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- Biden orders strike on Iranian-aligned group after 3 US troops injured
- A Turkish parliamentary committee resumes debate on Sweden's NATO bid
- Review plea filed in SC seeking ban on screening children for nursery admission
- Will find attackers of merchant navy ships: Rajnath

Peace accord between ULFA likely on Dec 29

Amit Shah, Himanta, Arabinda Rajkhowa to be present at pact signing prog

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: A tripartite accord is likely to be signed on December 29 between the pro-talks faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), and the Central and Assam governments, aiming to bring a lasting peace in the northeastern state, sources said on Tuesday.

Union home minister Amit Shah, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and over a dozen top leaders of the pro-talks faction of the ULFA, headed by Arabinda Rajkhowa, will be present at the signing of the peace agreement here.

The accord will take care of a host of long-standing political, economic and social issues concerning Assam, besides providing cultural safeguards and land rights to the indigenous people, the sources privy to the development said.

The hardline faction of the



United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), led by Paresh Baruah, will not be part of the agreement as he has been consistently rejecting the olive branch offered by the government. Two top leaders of the Rajkhowa group -- Anup Chetia and Sashdhar Choudhary -- were in the national capital last week and closeted with the government interlocutors to give final touches to the peace agreement, the sources said. Those who have been talking to

the ULFA faction from the government side include director of the Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka and the government's advisor on Northeast affairs A K Mishra.

The Rajkhowa-led ULFA faction had begun unconditional talks with the central government in 2011, despite strong opposition from hardline faction led by Paresh Baruah, who is believed to be residing at a place along the China-Myanmar border.

The ULFA was formed in 1979 with the demand for a 'sovereign Assam'. Since then, the outfit has been involved in subversive activities that led to the central government declaring it as a banned outfit in 1990. The Rajkhowa faction joined peace talks with the government on September 3, 2011 after an agreement for Suspension of Operations (SOO) was signed between the ULFA, central and state governments. (PTI)

Govt issues advisory to all social media platforms to comply with IT rules

Deepfake concerns

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: The government has issued an advisory to all platforms to comply with IT rules amid growing concerns around deepfakes and misinformation powered by AI, according to an official release. The advisory mandates that intermediaries (digital and social media platforms) communicate prohibited content specified under IT Rules clearly and precisely to users.

"The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) has issued an advisory to all intermediaries, ensuring compliance with the existing IT rules," it said. The directive specifically targets growing concerns around misinformation powered by AI-Deepfakes. This advisory is the culmination of discussions held by minister of State for IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar with intermediaries.

"The content not permitted under the IT Rules, in particular those listed under Rule 3(1)(b) must be clearly communicated to the users in clear and precise language including through its terms of service and user agreements and the same must be expressly informed to the user at the time of first-registration and also as regular reminders, in particular, at every in-



stance of login and while uploading/sharing information onto the platform," according to the advisory.

The advisory emphasises that digital intermediaries must ensure users are informed about penal provisions, including those in the IPC and the IT Act 2000.

In addition, the advisory says that terms of service and user agreements must clearly highlight that intermediaries/platforms are under obligation to report legal violations to the law enforcement agencies under the relevant Indian laws applicable to the context. "Rule 3(1)(b) within the due diligence section of the IT rules mandates intermediaries to communicate their rules, regulations, privacy policy, and user agreement in the user's preferred (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

HT BRIEFS

Cop injured

GURUGRAM: A traffic constable got injured after being hit by a car at a checkpoint in Sector 58 area here, police said on Tuesday. The incident happened near the Belgium Hotel on Sunday night. The car driver managed to flee from the spot. According to the complaint filed by traffic inspector Harish Kumar, he along with his team, had set up a barricade near the hotel. They were testing people driving with alcohol metres. During this, constable Govind signalled to stop a car which was seen coming towards the checkpoint. But instead of reducing the speed, the driver accelerated and hit Govind and fled, Kumar claimed.

Tiger rescued

PILIBHIT: A tiger from a nearby reserve ventures into an Uttar Pradesh village, perches on a wall, and resists relocation until forest officers tranquilize and rescue it. The incident unfolded in Atkona village, Kalinagar, near the Pilibhit district's tiger reserve. The unexpected visitor was discovered when stray dogs stirred a commotion at the sight of the majestic tiger. Despite initial panic, villagers gathered in large numbers to witness the unusual spectacle. Attempts to film the tiger sleeping on the wall were made, with the area cordoned off to ensure the safety of onlookers. The tiger spent the night undisturbed on the wall, resisting efforts to move it even after waking up.

Elephant calf

DHENKANAL (ODISHA): An elephant calf was found dead in a forest in Odisha's Dhenkanal district on Tuesday, officials said. The carcass of the calf, aged around five years, was spotted in the district's Hindol forest range, they added. Forest officials said the calf possibly died after coming in contact with a live wire laid by poachers. The autopsy of the calf was conducted and the exact cause of its death can be ascertained after getting the report, Sumit Kar, divisional forest officer (DFO), Dhenkanal, said.

Assam witnesses zero loss of lives due to extremist violence in 2023: Himanta

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday that 2023 marked a significant achievement with no lives lost due to extremist violence in the state, coupled with the complete eradication of tribal militancy.

Taking to the micro-blogging site X, Sarma credited the sustained efforts of the Union and state governments for ushering in an era of peace and prosperity in Assam.

"In 2023, several groups laid down their arms, AFSPA was further revoked, and no lives were lost to extremist violence, marking a successful year for the state," Sarma expressed on X.

Emphasising the state's transformation into an "abode of peace," the

chief minister highlighted 2023 as an unprecedented year where policing and peace efforts bore fruit.

Sarma also noted the gradual removal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) from most parts of the state as a major achievement in the peace-building process, with only four districts now under its jurisdiction.

The AFSPA, known for empowering security forces with special powers, has witnessed phased withdrawal, providing a more conducive environment.

Sarma further claimed a "complete end to tribal militancy" in 2023, with over 8,756 former militants rehabilitated in the last two years, involving an investment exceeding ₹ 300 (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Assam State Election Commission appoints observers for NCHAC polls

HT Bureau
HAFLONG, Dec 26: The State Election Commission, Assam has appointed one special observer and three election observers to oversee the upcoming General Election to the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) in 2024, said an official statement on Tuesday.

As per the statement, Dr R M Dubey, IFS (Retd), Ex -PCCF, Assam, has been designated as the special observer for the council election scheduled for January 8, 2024, with a contact number of 9435067690.

Additionally, three ACS officers from the Assam Government have been assigned as election observers for three distinct zones, covering a total of 28 council constituencies. Prasanta Baruah, joint secretary, Act East Policy Affairs Department, will oversee constituencies including



Haflong, Jatinga, Borail, Mahur, Jinam, Dihamlai, Harangjao, and Lower Kharthong, with a contact number of 9435383515.

It further said that Wilburn Dairmy, joint secretary, Excise Department, is responsible for constituencies such as Hangrum, Laisong, Dautuhaja, Maibang East, Maibang West, Kalachand, Wajao, Hajadisa, Langting, Hatikhali, Hadingma, Diger, and Semkhor, and can be contacted at 9435399416.

On the other hand, Gokul Chandra Brahma, joint secretary, Handloom, Textiles and Sericulture Department, will oversee constituencies including Diyungmukh, Garapani, Kharthong, Dihangi, Gunjung, Hamri, and Dolong, with a contact number of 9435120644.

All observers are currently stationed in Haflong and will be available throughout the election process. Recently, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC) on Tuesday announced the names of all their 28 candidates for the forthcoming election to the 13 NC Hills Autonomous Council, scheduled for January 8, 2024.

According to an official statement, the selection was done by the committee formed by the BJP. The declaration was made formally in the office (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

3 arrested, fake gold, currency seized in Guwahati

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 26: The police on Tuesday arrested three persons and seized fake gold and currency from Betkuchi in Guwahati.

Acting on prior int regarding the dealing and delivery of fake gold and currency, a team of the special task force of Assam police conducted a raid at the rented house of Golap Hussain at Katabari, Betkuchi in Guwahati. The team arrested the three persons and recovered a boat shaped fake gold weighing 1.69 kg, fake Indian currency worth ₹ 2,06,500 in denominations of ₹ 500 Denomination, two mobile phones and other items from the rented house.

The accused have been identified as Sahar Ali (27) Jagir Ali (23) and Musfikur Rahaman (23). While Sagar and Jagir hail from the 2 No Karuna Bari Village of Laluk in Lakhimpur district, Musfikur is a resident of the Sonapur Reserve Village of Bihpuria in Lakhimpur district. According to police sources, the matter is currently being investigated.

Stealth guided missile destroyer Imphal commissioned into Navy

MUMBAI, Dec 26: Stealth guided missile destroyer Imphal, which has an ability to fire extended range supersonic BrahMos missile, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of defence minister Rajnath Singh in Mumbai on Tuesday.

Apart from Singh, chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar and Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde attended the event that marked the formal induction into the navy of the third of four 'Visakhapatnam' class destroyers, indigenously designed by the navy's in-house organisation, Warship Design Bureau, and constructed by defence PSU Mazagon Dock (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Govt working towards revitalising traditional medicines: Sarba



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Dec 26: Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday asserted that the government is actively working towards revitalising traditional forms of

medicine. Emphasising the importance of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, Sowa Rigpa, and Naturopathy, Sonowal highlighted the government's commitment to promoting these ancient healing practices.

The minister also underscored the significance of integrating traditional medicine into the healthcare system, aiming for a holistic approach to well-being.

"Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government is working towards rejuvenating the traditional form of medicines like Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, Sowa Rigpa and Naturopathy. As the nation cruise towards becoming an Atmanirbharta, the Ayush ministry is working relentlessly towards enabling our rich traditional medicinal system with scientific validation for wider usage in the pharmaceutical and patient care areas of medical science," he said while addressing a gathering after he along with Arunachal chief minister laid the foundation stones for capacity expansion at the North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Folk Medicine Research (NEIAFMR) in Pasighat.

Sonowal said that this will not only benefit our traditional healers' community but also expand the scope of folk medicine, allowing it to reach greater number of people to heal and enrich their lives.

"The NEIAFMR is a leading institute of India that has been dedicatedly working towards reviving the folk medicine from the region. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 rises to 69 in India: Sources

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: With six more cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1, the numbers of infections of the new variant reported in the country have risen to 69, official sources said on Tuesday. Most of these patients are currently in home isolation and there was no increase in hospitalisation rates, they said.

NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V K Paul had said last week that the new variant was being closely investigated but he stressed on the need for states to ramp up testing and strengthen their surveillance systems. Even though the number of cases is rising and the JN.1 sub-variant has been detected in the country, there is no cause of immediate concern as 92 per cent of those infected are opting for home-based treatment, indicating a mild illness, officials had said.

There is also no increase in hospitalisation rates and Covid-19 is an incidental finding in those hospitalised due to other medical conditions, they had said.

In a letter to states and Union territories, Union health secretary Sudhanshu Pant last week had underlined the critical Covid-19 control and management strategies considering the upcoming festive season. He advised them to put in place requisite public health measures to minimise the risk of transmission.

States have been urged to ensure effective compliance of operational guidelines for revised surveillance strategy for Covid-19 shared by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. They have asked to monitor and report district-wise cases of Influenza-like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) in all health facilities regularly for early detection of rising trend of cases.

India saw a single-day rise of 628 new coronavirus infections, while the active cases have increased to 4,054, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday. The death toll was recorded at 5,33,334 (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Band has won several competitions, videos broadcast on MTV Indies

Diphu band 'Ambush' bags 1st runners up position at Melo Tea Fest

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 26: The Diphu based band 'Ambush' from Karbi Anglong has bagged the first runners up of at the Melo Tea Fest, an open competition held at Darjeeling in West Bengal.

The Melo Tea Fest that began on December 22 concluded on December 24. The prize comprised of a cash prize of ₹ 3 lakh and certificates. Chromatic, a band from Darjeeling was the winner and received a cash prize of ₹ 5 lakh and certificates, while the second runners up was Guns from Countryside of Sikkim, which received a cash prize of ₹ 2 lakh and certificates. Members of the renowned band Parikrama were the judges for the competition.

Ambush performed two cover



songs 'Bull on parade' of Rage Against The Machine (RATM) in the final rounds and 'They don't

care about us' of Michael Jackson. The band also performed its original number 'Song against mob lynch-

ing. The band consists of five members including the manager. They are the vocalist Risim Rongpi, Jitu Tokbi on bass guitar, Amarjit Bey on guitar, Deowinson Engti on drums and manager of the band Sarlong Tokbi. The event was organised by the Darjeeling Police to showcase the cultural tapestry of the region. Special emphasis has been laid on music, tradition and the renowned Darjeeling tea. The festival derived its name from combining "melody" and "tea," paying homage to the musical and tea-making heritage of Darjeeling. 12 teams were short-listed from among 75 entrants across Nepal, Kolkata, Shillong, Karbi Anglong, Delhi, Sikkim, and Darjeeling. Of the 12 bands, seven bands (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Plane grounded in France over human trafficking lands in Mumbai



MUMBAI, Dec 26: A plane carrying 276 passengers, mostly Indians, grounded in France for four days over suspected human trafficking, landed in Mumbai in the wee hours on Tuesday, an official said.

The aircraft, an Airbus A340, landed in Mumbai shortly after 4 am, the official said. It had taken off from Vatry airport near Paris around 2.30 pm local time.

There were also 15 crew members on board when the plane landed in Mumbai, the official said. Immigration authorities enquired from some of the 276 passengers who arrived, an official said, adding no passenger was detained and all 276 passengers were allowed to leave the airport by 11.30 am.

Despite repeated attempts by waiting media personnel at Mumbai airport, none of the passengers spoke about their journey or the events that unfolded over the last four days. Many on board who came out of the airport hours after the plane landed were seen rushing out, without facing the waiting media. Queries to them regarding reported interrogation of some of the passengers by officials at the airport went unanswered. According to French authorities, the charter plane had 276 passengers on board when it took off for Mumbai, as 25 persons, including two minors, had expressed the wish to apply for asylum and were still on French soil. Two others were held, produced before a judge and placed on assisted witness status, a French news channel said. When the flight landed in Vatry airport, there were 11 unaccompanied minors among the 303 Indian passengers (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Gujarat govt engages with over 1,000 companies to showcase GIFT City's potential to global investors

AHMEDABAD, Dec 26: Ahead of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, Gandhinagar-based Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) has become a focus area with the state government promoting it as a key investment destination by engaging with over 1,000 companies to organise roadshows and delegation visits, officials said. Spread over 886 acres of area, GIFT City is India's first operational smart city with infrastructure for international banking, insurance and capital markets. It has a committed investment of USD 1.57 billion, and a workforce of 10,000 professionals.

The upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGGGS), to be held in Gandhinagar between January 10 and 12, 2024, has made GIFT City an important focus area with international companies from countries like UAE, Japan, Australia, Singapore, and the USA expressing interest towards exploring investment opportunities in the GIFT International Financial Services Centre (GIFT IFSC), government officials said.

While GIFT City has already witnessed several large-scale investments, the state government has engaged with over 1,000 companies through six international and eight domestic roadshows and delegation visits held in the run-up



to the VGGGS to explore investment opportunities, a government release said.

During these engagements, the leaders shared the government's vision for GIFT IFSC and discussed various opportunities for setting up their units and/or expanding their businesses there.

"In the course of these meetings, various international companies from countries like the UAE, Japan, Australia, Singapore, and the USA showed their inclination towards exploring investment opportunities in GIFT IFSC," the release said. The state government has signed several MoUs with leading Australian companies with the intention of developing strategic partnerships in the area of dig-

ital technology and establishing finance sector firms in Gujarat's GIFT IFSC, it added.

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in his speech that India is one of the fastest-growing fintech markets in the world and the country's strength in fintech is aligned with the vision of GIFT IFSC. "GIFT City has the potential to become the gateway to the global fintech world and a fintech laboratory," he said. The prime minister also said that the government wants to make GIFT City the global nerve centre of new age global financial and technology services.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said GIFT City is a priceless gift that PM Modi has given to Gujarat. He attributed the realisation

of the GIFT City to Modi's visionary leadership. "GIFT City, which is a dream project of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is becoming a hub for international financial services and is progressing very fast. GIFT City is a priceless gift given to Gujarat by our prime minister," he said.

According to Patel, Gujarat has initiated its contribution to realise the prime minister's vision of a developed India through future-ready mega projects like GIFT City, Dholera SIR, DREAM City, Greenfield Ports, and the Ahmedabad-Mumbai High-Speed Rail (bullet train) project.

Bonds worth USD 50 billion have already been listed at GIFT City IFSC exchanges, and the government is shaping up strategies to attract more businesses through a string of tax benefits, including 100 per cent tax exemption for 10 consecutive years, and a more recent decision to allow liquor with the aim to provide it with a "global ecosystem".

GIFT CITY'S MD and Group CEO Tapan Ray said GIFT City, based on a tri-city concept as envisaged by PM Modi, represents the future of not only Gujarat but of the country.

"GIFT City, as you know, is the dream of our honourable prime minister. And he had come up with a very unique concept. He says

that it's a part of a tri-city concept where you have Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar and the GIFT City," Ray told PTI. "Vibrant concept. We have been seeing that in all our roadshows for Vibrant, GIFT City represents the future of not only Gujarat but India as a whole," he added. The state government believes that the ecosystem created at GIFT City for crucial economic activities combined with globally benchmarked regulations, taxation, and policies, etc, will help businesses and services engaged in sectors such as banking, finance, IT and ITES, fintech, capital market, insurance, automobiles, engineering, pharmaceuticals, e-commerce, ship and aircraft leasing, and ancillary services.

In a recent speech, CM Patel discussed how the state government plans to further expand GIFT City by connecting it to the metro rail system by July 2024, providing a significant convenience for professionals and employees commuting to the GIFT City.

The government also plans to expand the Sabarmati riverfront, spanning about 9 kilometres, near GIFT City. It has granted approval for construction of additional residential units in the GIFT City, and the Phase-2 development plan for GIFT City to be unveiled ahead of the VGGGS 2024. (PTI)

Adani family to invest ₹ 9,350 crore in green energy arm



NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Billionaire Gautam Adani and his family will inject ₹ 9,350 crore into the conglomerate's green energy arm to equip it to achieve the 45 GW target by 2030 and to meet debt payment obligations, according to a company filing.

The board of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) on Tuesday approved the plan to issue 6.31 crore warrants at ₹ 1,480.75 apiece to promoter group companies, Ardur Investment Holding Ltd and Adani Properties Pvt Ltd.

The investment of ₹ 9,350 crore "will be used for deleveraging and accelerated capital expenditure" in AGEL, the firm said in the filing.

The investment would give the promoter group firms 3.833 per cent equity stake in the company. AGEL closed at ₹ 1,599.90, up 4.3 per cent, on the BSE on Tuesday.

The company has bond maturities worth USD 1.2 billion coming up next year and it has already begun outlining plans for repaying or refinancing those.

The fund infusion is part of Adani's comeback strategy, since it was hit by damaging allegations of corporate fraud by Hindenburg Research in January. While the company denied any wrongdoing, Adani group companies lost over USD 50 billion in market value at the lowest point. Some of that loss has been recovered in months thereafter.

