Shah's statement within the parliamentary walls only deepened the perception of disrespect towards the institution. Congress leaders, including Kharge, proposed that Rahul Gandhi spearhead a campaign against these perceived threats to democracy in the lead-up to the 2024 elections. However, the efficacy of such actions remains uncertain in countering the alleged designs of the RSS. It is imperative for INDIA's leadership to construct a counter narrative against the backdrop of Modi and Shah's maneuvers, particularly considering the potential misuse of new laws to consolidate power. The looming specter of an accommodating Election Commission raises concerns about the fairness of future elections, prompting INDIA's leaders to devise a robust strategy to thwart any attempts to undermine democratic processes.

Speculations circulate within political circles that senior INDIA leaders may face arrest ahead of elections, marking a troubling trend of arbitrary power exercise in a democratic setting. The expulsion of MPs, a glaring example of this arbitrary exercise, underscores the urgency for accountability and upholding the spirit of the Constitution. Former Vice President Hamid Ansari's warning about the global rise of authoritarianism resonates strongly in India's current political climate. As nearly half of the assessed 173 countries experience declines in democratic metrics, the need for safeguarding democratic values becomes paramount. However, recent actions, such as Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar introducing casteism into parliamentary discussions, cast a shadow on these efforts. Dhankhar's expression of personal hurt due to the targeting of his farmer and Jat backgrounds during a debate on mimicry and casteism raises eyebrows. The conflation of mimicry with caste issues prompts questions about his moral support for Jat farmers agitating for Minimum Support Price (MSP). The juxtaposition of such concerns against the broader democratic backdrop adds complexity to the ongoing discourse.

India stands at a crossroads where the actions of its leaders and the trajectory of democratic principles intertwine. The suspension of MPs, the potential misuse of new laws, and the specter of authoritarianism demand a proactive response from INDIA's leadership. As the nation prepares for the 2024 elections, it is crucial to foster a political environment that upholds the values enshrined in the Constitution and ensures the preservation of a robust democratic spirit. In the face of growing concerns over democratic erosion in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's actions, including the suspension of opposition MPs and perceived alignment with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), have ignited a nationwide call to safeguard democratic values. The recent "Save Democracy" march by the INDIA bloc underscores the urgency for a counter narrative. Amid speculations of arrests of senior INDIA leaders and the potential misuse of new laws for political gains, there is a pressing need for INDIA's leadership to fortify democratic processes and address the broader challenges to accountability and constitutional principles in the lead-up to the 2024 elections.

From conformity to liberation: The radical power of education in shaping tomorrow's world

By: Dr Aniruddha Babar

Education, when confined to conformity, is a chain binding minds to the past. But when ignited as the 'practice of freedom,' it becomes the revolutionary flame that empowers hearts to critically question, envision, and ardently participate in the transformative dance of shaping a brighter, more just future for all.

In the realm of education, there exists a profound dichotomy – a choice between serving as a passive conveyor belt for societal norms or emerging as the vanguard of transformative change. Paulo Freire, a visionary educator, encapsulated this duality when he asserted, "There is no such thing as a neutral education process." Indeed, education, in its essence, either aligns with the status quo, fostering conformity, or it blossoms into the "practice of freedom," a catalyst for critical thinking and societal evolution.

The prevailing educational system, in many instances, functions as a conduit for perpetuating existing norms and structures (for e.g. British Education System in India). It can be a tool wielded by the establishment to seamlessly integrate successive generations into the prevailing logic of the status quo. In this mode, education becomes a force that moulds minds to fit pre-established moulds.

On the contrary, the transformative power of education is unleashed when it transcends its role as a mere dispenser of information. When education becomes the "practice of freedom," it becomes a dynamic force for change. It empowers individuals to engage critically with the world around them, to question assumptions, and to envision a more equitable and just society. This perspective sees education

as a means for individuals to actively participate in the reshaping of their reality.

Freire's philosophy urges us to view education not as a passive process but as an active engagement with the complexities of the world. It encourages educators and learners alike to peel back the layers of societal norms, dissecting them with a critical eye to free themselves from what I would say in our Indian context- the "Intellectual Prisons of irrelevant Western Ideas and World views". In doing so, education becomes a vehicle for fostering autonomy, enabling individuals to navigate the intricacies of their existence with a sense of purpose and agency.

To embrace education as the "practice of freedom" is to acknowledge its potential as a liberating force, capable of breaking chains of ignorance and prejudice. It is an invitation to explore diverse perspectives, challenge ingrained biases, and envision a society founded on justice and equality. Such an education system fosters creativity, innovation, and a sense of responsibility toward shaping a nation and a better world for future generations.

In conclusion, Freire's wisdom beckons us to recognize that education is never neutral. It is a force that either perpetuates the status quo or serves as a beacon for societal transformation. As we navigate the complexities of education, let us strive to embrace the latter – an education that empowers individuals to positively engage with reality, fostering a generation that actively contributes to the ongoing evolution of a more just, equitable, and enlightened India and the world. (The author is an academician in the Dept of Political Science, Tetsu College, Nagaland who can be reached at aniruddha@tetsucollege.org)

Mamata proposes and Arvind Kejriwal disposes: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge is India's prime minister nominee

Khela Hobe! That is West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee taking a direct hit at the opponent's goal post at the fourth INDIA meet in Delhi on December 19. Mamata pitted Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge against BJP's public face Narendra Modi. With that, the 2024 Lok Sabha elections would be a one-on-one one act play between the "unbeaten" and the "invincible".

Most significant, and more notable than Mamata's declaration that Kharge is "PM Face" of the INDIA Bloc, was Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal seconding Mamata's declaration. That made it "official". Though Kharge rose to interject that this wasn't the right occasion to suggest the name of INDIA Bloc's Prime Minister Nominee, he did not withdraw his name or object to the declaration.

Everything was fine. Gung ho. What's more, 'Kharge for Prime Minister' received wide support from all present at the INDIA Bloc meet. Nevertheless, after his name passed muster, Kharge said, "I work for the downtrodden. Let's win first, and then we will see. I don't seek anything. We have to first win. Who will be Prime Minister is a matter for later. First, we have to get a majority and strength ourselves. Then, the MPs will decide democratically".

Proposing Kharge's name for INDIA's "Prime Minister" was strategic, a move bound to catch the imagination of India's poor and vulnerable, the proletariat and the Dalit. In the recent assembly elections, these sections had rallied behind BJP and the Congress had garnered 9 lakh more votes than the BJP. At the all-India level, the Dalit are 22 per cent of the population and the RSS has been motivating them to vote for the BJP by telling them that they, too, were Hindus. INDIA leaders are seriously moving to explode this myth and bring back the Dalit to the secular fold. And quite naturally, Mallikarjun Kharge is the best bet for INDIA to win over the Dalit trust. Politically, too, Kharge fits the "PM Face" as he is not only mature, but also senior by far than Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In fact, the Prime Minister himself will admit this.

The best thing about "Kharge for INDIA's Prime Minister" is that it has already blunted Modi's pet peeve that the Congress is perpetuating Gandhi-Nehru rule. By naming Kharge, INDIA has hit the Modi nail on its head, silenced the saffron critics from hurling taunts at the Opposition's so-called inability to project a PM candidate to challenge Modi. So much so, even common people had started believing in this Modi canard. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting his authority and projecting himself as an "Iron Man", the BJP ecosystem had invested all its resources and skill to popularise the myth among the Middle-Class.

Yet another trending issue roiling political circles, as also common people, is "seat sharing", talk that the INDIA



Bloc just couldn't get it done. The latest INDIA meeting has now authorised the leader of the major party of a particular state to interact with leaders of other INDIA constituents and get the job of seat sharing done by the end of this month, otherwise by first week of January 2024, definitely. It was fascinating to witness INDIA leaders, especially Ma-

mata Banerjee, ruing the delay in seat sharing. "Is not too late, but and it's better to be late than never". The INDIA meet succeeded in resolving the problem of seat sharing in Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the states which have been the prime targets of RSS and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. These three states send 166 MPs to the Lok Sabha and Modi returned to power in 2019 riding on the shoulders of the MPs of these three states. Modi is now bragging about winning Chhattisgarh, MP and Rajasthan in a bid to ratchet up a psychological edge. He is forever claiming that the BJP would sweep these states in 2024 general elections, too.

The three states comprise 65 parliamentary seats of which the BJP won 63 in 2019, the saturation level, so to speak. Modi's ploy has been to "terrorise" opposition parties. But the maximum Modi can do is retain the 63 the BJP won in 2019. Chances are he will not. The reasons why the Congress lost the three states is common knowledge. It would be naïve to believe that the Congress does not know.

The best thing going for INDIA Bloc and provide impetus to it is Mamata and other leaders offering 270 seats to the Congress, indicating that INDIA has accepted that the Congress is prime mover and shaker of the Opposition alliance. And while on the alliance, it should be recognized that Mamata Banerjee has emerged as a key leader of the INDIA bloc. Her prima position will have significant bearing on the INDIA bloc's doings in the days to come. Most of her suggestions are unanimously accepted.

That said, in UP, the Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav would call the shots. The SP's alliance with Congress in

2017 did not yield the desired result owing to the tussle of supremacy between SP and Congress. The suggestion that Akhilesh Yadav should be "captain" in Uttar Pradesh will not work. Under the seat-sharing agreement, AAP's Arvind Kejriwal will work out the modalities for Delhi and Punjab. Interestingly, before the meeting, Punjab's AAP Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had expressed AAP's desire to contest all seats. However, in the case of Uttar Pradesh, Ram Gopal Yadav, who is Akhilesh Yadav's uncle, stated in no uncertain terms that the alliance should make up its mind between SP and BSP and only then negotiate. The message was clear, SP would cease to be in INDIA if the BSP is allowed a perch on board.

The good news is, the Congress has taken the lead by announcing a National Alliance Committee comprising senior leaders Ashok Gehlot, Bhupesh Baghel, Mukul Wasnik, Salman Khurshid and Mohan Prakash. This team will work in consultation with state leaders to finalise the seat-sharing formula and identify the constituencies to be shared among alliance partners.

The meet also succeeded in breaking the gridlock of organising public rallies. It was at the Mumbai meet that the INDIA leaders had decided to hold state level rallies and apprise the people of the utility and political relevance of the forum. But it failed to actualise. Beginning December 22, INDIA would hold rallies in all the states and condemn the authoritarian rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make people aware of the dangers of a fascist administration. The plan is to hold 10 rallies across the country.

This has become imperative and has acquired urgency with Modi working systematically to finish off the Opposition, create a so-called "Opposition Mukta Bharat". Nearly 152 members from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have been suspended in the last four days. Never in the parliamentary history of India has this nature and magnitude of suspensions taken place. The only fault of the members was that they had sought a statement from the Home Minister on the Parliament security breach. That no investigating agency has so far interrogated the BJP MP who made possible the breach of security is of deep concern.

Mamata Banerjee expressed her's, saying that "voices" are being stifled. She says the "suspensions" are unjust, and that the government has no moral right. INDIA leaders reiterated their commitment to "continue to fight against the tyranny of this government". INDIA bloc emphasising on the relevance of presenting a united front. "Today democracy is being mercilessly murdered by the Modi government. Representatives who raise public voice are suspended from the House. In such an adverse situation, our unity is our strength and this resolve to protect democracy is our energy. We will give a befitting reply to the dictatorship of Modi government. Will not be afraid, will not stop, will fight and win." (IPA Service)

Selfish MPs turned Parliament into a joke

By: Privanka Saurabh

The country is disappointed with what has been happening in the Parliament for the last few days. Only by running Parliament can the government answer the opposition's questions properly. In the atmosphere of uproar, MPs do not get a chance to express their views. Even a child can understand how protest can be expressed by going to the well and stopping the proceedings of the House by raising slogans and creating a ruckus.

A good thing will be said only when you put your questions clearly and the government can answer clearly. But what is even more worrying is that obstruction of Parliament has become the rule rather than the exception and our politicians have no compunction about it. This decline has occurred very rapidly in the last few years. MPs shout at each other, snatch and tear legislative papers, and come to the middle of the House over small issues. In the past years, most of the bills have been passed without discussion. This is an abuse of the parliamentary system. Now the opposition parties and some MPs have ruined the Parliament.

It is common for both Houses to stall proceedings by creating unproductive uproar over personal agendas. Noise in the Parliament, sloganeering in the well, taking personal digs at each other, and sometimes even getting into a scuffle is a common picture of the Parliament today. After all, why has the behaviour of political parties and MPs become so chaotic? Have the vested interests of the parties today made Parliament a joke?

Looking at the attitude of the MPs, it does not seem that they intend to allow development plans for the country. It seems as if the MPs have taken the entire parliamentary democracy hostage. Because the proceedings of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are shown live on TV nowadays, the common man of the country also sees everything that is happening in the Parliament every day.

After all, what image are the MPs presenting before the people? Just imagine what image is being created of you in the minds of the people of

the country.

The reason for this decline indeed is that politics today has become a game of numbers due to which regional satraps exert pressure to get their wishes done. They not only believe in bullying politics but also make the yardstick of a successful Parliament session 'whose stick is his buffalo'.

Today, size has become more important than content, due to which scenes like street fights are seen in Parliament. Therefore, in this declining political culture and moral values, the content that influences politics is not found in parliamentary proceedings.

Overall, it seems that Parliament has now become just a scoring club. Many would know that ₹ 2.5 lakh is spent on one minute of Parliament proceedings. In this way, an average expenditure of six crore rupees is incurred on one day's normal proceedings. The more the proceedings continue, the more the expenses increase.

Just think where this money comes from. It comes from the pockets of the common people of the country. What could be a bigger joke in a democracy than the Parliament proceedings being stalled continuously or there being uproar intermittently throughout the day, yet ₹ 6 crores are spent in a day? Just imagine what can be done with ₹ 6 crore. The fate of thousands of villages can be changed by the expenditure incurred on one day of Parliament proceedings.

Lakhs of poor girls can get married. Small and cottage industries can improve the fortunes of thousands of youth. But MPs don't think about all this. Even if development plans are not made, personal interests must improve. Have MPs become above the country?

One more thing, it is not the case that all the MPs are creating a ruckus. Those who are serious about their work are unable to do anything. The question is why MPs don't create an atmosphere every time. Do the MPs arrive only to create a ruckus? The MPs have paralyzed the Lok Sabha. The reality is that in a democracy, the people of the country directly elect the Lok Sabha.

In such a situation, the indirectly elected House should respect the dignity of the House of the People i.e. Lok

Sabha. It should not happen that every work done in the Lok Sabha is hampered.

All MPs should be allowed to speak about their constituencies in the Lok Sabha on fixed days, at least for three minutes each. MPs who repeatedly create ruckus should be identified and their list should be publicised. Such rules should be made that automatically certain action is taken against the MP who comes to the well waves the pamphlet or creates any kind of ruckus. Why do some MPs come back to the House after walking out? They do this only to show off, they have nothing to do with the development of the country. He is not able to do anything in the Parliament and on the other hand the people of his Lok Sabha constituency are suffering because he is not able to solve their problems. After all, there is only a ruckus in the Parliament. Therefore, stop Parliament from becoming an arena.

Explain your point to the leadership also; do not blindly follow their every right or wrong order. The first duty of MPs is to preserve the dignity of the sacred temple of democracy. Perhaps these people do not understand the dangerous dimensions of making Parliament unimportant. Our Parliament is the cornerstone of our nation which represents the people and is expected to exercise sovereign oversight over our national interests. The Government is answerable to the Parliament and the existence of the Government depends on the confidence of the Lok Sabha in it.

Therefore, the time has come that all our MPs should pay attention to how parliamentary democracy can be strengthened. Otherwise, the public will start ridiculing him. Our MPs should consider what kind of legacy they are leaving. Will they allow Parliament to collapse under the weight of its decline? We are seeing what is happening today. It is hoped that the MPs of the country and those who run the Parliament will soon realize how much hope the citizens of the country look for them. Also keeps him as an example on many occasions. (The author is a Research Scholar in Political Science, a poetess, Independent journalist and columnist)

India's top court straying from role of guarding democracy with its Article 370 verdict

By: Krishna Jha

Our democracy has lost each of its basics. From the recent crisis that proved to be an assault on not only federalism, but also its most relevant constitutional principles. The Supreme Court judgment on the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and the dismantling of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories was itself a case of a constitutional court condoning the misuse of powers by the executive. Four years after the event, the three concurrent judgments of the five-judge Constitution bench, headed by the Chief Justice of India, have larger and long-lasting implications that strike at the roots of federalism and states' rights.

The very fact that the Presidential order abrogated Article 370 when judiciary, deeply respected until now as the guardian of democracy, has been giving verdicts eroding the existing federal structure, was under President's rule, which means that the Supreme Court had given its clearance to this betrayal of the commitment made to the people of J&K at the time of accession to the Indian Union. By upholding the ruling that Article 370 was a temporary measure and there was no 'internal sovereignty' for the state of J&K, the court has taken a turn away from the question of why special status was accorded to J&K and how such a status was not temporary, but part of a solemn commitment made to the people of Kashmir by the constitutional authorities. Article 370 represented a constitutional guarantee that this status would be defined and evolved with the concurrence of the representatives of the people of J&K.