The green energy developer already has a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) tie-up of 19.8 GW (out of 20.6 GW locked in capacity, balance 800 MW being merchant) and land of over 2,00,000 acres (equivalent to over 40 GW of additional capacity) in resource-rich areas.

The board of the company, which has a goal of 45 gigawatts (GW) of green energy capacity by

2030, approved a preferential issuance of warrants to the promoters for a quantum of ₹ 9,350 crore at a price of ₹ 1,480.75 per share.

The issuance is subject to the approval of regulatory and statutory authorities as well as the shareholders of the company at the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) scheduled on January 18, 2024, a company statement said.

Earlier, AGEL had announced a USD 1.36 billion construction facility by eight leading international banks for 2,167 MW solar power projects in Khavda, Gujarat, the largest solar park in India.

In addition, AGEL had announced USD 1.425 billion of equity capital (USD 1.125 billion from preferential issuance by promoters and USD 300 million from TotalEnergies JV), which translates to a capital raising of over USD 3 billion.

This, the firm said, demonstrates the deep interest by long-term investors, strategic partners, financial institutions and banks, coupled with continued promoter commitment, for AGEL's target.

"India is on the cusp of becoming a global leader in renewable energy and Adani Green Energy is in the vanguard of this revolution," said Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group.

"This investment by the Adani family underscores our commitment not only to making our nation's clean energy dream a reality but also to an equitable energy transition where we phase down traditional power sources while simultaneously phasing up green, affordable alternatives to fuel our accelerating growth and development plans.

"With the infusion of funds, AGEL remains favorably positioned to achieve its accelerated growth trajectory," Adani said. (PTI)

Rupee falls 3 paise to settle at 83.19 against US dollar



MUMBAI, Dec 26: The rupee slipped 3 paise to settle at 83.19 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday amid a strong American currency and outflow of foreign funds.

A positive equity market sentiment and softer crude oil prices, however, provided a cushion and restricted the fall in the Indian currency, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic currency opened at 83.17 and traded between a peak of 83.10 and a low level of 83.21 against the greenback during intra-day deals. The local unit settled at 83.19 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 3 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the domestic currency settled at 83.16 against the dollar. Forex markets were closed on Monday on account of Christmas.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the Indian rupee depreciated on recovery in the US dollar and FII outflows. However, positive domestic markets and a decline in crude oil prices cushioned the downside.

He said the rupee is expected to trade with a slight positive bias amid rising expectations of a reduction in interest rates by the US Federal Reserve.

"However, demand for the US dollar from imports and selling pressure from FIIs may cap the upside. Geopolitical tensions in the Red Sea may also weigh on rupee at higher levels. Traders may take cues from house price index data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 82.90 to ₹ 83.50," Choudhary added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent higher at 101.35 on Tuesday.

Global oil price benchmark Brent crude inched up 0.03 per cent to USD 79.09 per barrel.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 229.84 points or 0.32 per cent to settle at 71,336.80. The broader NSE Nifty climbed 91.95 points or 0.43 per cent to 21,441.35.

The RBI data released on Friday showed that India's forex reserves jumped USD 9.112 billion to USD 615.971 billion in the week ended December 15 and the quantum of increase was one of the highest for a week.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the equity market on Friday as they offloaded shares worth ₹ 2,828.94 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

Stock markets rally for 3rd day on firm trend in Asian equities, buying in HDFC Bank

MUMBAI, Dec 26: Stock markets closed with gains on Tuesday, extending the winning run to the third day on the trot after buying in HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 229.84 points or 0.32 per cent to settle at 71,336.80. During the day, it jumped 364.33 points or 0.51 per cent to 71,471.29. Index heavyweights HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries contributed around 120 points to the rally.

The broader Nifty advanced 91.95 points or 0.43 per cent to 21,441.35 with 41 of its constituents ending in the green and nine closing with losses.

In the three sessions to Tuesday, Nifty gained 291 points or 1.37 per cent while Sensex rose by 1.17 per cent or 830 points.

Power, utilities, banking, oil and gas and commodities shares attracted buying while IT and tech shares succumbed to selling.

"Global markets are rallying in anticipation of aggressive US FED rate cuts in 2024. And Indian equities too are experiencing a surge de-

spite premium valuations driven by reversed FIIs inflows amid global risk-on," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. Among the Sensex firms, NTPC rose the most by 2.44 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra advanced by 1.65 per cent, Wipro by 1.59 per cent, Kotak Mahindra Bank by 1.35 per cent, Tata Steel by 1.27 per cent, and Asian Paints by 1.24 per cent. Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Titan, Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank also advanced. Bajaj Finance fell the most by 1.81 per cent. Bajaj Finserv by 1.42 per cent, and Tata Consultancy Services by 0.8 per cent. Tata Motors and HCL Technologies were also among the losers.

Infosys, which on Saturday announced that a global company has decided to terminate a multi-year contract worth USD 1.5 billion with it, declined by 1.12 per cent.

"Optimism in world equity markets drove key local indices higher on the back of buying in oil & gas, power and metal stocks. With the year end round the corner investor participation

is likely to remain thin, which could see the markets turn range-bound with a mixed bias over the next few days," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.72 per cent and smallcap index climbed 0.48 per cent.

Among the indices, utilities rallied 1.56 per cent, oil & gas climbed 1.45 per cent, commodities jumped 1.36 per cent, energy (1.28 per cent), power (1.22 per cent), healthcare (1.13 per cent), metal (0.93 per cent) and auto (0.91 per cent). IT and tech were the laggards.

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

US and European markets were closed on Monday. European markets remained closed on Tuesday for Boxing Day. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.03 per cent to USD 79.09 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 2,828.94 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

SBI buys ₹ 200 crore worth NCDs of Muthoot Fincorp

MUMBAI, Dec 26: State Bank of India has purchased non convertible debentures (NCDs) worth Rs 200 crore issued by Muthoot Fincorp.

The flagship company of 136-year-old Muthoot Pappachan Group on Tuesday said the debt issue has a five-year maturity with half-yearly being the frequency of the interest payment.

However it didn't reveal the pricing of the issue.

Shaji Varghese, CEO of the company said the proceeds from the NCD issue will be utilised for onward lending, business operations and further expansion and growth plan.

Muthoot Fincorp has over 3,600 branches across the country and offers gold loans, small business loans, auto loans, home loans and loans against property, among others. (PTI)

Asian markets steady in holiday-thinned trade

TOKYO, Dec 26: Asian markets were steady in holiday-thinned trading on Tuesday, with some markets in the region closed for holidays. US futures and oil prices edged higher.

Shanghai's benchmark led losses in Asia on heavy selling of technology and computer chip-related shares as worries revived over trade tensions with the US and other western countries.

The Shanghai Composite index sank 0.8% to 2,894.72. In Shenzhen, where relatively more high-tech companies are listed, the A-share index lost 1.3%.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 dropped

less than 0.1% to 33,244.50. In South Korea, the Kospi added 0.1%, to 2,601.67. Bangkok's SET rose 0.2%. Taiwan's TaieX gained 0.7% and the Sensex in Mumbai was up 0.4%. Markets in Australia and Hong Kong were closed.

Japan's unemployment rate remained stable at 2.5% in November, according to government data released on Tuesday. The job-to-applicants ratio experienced a slight easing, settling at 1.28, indicating there were around 128 job opportunities available for every 100 applicants. On the other hand, Japan's services producer price index, which measures the costs of

goods and services provided by businesses to other firms and government entities, held steady at 2.3% in November. This indicates a gradual pass-on of rising labour costs and potential for sustained wage gains, supporting the Bank of Japan's 2% inflation target.

US and European markets were closed on Monday and some in Europe will remain closed for Boxing Day. On Friday, Wall Street closed its eighth straight winning week with a quiet finish following reports showing inflation is on the decline even as the economy appears stronger than expected. (AP)

HP CM inaugurates ₹ 100.42 crore Parala fruit processing plant in Theog

SHIMLA, Dec 26: Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Tuesday inaugurated a fruit processing plant built for ₹ 100.42 crore at Parala in Theog subdivision of Shimla district. Wine, vinegar and juice will be produced in this plant ensuring that the local growers get fair prices for their produce, he said in a statement issued here adding that this plant will prove to be a milestone in the development of the area and its fruit industry.

Addressing the people at the occasion, Sukhu said that this year the disaster caused by heavy rains had wreaked havoc and link roads, especially in the apple belts of the state, were damaged badly. However, "Our government restored these roads on a priority basis, making sure that the produce is delivered to the market on time, thereby protecting horticulturists from financial loss," he said.

The state government announced a historic increase of ₹ 1.50 in the support price of apples, which now stood at ₹ 12 per kg. This time the procurement of apples has been done on a kilogram basis and the universal carton system is being implemented so that the orchardists get fair prices for their produce, remarked the CM. The government was continuously working for the upliftment and convenience of the horticulturists, said the Chief Minister, adding that "eight grading/packing houses, Controlled Atmosphere (CA) and Cold Stores are being established in Bhawanagar, Sandasu, Anu, Chopal, Jabli, Sundernagar, Dattnagar and Khadapathar for the convenience of the farmers".

Horticulture Minister Jagat Singh Negi said that various processed products will be produced in this unit while Education Minister Rohit Thakur said that the Parala plant would bring prosperity in the area and the Horticulturists would get good prices for their produce. (PTI)

By April, 1,400 new electric buses will be inducted in BMTC: Karnataka CM

BENGALURU, Dec 26: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said that 1,400 new electric buses will be added to the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation by April next year.

In the first phase, he flagged off 100 non-AC electric buses of the BMTC at Vidhana Soudha here.

"So far, Karnataka women have undertaken 120 crore rides in state transport buses for free since the launch of the Shakti scheme. A total of 40 lakh people travel on BMTC every day. In this, women of all castes, all religions and all walks of life are travelling for free," he said. The new electric buses have been added to promote public transport services and also curb increasing vehicular pollution in the city, he added.