The judgment delivered by the CJI, on behalf of three members of the bench, makes the claim that Article 370 was intended to "enhance Constitutional integration between the Union and the State of Jammu and Kashmir" rather than as a provision for special status of J&K. It further claims that the continuous exercise of power under Article 370 (1) by the President indicates that the gradual process of constitutional integration was ongoing.

The history of Article 370 shows that it was constantly misused to deny autonomy and encroach on the states' powers over the years by the president exercising this power. How was that done? "Concurrence" was given under various spells of President's rule by the centre's own-appointed governor.

However, as per the peculiar logic of the verdict, "The declaration issued by the President under Article 370 (3) was a culmination of the process of integration and as such is a valid exercise of power". By this reasoning of the learned justices, J&K does not deserve even the special features or rights given to some of the north-eastern and other states in Article 371. There can be no better legal justification for the decades of denial of democracy and autonomy to J&K.

The Constitution, that always provided a step sheet for the 'dos and don'ts' has been pushed aside as the judiciary, deeply respected until now as the guardian of democracy, has been giving verdicts eroding the existing federal structure. The secular, ethno-federal democratic principles have been thrown into hungry hands and are torn into pieces. The Constitution stands amended. The decision was taken by the Judiciary. The decision of the Supreme Court upholding abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 on August 5, 2019, stands intact. It is an act that does not have the honour of judicial acceptance, it also takes a position that goes against its own grain. It is not attempting to protect federalism, nor it stands for democratic values; all it does is promote a politically supportive pat on the back. The Supreme Court has released the government from the need of getting a hitherto imperative assent with two-third majority from both the houses. It is not the much needed assent to the act with two third majority, it destroys the very spirit of demos with kratos, as it becomes a rule of few on the majority destroying the first premise of democracy. The mechanism is not complicated. Only attempts are to be made to create a situation where law and order situation becomes vulnerable, and the pretext is ready to impose President's Rule, under Art 356.

The step is also an indicator of the subversion of our unity in diversity, the historicity in which the composite culture. It had been a deadly attack on federalism coming from the court directly as it said that when the state is under President's rule, it can opt to take any decision, either legislative or otherwise, leading to any act which can be of even irreversible consequences, on behalf of the state legislature. The decisions have been taken. It is extremely unfortunate that the decisions had the court's sanctions. How long do they think it will be before Modi begins to use the freedom their verdict has given him, to start overturning opposition governments in order to bend the whole of India to his and his Hindutva colleagues' will? To justify its decision, the bench has put forward two other supporting arguments. The first is that Article 370 was placed in part 21 of the Constitution titled "Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions". Thus it was never meant to be permanent. So all that the Modi government has done is to close the chapter on Kashmir. The second is that over the decades since the accession, Kashmir's laws have in any case been brought in line progressively with those of the rest of India. So as the government has argued, the autonomy shielded by Article 370 had been 'gradually eroded'. (IPA Service)

Higher education institutions' role in facilitating smooth university transitions

By: Monalisa Biswas

India's education sector is undergoing rapid transformation: thanks to the Government of India's NEP 2020 and its revolutionary goals. The new education policy aims to make the country's education system more responsive, accessible and inclusive by bringing it in line with global standards.

India is currently gearing up to host offshore campuses of several globally renowned universities. The UGC has already issued regulations for establishing and operating foreign university campuses in India.

These offshore campuses will offer myriad academic options and help students escape the rat race for securing seats in the top

Indian universities. This game-changing move will also drive Indian universities to improve their quality of education.

As the country prepares to welcome foreign universities, the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in ensuring the smooth transition of students from college to university becomes increasingly important. Students' transition from HEIs to university often becomes challenging and stressful as many Indian students are not adequately prepared for the stringencies of university life. Thus, it is high time HEIs advanced their strategies to facilitate a seamless academic journey for students.

Here are four approaches through which HEIs can prepare



students to thrive in the university:

1. Developing research skills: Universities pursue extensive research each semester; thus, HEIs must strengthen their research infrastructure to equip

students with essential research skills. NEP 2020 also aims to stimulate research & innovation in HEIs. Thus, higher education institutions must encourage students to engage in research-related activities actively. They

must be taught how to adhere to citation styles and proficiently construct research outlines.

2. Implementing student exchange programs: NEP 2020 emphasises academic collaborations with international institutions to promote cross-cultural experiences among students.

Therefore, HEIs must encourage students to participate in such programs to ensure the success of the National Education Policy. Such programs help students broaden their outlook besides providing global exposure.

3. Teach the art of networking: HEIs must educate students on the importance of networking. The scope of networking is not only limited to social media platforms but also includes other interactions that can be benefi-

cial for building long-term personal and professional relationships.

4. Mentoring and counselling sessions: Initially, students may find it difficult to adapt to the university environment. However, peer mentoring can help students feel more connected to their university.

It can be accomplished by facilitating connections with peers from similar backgrounds. Another effective career guidance tool is alumni mentoring, which can provide students with valuable insights into life after graduation.

To help students cope with the challenges of university life, HEIs should also offer counselling sessions. Counselling can help mitigate anxiety levels

in students and make them more confident.

Moreover, it offers valuable insights into problem-solving and time-management skills, thus enabling students to handle academic workloads effortlessly.

Wrapping up! India's higher education landscape currently calls for a far-sighted strategy. Thus, HEIs must roll their sleeves up and drive actions to facilitate seamless college-to-university transitions.

As key stakeholders in education, HEIs must understand the evolving requirements of 21st century learners and offer essential support to ensure their smooth and successful academic journey.

Majuli Recruitment 2023 – 8 Data Entry Operator & Support Staff Posts

Last Date: 26/12/2023.

District Health Society, NHM, Majuli has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 08 Data Entry Operator and Support Staff posts for engagement under District Health Society, NHM, Majuli for DPMU, NCD Cell, DDWH, Urban Health & Wellness Center, Majuli and SNCU of District Hospital, Majuli. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Data Entry Operator

No of posts: 04 Posts

Vacancy details:

IDSP Unit: 01
DPMU NCD Cell: 01
DPMU SNCU of Sri Sir Pitambar Dev Goswami District Hospital, Majuli: 01
District Drugs Ware House, Majuli: 01

Remuneration: ₹ 500 per day as per Task Rate/ Lump sum basis

Educational Qualification: Graduate with 6-months (minimum) Diploma in Computer Application from recognized University or from registered Institutes under Govt. of Assam or AICTE, India.

Age Limit: Not less than 21 years and not more than 45 years.

2. Support Staff

No of posts: 04 Posts

Vacancy details:

Urban Health Wellness Centre, Majuli : 02
District Drugs Warehouse, Majuli : 02

Remuneration: ₹ 338 per day as per Task Rate/ Lump sum basis

Educational Qualification: Candidate must be of VIII (Eight) standard passed.

Age Limit: Not less than 21 years and not more than 45 years.

How to Apply for Majuli Recruitment?

Interested and Eligible candidates may apply in Standard form of application along with self attested 1(one) set of photocopy of all relevant documents, 2-copies of Passport size photographs and experience certificates, if available.

Applications may be dropped in the box at the O/o the Joint Director of Health Services cum Member Secretary, Majuli during the office hours from 10 AM to 5 PM during 14th to 26th December 2023. After verification of the applications, selected candidate will be called for interview. Date for interview will intimate later-on.

Interested candidates are requested to report at 10.30 AM on the date of interview in the Office of the Joint Director of Health Services cum Member Secretary, DHS, NHM, Majuli.

SSC Constable Recruitment 2024 – 26146 Constable GD Posts

Last Date: 31/12/2023

Staff Section Commission (SSC) has released the official notification for the recruitment of 26,146 vacancy as Constable (General Duty) in Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Secretariat Security Force (SSF), Rifleman (General Duty) in Assam Rifles (AR). Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Constable (General Duty)

Name of exam: Constable (GD) in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), SSF, and Rifleman (GD) in Assam Rifles Examination, 2024

No of posts: 26,146 posts

Male: 23, 347 posts
Female: 2799 posts

Organization-wise vacancy details:

| Organization | No of posts |
|--------------|-------------|
| BSF | 6174 |
| CISF | 11025 |
| CRPF | 3337 |
| SSB | 635 |
| ITBP | 3189 |
| AR | 1490 |
| SSF | 296 |
| Total | 26146 |

Pay scale: Pay Level-3 (₹ 21,700-₹ 69,100)

Eligibility Criteria of SSC Constable GD Recruitment

Nationality: Candidate must be a citizen of India. Vacancies are state/ UT wise hence a candidate must submit domicile/ PRC against his state/ UT.

Age Limit: Candidate age must be between 18 to 23 years as on 1st January 2024. Candidates should not have been born earlier than 02-01-2001 and later than 01-01-2006 in normal course.

Age Relaxation: Permissible relaxations in upper age limit for different categories are as under:

SC/ ST: 5 years
OBC: 3 years
Ex-Servicemen: 3 years

Educational Qualification: The candidates must have passed Matriculation or 10th

Class Examination from a recognized Board/ University.

Application Fee:

Candidates have to pay a certain amount as application fee depending up on their category. The details are as given below:

| Category | Fee |
|---------------|-------|
| UR | ₹ 100 |
| OBC/MOBC | ₹ 100 |
| SC/ ST/ Women | Nil |
| Ex-Servicemen | Nil |

Payment Mode: BHIM UPI, Net Banking, by using Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, RuPay Credit or Debit cards or through cash in SBI Branches by generating SBI Challan.

SSC Examination Centres in Assam and Other North East States

A candidate must indicate the Centre(s) in the online Application Form in which he/ she desires to take the examination. Here's the list of centres available under North Eastern Region (NER).

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Itanagar (5001) | Dibrugarh (5102) | Guwahati (Dispur) (5105) |
| Jorhat (5107) | Silchar (5111) | Tejpur (5112) |
| Imphal (5501) | Shillong (5401) | Agartala (5601) |
| Aizwal (5701) | Dimapur (5301) | Kohima (5302) |

Important Dates of SSC Constable Recruitment 2023

Starting date to apply online: 24th November 2023
Last date to apply online: 31st December 2023
Schedule of Computer Based Examination: February-March, 2024

Army Institute Of Nursing Guwahati Recruitment – 10 Posts

Last Date: 31/12/2023

Army Institute of Nursing (AIN), Guwahati has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 10 Teaching and Non-Teaching Vacancy. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Professor cum Vice Principal

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification: Candidates should have passed MSc Nursing with 12 years experience with M.Sc. Nursing out of which 10 years teaching experience after MSc. Nursing.

Salary: Negotiable

2. Assistant Professor (Medical Surgical Nursing)

No of posts: 02

Educational Qualification: Candidates should have passed M.Sc. in Medical Surgical Nursing with three years teaching experience after M.Sc (Nursing).

Monthly Salary: ₹ 36,000.00

3. Tutor

No of posts: 06

Educational Qualification: Candidates should have passed M.Sc(Nursing) or B.Sc(Nursing) with 01 year of experience.

Monthly Salary:
(a) B.Sc (Nursing): ₹ 22,000.00
(b) M.Sc (Nursing): ₹ 25,000.00

4. Library Attendant

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification: Candidates should have passed Class 12 with 1 year of experience in a relevant field.

Salary: ₹ 10580 per month

How to Apply for Army Institute of Nursing Guwahati Recruitment?

Candidates are instructed to download application form from the Institute website (attached hereunder) and submit duly filled application form along with photocopies of certificates in sealed envelope, through registered/ speed post/ by hand, to the following address by 31st December 2023:

Army Institute of Nursing,
C/O 151 Base Hospital,
Basistha Temple Road, Basistha,
Guwahati - 781029, Assam .

Short listed candidates will be informed the date of interview via email/ telephonically.

Anganwadi Recruitment 2024 – 42 Anganwadi Worker & Helper Posts

Last Date: 02/01/2024

Office of the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), Kathiatoli, Nagaon has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 42 Anganwadi Worker and Anganwadi Helper (Sahayika) vacancy in various Anganwadi centres. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Anganwadi Worker

No of posts: 14 posts

Educational Qualification: Candidates must have passed Higher Secondary (Class 12th). If HS passed candidates not available in a particular area, then HSLC/AHM passed candidates will also be considered as eligible.

Remuneration: ₹ 4,500/- per month

2. Anganwadi Helper

No of posts: 28 posts

Educational Qualification: Candidates must have passed HSLC/ AHM. If HSLC/AHM passed candidates not available in a particular area, then Class IX passed candidates will also be considered as eligible.

Remuneration: ₹ 2,250/- per month

Other Criteria of Anganwadi Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidates age should be between 18 years to 44 years as on 1st January 2023.

Resident-ship: The candidate who apply for the post of Anganwadi Worker/ Anganwadi Helper shall be a permanent resident residing in the concerned Anganwadi Centre survey area where Anganwadi Centre is located.

The residential proof of the candidate for the post of Anganwadi Worker/ Anganwadi Helper must be issued by the Gaon Bura/ Ward Member or the President of the Gaon Panchayat.

How to Apply for Anganwadi Recruitment ?

The prescribed application form will be available in the office of the Child Development Project Officer, Kathiatoli, Nagaon between 11 AM to 3 PM.

The filled up application will be received in the office of the Child Development Project Officer, Kathiatoli, Nagaon in all working days till 2nd January 2024.

Documents to Submit With Application Form

Candidates have to submit the self attested copies of the following mentioned documents along with the filled application form as required.

Recent Passport Size Colour Photograph (2 copies).
Age Proof.
Educational Qualification Certificates and Marksheets.
Address Proof.
Caste Certificate (If Applicable).
Disability Certificate (If Applicable).
Experience Certificate (If Applicable).

Important Dates of Anganwadi Worker Recruitment 2024

Starting date of submission of application: 19th December 2023
Last date of submission of application: 2nd January 2024



Last Date: 09/01/2024

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 400 vacancy for National Defence Academy & Naval Academy Examination (I), 2024 (Indian Naval Academy Course (INAC)). Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

UPSC NDA & NA (I) Recruitment 2024

Name of exam: National Defence Academy & Naval Academy Examination (I), 2024

No of posts: 400 posts

Vacancy Breakup:

National Defence Academy: 370

Naval Academy (10+2 Cadet Entry Scheme): 30

Eligibility Criteria of UPSC NDA & NA (I) Recruitment

Educational Qualification:

Army Wing of National Defence Academy: 12th Class pass of the 10+2 pattern of School Education or equivalent examination conducted by a State Education Board or a University.

Air Force and Naval Wings of National Defence Academy and for the 10+2 Cadet Entry Scheme at the Indian Naval Academy: 12th Class pass with Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics of the 10+2 pattern of School Education or equivalent conducted by a State Education Board or a University.

Candidates who are appearing in the 12th Class under the 10+2 pattern of School Education or equivalent examination can also apply for this examination

Age Limit: Only unmarried male /female candidates born not earlier than 02nd July, 2005 and not later than 1st July, 2008 are eligible.

Application Fee of UPSC NDA & NA (I) Exam

#Others: ₹ 100/-
SC/ST Candidates/Sons of JCOs/NCOs/ORs: Nil
#Women: Nil
#Payment Mode: Online/ Offline

Important Dates of UPSC NDA & NA Exam 2024

+ Starting date of online application submission: 20th December 2023
+ Last date of online application submission: 9th January 2024

Israeli officials say the army has killed some 7,000 Hamas militants, but it has not presented any evidence to back up the claim

More than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israel-Hamas war, Gaza health officials say

RAFAH, Dec 22: The war in Gaza has killed more than 20,000 Palestinians; health officials in the Hamas-run territory said on Friday, a new reflection of the staggering cost of Israel's military offensive as pressure grows to scale it back.

The figure, amounting to nearly 1% of the territory's pre-war population, is just one measure of the devastation wrought by the conflict that over 11 weeks has displaced nearly 85% of Gaza's people and leveled wide swaths of the tiny coastal enclave.

More than half a million people in Gaza — a quarter of the population — are starving, according to a report Thursday by the United Nations and other agencies highlighting the crisis caused by Israel's bombardment and siege on the territory in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack.

Despite the urgency to address the crisis, a U.N. Security Council vote on aid deliveries and terms for a cease-fire was delayed again late Thursday, after days of high-level negotiations.

The United States, which has veto power, has pushed back against calls for an immediate cease-fire and giving the U.N. sole responsibility for inspecting aid deliveries. Israel, citing security grounds, insists it needs to be able to screen goods entering Gaza.

The U.S. said it would back a revised resolution that calls for "creating the conditions" for a cease-fire, rather than an immediate end to fighting. Other countries support a stronger text and said they would need to



consult their capitals before a vote, which is now expected later Friday.

Martin Griffiths, the U.N. humanitarian affairs chief, lamented the world's inaction.

"That such a brutal conflict has been allowed to continue and for this long — despite the widespread condemnation, the physical and mental toll and the massive destruction — is an indelible stain on our collective conscience," he wrote in a post on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

Despite calls for a cease-fire, Israel has said it would press on until Hamas, the militant group that has ruled Gaza for 16 years, has been destroyed.

The military has said that months of fighting lie ahead in southern Gaza, an area packed with the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million people, many of whom were ordered to flee combat in the northern half of the territory in earlier stages of the war. Since then, evacuation orders have pushed displaced civilians into ever-smaller areas of the south as troops focused on the city of Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest. The military said late Thursday that it is

sending more ground forces, including combat engineers, to Khan Younis to target Hamas militants above ground and in tunnels.

The air and ground campaign also continued in the north, even as Israel says it is in the final stages of clearing out Hamas militants from there.

Mustafa Abu Taha, a Palestinian farm worker, said ground battles and airstrikes have continued in his hard-hit Gaza City neighborhood of Shijaiyah, adding that many areas have become inaccessible because of massive destruction from airstrikes.

"They are hitting anything moving," he said of Israeli forces. Gaza's Health Ministry said on Friday that it has documented 20,057 deaths in the fighting. It does not differentiate between combatant and civilian deaths. It previously said that roughly two-thirds of the dead were women or minors. It said 53,320 Palestinians have been wounded.

Israel has carried out thousands of airstrikes as well as a fierce ground offensive in what it says is a campaign to destroy Hamas' military capabilities. It

blames Hamas for the high civilian death toll, citing the group's use of crowded residential areas for military purposes.

Israel declared war after Hamas militants stormed across its border on Oct. 7 and killed some 1,200 people and kidnapped 240 others.

Israel's military says 137 of its soldiers have been killed in the Gaza ground offensive. It says it has killed thousands of Hamas militants, including about 2,000 in the past three weeks, but it has not presented any evidence to back up the claim. Meanwhile, phone and internet services were gradually being restored on late Thursday, after the latest fighting-related communications blackout of 35 hours.

"Networks have become increasingly unreliable through recent days, with overall levels remaining far below pre-conflict levels," said the internet access advocacy group NetBlocks.

Repeated cuts in communications have also hampered aid deliveries at a time of unprecedented humanitarian needs in Gaza.

The extent of the population's hunger eclipsed even the near-famines of recent years in Afghanistan and Yemen, according to Thursday's report by the U.N. and other agencies. The report warned that the risk of famine is "increasing each day," blaming the hunger on insufficient aid entering Gaza.

"It doesn't get any worse," said Arif Husain, chief economist for the U.N.'s World Food Program. "I have never seen something at the scale that is

happening in Gaza. And at this speed."

The war has also pushed Gaza's health sector into collapse.

Only nine of its 36 health facilities are still partially functioning, all located in the south, according to the World Health Organization.

The agency reported soaring rates of infectious diseases in Gaza, including a five-fold increase in diarrhea, particularly among young children, compared to pre-war figures. It said there's been a rise in upper respiratory infections, meningitis, skin rashes, scabies, lice and chickenpox. "With the health system on its knees, those facing the deadly combination of hunger and disease are left with few options," it said.

WHO relief workers reported "unbearable" scenes on Thursday in two hospitals they visited in northern Gaza: Bedridden patients with untreated wounds cry out for water, the few remaining doctors and nurses have no supplies, and bodies are lined up in the courtyard.

Israeli forces have raided a series of health facilities in the north in recent weeks, detaining men for interrogation and expelling others.

On Thursday, troops stormed the Palestinian Red Crescent's ambulance center in the Jabaliya refugee camp, taking away paramedics and ambulance crews, the group said. On Friday, the Red Crescent said the military released some of the paramedics, including women, but eight remained in detention with their whereabouts not known. (AP)

Foreign nationals among 14 killed after gunman opens fire in a Prague university, Over 20 wounded

PRAGUE, Dec 22: Foreign nationals were among at least 14 killed after a student opened fire at a university in Prague, authorities said on Friday.

More than 20 others were also wounded in one of the Czech Republic's worst mass shootings.

The bloodshed took place on Thursday in the philosophy department building of Charles University, where the shooter was a student, Prague Police Chief Martin Vondrasek said. The gunman also died, authorities said. His name has not been released. Vondrasek said in the evening that 14 people had died and 25 were wounded, after earlier reporting that 15 had died and 24 were hurt. He didn't explain the change. Authorities warned that the death toll could rise.

Police gave no details about the victims or a possible motive for the shooting at the building located near the Vltava River in Jan Palach Square. Czech Interior Minister Vit Rakusan said investigators do not suspect a link to any extremist ideology or groups. Vondrasek said police believe the gunman killed his father earlier on Thursday in his hometown of Hostoun, just west of Prague, and that he had also been planning to kill himself. He didn't elaborate.

Later on Thursday, Vondrasek said that based on a search of his home, the gunman was also suspected in the killing of another man and his 2-month-old daughter December 15, in Prague. The chief described the shooter as an excellent student with no criminal record, but didn't provide any other information.

The gunman suffered "devastating injuries" but it wasn't clear if he killed himself or was shot to death in an exchange of gunfire with officers, Vondrasek said, adding that there was "nothing to suggest that he had an accomplice."

The shooter legally owned several guns

— police said he was heavily armed on Thursday and was carrying a lot of ammunition — and that what he did was "well thought out, a horrible act," Vondrasek said. University authorities said they would tighten security in university buildings with immediate effect.

"We mourn the loss of life of members of our university community, express our deepest condolences to all the bereaved and our thoughts are with all those affected by the tragedy," Charles University said in a statement.

The building where the shooting took place is in Jan Palach Square, a busy tourist area in Prague's Old Town. It is just a few minutes' walk from the picturesque Old Town Square, a major tourist attraction where a popular Christmas market attracts thousands of visitors.

The government quickly sought to quell concerns that the massacre was back by foreign interests. "There's no indication that it has anything to do with international terrorism," Rakusan said.

"It's a horrible crime, something the Czech Republic has never experienced," he said. Pavel Nedoma, the director of the nearby Rudolfinum Gallery, said he watched from a window as a person standing on a balcony of the building fired a gun. Authorities evacuated everyone from the building and police said they were still searching the area, including the balcony, for explosives.

The building forms part of the square and faces a bridge across the river with a view of Prague Castle, the seat of the Czech presidency. President Petr Pavel said he was "shocked" by what happened and offered his condolences to the relatives of the victims, as did leaders of Germany, France and Slovakia, the European Union and Israel. (AP)



HK court rejects Jimmy Lai's bid to throw out sedition charge

HONG KONG, Dec 22: A Hong Kong court on Friday rejected a bid by prominent activist publisher Jimmy Lai to throw out a sedition charge against him, delivering the ruling on the third day of his landmark national security trial.

Lai, 76, was arrested during the city's crackdown on dissidents following huge pro-democracy protests in 2019. He faces possible life imprisonment if convicted under a sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing. He is charged with colluding with foreign forces to



endanger national security and conspiring with others to publish seditious publications. Foreign governments, business professionals and legal scholars are closely watching the case, which is tied to the now-shuttered pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily that Lai founded.

Many view it as a trial of the city's freedoms and a test for judicial independence in the Asian financial hub.

Hong Kong is a former British colony that returned to China's rule in 1997 under a promise the city retain its Western-style civil liberties for 50 years. That promise has become increasingly threadbare since the introduction of the security law, which has led to the arrests and silencing of many leading pro-democracy activists.

Earlier this week, judges Esther Toh, Susana D'Almada Remedios and Alex

Lee heard arguments from both sides about whether the prosecution had missed the time limit for charging Lai with sedition. The law requires the prosecution of sedition charges to begin within six months after an alleged offense is committed.

On Friday, the judges, who were approved by the government to oversee the proceedings, ruled the prosecution filed the charge in time. "The application of the defence must fail," they wrote in their judgment. The trial is expected to last about 80 days without a jury. (AP)

Turkiye detains 304 people with suspected links to IS group in simultaneous raids

ANKARA, Dec 22: Turkish security forces have rounded up 304 people suspected of links to the Islamic State extremist group in simultaneous raids across Turkey, the interior minister said on Friday.

Ali Yerlikaya said the suspects were detained in 32 provinces but the majority of them were in Turkey's three largest cities, Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

The operation, codenamed "Heroes-34," was conducted jointly by the po-

lice intelligence and counter-terrorism squads, Yerlikaya said on the X social media platform.

There was no information on the suspects' nationalities. The militant group has carried out a string of deadly attacks in Turkey, including a shooting at an Istanbul night club on January 1, 2017, which killed 39 people during New Year celebrations.

It was not clear if the latest operation was part of a security sweep leading up to the

New Year festivities.

"There will be no respite for the terrorists for the sake of the peace, unity and solidarity of our beloved nation," Yerlikaya said.

"With our security force's superior efforts, our fight will continue uninterrupted." His ministry posted a video on X showing images of the raids, including anti-terrorism police breaking down a door, handcuffing suspects and leading them into police vehicles. (AP)

6 labourers killed in attack in Pakistan's northwest



PESHAWAR, Dec 22: Unidentified militants shot and killed at least six labourers who were working on the construction site of a police station in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Friday, police said.

The tragic incident took place in Wana, South Waziristan Tribal District. The labourers were killed after being shot at point-blank range by unidentified militants while they were in their tents.

As many as 6 labourers, who worked on the construction site of a police station were killed, police said.

District Police Officer South Waziristan Farmanullah confirmed the incident and said that the police are investigating the killings from every angle.

However, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

In August, at least 11 labourers were killed and two injured in a terrorist attack in the same district. Recently, Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorist activities orchestrated by various terror outfits. According to a recent report by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) think tank, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was the most affected by terror attacks in November, recording 51 attacks with 54 deaths and 81 injuries. (PTI)

Pakistan's election commission extends deadline for filing nomination papers by two days

ISLAMABAD, Dec 22: Pakistan's election commission on Friday extended the deadline for filing nomination papers for the February 8 general elections by two days till Sunday after major political parties sought more time to complete the time-consuming exercise.

According to the schedule issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), potential candidates are required to file nomination papers from December 20 to 22.

The top election body began accepting nomination papers from prospective candidates on Wednesday. The deadline for the filing of papers was set to expire at 4:30 pm on Friday.

However, in a press release on Friday morning, the electoral watchdog announced that nomination papers can now be filed till Dec 24 (Sunday). It said the decision was taken in response to requests from political parties and to facilitate the candidacy process.

"Political parties must submit priority lists for specific seats to returning officers within the stipulated time," it said.

With little time over a month left for polls, the electoral watchdog has entered election mode. Last week, the commission issued the election schedule, putting an end to uncertainty surrounding the exercise.

Returning officers will examine the nomination papers from December 25 to 30, as specified in the schedule. The statement underscored that "all activities as listed in the election schedule released on December 15 will be held as planned".

The electoral watchdog also confirmed that the amended schedule was available on the ECP website. The statement further emphasises that the changes did not affect the poll date and that elections would be held on February 8.

Major Pakistani political parties, including the PML-N led by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, sought extensions on Thursday.

PML-N leader Ishaq Dar wrote a letter to the ECP seeking a two-day extension in the deadline to submit nomination papers.

In a letter posted on X (formerly Twitter), Dar — who is the chairman of the party's election cell — had said that only three days had been allocated for the filing of nomination papers while seven days had been given for the scrutiny of the same.

Calling the nomination of papers a "time-consuming exercise", the former finance minister said the process of filing nomination papers requires multiple details and documents to be annexed with the same.

Meanwhile, several candidates, both backed by political parties and independent ones, submitted their nomination papers on Thursday.

In Lahore, PML-N Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz Sharif reportedly received nomination papers. She is expected to contest elections from a national or provincial assembly constituency from Lahore and submit nomination papers on Friday. Sources had told Dawn newspaper that as many as 300 candidates received nomination papers on the second day of the ECP schedule.

After fresh delimitation, the National Assembly would consist of 336 seats, including 266 general seats, 60 seats reserved for women, and 10 for non-Muslims.

Those contesting for the National Assembly would have to submit Rs 30,000 with nomination documents, while the fee for a provincial assembly is Rs 20,000. A candidate is legally allowed to submit a maximum of five nomination papers.

According to the rules, every Pakistani citizen aged 25 or above is eligible to contest for any National Assembly seat, whereas provincial assembly contestants must belong to the concerned province. (PTI)

Japan's Cabinet OKs record USD 56 billion defence budget for 2024 to accelerate strike capability

TOKYO, Dec 22: Japan's defence spending will surge more than 16 per cent next year under a record military budget approved on Friday by the Cabinet that will accelerate deployment of long-range cruise missiles that can hit targets in China or North Korea.

It also will further fortify the military with F-35 stealth combat jets and other American weapons as Japanese troops increasingly work with allies and take on more offensive roles.

The 7.95 trillion-yen (USD 56 billion) budget plan for the 2024 fiscal year beginning March marks the second year of a five-year military buildup pro-

gram under a new security strategy Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government adopted a year ago. The reinforcement of

strike capability under the strategy is a major break from Japan's post-war principle of limiting use of force to self-defence.

Japan plans to spend 43 trillion yen (USD 300 billion) through 2027 to bolster military power and nearly double its annual spending to around 10 trillion yen (USD 68 billion), making Japan the

world's third-biggest military spender after the United States and China.

The move further boosts Japan's continuing arms spending growth for a 12th year. The previous record was last year's 6.8 trillion yen budget.

The centrepiece of the 2024 budget is early deployment of "standoff" missiles that officials say are needed to reinforce air defences, especially to protect Japan's southwestern islands in case a conflict should erupt be-



The death toll included 113 people in Gansu and another 31 people in neighbouring Qinghai

China has started erecting temporary housing units after an earthquake destroyed 14,000 homes



BEIJING, Dec 22: Hundreds of temporary one-room housing units were set up on Thursday in northwest China for survivors of an earthquake that destroyed more than 14,000 homes and killed at least 144 people, according to state

media reports. The death toll rose by nine as search teams dug through heavy mudslides that had inundated two villages, a city official in Qinghai province said Friday morning. Three people remained missing in

the mudslides.

State broadcaster CCTV showed footage of cranes lifting white, box-like housing units and lining them up in an open field in Meipo, a village in Gansu province.

About 260 had been erected, and the total in the village was expected to reach 500 across nine sites by Friday morning.

The arrival of the prefabricated units was a sign that many of the more than 87,000 people resettled after the Monday night earthquake may be homeless for some time.

Many have been enduring temperatures well below freezing in flimsier tent-like units with blue plastic sheeting on the outside and a quilted cotton lining inside.

An assessment of the houses in a village visited by The AP on Wednesday found that 90% weren't safe to live in, experts told CCTV in an online report.

Some of the homes in Yangwa village appear OK, but they have structural damage that make them unsafe, the experts said. For those that can be repaired, the work may have to wait until next year, because the soil is frozen.

The death toll included 113 people in Gansu and another 31 people in neighbouring Qinghai. Nearly 1,000 were reported injured.

The magnitude 6.2 quake struck in a mountainous region on the Gansu side of the boundary between the two provinces and about 1,300 kilometers (800 miles) southwest of Beijing, the Chinese capital.

Funerals have been held for the dead, some following the Muslim traditions of much of the population in the affected area.

The mud rose as high as 3 meters (10 feet) in the two villages in Qinghai province, leaving only the

rooftops of some buildings showing.

Search teams used excavators to dig through the thick sea of mud that covered roads, encased buildings and blocked entry points.

Experts quoted by CGTN, the Chinese state broadcaster's international arm, said the earthquake liquefied underground sediment in the area, where the water table is relatively high.

At some point, the muddy sediment burst through the surface and flowed down a usually dry ditch into the villages.

Most of China's earthquakes strike in the western part of the country, including Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, as well as the Xinjiang region and Tibet.

The latest quake was the deadliest one in the country in nine years. (AP)

Students protest former MLA's murder by insurgents in Arunachal

MLA killed by unknown assailants near the Indo-Myanmar border in Tirap district on December 16

ITANAGAR, Dec 22: Various students' organisations under the aegis of All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU) on Friday staged a rally here to protest against the killing of former Congress MLA Yumsem Matey. Denouncing the act of rebel groups in the three districts of Tirap, Changlang and Longding, hundreds of students marched from the Akashdeep complex to Raj Bhavan holding anti-insurgency banners and placards. The protesting students later submitted a five-point memorandum to Governor Lt Gen K T Pariaik (Retd).

The demands of the students' organisations include securing peace and normalcy in Tirap, Changlang and Longding (TCL) region, to fast track the investigation of the MLA killing case through NIA.

They also demanded immedi-



ate release of village chief of Chop village in Longding district, sealing of the international border and expelling of insurgent groups to secure peace in TCL region and three battalion

forces to check cross-border crimes in each district.

The state government on Thursday decided to transfer the case relating to the brutal killing of Matey, to the National Invest-

igation Agency (NIA).

The government has requested the Union home ministry to take up the matter with the NIA to probe the incident, following a request from the state police department, deputy secretary to state home department, Likha Sampu said in a statement here.

On December 16, Matey was shot dead by unknown assailants near the Indo-Myanmar border in the Lazu circle of Tirap district.