Siddaramaiah accused the BJP of criticising its free bus travel service for women and questioned why it did not implement this wel-



fare scheme when it was in power. He also explained the effective results of this scheme.

"Due to our guarantees, the purchasing power of people and the economic activity of the state is also increasing. These schemes save a lot of money for labourers, farmers and women. They use that

money for other needs of their family. Thus, the economic power of millions of families is also increasing," the chief minister said.

"About 4.30 crore people of the state are directly benefiting from the government guarantee schemes. By that, the poor and working classes are being brought into the main-

stream of economic progress," he said. Through economic empowerment, financial independence has been achieved for all women, poor, working class and middle class families in the state, he said. "The Congress government had come to power to achieve this. The previous BJP regime did nothing to empower people. Instead, they are criticising," he added.

Meanwhile, the BMTC in a statement said that Advance Driver Assistance System (ADAS) is being implemented in 10 buses to create a safe transport system for the passengers and more awareness for the drivers. "In order to effectively control traffic violation and accident cases caused by drivers, 3,000 drivers are being trained in traffic command and control centre from December with the cooperation of the police department for safe driving and strict adherence to traffic rules," it stated. (PTI)

The plan enhances customers' coverage through three riders- Aviva Accidental Casualty Non-Linked Rider, Aviva Cancer Cardio Non-Linked Rider, and Aviva New Critical Illness Non-Linked Rider. Furthermore, it includes a waiver of premiums feature in the event of critical or terminal illness, applicable through the Aviva New Critical Illness Non-Linked Rider and the 3D-Accelerated plan option respectively.

Vinit Kapahi, head of marketing, said, "We are thrilled to introduce the Aviva Signature 3D Term Plan, a remarkable addition to our flagship Signature series. With a profound understanding of life's uncertainties, we have crafted a plan that embraces the three pillars of protection: diseases, disability, and death. As awareness regarding the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle continues to grow, people are taking proactive steps towards embracing healthy habits such as mindful eating and regular physical activity. In fact, we have recently launched Free LIVE Yoga and meditation sessions by trained instructors on our Social media handles (<https://www.facebook.com/AvivaIndia?mibextid=LQQJ4d>) to help our audience attain physical and mental wellness and we encourage everyone to join them. However, focusing solely on physical and mental well-being is not a comprehensive solution for overall well-being. This is where our Aviva Signature 3D Term Plan steps in - to provide our customers with protection against life's unforeseen challenges and to help them become future-ready."



Baan Theatre forms new committee in 118th-year milestone

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Dec 26: In a testament to its enduring legacy, Baan Theatre Tezpur, the pioneering Assamese modern Theatre Hall established in 1906, convened its biennial conference, marking 118 years of cultural significance. The day-long event witnessed the formation of a new executive committee, revitalising the commitment to the arts in Assam.

Commencing the proceedings, Bankim Sarma, a distinguished lyricist and the president of Baan Theatre, hoisted the flag and addressed the gathering. Emphasising the importance of preserving the legacy of Baan Theatre, Sarma urged attendees to contribute to the development of the organization, a stalwart in Assam's cultural landscape.

The general meeting, presided over by Bankim Sarma, unfolded with Jitumani Deva Choudhury,



the general secretary of Baan Theatre, presenting the proceedings of the previous three years' executive meetings and outlining the objectives of the conference. Dwijen Nath, the secretary, provided a brief account of the general meetings, while Khanindra Kumar Deka elucidated the audited accounts of the organisation.

After thorough deliberation, the meeting took significant strides, resolving to establish a digital archive for the preservation of played drama scripts and organisational documents. Additionally, the decision was made to extend associate membership to a group of young members actively conducting children's play workshops at

Baan Theatre.

As part of the proceedings, Baan Theatre felicitated noted actor Bhabani Nath, social worker Nirmal Kalita, and theatre figure Pratham Das with lifetime membership certificates.

In the election that followed, the new executive committee was formed with Bankim Sarma as president, Dilip Bora and Bhabananda Das as vice presidents, Jitumani Deva Choudhury as general secretary, Dwijen Nath and Hemanta Kumar Sarma as secretaries, Bhupen Sarma as general manager, Jintu Borthakur as sangitadhiakar, Bhupen Barua as librarian, and Taj Hussain as stage manager. Eighteen male and female executive members were also elected to serve for the forthcoming period, rejuvenating the commitment to cultural enrichment in the region.

Truck driver found dead in Gossaigaon

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Dec 26: The lifeless body of a truck driver, identified as Salamat Khan from Uttar Pradesh, was discovered near the Reliance Petrol Pump at Telipara in Gossaigaon during the early hours of Tuesday. The locals, upon finding the deceased, promptly informed the Simultapu Police, who then retrieved the body and sent it to Kokrajhar Civil Hospital for post-mortem.

Initial investigations by the police suggest that the driver, operating a truck with registration number MH04-FP-1796, may have succumbed to a cardiac arrest while attempting to disembark from the vehicle on the intervening night of Monday.

The police are conducting a preliminary inquiry into the incident to gather more details surrounding the circumstances leading to the driver's demise.

Guru Nanak Senior Secondary School observes 'Veer Bal Diwas'



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Guru Nanak Senior Secondary School in Guwahati observed 'Veer Bal Diwas' on Tuesday, commemorating the sacrifice of the sons of Guru Gobind Singh. This annual celebration pays tribute to young martyrs who laid down their lives for the country, exemplifying extraordinary patriotism.

The event witnessed active participation from students, teachers, management, and trustees, creating an atmosphere of enthusiasm and reverence. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs and Irrigation, Government of Assam, Ashok Singhal, along with MP Bhubaneswar Kalita, graced the

occasion held at the school Gurudwara.

As part of the celebration, students engaged in painting, essay writing, and quiz competitions centered around the theme of 'Veer Bal Diwas'. The activities aimed to educate and inform the younger generation about the remarkable courage and sacrifice of the 'sahibzades', Guru Gobind Singh's children.

Sardar Bhupinder Pal Singh, the secretary of the institution, expressed gratitude to the esteemed guests, students, guardians, and teachers for their active participation, contributing to the success of the 'Veer Bal Diwas' celebration at Guru Nanak Senior Secondary School.

Sur Sadhana hosts training and lecture program at Nowgong Girls' College

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Dec 26: 'Sur Sadhana', a prominent music institute in the small town, organised a distinguished training and lecture program on classical music at the auditorium of Nowgong Girls' College last Sunday. The event witnessed the presence of noted master of classical music, the centenarian Pandit Satyakrishna Mishra, along with his wife Nirupama Mishra, sons Bidyut Mishra and Pradyut Mishra, and NRI Mitati Benarji Bhoomik, a renowned scholar and vocal artist residing in New Jersey, USA.

Suwagmoni Mahanta, the head of 'Sur Sadhana', inaugurated the program by lighting the ceremonial earthen lamp. The institute members and authorities of Nowgong Girls' College felicitated the

esteemed guests and other attendees.

NRI Mitati Benarji Bhoomik, an expert in classical music, delivered a keynote address on various forms of classical music and provided training to the institute's students during the program.

The centenarian violinist and expert instrumentalist, Pandit Satyakrishna Mishra, showcased his mastery in classical music by performing on the violin for over half an hour during the event.

The program, mentored by Krishna Kingkar, also had the special presence of Dr Kulen Das, the principal of Nowgong Girls' College. The solemn event aimed to promote and impart knowledge about the rich traditions of classical music to the students and enthusiasts present.

St Paul Church celebrates Christmas in Bamunpukhuri

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Dec 26: St Paul Church at No 1 Bamunpukhuri, under Dhekiajuli sub-division, celebrated Christmas with religious fervour, hosting a series of events over two days. On Christmas Eve, a mass prayer, termed 'jaganan', saw the active participation of Christian communities from the entire Bamun Pukhuri gaon panchayat area, guided by the Church's priest, Immanuel Surin.

On Monday morning, the church hosted a festive gathering where the Christian community engaged in special prayers to honour Jesus Christ. The day's festivities included sharing Christmas greetings, group dances, and song presentations by local women and Sunday school students. A felicitation program recognised and honoured senior citizens of the area. Special guests, including Mahendra Kumar Nath (Assam Sahitya Sabha central body member) and Mintu Hembram (Santhal student leader), shared Christmas wishes.

In the evening, a group from the church visited the homes of ailed, aged, and distressed residents in the area. They offered felicitations, Christmas greetings, and prayers for the overall well-being of the individuals, accompanied by the uplifting tunes of a carol song. The event aimed to spread joy and connect with the community during the Christmas season.

Assam Rifles organises yoga

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Dec 26: Assam Rifles, in a bid to foster community engagement and holistic well-being, organised a special event titled 'Yoga with Locals' at the Battalion Headquarters in Lokra, Sonitpur. The initiative brought together military personnel and local residents, encouraging the practice of yoga for both physical and mental health. This collaborative effort not only showcased the military's commitment to overall wellness but also aimed to create positive interactions between the armed forces and the local community. By promoting such events, Assam Rifles aims to contribute to a harmonious and healthy environment in the region.

The yoga session witnessed enthusiastic participation from 186 individuals, highlighting the success of the initiative in promoting community spirit and overall wellness. Such multifaceted endeavours reflect the diverse roles that security forces can play in enhancing the quality of life in the areas they serve.

Awareness meeting conducted

HT Correspondent

MORIGAO, Dec 26: An awareness meeting focused on 'Juvenile Delinquency' was conducted by the Moirabari Thana Nagarik Samiti at Moirabari Girls' Senior Secondary School and Durbandhi Secondary School. The initiative aimed to educate the community about child-related crimes and promote awareness on the subject.