Matey, a former Congress legislator, along with three of his followers had gone to the village for some personal work when someone took him towards a jungle on some pretext and fired at him, killing him on the spot.

The NIA has been tasked by the state government to bring culprits involved in the gruesome killing of the former MLA to justice. (PTI)

DoNER minister reviews development projects in Northeast

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) minister, G Kishan Reddy on Friday held a review meeting in the virtual mode with all the chief ministers of the eight Northeastern states.

During the meeting, the DoNER minister held discussions with the chief ministers of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam regarding the various development activities being undertaken in these states under the DoNER ministry. He also took stock of the progress being made in the different development projects being implemented in these states.

During the meeting Reddy also said that the Centre lays great emphasis on developing the Northeast to transform the region into an engine of growth as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Held a meeting over VC with all the Chief Ministers of the North East Region today. Reviewed implementation of various developmental projects & central govt schemes," the DoNER minister said on X on Friday.



"Emphasized on the whole of government approach to developing the NE which will help make it the engine of growth, as envisioned by Hon'ble PM Shri@narendramodi," he further posted.

Meanwhile, Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma on Friday also took to X to express his gratitude the DoNER ministry and the central government for their continued support in developing all the northeastern states.

"Attended the meeting via video conferencing called by Hon'ble Union Minister for @MDoNER_India, Sh.@kis-

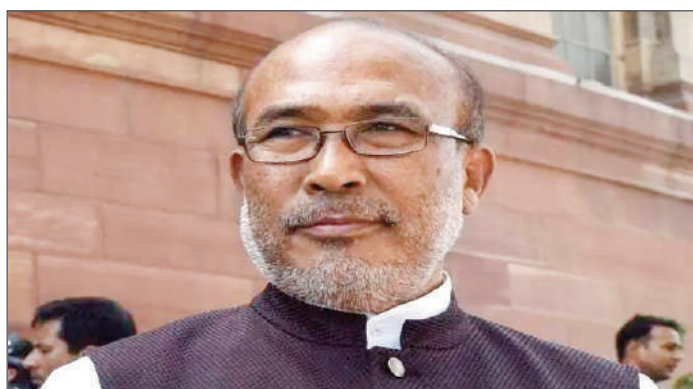
hanreddybjp to discuss about ongoing projects in Meghalaya funded under the Ministry. We are grateful to the Ministry and to GoI for their continued support to ensure accelerated progress of Meghalaya and other North East States," Conrad Sangma said on X.

Moreover, Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio said in a post on X, "Had a review meeting with the Hon'ble Minister of @MDoNER_India Shri G Kishan Reddy @kishanreddybjp with regard to timely completion of the ongoing projects of the Ministry in Nagaland."

Manipur CM thanks PM for acknowledging state's importance

IMPHAL, Dec 22: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Friday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for acknowledging the importance of Manipur and naming a defence warship after the state capital Imphal. Addressing the curtain raiser ceremony of the commissioning of INS Imphal, Indian Navy's stealth guided missile destroyer, he also thanked Union defence minister Rajnath Singh and all the navy officials for taking this initiative.

"It is a proud moment for all Manipuris and we will all stand for a strong and united India... I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for acknowledging the importance of Manipur and naming a defence warship after Imphal," Singh said at the programme held at Kangla here. The commissioning of INS Imphal not only adds another dimension to our country's maritime capabilities but also stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit of our armed



forces," he later said on X.

"This warship, named after our vibrant state's capital, Imphal, reflects the unity and strength that define us as a nation... May INS Imphal sail with pride, safeguarding our nation and contributing to the peace and security of our region," he said in the post. Equipped with BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles and anti-submarine indigenous rocket

launchers, the ship was delivered to the Indian Navy on October 20 by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai. On the ethnic strife in the state, the chief minister said peace has been restored in the state.

"I appeal to the public not to create any situation that will lead to misunderstanding and to have faith in the government," Singh said. (PTI)

2 abducted by NSCN (Ang Mai) released

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Dec 22: The two persons who were abducted on November 28 from Chop village under Wakka Police Station in eastern Arunachal Pradesh's Longding district have been released.

Longding superintendent of police, Dekio Gumja said the abducted persons, Chingsan Wangham (45 yrs), and the Raja (chief) and Chopkhu Gangsa (53 yrs), the Gaon Burah of the village were released by the banned outfit early on Thursday. They reached their village at around 2 pm on that day.

The duo was abducted by a heavily armed 15-member group of militants from the NSCN (Ang Mai) faction as they had refused to pay extortion, which the outfit had demanded three months back.

The health condition of the duo is stated to be stable.

Manipur CM meets Guv, discusses various issues

IMPHAL, Dec 22: Manipur Governor, Anusuiya Uikey met chief minister N. Biren Singh and chief secretary Vineet Joshi at Raj Bhavan on Friday and discussed a wide range of issues pertaining to restoration of peace and normalcy, re-settlement of displaced people to their own places, distribution of compensation to families who have lost their houses and properties etc.

The Governor enquired about the progress of final assessment of the damages due to violence being conducted by the government so that the interim relief amount can be distributed immediately.

Requests made by the Committee on Protection of Meitei Victim Moreh for giving immediate relief to those who have lost their houses, shops and properties was discussed and Governor asked the chief minister to take up steps for extending relief to them.

Demands made by the political parties of Manipur to meet the Prime Minister to solve the problems of the state, JD(U)'s demand for providing immediate relief to the artist community and labourers and subsidized air fare for people of Manipur were also discussed in the meeting.

Forum for Restoration of Peace's appeal to stop illegal extortion by armed organizations from vehicles, goods and shops was discussed. Recovery of weapons, sealing of Indo-Myanmar border, initiation

of dialogue process, free movement in the national highways was also discussed in the meeting. The meeting also discussed the representation submitted by the Joint Administrative Council of State Government employees Association, urging for timely disbursement of salaries and pensions.

Appointment of a director and filling up of the vacant post of secretary for the Rajya Sainik Board, Manipur and the Meckle Tea India Private Limited's proposal for large scale tea plantation in the State as an alternative to poppy cultivation was also discussed in the meeting.

Director general of Assam Rifles, Lt. General P. C. Nair's proposal for naming the Singhat-Behiang Road in the name of (Late) Col Viplav Tripathy, who was killed in an ambush by militants in 2021, exemption of income tax to those who want to donate to Governor's Relief Fund, awarding security personnel who have contributed distinguished service on the war on drugs, issues of autonomous district councils and the request made by the All Manipur Working Journalists Union were also considered in the meeting.

Meanwhile, the chief minister assured the Governor that the government will do the needful regarding the issues that were discussed. He also directed the chief secretary to take up all necessary steps to implement the proposals made in the discussion. (NNN)

Nagaland Cong takes out rally to protest suspension of oppn MPs

KOHIAMA, Dec 22: The Nagaland Congress on Friday took out a rally in Kohima as part of the nationwide protest by the INDIA bloc against the suspension of 146 opposition MPs from Parliament. Such blatant abuse of power by the BJP government at the Centre is unprecedented in the history of Parliamentary democracy in India and the rest of the world, the state Congress claimed in a statement.

"The actual reason for which the Narendra Modi government resorted to this mass suspension was to ensure the passage of consequential bills without any meaningful discussions and debates in Parliament," it said.

Altogether 146 opposition MPs were suspended from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha during the just concluded Winter Session for demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah in the House on the December 13 Parliament security breach issue.

"We refuse to cower down to the bullying tactics of the BJP and will continue to condemn and oppose their agenda to destroy the democratic principles upon which our founding fathers built our Nation," the Congress affirmed. (PTI)

Government committed to develop sports in the state: Meghalaya CM

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma on Friday attended the concluding ceremony of the Shillong Arm Fight 2023, All India Arm Wrestling Championship at the U Soso Tham Auditorium in Shillong.

Athletes from across the country participated in the two-day arm wrestling championship that was organised by the People's Federation of Arm Wrestling India in association with the Bouncers Association of Meghalaya and the Treilang Welfare Society, with support from the Meghalaya directorate of sports. The event began on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Meghalaya CM said, "It is encouraging to see several athletes from across the

country participating in the Shillong Arm Fight 2023 this time. The championship is an apt platform where they can showcase their arm wrestling skills."

"Our government is committed to developing sports in the state, for which we have taken a number of initiatives. Though our Star Programme young sportsmen in the state are identified and imparted training in their respective area of interest. So far, 25,000 young children have been identified and they will be trained accordingly," he said.

The CM also said that he is delighted to see the state transforming into a preferred destination for various sports events.

"At the closing ceremony of the Shillong Arm Fight 2023, All India Champion or-

ganised by the Bouncers Association of Meghalaya (BAM) and The Wrestling Society (TWS) and supported by the Govt. of Meghalaya in Shillong. Encouraging to see top arm wrestlers come to Shillong to participate in the championship and competing with arm wrestlers from the state, making it a platform of opportunities for all participants to show their arm wrestling skills. @ianuragthakur@IndiaSports," said Conrad Sangma on X.

The CM also said that it is encouraging to see para athletes participating in the event. It displayed their strength, confidence and immense will power.

"Was even more pleased to see our Para Athletes also participating in the championship and showing their strength of might and confi-



dence. Congratulate the organisers for making the competition a truly inclusive one.

I congratulate all the winners and the participants. As a Govt. we are happy to play our role in encouraging such sports and the coming up of such National and International tournaments speaks volumes of our commitment. @ianuragthakur@IndiaSports," said Sangma through the post on X.

INDIA alliance leaders stage protests over oppn MPs' suspension

AGARTALA, Dec 22: Leaders of the INDIA alliance in Tripura staged demonstrations in various parts of the state on Friday against the suspension of opposition MPs, joining similar protests across the country.

Members of the Left parties and the Congress took to the streets to condemn the move, claiming it was a larger conspiracy to ensure an 'opposition mukt Sansad' (opposition-less Parliament).

"Never before have the countrymen seen the suspension of so many MPs of opposition parties for seeking statements from the

PM and the home minister on the security breach in Parliament," CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Choudhury told reporters.

A total of 146 MPs of both Houses of Parliament were recently suspended.

"This is unjust and against the spirit of Parliamentary democracy," he said.

Among other places, demonstrations were staged in front of the Congress Bhavan here.

"We urge more people to join this stir to save the country's democracy," Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president Asish Kumar Saha said. (PTI)



Vajpayee Jayanti observed at Raj Bhavan in Kohima

Nagaland Gov asks public to emulate Vajpayee's values of integrity, perseverance, deep commitment to nation

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Dec 22: Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was a seasoned political leader, who had left an unforgettable mark on the political scenario of the country, said Nagaland Governor La Ganesan on Friday.

The Governor said this during a programme organized on the occasion of the 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee Jayanti' at the Raj Bhavan in Kohima on Friday.

Aadviser to Nagaland chief minister Abu Metha, officials of the Task Force of Music and Arts Nagaland, Rattle and Hum Music Society and other officials were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Ganesan said, "I am happy to be able to celebrate the legacy of a man who left an unforgettable mark on the political scenario of our country,



Vajpayee was a visionary leader, who understood the importance of inclusive governance and worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between different ideologies and communi-

ties." Ganesan reminded the gathering to reflect on the values of integrity, perseverance and a deep commitment to the welfare of the nation

that Vajpayee stood for. He hoped that the late PM's legacy serves everyone as a guiding light, reminding us of the power of unity and the ability to rise above differences to work towards a common goal and a more harmonious India.

Adviser to CM, Metha reminisced Vajpayee's three-day visit to Nagaland during his third term as PM.

Metha said Vajpayee was one of the first PMs to recognise the unique identity and history of the Nagas.

His commitment to the Naga people and his developmental initiatives in the state won many Naga hearts during his visit, he added.

Artist Vinezoto Tase was also felicitated by the Governor at the programme for his artwork of Vajpayee.

JAWAHAR NAVODAYA VIDYALAYA DIPHU KARBI ANGLONG-1 ASSAM

Ref No 3-43/JNV(KANG)/2023-24/

Dated 23-12-2023

TENDER NOTICE FOR AUCTION OF VIDYALAYA ITEMS

In continuation to the Advertisement dated on 15-12-2023, Hills Times News Paper. The date for submission of tenders are extended for another seven days. Sealed Tenders are invited from the authorized Registered Dealer for Auction of Mahindra & Mahindra Jeep, besides Auction for Computer Desktop Nodes, Hostel Equipment, Furniture, Musical Items, Guest Room items, Museum Items and Utensils from JNV Diphu, Karbi Anglong-1 Assam.

The Tender form can be purchase on payment of Rs 500/- from the Vidyalaya Office on or before 30-12-2023 during Office hours. Further, the same can be downloaded from the Official website of the Vidyalaya, however during submission of Tender form an amount of Rs 500/- in the form of demand draft should be deposited in favour of Principal, JNV Diphu.

Last date for submission of sealed Tenders in the Office of the Principal is 30-12-2023 up to 12:00 noon. The Tender will be opened on 30-12-2023 at 2:00 PM in the Office of the Principal by the Vidyalaya Purchase Advisory Committee.

Sd/-
PRINCIPAL
JNV DIPHU KARBI ANGLONG-1

Rahul immature, undemocratic; people trust 'Modi's guarantees': BJP

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The BJP on Friday slammed Rahul Gandhi as an immature and undemocratic leader and made light of the INDIA bloc's protest at Jantar Mantar here, saying the days of befooling people with such an agitation are gone as they now trust the guarantees of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

With the opposition flaying the government for the suspension of its 146 MPs during Parliament's Winter session over their protests on the issue of security breach, information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur said all MPs should have spoken in one voice over such a sensitive matter but leaders like Rahul Gandhi are instead levelling false allegations.

INDIA bloc parties did not participate in discussions in Parliament over people's issues and important bills and it seems that they have lost their mental balance following the drubbing they received in the recent assembly polls, Thakur said, describing Gandhi as an immature and undemocratic leader.

BJP national spokesperson Sam-



bit Patra said Gandhi's frustration after the poll losses is visible in his conduct inside and outside Parliament and took a jibe at the Congress leader over his 'mohabbat ki dukan' (shop of love) phrase to describe his party's ideology to contrast with the ruling party's alleged 'nafrat ki dukan' (shop of hate).

Is the way vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar was mimicked and "body-shamed" an evidence of 'mohabbat ki dukan' or 'nafrat ki dukan', he asked and took a swipe at the Congress for its "shop of

corruption" by referring to the recover of over ₹ 350 crore in cash from firms linked to its MP Dhiraj Prasad Sahu.

The arrogance of opposition parties is visible in their conduct, he added.

"The days of befooling people by holding such protests at Jantar Mantar are gone as they now believe in 'Modi's guarantees' and have put their stamp of endorsement on them," he said.

Thakur accused INDIA bloc parties of insulting constitutional positions with the mimicry of

Dhankhar and sought an apology from the Congress. "Instead the lips of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul are sealed. They are hurling false allegations instead of offering an apology," he said.

They have become a laughing stock in the eyes of people, he claimed. Jats and farmers will not forgive them for insulting Dhankhar, he added.

Patra said people have witnessed Rahul Gandhi's behaviour and he is instead doing politics over it.

The opposition INDIA bloc on Friday staged a protest at Jantar Mantar here against the suspension of 146 MPs from the two Houses of Parliament during the Winter session and called on people to unite to save democracy in the country.

Rahul Gandhi said opposition members were suspended from the two Houses for demanding answers from Home Minister Amit Shah on the December 13 Parliament security breach issue.

"The more hatred the BJP spreads, the more love and brotherhood INDIA parties will spread," he said. (PTI)

Oppn MPs came with request for suspension: Pralhad Joshi

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Slamming the opposition over disruptions during Winter Session, parliamentary affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Friday said the government was not keen to suspend MPs from Lok Sabha, but opposition members came with requests for suspension after action was taken against some of their colleagues.

Addressing a press conference here, Joshi also said the opposition was free to move court against the three new criminal laws if they felt something was wrong with the draft legislations approved by both the Houses of Parliament.

"We did not want to suspend MPs, we requested them. But after we suspended a few MPs, several of their colleagues came with requests to us seeking suspension. This is the level the Congress stoops to," said Joshi, flanked by Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal.

Joshi said the government's floor managers had told the opposition MPs that action was taken against those indulging in indiscipline by bringing placards to the House.

"They told us that they will also indulge in indiscipline and wanted us to suspend them," the Parlia-



mentary Affairs Minister said. As many as 146 MPs – 100 from the Lok Sabha and 46 from the Rajya Sabha – were suspended during the winter session of Parliament for unruly behaviour and carrying placards.

At the outset, Joshi said the Winter Session which concluded on Thursday, was by and large the last session of the 17th Lok Sabha as the Budget Session would approve the Vote on Account and was unlikely to transact any legislative business.

He said the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha was historic as it saw the reading down of Article 370 with regard to Jammu and Kashmir and the just concluded

Winter Session witnessed the shedding of the vestiges of the British-raj from the criminal justice laws.

Launching a broadside against Rahul Gandhi, Joshi said the former Congress president was "enjoying" and videographing the action of a fellow Lok Sabha member mocking a Constitutional authority.

The minister said the Congress and other opposition parties were hunting for a reason to disrupt the Parliament proceedings to vent out the frustration of its defeat in the assembly elections.

"The Congress is not responsible when in power and most irresponsible when in opposition," Joshi said. (PTI)

Three first-time MLAs among 9 BJP lawmakers inducted into Chhattisgarh cabinet



RAIPUR, Dec 22: Nine BJP lawmakers, including three first-time MLAs, were on Friday inducted into the chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai-led cabinet in Chhattisgarh, taking its strength to 12.

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan administered oath of office and secrecy to the nine MLAs, including a 31-year-old woman legislator, during a function held here at Raj Bhavan. Two deputy chief ministers – Arun Sao and Vijay Sharma – had earlier taken oath on December 13 when Sai was sworn in as the chief minister.

The lawmakers who took oath on Friday include eight-term MLA Brijmohan Agrawal, senior party leaders and former ministers Ramvichar Netam, Kedar Kashyap and Dayaldas Baghel.

IAS-turned-politician OP Choudhary, Tank Ram Verma and Laxmi Rajwade, all first-time MLAs, and second-time legislators Shyam Bihari Jaiswal and Lakhnail Dewangan have also been appointed as ministers.

CM Sai, his deputies Sao and Sharma, former CM Bhupesh Baghel, and assembly speaker Raman Singh were present on the occasion.

After the expansion of the cabinet, it has six members belonging to Other Backward Classes (OBC) – Sao, Dewangan, Jaiswal, Choudhary, Verma and Rajwade.

CM Sai, Netam and Kashyap hail from the Scheduled Tribes, while Baghel is from the Scheduled Caste category. Sharma and Agrawal are from the general category.

Rajwade will be the only woman member in the cabinet. Agrawal, Netam, Kashyap and Baghel have served as ministers in previous BJP governments in the state, while CM Sai has been a Union minister during the first term of the Narendra Modi government at the Centre.

Five members of the Sai cabinet – Sao, Sharma, Choudhary, Verma and Rajwade – are first-time MLAs.

After the expansion, the cabinet has four members from the Surguja division, three from Bilaspur division, two each from Raipur and Durg divisions and one from Bastar division.

Beating most predictions, the BJP registered a stunning victory in the state and ousted the Congress in the assembly polls held on November 7 and 17, whose results were declared on December 3.

The BJP won 54 seats, while the Congress bagged only 35, down from the 68 seats it had won in the 2018 polls.

The portfolios of the ministers are yet to be announced.

The Chhattisgarh cabinet can have 13 ministers at most, including the chief minister. The state has 90 assembly seats.

Brief profiles of the ministers who were sworn in on Friday:

1. Brijmohan Agrawal: One of the senior BJP politicians and the tallest leader from the Agrawal community in the state, Agrawal (64) has served as a minister in the undivided Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. In the recently held elections, Agrawal won from Raipur City South constituency by the highest margin of 67,719 votes against Congress' Mahant Ramsundar Das, becoming the eighth straight-term MLA and remaining unbeaten since 1990.

2. Ramvichar Netam: A prominent tribal face of the party in Surguja division in northern Chhattisgarh, Netam (61) won the Ramanujan seat this time defeating Congress' Ajay Tirkey by 29,663 votes. Netam, a six-term MLA, was also elected as Rajya Sabha MP in 2016 and had served as minister twice in the Raman Singh-led BJP government in Chhattisgarh (2003 and 2008). He was also appointed as the pro-tem speaker of the newly elected assembly.

3. Kedar Kashyap: The 49-year-old MLA, who comes from the Bastar region (south), is another prominent tribal leader. Kashyap defeated Congress' sitting MLA Chandan Kashyap in Narayanpur seat by 19,188 votes this time. A four-term MLA, Kashyap had served as a minister in the Raman Singh-led BJP government in 2008 and 2013.

Kashyap led the BJP's onslaught against the previous ruling Congress over alleged religious conversion in the Bastar region, helping the party put up a good show in the tribal-dominated region. He is the son of BJP stalwart and former MP Late Baliram Kashyap.

4. Dayaldas Baghel: A four-term MLA, Baghel (69) hails from the SC community. He defeated Guru Rudra Kumar, an influential SC leader and minister in the previous Congress government, in Nawagarh this time. He started his career as a sarpanch and became an MLA in 2003 for the first time. He served as minister in the third term (2013-18) of the Raman Singh-led BJP government in the state.

5. Lakhnail Dewangan: The 61-year-old defeated an influential minister in the previous Congress government, Jai Singh Agarwal, in Korba. Dewangan, who comes from the OBC community, was elected as an MLA for the first time from Katghora in 2013. He had also served as a mayor in Korba district from 2005 to 2010. (PTI)

INDIA bloc protests suspension of oppn MPs, Kharge says democracy under threat

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The opposition INDIA bloc on Friday staged a protest at Jantar Mantar here against the suspension of 146 MPs from the two Houses of Parliament during the Winter session and called on people to unite to save democracy in the country.

The protest, which was organised under the banner of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), was attended by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi and leaders of Left parties, DMK, NCP, SP, NC, TMC, JMM, RJD and other members of the opposition coalition.

Addressing the gathering, Kharge said the leaders of INDIA parties have come together as democracy is under threat under the BJP government.

"When all unite, Narendra Modi won't be able to do anything... The more you try to crush us, the more we will rise. We are fighting unitedly to save the country and democracy," he said.

Gandhi said opposition members were suspended from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha for demanding answers from Home Minister Amit Shah on the



December 13 Parliament security breach issue.

"The more hatred the BJP spreads, the more love and brotherhood INDIA parties will spread," he said.

"By shunting out 150 MPs from the Parliament, the government has shut out the voice of 60 per cent Indians," he said. NCP leader Sharad Pawar, CPI-M's Sitaram Yechury, CPI's D Raja, JMM's Mahua Maji, DMK's Tiruchi Siva, RJD's Manoj Kumar Jha, TMC's Mausam Noor, NC's Hasnain Masoodi, Revolutionary Socialist Party's N K Premachandran and SP's S T Hasan were among the leaders present at the protest. (PTI)

Maoists blow up railway tracks in Jharkhand, 13 trains cancelled



CHAIBASA (JHARKHAND), Dec 22: Members of the banned CPI (Maoist) blew up a portion of railway tracks in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, disrupting train services on the Howrah-Mumbai route for several hours, police said on Friday. At least 13 trains were cancelled and one has been diverted due to the incident, a railway official said. The incident occurred late

Thursday night in the Chakradharpur division of South Eastern Railway between Mahadevasal and Posoita stations, around 150 km from the state capital Ranchi, West Singhbhum superintendent of police Ashutosh Sekhar said.

"Security has been tightened in the locality. The repair work on the railway tracks has been started from early morning," he said, adding that

Maoists also put up banners and posters in the area.

Chakradharpur Division Assistant Commercial Manager Vinit Kumar told PTI that train operations in the division have been restored around 9 am on Friday.

"Around 10:08 pm on Thursday, an explosion occurred between Mahadevasal and Posoita stations, which blew up the third line of the section. No casualty has been reported. The movement of trains was controlled and the convenience of the passengers was ensured," a railway communiqué said.

"Tracks of around two to three metres were damaged in the blast by unidentified persons," Kumar said. Help desks at Rourkela, Tatanagar, Chakradharpur and Jharsuguda stations were immediately set up for passenger services, it stated. (PTI)

LoC management in Rajouri-Poonch belt Security experts call for strengthening of intelligence network

JAMMU, Dec 22: Security and defence experts have called for immediate strengthening of the security management and intelligence network along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu region, which witnessed the killing of 59 people, including 24 security personnel and 28 terrorists, in terror incidents this year.

A day after five soldiers were killed and two injured when heavily armed terrorists ambushed two Army vehicles in the border district of Poonch, they expressed concern over the increasing footprints of terrorists in the region.

Lt Gen Paramjit Singh (retd), who headed the Nagrota-based XVI corps of the army, acknowledged that the terrain where the incident took place is a difficult one. "But having said that one needs to be prepared for all eventualities," he said.

He said it was time for the top brass in the corps to go back to the drawing board and analyse the continuous "reverses" being witnessed in the area.

"This area also has an unholy nexus between smugglers, drug

cartels and people in the system. There is an urgent need to break the backbone of this," Lt Gen Singh, who was one of the army officials involved in the Balakote strike in 2019, said.

India had hit back at terror camps, especially of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed group, after 40 CRPF personnel were killed in a car bomb explosion in Pulwama in February 2019.

Gen Singh also advised that it was time for those at the helm of affairs to go back to the drawing board and basic training of jungle warfare. "We should not be more dependent on technical inputs as they are misleading at times," he said.

Expressing concern over the terror incidents, defence expert Col (retd) S S Pathania said, "It is the second incident in the last two months. This region was peaceful until two years ago. In the last two years, 24 soldiers were martyred here. Why is it happening? Why have terrorists been so emboldened?"

He said focus should be laid on strengthening LoC management



and intelligence network.

"The LoC security management should be foolproof and the intelligence network should be strengthened," he said.

Security expert captain (retired) Anil Gaur also expressed concern over the security situation in the region and called for a total revamp of the intelligence network.

"Pakistan is trying to revive terrorism in this region by engineering these incidents. There are some gaps in dealing with terrorism. It is

Parliament security breach: HC stays order asking police to provide FIR copy to accused

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The Delhi High Court on Friday stayed the trial court's order directing the city police to supply a copy of the FIR to an accused in the Parliament security breach case.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma issued notice to accused Neelam Devi on the police's plea challenging the trial court's December 21 order directing the probe agency to furnish a copy of the FIR to the counsel for the accused as per law.

"The execution of the order dated December 21 stands stayed till the next date of hearing. Notice issued to the accused for the next date of hearing," the high court said.

The police's counsel contended that in sensitive matters, the accused has to approach the commissioner who will form a committee to decide the application for providing a copy of the FIR and, if it is denied, they can move the court for relief.

However, the trial court erred in directing the police to provide the FIR copy to the accused, the Delhi Police said.

Women's safety priority of government: Bhajan Lal Sharma

JAIPUR, Dec 22: Chief minister Bhajan Lal Sharma said on Friday that women's safety is the priority of the government. He also instructed police officers to take action in cases of organised crime and paper leaks.

Sharma held a high-level meeting of police officers at the chief minister's office.

In the meeting, the chief minister said that cases of harassment of women have come to light on a large scale in Rajasthan in the last few years.

The government's priority is to bring back the honour and glory of the state by protecting women. He said the department should take all necessary steps for this. (PTI)

On Thursday, the trial court extended till January 5 the custody of four accused -- Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Amol Dhanraj Shinde and Neelam Devi -- arrested in the Parliament security breach case.

On an application by Neelam Devi on the police's plea challenging the trial court's December 21 order directing the probe agency to furnish a copy of the FIR to the counsel for the accused

anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack on December 13, two of the accused -- Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D -- jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery during Zero Hour, released yellow gas and listed the matter from canisters and shouted slogans before being overpowered by some MPs.

Around the same time, two others -- Amol Shinde and Neelam Devi -- sprayed coloured gas from canisters while shouting "tanashahi nahi chalegi" outside the Parliament House premises. Besides the four accused, police have arrested Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat in the case. All the six accused are being interrogated in police custody. (PTI)

Sharma held a high-level meeting of police officers at the chief minister's office.

In the meeting, the chief minister said that cases of harassment of women have come to light on a large scale in Rajasthan in the last few years.

The government's priority is to bring back the honour and glory of the state by protecting women. He said the department should take all necessary steps for this. (PTI)

LoC management in Rajouri-Poonch belt Security experts call for strengthening of intelligence network

search operation came under attack at a blind curve at Dhatar Morh between Dhera Ki Gali and Bufliaz under the jurisdiction of the Surankote police station around 3.45 pm, according to the officials.

The stretch between Dhera Ki Gali and Bufliaz on the boundary of Rajouri and Poonch districts is densely forested and leads to Chamrer forest and then Bhata Dhurian forest.

With the latest killing, the total number of people killed in terrorist incidents in the border districts of Rajouri, Poonch and Reasi went up to 59.

Earlier, the three districts witnessed a series of encounters that left 54 persons, including 19 security personnel and 28 terrorists, dead.

While 31 persons, including 10 terrorists and 14 security personnel, were killed in Rajouri, 15 terrorists and five security personnel were killed in Poonch district. Three terrorists were killed in Reasi district.

Most of the terrorists were killed while attempting to sneak into this side of the border, the officials said. (PTI)

Manoranjan D maybe the mastermind behind parl security breach: Police

Manoranjan was arrested along with Sagar from inside the parliament on December 13

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The Delhi Police Special Cell suspects Manoranjan D — one of the six people arrested in the Parliament security breach — to be the mastermind behind the conspiracy, hatched to send a message to the ruling government by doing “something big,” said a source privy to the probe.

According to police, Lalit Jha, another accused, has revealed to the interrogators that Manoranjan was the one who motivated other members to do something big and planned the breach in the parliament. However, his, Jha's, role was only to destroy the evidence after the act.

Manoranjan was arrested along with Sagar from inside the parliament on December 13. Both had jumped into the well of the Lok



Sabha and opened yellow colour canisters hidden in their shoes.

Manoranjan, a native of Mysore, had quit engineering to engage in social work. Though he was unemployed, he managed to visit Cam-



Jha was produced before the court on Friday from where he was sent to 14 days of police custody.

Police told the court that they needed to confront Jha with other

accused and collect scientific and digital evidence related to the case.

According to the source, Jha told police that Manoranjan had sent tickets to him and others on WhatsApp to come to Mysore in Karnataka a year ago.

Another officer said the doctors on Friday started conducting the psychoanalysis tests on all six.

The accused were taken to a forensic lab where they underwent the test, which is supposed to help interrogators ascertain their mental condition, the person said.

Police said the accused have revealed that they were upset with unemployment and the farmer and Manipur crisis.

They are yet to reveal the proper sequence and reason behind their act inside and outside Parliament, police said. (PTI)

Centre released ₹ 900 crore in two installments to TN ahead of rains: FM Sitharaman

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Union minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the Centre has released ₹ 900 crore in two installments to Tamil Nadu in the current financial year, to deal with the havoc caused by the unprecedented rainfall and flooding.

A total of 31 people died in four southern districts owing to the heavy rainfall that occurred early this week, the finance and corporate affairs minister said.

Briefing reporters here, the natural calamity has claimed human lives and caused damage to infrastructure and communication systems.

Extending her condolences to the bereaved family members, Sitharaman, who spoke in Tamil, said, “The amount of rainfall that should have occurred for the whole year has been received in a single day. For example, if the total amount of rainfall is 50 cm in a

place like Tuticorin, it has received the entire amount of rainfall in one single day.”

Sitharaman said the Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai has ultra-modern equipment including three dopplers and had forecast on December 12 itself that there would be heavy rainfall in the four districts — Tenkasi, Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin on December 17.

She was responding to chief minister M K Stalin's charge that the India Meteorological Department had failed to issue timely warnings about the extreme rainfall that battered four southern districts and it had issued a red alert two days after the downpour began.

Taking a dig at Stalin, Sitharaman said when such a massive disaster was unfolding in Tamil Nadu, the chief minister was in Delhi with the INDI Alliance. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Himanta bats for economic

As a part of the centenary celebrations, besides starting the construction works of the proposed Kanaklata University, preservation of the residence of Kanaklata and a memorial involving a financial outlay of ₹ 30 crore at Borongabari area will be undertaken. Acknowledging the role of Non-cooperation Movement for generating a sense unity and nationalism among the women, the chief minister said that immediately after Mahatma Gandhi had left Assam, women like Himanta Kumari Devi, Nalinibala Devi, Bijuti Phukan, Smrita Bhattacharjee, Krishnamaya Agarwala, Snehalata Devi Barua, Chandraprabha Saikiani plunged in the movement.

Cultural Affairs minister Bimal Bora, minister Housing and Urban Affairs Ashok Singhal, MP Pallab Lochan Das, MLAs Utpal Bora, Ranjit Dutta, Promode Borthakur, and host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Government harnessing tech for

India was earlier not taken seriously, but now the world has veered around to the agenda set by Prime Minister Modi and India at the G20. “Over 200 meetings of the G20 were held at 65 cities across India during the course of the year. Assuming a leadership role on climate change, PM Modi stressed on Mission Life (Lifestyle for Environment). With the target of net zero by the year 2070, as committed by PM Modi, India is well set on course to achieve its staggered emission targets,” Singh said.

“From issues like terrorism, cyber security to anti-corruption, the G20 meetings chaired by India throughout the year have been very successful,” he added. The minister said India is today among the leading five or six nations in the world using quantum technology. “Our CPGRAMS (Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System) public grievances portal, DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) and SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages Abadi and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas) programmes are cited the world over as technology-driven people-centric reforms,” Singh said. “Today the world is ready to be led by India,” he added. (PTI)

Himanta expresses concern over SP's

“Our aim remains courteous behaviour with fellow citizens. I have also conveyed my sincere apologies to the Hon CM Assam for anguish caused to him and the Government. Apologies to people of Assam with a commitment to improve further,” the DGP added.