Both awareness programs were led by school principals Jamil Ahmed and Abul Hachim, with the participation of Pankaj Das, the officer-in-charge of Moirabari Police Station. OC Pankaj Das provided insights into the essential measures that parents should take concerning their children. The sessions were designed to enlighten attendees about juvenile delinquency and the role of parents in preventing such occurrences in society.

4th Biennial Conference of Moina Parijat concludes in Biswanath

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Dec 26: The 4th edition of the Biennial Conference organised by Biswanath district Moina Parijat concluded on Monday at Janaguri Adarsha High School. The three-day event commenced on December 23 with various activities and competitions.

The inaugural day included the hoisting of the flag, registration of delegates, and the opening of the delegate session. Competitions such as Bhupendra Sangeet, Parbati Prasad Geet, and Jyoti-Bishnu Sangeet were held. The second day featured a range of competitions, including extemporaneous speech, drawing, quiz, and recitation. The cultural night on the second day added vibrancy to the event.

On the final day, a cultural procession was inaugurated by renowned cine actress Chetana Das. The open session and prize distribution ceremony took place with Sanjiban Bora in the chair. Bhaswati Priya Bhuyan, a distinguished guest, graced the occasion as the chief guest, and Asthajita Hazarika addressed the gathering as an appointed speaker. Sootea MLA Padma Hazarika, actor Debananda Saikia, and Purnada Hazarika were among the notable attendees at the concluding session. The event served as a platform for cultural and intellectual exchange, fostering community engagement in Biswanath district.

Tragic elephant attack claims life of eight-year-old child in Kachugaon

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Dec 26: In a devastating incident, an eight-year-old child identified as Sany Mardi, a Class 3 student, lost his life in an elephant attack in Athiabari under the Kachugaon Forest Division. The tragedy unfolded when a group of wild elephants emerged from the Raimona National Park jungle in search of food on the intervening night of Monday. The wild elephants not only posed a threat to human life but also wreaked havoc on the properties of Sida Mardi, including crops and houses. The incident has sparked outrage, with the All Assam Adivasi Students Association strongly condemning the perceived negligence of forest officials and police personnel. They criticised the authorities for their delayed response, which allegedly contributed to the tragic loss of life.

Following the recovery of the deceased child's body, the police transported it to Kokrajhar Civil Hospital for post-mortem examination. This unfortunate event adds to a series of man-elephant conflicts in the Raimona National Park villages in recent months, highlighting the need for proactive measures to protect the lives of the residents. The community demands urgent attention and intervention from the authorities to prevent further such incidents and safeguard the well-being of the people.

New double line commissioned between Changsari and Agthori

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: The Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS)/NF circle, Suvomoy Mitra, has successfully completed the statutory inspection of the recently laid double line between Changsari and Agthori stations. This crucial development is part of the New Bongaigaon - Agthori via Rangiya 142.97 km doubling project, aiming to increase sectional capacity significantly.

The 7.48 km stretch between Changsari and Agthori is a vital component of the larger project, which involves the construction of 75 major bridges, 38 minor bridges, and 19 new station buildings. The newly commissioned second line is designed to accommodate both goods and passenger traffic, contributing to improved operational efficiency and safety.

The CRS/NF circle conducted a thorough inspection, covering various aspects such as bridges, railway track fittings, P-way assets, electronic inter-locking, relay rooms, cabins, level crossings, and stations along the section. With this double line in place, trains can



now move in both directions without stopovers at stations, enhancing punctuality and allowing for increased train speed, thereby reducing congestion.

Out of the total 142.97 km of the New Bongaigaon - Agthori via Rangiya doubling project, 70.91 km has already been commissioned. Earlier sections between New Bongaigaon to Bijni, Pathsala to Nalbari, and Bijni to Sorbhog were commissioned on specific

dates in 2022 and 2023. The recent commissioning of the 7.48 km stretch between Changsari to Agthori further boosts connectivity in the north-east region.

In addition to the double line, new foot over bridges and passenger platform sheds, each 3 meters wide, have been commissioned at Changsari and Agthori Stations, enhancing passenger amenities and overall rail infrastructure in the region.

Youth takes his own life after police questioning following Jorhat Grenade Blast

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Dec 26: The alleged suicide of 24-year-old Dipankar Gogoi from Bina Chai village in Titabar subdivision, Jorhat district, has sparked outrage. Dipankar was reportedly questioned by the police regarding the grenade blast in Jorhat on December 14 and his alleged links to ULFA-I. His body was discovered hanging from a tree in the tea garden behind his house.

Assam Police Headquarters has initiated an inquiry into the incident, appointing IGP Eastern Range to investigate various aspects, including procedural matters, CCTV footage from the police station, and the contents of the medical examination report conducted after questioning.

Dipankar's father has accused the police of repeatedly detaining his son since the grenade blast incident. He stated that Dipankar, who had surrendered to the authorities about five years ago after being associated with ULFA, was innocent and no longer involved with the outfit. The father

claimed that Dipankar had been subjected to torture and harassment by the police, leading to his tragic decision.

Dipankar's elder sister confirmed his past association with ULFA but stressed that he had surrendered and distanced himself from the group. She accused the police of relentless harassment, often picking him up and dropping him off at odd hours.

Titabar SDPO Kakoli Patgiri countered the family's claims, stating that Dipankar had willingly come to the Titabar Police Station after being summoned. She denied allegations of police picking him up from his house and emphasised that he was returned after a medical examination at the Titabar Sub-divisional Civil Hospital.

The medical examination report from the hospital indicated no external injuries on Dipankar Gogoi. The incident has raised concerns about the handling of the case and the impact of police questioning on the mental well-being of individuals involved.

BSF apprehends smuggler with endangered gecko



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: In a continued effort to combat trans-border crimes and smuggling, Border Security Force (BSF) troops, under the Guwahati Frontier, successfully thwarted another smuggling

bid along the Indo-Bangladesh international border. The operation led to the apprehension of one smuggler and the recovery of an endangered species gecko.

Acting on reliable intelligence, Bordermen from the 31st Battalion BSF, in collaboration with the Forest Department team from Dhubri division, initiated a special joint operation in the bordering village of Paschim Maisha in Dhubri on Monday.

During the thorough search operation, the joint team successfully apprehended an Indian smuggler and confiscated an endangered species Gecko valued at ₹ 10,00,000 from his possession near the Indo-Bangladesh International Border.

The apprehended smuggler, along with the seized items, is being handed over to the nearest police station for further legal proceedings. Given the susceptibility of the India-Bangladesh international border and the escalating activities of smugglers and anti-national elements, BSF troops are consistently intensifying efforts to ensure the safety and security of the border, making it impervious to criminal activities.

Grievance redressal mechanism for army personnel and ex-servicemen initiated

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Dec 26: In an effort to address the concerns of army personnel, ex-servicemen, and their dependents in Nagaon district, a grievance redressal mechanism known as the 'District Sainik Bandhu Meeting' is set to take place soon. The meeting will be chaired by the district commissioner of Nagaon and will be held at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office.

All serving personnel, ex-servicemen from the Army, Navy, and Air Force, along with their dependents or widows in Nagaon district, who have grievances related to land, revenue, property, police protection, disputes with neighbors, or any other civil administration-related problems, are encouraged to report to the Zila Sainik Welfare Office in Nagaon. The grievances will be included in the upcoming 'District Sainik Bandhu Meeting'

for redressal by the civil administration.

For any clarifications or additional information, individuals can contact the Zila Sainik Welfare Office of Nagaon at the provided telephone number: 03672-233665, as mentioned in an official release. This initiative aims to streamline the grievance redressal process and enhance support for military personnel and veterans in the district.

Chandubi Lake: From picnic spot to tourist hub

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: The renowned Chandubi Lake picnic spot has now become a popular tourist hub, situated in the Palashbari constituency in Kamrup district. A beautiful, serene lake located on the outskirts of Guwahati with stunning views, Chandubi is a natural lake under the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council (RHAC), located 64 kilometers (40 mi) from Guwahati city, accessible through National Highway 17. The lake lies at the foot of the Garo hills, surrounded by Assam and Meghalaya, covered by deep forests and small villages. It is a natural sightseeing and picnic spot, also attracting migratory birds during winter. The lake was formed in 1897 due to an earthquake when the forest sank, creating the lake.

Although Chandubi Lake was initially known as a picnic site, with changing times, tourists from outside the island have shown interest in staying overnight to enjoy the beauty of the place. Consequently, resorts have been established in various parts of the island. Kaushik Das, co-founder of 'Chandubi Jungle Camp',

mentioned that every year, around two thousand people from various parts of the world visit Chandubi Lake and stay at their resort.

"There are places for night stays like Chandubi Jungle Camp, Lake View Homestay, Eco Camp, and other homestays, including the Assam Tourist Lodge. Over the year, around eight to ten thousand people stay overnight at Chandubi Lake." Tourism development officer Danny Gam, who served as the tourist information officer in Chandubi for over six years, stated that the state government tourist lodge was established in 1988.

"Since I joined Chandubi office, the state government has taken many remarkable steps, such as training fifteen local youths as tourist guides, providing life jackets to the Chandubi Boating Association (which plays a major role in Chandubi Lake), and reconstructing and creating new rooms for tourists in the tourist lodge premises," said Danny Gam. Gam also said that the lake is currently drying up for various reasons. Therefore, the state government should investigate the matter in collaboration with the

Forest Department and find ways to prevent the water from drying up.

"With the help of the state government, we welcomed many YouTube vloggers for the promotion of the lake, providing leaflets and signs on the road for easy access to the lake when there was no network connectivity," added Danny Gam.

"We celebrate World Tourism Day every year in different villages near Chandubi Lake for promotion, so that villagers will also contribute their ideas to attract tourists," added Danny Gam.