Solutions to all problems of

were decided by keeping the country's great culture as a guide, Shah said. He also spoke about the scrapping of Article 370 and said its abrogation enabled the complete integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian Union. Referring to past BJP manifestos, Shah highlighted that the party always said that the Ram temple should be built and the practice of instant triple talaq be ended. In Modi's tenure, he said, the construction of the Ram temple (in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya) started and now the consecration of Lord Ram's idol will take place on January 22. He also talked about the Kashi Vishwanath corridor in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi, the Mahakal Lok corridor in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain, and the inauguration of the Mata Sharda Devi temple in Kashmir. The home minister also highlighted the installation of the 'Sengol', a historical sceptre from Tamil Nadu, in the Lok Sabha chamber of the new Parliament building.

“I am happy that seers sitting here have dedicated their lives to guiding society,” he said in his address at the sammelan. Shah also said he has seen many ups and downs in life, but the teachings of the Gita have always guided him. “I have seen many ups and downs, but as my mother taught me the Gita in my childhood, I never experienced any disappointment and pain,” he said.

Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, yoga guru Ramdev and Swami Gyananand Maharaj among others were present on the occasion. (PTI)

Former BJYM general secretary

coming from the centre and state governments go into a single account. The financial sanctions of the executive member (EM) of KAAC have become valueless.

CEM is controlling everything. The CEM is the CEO of Karbi Anglong,” he claimed.

302 people died in tiger attacks

In West Bengal, 29 people died. However, this number has steadily decreased over the years, from 15 in 2018 to just one in 2022. The data showed an increase in tiger attack-related deaths in Bihar — zero in 2019, one in 2020, four in 2021 and nine in 2022. The number of tigers in India increased from 2,967 in 2018 to 3,682 in 2022, an annual rise of 6 per cent, according to government data released in July this year.

With a 50 per cent increase in the last four years, Madhya Pradesh has the maximum number (785) of tigers in the country, followed by Karnataka (563), Uttarakhand (560), and Maharashtra (444). (PTI)

IIT-Guwahati unveils model to

like a spur instilled to prevent river bank erosion’, Sarma said. The research also delves into how river banks, spurs and sandbars affect the way water moves, he said, adding that the model has helped design bio-engineering methods for controlling river bank erosion. It has also been applied to understand the habitat suitability of aquatic species, especially endangered ones, based on the availability of required depth and flow velocity, he added. The findings were published in the ISH Journal of Hydraulic Engineering, earning the prestigious ‘ISH Jal Vidyayan Puraskar’ (Best Paper in ISH Journal) 2023.

The paper has been co-authored by Sarma and his former research scholar Dr Anupal Barua. (PTI)

At INDIA meet, Nitish sought

will be met in Bihar. We face no hurdles here. We wish the same happens nationally though all states have different dynamics”, The JD(U) leader was also asked about speculations around the party's national executive and national council meets scheduled in Delhi next week, when, according to a section of the media, a “big decision” was likely. He replied, “It is routine. The party constitution calls for such meetings after a certain period of time. So these were due. Such meetings have been held as per schedule in the past, sometimes in Patna, and sometimes in Delhi. There is nothing unusual.” To a pointed query as to whether replacement of national president Rajiv Ranjan Singh “Lalan”, for perceived closeness with RJD president Lalu Prasad, was on the cards, Jha asserted, “Such a proposal has never been under consideration”. (PTI)

Extortionists held in Diphu

duo confessed to the crime and a case vide Diphu PS C/ No 126/23 U/ S 120B/ 387/506 IPC has been registered against them. Further investigation is underway.

India's new envoy says committed to

of ties in political, economic, and security fields over the decades, emphasising India's role as Sri Lanka's close neighbour, largest trade partner and a key development partner. Jha expressed his commitment to strengthening the special friendship between the two countries, fostering closer collaboration in trade, investment, energy, connectivity and other areas.

He aligned his goals with the Vision Statement agreed upon by the leaders of both nations, expressing confidence that their cooperation would lead to shared prosperity, progress and regional stability.

The new High Commissioner thanked President Wickremesinghe for the warm welcome and looked forward to constructive engagements in the future. Minister of Health and Industries Dr Ramesh Pathirana, who is the current Acting Foreign Minister, and President's Secretary Saman Ekanyake were present on this occasion, the release said. Jha has earlier served as Ambassador of India to Uzbekistan from 2019-2020 and as the deputy chief of mission at the Indian Embassy in Washington DC from 2017-2019.

He has held key positions in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi, including as head of the division for human resources and management affairs, the division for relations with Western Europe and the European Union, and the policy planning division. He also served in Colombo from 2007-2010 as a Counsellor at the High Commission, handling work related to commercial and economic matters.

“During this period, in particular, he was pivotal in building the architecture of India-Sri Lanka development cooperation,” the Indian High Commission said in a press release.

Jha has also served as a member of negotiating teams for Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with Sri Lanka and the European Union respectively, the Sri Lankan President's Office said. (PTI)

KNP authorities promote conservation

will offer a glimpse into the Kaziranga National Park. “The programme beginning from December 22 has been timed in the evening just after the safari and the cultural shows are over, so that the visitors are engaged fully”, the KNP director said. A fee of ₹ 50 per person will be charged as an entry ticket and the proceeds will be used to support the forest frontline through the staff welfare society. Ghosh added. (PTI)

Tree felling begins to expand mine in Chhattisgarh's Hasdeo Arand

AMID PROTESTS

AMBIKAPUR, Dec 22: Tree felling for Parsa East and Kete Basan (PEKB) phase-2 extension coal mines in the biodiversity-rich Hasdeo Arand region of Chhattisgarh's Surguja district has begun amid police security cover. Activists alleged police on Thursday detained those who were protesting against coal mining in the Hasdeo area.

The Opposition Congress raised the issue in the state Assembly and accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government of favouring industrialists.

The local administration claimed it had all the necessary permissions to go ahead with tree felling, while police officials said they had visited the residences of some locals to advise them not to create a law and order situation. Chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai told reporters in the Assembly complex that he has received information about opposition by people (against deforestation) but no arrest has been made.

“The forest department started felling trees for PEKB phase 2 in Udaipur development block of Surguja district this (Thursday) morning. To maintain law and order, police personnel were deployed there. Necessary clearances have been granted,” a district administration official said on Thursday. The state government had granted permission for non-forestry use of 1,136.328 hectares of forest land for PEKKB phase-II mine (Surguja), which was allotted to Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited (RVUNL) last year.

According to officials, the first phase of mining on 762 hectare of land in PEKB block allotted in 2007 to RVUNL began in 2013 and has been completed. Local villagers under the banner of Hasdeo Arand Bachao Sangharsh Samiti had been protesting against allotment of these mines for several years.

The forest department had in the past tried to launch a tree cutting exercise to pave the way for the start of the PEKB phase 2 coal mine, but that triggered strong opposition from local villagers, which forced the authorities to halt their action. (PTI)

2 cases of Covid's JN.1 variant detected in country till Thursday

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Twenty-two cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been detected in the country till Thursday, with 21 cases being reported from Goa and another from Kerala, official sources said. In Goa, the sources said, no clustering of cases of the JN.1 variant has been seen and all infected people have recovered without complications.

Those infected had mild upper respiratory tract infection with symptoms of mild dry cough, sore throat with or without fever, they said.

In November, 62 samples were sent to different INSACOG labs for whole genome sequencing for detection of the JN.1 variant, while in December, so far, 253 samples have been sent, the sources said on Friday. (PTI)

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

It is informed to all concerned that NIT is issued by the undersigned inviting "Notice Inviting Tender" from eligible Reputed Registered Firm / Trust / Company etc. for supply of inputs / items namely (i) e-Rickshaw, (ii) Sewing Machine, (iii) Fashion Design Machine and (iv) Automatic Paper Plate Making Machine. Details will be available at e-Procurement portal i.e., <https://assamlenders.gov.in>.

NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

It is informed to all concerned that RFP is issued by the undersigned inviting "Request For Proposal" from eligible Reputed Registered Training Institutes for empanelment of bidders in the RFP process for selection to provide necessary Training course for Coaching for Entrance Exam for UPSC (12 months). Details will be available at e-Procurement portal i.e., <https://assamlenders.gov.in>.

Sd/-
Director,
Assam Minorities Development Board
R.G.B. Road, Ganeshguri, Guwahati-6

Janasanyog/CF/4388/23/23 December 2023

Kota faces shortage of clinical psychologists

Despite rising number of suicides by students

KOTA (RAJASTHAN) Dec 22: Despite 26 cases of suicide by coaching students in 2023, the highest in a year, Kota still faces a shortage of clinical psychologists to deal with mental health issues of about 2.50 lakh coaching students preparing for various entrance exams away from their homes.

The Psychological counselling Centre, set up in September this year in the New Medical College Hospital in Kota in compliance with the state government's budget announcement, has no clinical psychologist. There is only one clinical psychologist appointed at the NMCH against the demand of at least five, and it lacks an adequate number of trained staff.

Non-availability of M Phil in clinical psychology in medical colleges of the state has further aggravated the issue as those serving in government medical colleges in the state are the degree holders from other states and are short against the demand.

Dr Vinod Kumar Daria, professor (MD), the department of psychology at the New Medical College Hospital told PTI that he chalked out a proposal for M Phil course in clinical psychology in government institutions in Rajasthan and forwarded it to the state government in January last year. The proposal was approved leading to announcement of Psychological Counselling Centre with skilled clinical psychologists.

The Psychological Counselling Centre was started (without any additional budget), however, commencement of M Phil course and appointment of clinical psychologists is still pending there, Dr Daria added.

Because of better study culture in Rajasthan, parents from across the country are getting



their wards admitted in Rajasthan and a further high inflow of students is expected in Kota, Sikar and Jaipur. Clinical psychologists are in acute demand in the state, Dr Daria said while pointing out that inflow of mental health-related patients in government medical colleges in the state is sufficient enough to start with eight-seat M Phil course in clinical psychology.

Admitting an acute shortage of clinical psychologists and expert counsellors, Dr B S Shekhawat, head of the department of psychology and additional principal at the Government Medical College, Kota, told PTI he had written for clinical psychologists and counsellors; however, they were yet to be appointed.

Dr Shekhawat claimed one expert clinical psychologist is available in the department and he is at service with faculties of department and MD students. He has also undergone training of clinical psychology.

Dr Shekhawat stressed psychologists should be trained one

with adequate experience.

“They have extended professional psychological counselling to around 400 patients, most of them coaching students since the counselling centre started in September this year,” Dr Shekhawat said.

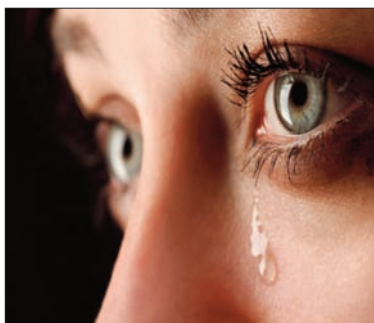
Principal secretary, medical education, T Ravikant did not respond to WhatsApp messages for his comment on status of the proposal for the M Phil course in clinical psychology and the requirement of clinical psychologists in the state.

Meanwhile in the private sector, there are reportedly three-four clinical psychologists, including a couple of them in two coaching giants.

Currently, a team of 96 counsellors with two clinical psychologists are working under him and extending psychological counselling and treatment to students at its various centres in the city, Dr Harish Sharma, principal psychologist at one of the coaching giants in Kota told PTI. (PTI)

Sniffing women's tears found to reduce aggressive behaviour in men

When given the opportunity, the men could get revenge on the other player by causing them to lose money



NEW DELHI, Dec 22: A study has found that sniffing woman's tears leads to reduced aggression in men.

The research led by Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel, showed that tears from women contained chemicals that lowered men's brain activity linked to aggression and thus, weakened aggressive behaviour in them.

While this process of social chemosignalling is known to be common in animals - male aggression in rodents is blocked when they smell female tears - the process is less understood in humans, the researchers said in their study published in the journal PLOS Biology.

To investigate this, the researchers exposed a group of men to either women's emotional tears or saline while they played a two-person game,

designed to elicit aggressive behaviour against the other player, whom the men were led to believe was cheating.

When given the opportunity, the men could get revenge on the other player by causing them to lose money. Also, the men weren't aware of what they were sniffing - women's tears or saline solution, both of them odourless.

The researchers found that vengeful aggressive behaviour in men dropped by more than 40 per cent after they sniffed women's emotional tears.

They also studied these men's brain activity and found using functional MRI that two aggression-related brain regions - the prefrontal cortex and anterior insula - became more active when the men were provoked during the game.

However, these aggression-linked brain regions did not become as active when the men were sniffing the female tears, the team found.

Individually, the greater the difference in this brain activity, the less often the player was seen to take revenge during the game.

The findings regarding this link between tears, brain activity and aggressive behaviour imply that the process of social chemosignalling is a factor in human aggression, not just in animals, the researchers said. (PTI)

Shah Rukh Khan's 'Dunki' earns ₹30 crore nett on day one

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED PEOPLE TO TAKE ME SERIOUSLY AS AN ACTOR: ANANYA PANDEY

MUMBAI, Dec 22: Shah Rukh Khan's "Dunki" raked in ₹30 crore nett at the domestic box office on its opening day, according to industry tracker Sacnilk.

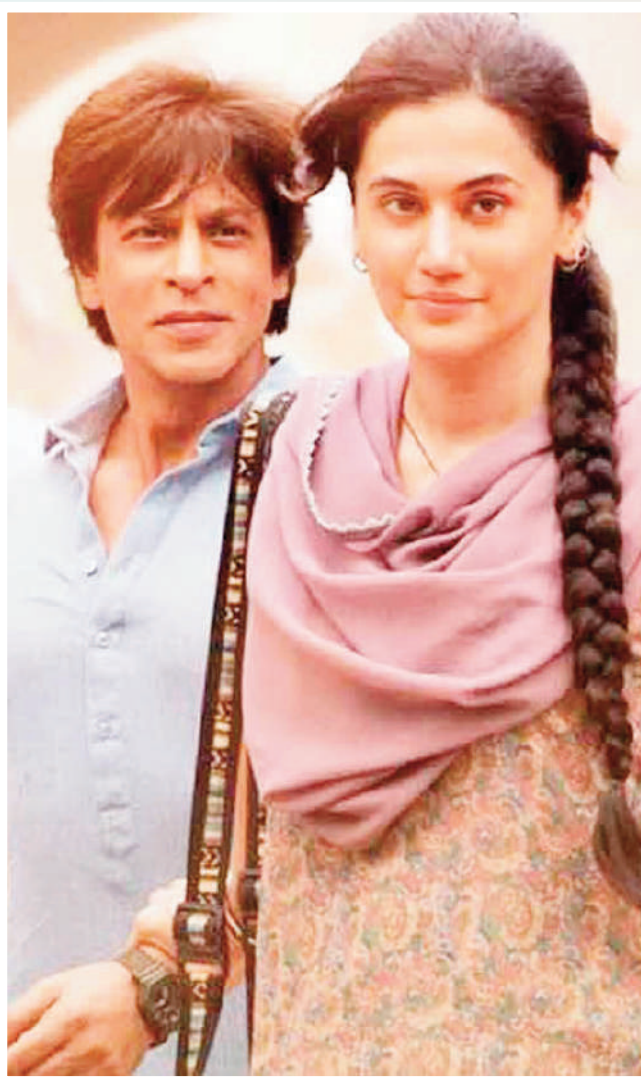
"Dunki", a comedy drama based on an illegal immigration technique 'donkey flight', released in theatres worldwide on Thursday. It also features Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal, Boman Irani, Vikram Kochhar and Anil Grover.

"Dunki" earned ₹30 crore India net on its first day for all languages," the website reported.

The Rajkumar Hirani-directed film marks Shah Rukh's third and last release of 2023 following back-to-back action blockbusters in Pathaan and Jawan.

The day one earnings of Dunki is significantly lower than both Pathaan and Jawan, which had amassed ₹55 crore and ₹65.5 crore nett on their opening days in India respectively. The two movies went on to earn over ₹1000 crore at the worldwide box office.

Billed as a saga of friendships, borders, nostalgia for home and love, Dunki is directed by Hirani from a script he co-wrote with Abhijit Joshi and Kanika Dhillon. (PTI)



India's official Oscar entry '2018' fails to make it to final 15

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Malayalam film "2018: Everyone is a Hero", India's official entry in the international feature film category at the 2024 Academy Awards, is out of the Oscars race. The Jude Anthony Joseph-directed film failed to make it to the shortlist of 15 films for the category, which was announced by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) on Friday.

Jonathan Glazer's historical drama "The Zone of Interest" (UK), Denmark's "The Promised Land", starring Mads Mikkelsen, and "Perfect Days" from Japan are being billed as the frontrunners of the category. The shortlist also includes "Amerikatsi" (Armenia), "The Monk and the Gun" (Bhutan), "Fallen Leaves" (Finland), "The Taste of Things" (France), "The Teachers' Lounge" (Germany), "Godland" (Iceland), "Io Capitano" (Italy), "Totem" (Mexico), "The Mother of All

Lies" (Morocco), "Society of the Snow" (Spain), "Four Daughters" (Tunisia) and "20 Days in Mariupol" (Ukraine).

Films from 88 countries were eligible in the category. The shortlisted movies will advance to the next round of voting. "2018", starring Tovino Thomas in the lead, was announced as India's official entry for the 96th Oscars in September this year. The movie narrates the story of the devastating Kerala floods in 2018. According to the makers, the film has earned over ₹200 crore at the box office to become the highest grossing film in Malayalam cinema.

"I sincerely apologise to all my well-wishers and supporters for disappointing you all. Nevertheless, the opportunity to represent India in this competition has been a dream-like journey that I will cherish for a lifetime. "Being the highest-grossing film and the official

Indian entry to the Oscars is a rare achievement in any filmmaker's career. I am grateful to God for choosing me for this extraordinary journey," the filmmaker wrote. The AMPAS also unveiled shortlists for nine other categories - original song, original score, sound, documentary feature, documentary short, animated short film, live action short film, makeup and hairstyling, and visual effects. At the 95th Academy Awards, "RRR" and "The Elephant Whisperers", the two Indian films which won the best original song and best documentary short, were sent to the Oscars directly by the makers, but India's official entry in the international film category, Gujarati film "Chhello Show" (Last Film Show), couldn't make it to the final five nominations. The 96th Academy Awards are scheduled to take place on March 10, 2024 in Los Angeles. (PTI)



MUMBAI, Dec 22: Nothing works like good work, says Ananya Pandey who wants her film choices to reflect the evolution she has had as an actor.

The actor, who debuted with Karan Johar's production "Student of the Year 2", earned critical acclaim for her performance in Shakun Batra-directed "Gehraiyaan" from the same banner.

While fans noticed a shift in her choices post "Gehraiyaan", Pandey called it a "natural progression", whether it is her latest film "Kho Gaye Hum Kahan" from Zoya Akhtar's banner or her upcoming cyber-thriller "Control" by Vikramaditya Motwane.

"I've always wanted people to take me seriously as an actor. It's not that it (choices) changed after 'Gehraiyaan'. I'm in my 20s, I'm growing up and there are different things that I'm relating to. There are different kinds of stories I want to do. It's simultaneous with my growth as a person. My choices are also changing. It's a ripple effect," the actor, 25, told PTI in an interview.

"I'm not making any conscious decisions. I've my wishlist and I'm secretly manifesting who I want to work with but nothing works like good work. I'm trying to focus on that," Pandey added.

The actor said she is grateful that filmmakers like Batra, Akhtar and Motwane "believed that if I could work with them, I could back a film for them".

"Kho Gaye Hum Kahan" is set to stream on Netflix from December 26 and also stars Siddhant Chaturvedi, Adarsh Gourav and Kalki Koechlin.

The coming-of-digital-age drama revolves around three best friends as they navigate life while striving to balance their online identities with their true selves.

Pandey hopes the movie resonates with people of her age.

"I found it very relatable and I felt I can find it relatable, then there are so many people out there, who will. There are films that define every generation. I feel like being a part, hopefully, of something that people will look back years later and be like, 'Oh, that's ahead of time or that spoke of our generation and we related to it'," she said.

"Kho Gaye Hum Kahan" is directed by debutant director Arjun Varain Singh and produced by Excel Entertainment's Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar and Tiger Baby's Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar. (PTI)

Prime Video unveils docuseries 'Wedding.con' from Tanuja Chandra

MUMBAI, Dec 22: Streamer Prime Video on Friday announced "Wedding.con", a true-crime docuseries that will examine the dark side of the online matrimonial scene.

The streaming service has launched the trailer of the docuseries, which comes from filmmaker Tanuja Chandra of "Dushman" and "Qarib Qarib Single" fame. It is a BBC Studios India Production. The five-part series follows the stories of five women as they embark on the journey to fulfil their dream of a happy marriage.

"However, their search for the perfect life partner takes a distressing turn as they fall victim to financial and emotional exploitation by connen. These imposters, assuming fake identities and posing as suitable grooms on

online platforms, leave the women betrayed," read the official description.

Chandra said working on the series turned out to be an eye-opening experience for her.

She hopes that through its release on Prime Video, the show will help in saving women from being duped in the future. "In India and other South Asian cultures, it's widely believed that marriage is the most significant milestone in a woman's life, and the pressure to 'settle down' keeps mounting as she grows older," she said.

"In fact, by the time she's 35, she's told the ship has long sailed. 'Wedding.con' is the tale of five women who were victims of matrimonial fraud, but are now survivors and have shown tremendous courage in recount-

ing their experience, to expose these scams," she added.

Aparna Purohit, head of Originals, India and Southeast Asia, Prime Video, said the streamer has always focused on championing and authentically representing women, both on screen and off screen.

"Wedding.con" stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment.

Through its poignant documentation of real-life experiences, the series not only serves as a cautionary tale but also aims to inform and educate viewers about online matrimonial fraud, which turns out to be one of the most under-reported crimes. The issue remains shrouded in shame and stigma, making it crucial to shed light on," she added. (PTI)



'Death's Game' stars Park So-dam & Seo In-guk: Would love to visit India, meet fans

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: 'Death's Game' stars Park So-dam and Seo In-guk haven't been to India but are aware of the popularity K-dramas enjoy in the country, which is one of the destinations they would love to visit in future. So-dam, best known to viewers for her role in Bong Joon-ho's Oscar-winning film 'Parasite' and Korean dramas such as 'Cinderella with Four Knights' and 'Record of Youth', said she learned a lot about India through her college friend and 'Squid Game' star Anupam Tripathi.

"I haven't had the chance to visit India. However, I went to school with Anupam, you may know of him, he's an actor in Korea who came from India. We took classes together and in our downtime, we'd take walks around a lake together and I heard so much about India from him," So-dam told PTI in a virtual international

roundtable.

Anupam, who broke out with his role of Ali Abdul, a Pakistani migrant worker in "Squid Game", and So-dam studied at the Korean National University of Arts.

"Recently, I watched the variety show 'Adventure by Accident' where they visit India and I was amazed at the variety of different sceneries and backdrops India had, depending on where you go. So I'd really love to visit one day," she added.

The 32-year-old actor stars as Death in Prime Video's fantasy drama 'Death's Game', which revolves around In-guk's Choi Yi-jae. Yi-jae tries to end his life and angers Death who makes him experience the pain of death 12 more times through different incarnations. It is based on a popular webtoon.

In-guk, also a singer, is familiar to Korean drama enthusiasts for his roles in

'Reply 1997', 'Shopping King Louie', 'The Smile Has Left Your Eyes', 'Doom At Your Service' and 'Cafe Minamdang'.

The actor, 36, said he feels happy for the love and support he receives from his global fans.

"Unfortunately, I haven't had the chance to visit India, so I would love to go when the opportunity comes and I'd love to meet the fans there," he said.

Asked about the global stardom that Korean actors enjoy today given the popularity of K-dramas internationally, In-guk said he takes it as a responsibility.

"I feel very happy and grateful that the music I put out and the stories I tell through acting are loved both in Korea and in other parts of the world. And it gives me a greater sense of responsibility.

"I want to meet my fans' expectations with my art and make sure that my global

fans are happy with what I put out there. It gives me a sense of determination, motivation and responsibility," the actor told PTI.

So-dam is happy that 'Death's Game' is available globally.

"It makes me happy because we tell a story with many universal themes and messages that I'm sure will resonate with a lot of different people around the world. We also have a universally resonant message about life, how you should look back on it and think about how precious we all are and our day-to-day mundane lives are. I hope that the global audiences will watch the show and relate to the themes being delivered," she added.

In-guk, who has already featured in the fantasy show 'Doom At Your Service', said he accepted the drama because he was already a fan of the original webtoon. (PTI)

Madrid and Barcelona still alone in fight for Super League despite ruling

MADRID, Dec 22: Real Madrid and Barcelona are struggling to find allies in their fight to revive the Super League project.

The Spanish powerhouses were quick to claim victory and praise the decision by the European Union's top court on Thursday to rule against the attempt by UEFA and FIFA to block plans for the breakaway competition.

But as the hours passed, there were no signs that they would get anybody else to join their crusade despite the favorable ruling.

Madrid and Barcelona faced an uphill battle trying to convince other clubs to get back on board, but they were not likely to give up anytime soon.

"Allow me to tell the European clubs that we are at the dawn of a new era that will allow us to work freely, on the basis of constructive dialogue, without threats, without acting against anything or anyone, and with the aim of innovating and modernizing football in order to continue sustaining the fans' passions," Madrid president Florentino Pérez said in a statement.

The Super League deal would be especially important for Barcelona, which could potentially solve its financial difficulties if the competition was to be formed. The club said it was time to take action and invite "the parties to engage in a new phase of discussions."

"As one of the clubs driving the Super League project, FC Barcelona feels that the sentence paves the way for a new elite level football competition in Europe by opposing the monopoly over the football world, and wishes to initiate new discussions as to the path that European competitions should take in the future," the Catalan club said.

But none of the other 10 clubs involved in the original project expressed their desire



to return.

Italian club Juventus had been one of the three holdout clubs until finally withdrawing earlier this year. Although its new management took steps to move away from the project, former president Andrea Agnelli, one of the Super League's architects and whose family still owns the club, made a cryptic post on X — formerly known as Twitter — referencing a Juventus slogan that translates as "All the way to the finish," accompanied by lyrics from a U2 song.

Madrid's and Barcelona's rival Atletico Madrid was one of the clubs to quickly reinstate their stance against the new competition. "The European football community does not support the European Super League," Atletico said in a statement.

"Germany, France, England, Italy, Spain (except for Real Madrid and Barcelona), oppose the Super League. We advocate for protecting the

broader European football family, preserving domestic leagues, and securing qualification for European competitions through on-field performance each season."

The Premier League was among the leagues expressing their disagreement with the idea of the new competition, as were many teams and the European Club Association, which represents Europe's top football clubs.

"Our position has not changed," Manchester United said. "We remain fully committed to participation in UEFA competitions, and to positive cooperation with UEFA, the Premier League, and fellow clubs through the ECA on the continued development of the European game."

Madrid-based A22 Sports Management, the promoter of the Super League, immediately announced revised plans for the competition that would be a rival to the Champions

League, Europe's top club tournament.

The newly proposed Super League would have promotion, relegation and exit from the breakaway competition. The original idea introduced in April 2021 collapsed within 48 hours after vehement protests by fans, leagues and the soccer world in general.

"The present and the future of European football are in the hands of the clubs, the players and the fans," Pérez said. "Our destiny now belongs to us and we have a great responsibility in our hands. This day marks a turning point. It is a great day in the history of football and sport in general."

So far there was no history being done, though, as the Spanish rivals remained the only two clubs fighting for the breakaway competition.

"I hope they start their fantastic competition as soon as possible with two clubs," UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin said sarcastically. (AP)

Deepti Pooja restore India Women's command against Australia

MUMBAI, Dec 22: A sturdy 102-run unbeaten stand between Deepti Sharma (70) and Pooja Vastrakar (33) restored India Women's command against Australia on the second day of the ongoing one-off Test, stretching the home team's first-innings lead to 157 here on Friday.

India reached 376/7 in reply to Australia's 219 with their resolute batting show spruced up by Smriti Mandhana's 74, Jemimah Rodrigues' 73 and a fine 52 from debutant Richa Ghosh.

Deepti and Vastrakar came together after India lost four quick wickets for a mere 14 runs to cede advantage to Australia, as their resistance flattened the visitors who used eight bowling options with only Ashleigh Gardner (4/100) making an impact.

The right-arm off-spinner Gardner, coming off an eight-wicket spell in the women's Ashes Test, troubled the Indians the most as she kept nibbling away with crucial wickets while being persistent with probing line and lengths.

But the Indians eventually wrested back control, riding on the splendid partnership between Deepti and Vastrakar, who were a mere five runs away from recording the best eighth-wicket stand for India Women's ever when stumps were drawn.

While Deepti cracked nine fours to make 70 not out off 147 balls, it was Vastrakar whose ascent as one of India's dependable players continued.

Having returned figures of 4/53 on the first day, Vastrakar reached



33 not out from 115 balls with four boundaries.

However, the highlight of the day was youngsters Ghosh (52) and Rodrigues (73) taking apart the Australian bowlers with disdain, putting on 113 runs for the side's second-best partnership for the fourth wicket.

In her maiden outing with the bat in Tests, Ghosh put on a fine show of attack and resilience alike, cracking seven fours in her 104-ball innings while producing strokes on both the sides of the pitch. But Ghosh also had Ellyse Perry to thank who spilled a sitter at mid-off when the Indian batter mistimed one off Gardner having reached 14.

However, she became the 14th Indian batter to score a fifty on debut, joining Rodrigues and Shubha Sathesh to have done so in the span of last 10 days or so.

Rodrigues displayed her control and finesse especially with the sweep shot, collecting a majority of her runs (63 per cent) on the leg

side while making a fine 73 off 121 balls with nine hits to the fence.

Notching up a second consecutive fifty in as many Tests, Rodrigues appeared primed for a maiden century too but she had only herself to blame after hitting one straight to Annabel Sutherland at extra cover off Gardner.

With the pitch providing variable bounce, each of the Indian batters who got runs showcased immaculate approach in anticipating the bounce and trusting their defence, which was not the case for a few others.

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur (0) lasted for only two balls as she was slow to react to a delivery from Gardner which kept low and struck her pads in front of the leg stump.

India slipped further and lost the advantage when Yastika Bhatia (1) seemed to have committed herself too early into the shot to miss a sweep off Gardner and was adjudged leg-before. (PTI)

Indian shooting team not to compete in season-opening Cairo World Cup

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: India will not be competing in the season-opening ISSF World Cup in Cairo from January 24 as the national federation wants to give the shooters some "rest" and not "exhaust them" in a busy year, which also has a couple of Paris Olympic qualification events still to go.

However, the decision to skip the competition was taken only recently and has left a few top shooters, who planned their competition schedule well in advance, in a bit of a quandary.

National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) Secretary General Sultan Singh said the matter was being discussed by the "coaches, sports science team and everybody, and according it has been run through".

The Cairo World Cup will be held in all three disciplines -- pistol, rifle and shotgun -- and will conclude on February 1.

"We want to give them rest and not exhaust them. Everything is run through the training structure. We don't take any decision on the training part of it without keeping the shooters as well as coaches (in the loop).

"All the shooters are aware of it; it is as per the laid out policy. All the shooters are cognizant of this," said Singh.

NRAI assistant secretary, Nimit Chopra, indicated the coaches wanted the shooters not to exhaust themselves in a busy year.

"Coaches want their shooters to rest and not participate in all the competitions. We have the Jakarta competition (Asia Olympic Qualification Rifle/Pistol, January 5-



18) in which the full 'A' team is going," said Chopra.

"The Cairo World Cup (January 24-February 1) is immediately after the Olympic quota competition in Jakarta. The decision (not to send team) was taken last week only. "We are also not sending the 'B' team, the reason being if we don't send 'A' team and only send 'B' team, then there are some QROG (Qualification Ranking Points for Olympic Games), which the 'B' team can accumulate and it will be a disadvantage for the 'A' team (when the Olympic selection trials take place in May next year). That is why we have decided no one will go there (Cairo)."

NRAI will conduct a series of trials to select the Paris Olympic Games squad in May where only those topping in the exercise will represent the country, irrespective of whether they have earned the Games quota places for the country or not.

In shooting sport, an Olympic quota is won by the country and not by an individual.

India will, however, be sending its team for the ISSF World Cup (Rifle/Pistol) in Granada, Spain from February 10 to 18. But there are only two events -- 10m air rifle and 10m air pistol for seniors and juniors -- scheduled there.

A shooter told PTI on condition of anonymity that the scheduling should be done well in advance so that shooters have seamless preparations. "We train for certain competitions and skip others. Our training is very, very systematic and any change can upset our form and rhythm. So, accordingly the federation should consider these things. Some shooters would have opted out of the Jakarta competition and trained for Cairo World Cup. Now they will miss both," the shooter said.

Another shooter added, the federation could have given an option between Jakarta and Cairo to its athletes.

"That (giving an option) could have been a good option," the shooter said. (PTI)

Shaheen could be rested for third Test against Australia to manage workload

KARACHI, Dec 22: Pakistan pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi may be rested for the third and final Test against Australia in Sydney to manage his workload following the angry backlash the PCB faced after Khuram Shahzad suffered a serious rib cage injury.

Pakistan lost the opening Test at Perth by 360 runs with debutant Shahzad taking five wickets but he also got injured in the process and was ruled out of the Melbourne (December 26) and Sydney (January 3) Tests.

Pakistan's strike bowler Afridi took just two wickets in Perth and the thinking is that, if the visitors also lose the Boxing Day Test, he will be rested for the final game in Sydney to keep him fresh for the crucial T20I series in New Zealand.