It is worth mentioning that many poets have already written poems about Chandubi Lake, captivated by its natural beauty. Chandubi Lake is a tourist destination where some tourists visit during the Chandubi festival in the first week of January. During this festival, local village people perform their traditional or cultural dance forms, and stalls offer local traditional foods. The festival is jointly organised by the All Rabha Students Union, RHAC, Assam State Tourism Department, and the local public. Thousands of spectators from various places visit the festival. The nature-conscious com-

munity and local public emphasized recent changes in the lake, such as water drying, which had never happened before. They urged the state government to investigate and find a solution to the matter.

When asking different people who visited Chandubi Lake, they expressed their opinions, such as, "Though the tourist lodge is in Chandubi, the state government should develop the rooms for night stays." An anonymous tourist who visited Chandubi during the Chandubi festival highlighted that the state government should brand locally made liquors and beers, as the Meghalaya state government recently did with '7 United Rice Brew' beer. This way, people in the area will financially benefit. On the other hand, some suggested that the government should take the initiative to make houseboats, another tourist attraction like Dal Lake in Kashmir and other places in Kerala.

Meanwhile, people in the Chandubi area seek government financial assistance to make traditional houses for homestays and to be financially benefited.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Cherish your human connections: your relationships with friends and family. - Joseph Brodsky

Indian 'Cyber Slaves' in Myanmar

In the midst of the ongoing civil war in Myanmar, disquieting reports have surfaced in the Sri Lankan media, raising concerns among Government of India (GOI) circles. According to these reports, a number of Indians are purportedly being held as prisoners in what has been described as "terror camps" in the strife-torn nation. While Kolkata-based intelligence agencies neither confirm nor deny these reports, Sri Lankan ambassador Janaka Bandara emerges as the primary source. Endeavoring to secure the safe return of Sri Lankan youths reportedly detained as "cyber slaves" in Myanmar, Ambassador Bandara has orchestrated a significant diplomatic initiative from Colombo: a joint six-nation diplomatic mission to address this alarming situation. Open-source reports indicate the involvement of officials from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan, alongside India, in addressing the issue with Myanmar authorities. The political establishment in Colombo was jolted by initial reports of Sri Lankans being used as "slaves" in a terror camp, prompting Ambassador Bandara to reveal a startling fact that has yet to be widely reported in mainstream Indian media. He asserts that at least 200 Indians are being used as "cyber slaves" in a terror camp in Myanmar, information gleaned from his preliminary investigations. Despite the lack of specific details, the absence of an official reaction from Delhi does not diminish the factual validity of the ambassador's revelations. The Sri Lankan Government is spearheading a new seven-member delegation of regional countries to meet Myanmar's army authorities in Naypyidaw, urgently discussing the situation.

Complicating the scenario further is the prolonged civil war that has plagued Myanmar since February 2021. The Myanmar army, led by Gen Min Hlaing, forcibly took control from the civilian government headed by Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering protests that escalated into a planned and prolonged armed resistance. With large parts of the country ravaged, over 1.9 million people displaced, and an estimated 6550 casualties, securing accurate real-time information from Myanmar has become exceedingly difficult due to censorship restrictions. In this context, the editorial emphasizes the need for swift diplomatic action to ascertain the details surrounding the alleged imprisonment of 200 Indians in a Myanmar "terror camp." Although relations between India and the ruling junta in Myanmar remain ostensibly normal, the editorial underscores the imperative for Delhi to leverage its effective communication channels to obtain precise information and secure the release and repatriation of the purported "cyber slaves." It is crucial to recognize the complexities of the situation, with armed conflicts involving various ethnic tribal groups seeking autonomy from the Burmese majority. The joint anti-junta front, supported by the U.S. and EU countries, has further muddied the waters of an already tumultuous political landscape.

Bridging the gap: The transformation of Assam's Madrasas into ME schools



The recent decision by the BJP-led Assam government to rename 1,281 state-run madrasas as Middle English (ME) schools has sparked a significant amount of debate and controversy. This move, which was announced by Assam Education Minister Ranajit Pegu, has been made with the intention of fostering uniformity and inclusion in the state's education system. The decision has not only been met with criticism but has also reignited discussions surrounding the role of madrasas in the Indian educational landscape.

The name change notification, issued by Elementary Education Director Suranjana Senapati, has affected a large number of madrasas spread across various districts in the state. The government's decision to rename these institutions as ME schools is part of a broader effort to bring greater consistency to the education system. The move follows Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's previous statement that his government would shut down all madrasas, citing their lack of relevance in 'New India'. Additionally, the government claims to have incurred a cost of Rs 500 crore for running madrasas, which has added fuel to the fire of this ongoing debate.

The decision has triggered a wider conversation about the role and purpose of madrasas in India. While some support the move as a step towards promoting secular education and integrating religious institutions into the main-

stream education system, others have criticized it as an attack on the country's religious and cultural diversity. The chief minister's comments have also sparked support in other states, such as Tripura, where a BJP legislator echoed the sentiment that government-run madrasas should be shut down because they allegedly "produce terrorists and not doctors or engineers".

Additionally, the demolition of four madrasas in Assam last year due to their alleged involvement in anti-national and jihadi activities has added to the controversy. These incidents have spurred concerns about the potential radicalization and extremist activities within some madrasas, a sentiment that has been echoed by proponents of the government's decision.

In conclusion, the BJP-led Assam government's decision to rename state-run madrasas as ME schools has led to a heated debate and highlighted the complexities and challenges surrounding the role of religious institutions in the education system.

While the move is aimed at promoting uniformity and inclusion, it has also rekindled conversations about the place of religious education in a multicultural and diverse society. This issue is likely to continue to provoke discussions and raise important questions about the balance between secular education and religious freedom in India. (The author can be reached at shashankadas0007@gmail.com)

EPIC AFFAIRS
SHASHANKA DAS

India faces policy alignment challenge with COP28 agreements

The effectiveness of COP28, the Conference of the Parties convened in Dubai, in advancing the initiatives initiated with the 2015 Paris Agreement to tackle climate change, mitigation, adaptation, and securing necessary finances, remains a subject of scrutiny. Typically, there has been a plethora of positive rhetoric and promises to fulfill obligations. However, commitments often tend to be left open-ended, allowing for the accommodation of short-term national priorities alongside the overarching goals, raising questions about the tangible impact of the conference outcomes.

The conference, which extended beyond its scheduled duration, has yielded a noteworthy outcome that deserves acknowledgment. A significant stride was made with the unanimous decision to commence the reduction of global fossil fuel consumption and achieve net-zero by 2050—a historic and binding resolution. This decision marks a pivotal moment in signaling the eventual decline of the fossil fuel era, encompassing coal, oil, and gas.

It serves as a crucial message to policymakers, including those in India, who have persisted with policies supporting coal investments, urging them to reconsider their approach. Moreover, it sends a clear directive to coal investors, encouraging them to swiftly disengage and refrain from making further commitments, irrespective of any conflicting signals from policymakers.

The member countries achieved a historic consensus to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030, marking a decision that stands in contrast to the Indian stance. The timeline, a mere seven years ahead, holds significance as India and China, both major economies experiencing rapid emission increases, opted out of this agreement during the conference. The pact aimed at mitigating current climate trends by tripling global renewable energy output and doubling energy efficiency by that specified date, despite the endorsement of 118 countries to join the initiative.

The tripling, as emphasized by the International Energy Agency, is deemed necessary to maintain focus on the objective of reducing the demand for fossil fuels and limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the close of the century. The primary thrust of these efforts will center on the gradual elimination of coal-fired power plants and the restraint of oil and gas usage.

Indian policymakers, should they perceive these outcomes as overly restrictive, can find solace in a significant decision that surfaced early in the two-week duration of the conference. A 'loss and damage' fund, aimed at assisting vulnerable countries in managing the impact of climate change, is slated for establishment. While laudable, the caveat lies in the fund's size, albeit in its initial stage—a modest \$475 million, with the US commitment



amounting to just \$17.5 million. This figure stands in stark contrast to the collective loss of \$525 billion endured by the 55 most vulnerable countries due to climate change over the past two decades. This loss is projected to escalate to \$580 billion by the year 2030.

As the fund's operations advance under the initial supervision of the World Bank, additional contributions are expected to follow. This financial support aims to assist impoverished nations in managing the cascading impacts of climate change, including rising sea levels, floods, droughts, and cyclones. The moral rationale behind advocating for such a fund lies in the premise that affluent countries, whose industrial expansion since 1850 has led to greenhouse gas accumulation, global warming, and the climate crisis, bear a responsibility to aid less prosperous nations—the most vulnerable victims—in combating these challenges.

India's stance, thus far, entails adhering to the nationally determined targets it has previously declared without making any new commitments. This trajectory will usher in a significant transformation in sectors such as steelmaking, vehicle design and manufacturing, building design and construction processes, and even the cookstoves employed by households. The push towards embracing cleaner energy sources will have repercussions across the spectrum of businesses, impacting entities of all sizes—from micro, small, and medium enterprises to large corporations.

The crucial factor lies in securing the necessary investment to facilitate this transition towards cleaner energy. Currently, funding in the fossil fuel sector continues to surpass that allocated for advancing a sustainable and clean economy. The advisory panel for COP28 proposes a dual-pronged strategy—taxing polluting activities and reducing subsidies for fossil fuels. One sector where the implementation of carbon taxes can be relatively seamless is transportation, particularly in maritime and aviation.

However, the broader challenge lies in cutting subsidies entrenched deeply, presenting a significant political hurdle. Farmers may resist reductions in fertilizer subsidies, and it would require a bold state government to reconsider providing free minimum electricity leads to every household.

The imperative lies in securing the necessary investment to facilitate a transition towards cleaner energy. Currently, funding in the fossil fuel sector continues to surpass that allocated for advancing a sustainable and clean economy. Proposing a dual-pronged strategy, the advisory panel for COP28 suggests taxing polluting activities and reducing subsidies for fossil fuels.

While the implementation of carbon taxes in transportation, especially maritime and aviation may be relatively seamless, the broader challenge lies in cutting deeply entrenched subsidies—a significant political hurdle. Resistance from farmers against reductions in fertilizer subsidies may prevail, and it would require a bold state government to reconsider providing free minimum electricity leads to every household.

The overarching global imperative is a shift from coal to renewables. While affluent nations that have transitioned to natural gas hesitate to assist the rest of the world in making a similar shift, coal remains the focal point. It is the primary fuel for countries that have not yet adopted gas, which, despite being somewhat cleaner, faces criticism.

Achieving this transition requires financing for developing countries, with the stipulation that it does not contribute to their existing debt burden.

The necessary corrective measures that Indian policymakers must undertake in light of the conference's outcomes involve expediting the establishment of increased capacity for renewable energy, such as solar and wind power. While there is considerable discourse around various forms of hydrogen production, it is essential to underscore that only green hydrogen, derived from renewable energy sources, meets the required standards.

Additionally, significant investments in constructing extensive battery banks and reinforcing transmission lines are imperative. This infrastructure is crucial for the seamless transmission of wind and solar power from regions where they are abundant to those facing deficiencies in the requisite climatic and geographical conditions.

COP28 has established a worldwide consensus on the trajectory that the planet must follow to secure its future. For a nation like India, this presents a dual challenge—navigating rapid growth to eradicate poverty while also relinquishing a plentiful natural energy source like coal. Should India's political leaders fail to confront this challenge, there is a looming risk of not only undermining themselves but also hindering the progress of the nation. (The writer can be reached at dipaknews@gmail.com)

Israel in a bind with Joe Biden running the war on Gaza

By: Arun Srivastava

Reverses suffered by the Israeli army in 80 days of the 'War on Gaza' reminds the US President, Lyndon B. Johnson, invaded Vietnam to check the communism juggernaut. Today, POTUS Joe Biden is commanding the Israeli Defence Forces much to the disgust of centrist liberal forces.

Then, it was the start of the Cold War; today, Biden is fighting terrorists. Biden and Netanyahu have vowed to finish Hamas. But the nature and character of the 'War on Gaza' make it explicit that the IDF is targeting civilians along with Hamas. Israel claims to have killed nearly 3000 Hamas terrorists. But that is only 10 percent of the 40,000-strong Hamas. The reality is Israelis have killed nearly 18000 Palestinians.

These figures contradict Netanyahu. The attack is not only to finish off Hamas. The attack has an ulterior motive. The goal is to take control of Palestine. The US has been eyeing this oil producing region. So much so, Biden has put his political career at stake. And Americans are hitting the streets against Biden goading Netanyahu.

One thing is clear, the 'War on Gaza' would have ended if Biden hadn't stood firm with Netanyahu. The genocide in Gaza is also of Biden's doing. Does Israel have the support of "most of the world"—of the US, UK, EU? Truth is, the war against Hamas is only part of the 'War on Gaza'. After 80 days of fighting, Biden is like Lyndon Johnson—on the verge of losing the war. Biden is bidding on 'Bibi' Netanyahu to do his bidding. The fact is Biden cannot ditch Israel for his own second term. Though a moderate Democrat, Biden wants to eliminate democratic and liberal forces. To achieve his mission Biden supports the likes of Benjamin Netanyahu.

The US is talking ceasefire but then why did the US boycott the vote on cease fire and veto the proposal for ceasefire. He talks of asking Netanyahu to stop civilian deaths but there is always something fishy about Biden and his statements. He could have come out with this suggestion long back, but he is waiting for the end of Hamas,

which will not happen in a 100 years.

A week ago, the United Nations called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and Biden realised Israel was losing international support because of the "indiscriminate" bombing of civilians in Gaza. The 193-member UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for ceasefire. 153 countries voted for and 23 abstained. But the US and Israel voted "against".

A Hamas official in exile, Izzat El-Reshiq, echoed the general reaction: "Israel must stop its aggression, genocide, and ethnic cleansing of our people." Israel had created an impression that its forces would finish Hamas in ground action. But reports paint a gloomy picture. So far the IDF has lost 152 soldiers.

As the war enters 80 days, Israelis appear resigned. Uncertainty has gripped them. The only option left is to agree to a ceasefire. Bibi is also scared of his loss of face. Before the declaration of war he had given the impression that he would win the battle. But in the prevailing situation it does not appear to be feasible. War experts and diplomats are of the opinion that Netanyahu has committed a blunder by underestimating Hamas.

While his popularity has been badly battered by the security failures in the wake of Hamas attack into southern Israel on October 7, the lingering war and Israel's huge losses have exposed even Mossad. The masterminds of "October 7" Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif continue to be at large and Israeli officers say they may need months more to complete their mission. To add to Netanyahu's woes, Israeli Defence Forces have poor knowledge of urban warfare in which the Hamas terrorists are experts.

As for India's role, right from the beginning, India has taken a wrong line. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's declaration that "We stand in solidarity with Israel at this difficult hour" might have had a soothing effect on the RSS, but it did not reflect the leadership's political maturity. Finally, Biden appears to be getting little credit for his war-mongering efforts. Some strategists caution that even if Biden did take a harder line with Israel, it would alienate him from Democrats who want him to strongly support the Jewish state. (IPA Service)



Kerala government toughens stand against Governor Arif Mohammed Khan

By: P. Sreekumaran

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) Government in Kerala has upped the ante against Governor Arif Mohammed Khan by seeking President Droupadi Murmu's intervention in the crisis involving the Governor and the State government, at the root of which are Khan's alleged gubernatorial excesses; the Governor is not even sparing varsities and students as he goes about settling scores with the state government.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who dashed off the letter via the good offices of the Prime Minister, accused the Governor of failing to discharge his constitutional obligations and resorting to protocol violations.

Vijayan sought the President's intervention to end the crisis, including Governor Khan's recall. And, just so that nobody throws a spanner, Union Home Minister Amit Shah has been kept in the loop.

Among the Governor's protocol violations was an unannounced visit to the SM Street in Kozhikode. The letter also mentions the Governor stepping out of his vehicle while on the way to the Thiruvananthapuram airport and aggressive response to the Students Federation of India's protests. Pinarayi alleged that the Governor was wanted to disrupt Kerala's peaceful atmosphere.

The Government upped the ante against the Governor when the latter's unusual communiqué saw "the beginning of the collapse of the constitutional machinery" in the State. The proximate provocation for the Governor's ire was the black flag demonstrations the SFI.

The communiqué alleged that the CM was stopping the police from removing the SFI-sponsored banners against the Governor on the Calicut University campus.

The SFI has been protesting against the Governor for trying to stack the Senates of state-funded universities with Sangh Parivar nominees. The LDF Government was also irked by the Governor's hint that the "dismal financial health" of the state might warrant the imposition of financial emergency in Kerala.

The Governor had gone to the extent of setting a 10-day deadline for the Government to apprise him of the State's financial health. If the Government failed to do so, he would draw his own conclusion. The "unusual behaviour" of the Governor included throwing a tantrum at the media. They were told to "get lost" by the Governor gone berserk. In his strong response, the Chief Minister said that although the Governor used bad words against the students, the latter exercised restraint. The student community has refused to walk into the trap set by the Governor, who was trying to ignite a conflict in the State.

It gets clear that the governor's aim is to seek central intervention in the name of a breakdown in the state's law and order, when in reality, there is no breakdown of law and order in the state, the Chief Minister said. The fact that he could "freely walk" in the famous SM Street in Kozhikode disproved his claim of a law and order breakdown in Kerala.

The Chief Minister said the Governor was withholding bills passed by the State Assembly and coming in the way of implementing the Government's people-friendly measures. He signed a few bills out of the eight he was sitting on only after the Supreme Court took him to task.

The Governor also committed contempt of court when he referred a few bills to the President after refusing to sign them for over two years! This showed his contempt for the judiciary.

Meanwhile, the SFI has decided to stage a sit-in in front of the Calicut University's gate, also stage a historic protest in the days to come. The protests would continue until the Governor is removed.

Significantly, the Governor has not reacted to the SFI's allegation that he is trying to bring RSS influence into the University. The Governor has also refused to disclose the source from where RSS workers were recruited for nomination to the University Senate. There are grounds to believe that the Governor is hand in glove with the RSS to saffronise education in Kerala. These RSS tactics are unlikely to succeed in Kerala, which has a glorious tradition of upholding secular values in the teeth of hostility from communal forces. (IPA Service)

Tracing the cause of gender inequality in ancient India

By: Anzila Adeem

Gender inequality is one of the most spoken-about issues in contemporary times, we have seen how ancient civilizations in India practiced gender equality, giving women legal, educational, and social rights. The evidence lies in all sorts of Indian scriptures and ancient Indian art.

After that, we can see the gradual decline in gender equality from the Vedic periods. In this article, we will try to trace the root causes of how gender disparities infiltrated religion and culture in the Indian Subcontinent.

One of the most popular causes that historians have put out for gender inequality is the Laws of Manu. According to the book along with other Hindu law books, Dharmashastras, and Arthashastra, women as a whole were considered to be low-caste individuals. So even if women belonged to upper caste families they were categorized as lower caste.

Since low castes (Shudras) were already not allowed to study and practice the Vedas, women from all backgrounds were actively excluded and stopped from getting educated at that time.

Around 500 BC women were gradually deprived of the rights and privileges they had enjoyed during the Vedic age. They could no longer undergo the Upanayan sanskara, hence made ineligible to receive education.