A source said that the team management wants to manage the workload of the pace bowlers, especially Afridi, as the T20 World Cup in the West Indies and the USA is less than six months away and the series against the Blackcaps will be crucial to their preparations.

"The backlash the board and management is facing over the handling of Khuram's workload has set off panic buttons, plus the form of Shaheen has added to the concerns of the team management and selectors," the source said.

The source added that team officials and selectors had discussed Afridi's case with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chief Zaka Ashraf.

"It is in the pipeline that if Shaheen doesn't do well in Melbourne Test and the team ends up on the losing side, he will be rested for the final Test so that he is fresh for the T20I series in New Zealand," the source said.

Pakistan are already without key pacer Naseem Shah, who is recovering from a shoulder surgery. Ehsanullah is rehabilitating following an elbow surgery and Muhammad Hasnain is nursing an ankle injury. (PTI)

It's Bajrang's personal decision to return Padma Shri: Sports Ministry

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The Sports Ministry on Friday said Bajrang Punia's decision to return his Padma Shri award in protest against Sanjay Singh's election as Wrestling Federation of India president is a personal one but it will still try to convince him to rethink the move. Olympic medalist grappler Bajrang decided to return the honour a day after Sanjay, a Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh loyalist, was elected to the top post at WFI.

On Thursday, Sanjay was elected as the president of the WFI after the panel led by the close aide of Brij Bhushan won 13 of the 15 posts. Sakshi Malik, Bajrang and Vinesh Phogat addressed a press conference after Sanjay's election in which Sakshi, a bronze medalist at the 2016 Rio Olympics, announced that she would quit the sport as a mark of protest.

But ministry sources said the



WFI elections were conducted in a free and transparent manner.

"It is Bajrang Punia's personal decision to return Padma Shri. The WFI elections were held in fair and democratic manner," a ministry official told PTI. "We will still try to persuade Bajrang to reverse his decision to return Padma Shri," he

added. Bajrang on Friday tried to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and hand over a protest letter, where he mentioned about returning his Padma Shri award.

But he was stopped at Kartavya Path by Delhi Police officials since he didn't have any prior appointment. (PTI)

Unfortunately haven't been able to give Samson chance at No 3: KL Rahul

PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA), Dec 22: India captain KL Rahul conceded that a "phenomenal" Sanju Samson was finding it difficult to find a place in the team occupy key spots, adding that he was pleased the talented cricketer grabbed his chance in the series against the Proteas.

Samson, elevated to No.3 spot, smashed his maiden ODI century in the third and final match against the Proteas on Thursday as India won by 78 runs to wrap up the series 2-1.

"Pleased for Sanju, he's been a phenomenal performer in the IPL over the years. Unfortunately, we haven't been able to give him the chance at No. 3, because obviously there are stalwarts in the ODIs who occupy those key spots.

"Glad he was able to grab his chances here," said Rahul following the big win.

Samson measured 108 (114 balls) and Tilak Varma's patient

52 (77 balls) guided India to a competitive 296 for eight. South Africa challenged the tourists through a fifty by Tony de Zorzi (81, 87 balls) but were eventually bowled out for 218 in 45.5 overs.

Samson didn't get the opportunity in the first ODI as the target set by South Africa was very low, while in the second match, the wicketkeeper-batter scored 12 coming in at No.5. But in the decider, he was elevated to No.3 as Virat Kohli is not touring with the ODI side. Rahul added the focus of the team will now shift to the two-Test series beginning in Centurion on December 26. Regular skipper Rohit Sharma and Kohli will be back in the side and Rahul will be the first-choice keeper.

"Will celebrate with the boys and then switch back to focusing on the Test series in a day or two. Love being around the boys, that's how it's been since I came over to South



Africa after some time away following a disappointing World Cup final," he added.

"Player of the match" Samson said he was happy to have scored his maiden ODI century in 16 outings, and added the extra 3-4 overs he got to bat coming in at No.3 helped him in his endeavour.

"Proud of it (century), specially considering the result as well. Have been working hard. This format gives you some extra time to understand the wicket and the bowler's mindset. Batting at the top of the order gives you those 10-20 extra deliveries," said Samson.

He added that the juniors on the side had really upped their game and made the seniors proud.

"The whole country is very proud of how Tilak Varma has stepped up, lots more expected from him. The seniors have set the standards of Indian cricket and the juniors are coming in

and doing the job. It's not very easy, travelling in between and playing every 2-3 days but they're getting the job done."

Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh, who returned sublime figures of 4 for 30 to add to the five-for in the first ODI, said the IPL experience had made him a much better cricketer.

"The plan was simple, it was to bowl wicket-to-wicket and get lbws and bowled. Sometimes when there isn't anything happening on the wicket, you need some support from the umpires, that's why I had to appeal a lot," said the "Player of the Series" for his 10 wickets.

"IPL has been a very good platform for us youngsters, there isn't a big gap between IPL and international cricket. You understand the mindset of international cricketers and it helps. We are all loving the chances we've got. We'd love to give our all in the future as well and do well," he added. (PTI)

After WFI polls, relief that stalled Nationals will resume

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The wrestling fraternity has largely heaved a sigh of relief that the national camps and competitions will finally begin with the formation of a new federation, and it does not matter that Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh will continue to call the shots.

The country's top wrestlers, including Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik, had pushed for a woman president, but Brij Bhushan loyalist Sanjay Singh emerged as the winner in the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) polls on Thursday by beating former wrestler Anita Sheoran.

Since Brij Bhushan was asked to step aside and an ad-hoc panel was formed to manage the day-to-day affairs of the federation, national camps and National championships could not be held in 2023.

It affected many wrestlers since medals won and participation certificates in National championships are necessary to apply for jobs. Hundreds of wrestlers suffered due to this as many had one last year to win a medal in the junior category.

"How does it matter who has won? The elections were held after the Supreme Court intervention. Koi jabardasti nahi huee (No one was forced to do anything). The government was also looking at it," said Jagdish Dhanda, a coach at the famous Chhotu Ram stadium in Rohtak.

"The sport had literally stopped in the last 11 months. It's good that the activities have started immediately after the formation of the new body. Now national camps will be held and competitions will be organised, you won't realise the loss in the last 11 months," Dhanda said.

Asked how the wrestlers in his stadium



have reacted to the fact that Brij Bhushan, who is accused of sexual harassment of women wrestlers, has kept control of the body through the new chief, Dhanda said. "The wrestlers are neutral."

"Actually, no one is discussing it. It was clear that Bajrang Punia and Vinesh Phogat were just working for themselves. They wanted to save themselves from trial. Initially, no one understood, but later, when they skipped the Asian Games trials and did not honour their words to the Panchayat, people stopped believing them," Dhanda reasoned.

Both Bajrang and Vinesh were exempted from the Asian Games trials by the ad-hoc panel and were dragged to court by the wrestlers in their respective categories.

Bajrang had returned empty-handed

from the Hangzhou Asian Games and Vinesh eventually suffered an injury and could not compete in the continental showpiece.

Dhanda and his team of coaches have produced many international medal winners from the Rohtak wrestling centre. Dhanda is working there since 2014.

Similar sentiments were shared by the coaches at Delhi's Chhatrasal Stadium. "A solid leadership is required in WFI. You have seen how the ad-hoc panel struggled to take decisions. They kept changing their decisions, so it is only good that the same panel has returned to power. You need experience, and they have done a tremendous job in the last 10-12 years," said the coach, who did not wish to be named.

"Thankfully, now nationals will be

held. All that the wrestlers need is competition. We are not from any party. We just want the betterment of our sport."

The coach said the protesting wrestlers should have tried to resolve the issues, if any, by dialogue.

"Matbhed ho hi sakte hi (There can be difference of opinion), which can be sorted by sitting and talking. Hitting the roads is not a good option. The sport got a bad name for that."

"The parents were so worried that their wards had lost an entire year. It's a brutal sport; one year is too long a period."

Usually, by the end of May, all the age-group Nationals finish. At least 120 medals are offered in these championships. Only U23 championships were held this year.

A female wrestler from Haryana said there will be some hesitation in approaching the federation officials.

"We do not know what's the truth. Whether sexual harassment took place or not, we do not know. But trust me, there will be some hesitation, at least initially, if the wrestlers need to ask something from the federation. We do not know if we will be seen as those who protested against the federation officials," the wrestler said, expressing her apprehensions.

The new dispensation has already announced that the U15 and U20 Nationals will be held in Gonda in the last week of December.

The AGM will be held in Delhi on January 11 or 12. The new body, hours after getting elected on Thursday, had cancelled all the decisions taken by the ad-hoc panel. (PTI)

ASPL: KAMSFC beat Dima United FC in Semis, reach final



HT Bureau

DIPHU, Dec 22: In the first semi-final match of the Assam State Premier League (ASPL) the home team Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC (KAMSFC) – blue giants defeated Dima United FC, which was played at Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium on Thursday evening (December 21). The KAMSFC has now reached to the finals.

The match was really a thrilling encounter between the two rivals. The Dima United boys came with full spirit. In the 45 minutes of the first half the visitors dominated the game. For the Morning Star there seems to be a lack of coordination and a lack of passes. Though both sides tried hard but failed to break the deadlock in the first half.

In the second half witnessed the Morning Star boys with fresh energy. They took good attacking shots against the visitors and tried to create chances. In the 52nd minute the Morning Star got their first goal through Samuel K Vanlalpeka with an assist from Tenson Tisso. With this the Morning Star boys regained more energy and went on an attacking spree. It took less time to get their second goal and in the 56 minutes Bishnu Bordoloi through an assist from Joseph Lalnempuia found the back of the net.

Taking chances on the beleaguered Dima United boys, the

Morning Star took to goal scoring. Singdoulhen Khongsai in the 60th minute through an assist from Komolom Rongphar scored the third goal for his team. The fourth goal was scored by Robinson Khongsai in the 68th minute through an assist from Singdoulhen Khongsai.

Though the visitors conceded more goals, there was energy in them. They could create chances and in the 69th minute Prakash Chetri netted the first goal for his team. This gave fresh energy for the Dima United boys making good attacks against their opponent. A mistake was made on the visitor's side. In the 77 minutes Singdoulhen Khongsai kicked the ball into the net and touched the foot of Abhishek creating an own goal for Dima United.

Not losing hope the Dima United boys fought back and in the 89th minute found the back of the net via a penalty kick by their captain Lalminglu Vankal as Harbamon Timung of Morning Star was shown a yellow card for his faulty play inside the goal box. The 90 minutes match ended with a score of 2-5 in favour of Morning Star.

Morning Star will meet in the final with the winner of today's second semi-final match played between United Chirang Duar FC and Eleven Stars Club at Tepesia Sports Complex, Sonapur, Guwahati. The final match will be played here at KASA stadium on January 7, 2024.

South Africa's Dean Elgar to retire from international cricket after Tests against India

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 22 Former South Africa captain Dean Elgar on Friday announced his retirement from international cricket at the conclusion of the upcoming two-Test series against India, commencing in Centurion on December 26.

Elgar made his debut in 2012 and has played 84 Tests. The left-handed batter has scored 5,146 runs at 37.28 with 13 centuries and 23 fifties.

"Elgar will fittingly end his international career with the two Test matches — the first to be played at his home ground in Centurion from 26-30 December and the second at the venue where he scored his first Test runs, Newlands Cricket Ground in Cape Town, from 03-07 January," said Cricket South Africa (CSA) in a statement.

The 36-year-old also played eight ODIs, with his last appearance in white-ball cricket coming in 2018.

"Having had the privilege to do it for 12 years internationally is simply beyond my wildest dreams. It has been an incredible journey that I have been fortunate enough to have," said Elgar.

"As they say, 'all good things come to an end', and the Indian home series will be my last, as I have made the decision to retire from our beautiful game," he said. (PTI)

Kohli returns home due to family emergency, Gaikwad ruled out of series

CENTURION, Dec 22: Virat Kohli has returned to India due to a family emergency but the senior batter will be back in time for the first Test against South Africa starting here next week.

Kohli had travelled to South Africa as part of the Indian squad for the two-Test series, which will begin at SuperSport Park on December 26.

"Virat Kohli has returned to India due to a family emergency. But he will be back before start of the first Test," a BCCI source told PTI on Friday.

It is understood that Kohli had already

taken permission from BCCI brass about his short leave.

"Virat had already left on Thursday and it was pre decided. Virat didn't take part in the three day intra squad match where India and India A players took part," the source added.

No one in BCCI however could confirm the nature of the emergency.

Kohli had missed out on a Test match during the last away series in South Africa due to a back injury.

He will be back in the Rainbow Nation on December 24 and will take part in the pre-match training.

Meanwhile, Indian batter Rituraj Gaikwad was ruled out of the two-match series, which is a part of the World Test Championship cycle, after fracturing his finger.

"Rituraj Gaikwad has been ruled out of the two-Test series with ring finger fracture," the source added.

Gaikwad had injured his finger while trying to take a catch during the second ODI against South Africa earlier this week.

That Gaikwad was ruled out of the first Test was reported by PTI on Thursday but it wasn't confirmed if he had sustained a fracture. (PTI)

Khawaja to challenge ICC reprimand, says armband was for a bereavement

MELBOURNE, Dec 22: Bewildered by the ICC's decision to reprimand him for wearing a black armband during the first Test against Pakistan, Australia's Usman Khawaja on Friday said he will contest the charge as he had told the governing body it was for a "personal bereavement". Khawaja had worn a black armband during Australia's 360-run win over Pakistan in Perth last week. He had arrived for a training session on December 13 with "all lives are equal" and "freedom is a human right" inscribed on his batting spikes and had reportedly planned to wear them during the inaugural Test.

"The ICC asked me day two (of the Perth Test) what (the black armband) was for, I told them it was for a personal bereavement. I never ever stated it was for anything else," Khawaja told reporters.

"I respect the ICC and all the regulations they have, I will be asking them and contesting them... From my point of view, that consistency hasn't been done yet."

"The shoes were for a different matter, I'm

happy to say that, but the armband (reprimand) made no sense to me," he added.

The opener added that the global governing body had not applied the rules consistently.

"I followed all the regulations and past precedents — guys have put stickers on their bats, names on their shoes, done all sorts of things in the past without ICC approval and never been reprimanded."

The ICC's regulations prevent players from displaying messages of political, religious or racial causes during international matches.

However, players can wear black armbands to mark deaths of former players, family members or other significant individuals after taking prior permission from the governing body. The ICC reprimand for Khawaja wearing a black armband in Perth carries no financial or playing penalty. Khawaja also denied he had "any hidden agendas" when he arrived for a training session with "all lives are equal" and "freedom is a human right" inscribed on his batting spikes, apparently in reference to the war in Gaza. (PTI)

Last 3-4 months were mentally challenging, grateful for maiden ODI ton: Samson



PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA), Dec 22: India wicket-keeper batter Sanju Samson revealed that the past three-four months have been mentally challenging for him but he kept at it by working on himself and bounced back by scoring his maiden ODI ton. Samson was overlooked for the ODI World Cup in India with selectors preferring to go with the likes of Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav despite the Kerala batter averaging 55.7 with a strike rate of 104 in 13 ODI innings.

"The last three, four months were challenging for me mentally," Sanju said after the 78-run win on Thursday.

"So going through all that and coming here I think doing what I did today, I think I feel really happy and grateful."

Samson was also not picked for the

Asian Games, indicating that he is really low in the selectors' pecking order.

On Thursday, however, he took things in his own hand and scored his maiden ODI century to help India win the third game and clinch the series 2-1 against South Africa.

"I've been blessed in my genes. My father is also a sportsman, so how much ever setbacks you have, I think there's always no other way to come back and bounce back... think how much you can work on yourself and how you can come back more strongly," he added.

Elevated to the number three spot, Samson, who scored a measured 108, joined forces with Tilak Varma (52) to take India to a competitive target.

"Honestly, I think I was not looking at

the scorecard. Until I had a partnership with Tilak till then I just wanted to play and like go with the merit. I just watched the ball and bat and the boundaries and the scoring options ultimately happened.

"So I was just focused on the process and playing one ball at a time and then I think the scorecard kept on ticking."

"When Tilak came in when we both had a tough four or five overs where I think (Keshav) Maharaj, was bowling the best. I think both the ends were a bit tight. That's when we thought that we need to go on and take some risks at the moment."

Asked how he kept his calm during the knock, Samson said, "I don't know actually. It comes very naturally to me."

"It's very important to make really good decisions. When you are calm and when you are aware of your thoughts, emotions of your physical being and mental being that helps me to make some really good decisions."

The home side looked on course for victory before the Indian pacers, led by left-arm Arshdeep Singh, bowled the South Africans out for 218 in 45.5 overs.

"I think the power-play, the way South African openers batted, I thought they are taking the game away five overs before."

"But after that when our fast bowlers came in between, and the ball I think was maintained nicely by all the teammates... the fast bowlers also hit some proper areas to get those crucial wickets of David (Miller) and crucial wickets were important for us." (PTI)



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