Later the law codes of Dharmashastra and Manusmriti put stringent restrictions on women, by reducing the age of marriage to 8 or 9 years, thus depriving them of the opportunity to receive education. Manusmriti (200 A.D): "By a girl, by a young woman, or even an aged one, nothing must be done independ-



ently". Such texts were prominent and taken and adopted into society.

If we look at the timeline, we can observe that Central Asian Pastoralists called the Steppes migrated to India, which is commonly referred to as the Aryan Migration as well. They first settled in the Sindh and Punjab regions of the Indian subcontinent. Most civilizations of the world were agrarian including the Indus Valley civilization.

The Steppes came to India when climate change was rampant causing the Indus River to change its directions and cause droughts and floods in unprecedented areas. There would also be multiple tectonic shifts causing earthquakes. This caused the Harappan civilization to dwindle and made them weak enough to be infiltrated by other communities.

The Steppes lived with the locals and established their own cultures and customs after settling in the Punjab region. This era also marks the start of the Vedic period.

From an economic point of view, the Northern part of India went through a big change from an agrarian urban-based structure to being pastoralist. Pre-Vedic Harappan civilization was essentially urban. But in the Rigvedic

economy, urban centers (nagara) are almost absent.

Rather Indra, the principal God and the Hero has been named Purandara, meaning one who destroys the puras or cities of the dasas and dasyus, perhaps representing the indigenous people. As a band of nomadic people, the Rigvedic Aryans were primarily pastoralists.

The Rigveda emphasizes cattle as the chief property. Even though farming remained one of the most important economic activities economically, herding and pastoralism gained equal importance.

Therefore, whatever men and women did was always segregated by gender but no work was looked down upon.

The fluctuation in demand in agriculture meant that women doing the work related to farming would be less important if pastoralism was the norm.

In the later times, as the Steppes moved towards the south of Bihar and other lands, and discovered alluvial soil which is why agriculture became just as important. This worked hand in hand with the Steppe's patriarchal culture that made the status of women fall.

Another cause would be the implementation of the purdah system in India. The practice of

keeping women in seclusion and asking them to veil their faces in the presence of outsiders became widespread among upper-class women.

Many historians believe that the purdah system came into the Indian subcontinent with the Mughals in the medieval period. The practice of secluding women from the vulgar gaze was a common custom among upper-class Hindus and was also in vogue in ancient Iran, Greece, etc.

The Arabs and the Turks adopted this custom and brought it to India with them. Due to their example, it became widespread in India, particularly in north India. It also eventually became a status symbol which is why women who were not upper castes also tried copying it. During the time of the Mughals and the Sultanate, Hindu rituals were still practiced.

The caste system co-existed with customs brought out by the Mughals and Delhi Sultanate. During this time, women also wouldn't be allowed to go to temples and mosques, where mostly elementary education would take place. Due to such social practices, women were now being systemically excluded from participation.

Gender inequality in the Indian subcontinent has historical roots in factors like the Laws of Manu, Aryan migration, and a shift to fluctuating pastoral-agrarian economies. Women had been marginalized due to lower caste status, strict rules on education and marriage, and the introduction of the purdah system.

Cultural, economic, and religious influences converged to systematically diminish gender equality, departing from the more equal Vedic period. Recognizing these historical factors is essential for addressing gender disparities in today's context. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Why are cases of HIV infections on the rise among girls?



By: Robby Berman

Overall, the incidence of HIV has fallen from what it once was globally. However, a new and troubling "global snapshot" from UNICEF finds that, for adolescent girls and children in many areas, the crisis persists.

It accounts for the deaths of 99,000 adolescent girls and children from causes related to AIDS, or stage 3 HIV - the most advanced and severe stage of infection with this virus - in 2022.

Particularly affected are adolescent girls and children from birth to 19 years in Eastern and Southern Africa. The areas next most affected are West and Central Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and South Asia.

"It is unacceptable that adolescent girls, who should be planning their futures, continue to bear the heaviest burden of HIV infection." —Anurita Bains, UNICEF associate director of HIV/AIDS, in a press release

Insufficient access to HIV treatment for children

In the affected areas, treatment for younger people falls far behind the options available to adults. Although the 0–19 years age group comprises just 7% of those living with AIDS, they account for 15% of all deaths from the disease.

The report also notes a lack of age-appropriate antiretroviral medication for people in this age group, although this may be changing.

In lower- and middle-income nations, a lack of standardized and readily available testing is hampering attempts to address the crisis. UNICEF also describes a cumbersome diagnostic process for the young as holding back efforts to help those infected with HIV.

UNICEF says this is among the reasons that just 57% of those aged 0–14 years are receiving retroviral treatment, compared to the 77% of older adolescents from 15 to 19 who are. Half of those not receiving treatment live in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Why is HIV on the rise among young girls?

Jennifer Arney, senior technical advisor at FHI 360 - a global organization promoting public health - who was not involved in the UNICEF report, spoke to Medical News Today about its findings.

She told us that "[a]dolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa are much more likely to acquire HIV than their male peers due to multiple interrelated risk factors which contribute to increased vulnerability."

According to her, these factors include:

- early start to their sexual life
- intergenerational sexual relationships
- high socioeconomic vulnerability
- transactional sex
- early marriages
- low levels of education and schooling
- gender-related power imbalances and violence

- a lack of availability of adolescent and youth-responsive services.

Dr. Tetyana Vasylyeva of U.C. Irvine's Department of Population Health & Disease Prevention, not involved in the UNICEF report, explained to MNT that "[s]exual violence, and particularly intimate partner violence, often puts young women at risk."

HIV among adolescent girls and young women from 10 to 24 years of age is over three times higher than among males of the same age, says the UNICEF snapshot.

"Young women," said Dr. Vasylyeva, "are at higher risk for HIV than other groups in Southern African countries."

She cited "partners who are decades older

in age, and thus have longer lifetime exposure to HIV."

Arney further noted that:

"Even where appropriate and respectful sexual and reproductive health services exist, adolescent girls and young women are often unaware of available services, unable to access due to distance or clinic hours, or afraid to seek care because of concerns around confidentiality or judgement and poor treatment by providers who may disapprove of them engaging in sex."

Even where educational opportunities exist, said Dr. Caterina Casalini, senior technical advisor in Clinical Services at FHI 360, not involved in the report, "[s]chool commitment, communication with schoolteachers and negative teacher attitudes also play a deterring role in disclosing HIV status and accessing treatment."

"Poor access to sex education and reproductive care also contribute to young women's vulnerabilities to HIV," added Dr. Vasylyeva. Once in care, however, "women [in Southern African countries] are actually generally better at staying in care and thus be virally suppressed once diagnosed," she noted.

HIV in children

The World Health Organization (WHO) says that there were an estimated 1.8 million children aged 0–14 years living with HIV at the end of 2019, with 150,000 children newly infected.

Without better access to diagnoses and treatment, says the WHO, 50% of children with HIV will die before they are 25 years old, with 80% not living to see their fifth birthday.

More than 90% of cases of childhood HIV infections are due to transmission from infected mothers during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding.

HIV hits children particularly hard, since their young immune systems cannot fight infections as well as those of adults can.

These children experience various subsequent health issues, including ear and sinus infections, sepsis, pneumonias, tuberculosis, urinary tract infections, intestinal illness, skin disease, and meningitis.

The WHO recommends that infants born to mothers living with HIV should be tested by 2 months of age, during breastfeeding, and also when the breastfeeding phase ends, considering the continued transmission risk.

Strategies to fight childhood HIV

According to Dr. Casalini, decentralized treatment distribution and remote or virtual service delivery strategies have proven to be successful.

However, "often solutions are not implemented at scale, neither with fidelity nor systematically, and countries are challenged with insufficient resources to tackle the gaps along the HIV cascade and the need to find efficiencies when prioritizing adolescent girls," she told us.

Nevertheless, Dr. Casalini noted a bright spot on the horizon: Integrase inhibitor dolutegravir (DTG), which has shown promise in trials and can be administered to HIV patients just 4 weeks old.

There are, Dr. Casalini said, "[p]romising real-world data among children and adolescents living with HIV aged 0–19 years old who received DTG from 2017 to 2020 in six Eastern and Southern Africa (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda)."

Dr. Vasylyeva added that "[t]reatment remains the best prevention strategy, as it reduces 'community viral load since 'undetectable [means] untransmittable.'"

"People in treatment cannot transmit HIV to their partners," she emphasized. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

The disproportionate impact of climate change on women: A closer look ahead of COP28

By: Poonam Muttreja

The upcoming 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled to convene in Dubai, stands as a pivotal opportunity to bring global climate challenges centre-stage.

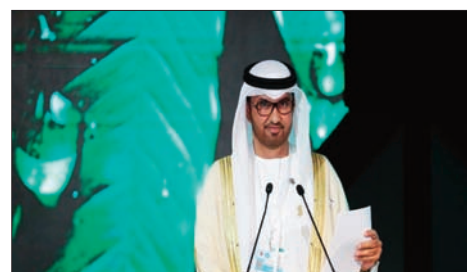
Central to these deliberations is the need to develop a comprehensive understanding of the differential impacts of climate change on various demographic groups particularly the disproportionate impact of climate change on women from marginalised communities, who are more susceptible to health risks and other devastating aspects of climate change. Their vulnerability is exacerbated by pre-existing societal inequalities and poverty.

An analysis of 130 peer-reviewed studies highlighted that 68 per cent of these studies found women to be more affected by health impacts associated with climate change compared to men.

For instance, women and girls are more likely to die in heatwaves in India, France and China, and in tropical cyclones in Bangladesh and the Philippines.

According to a 2022 UN Women report, rising temperatures have been linked to a higher incidence of stillbirth, and the spread of vector-borne diseases like malaria, dengue fever, and Zika virus which are associated with adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes. They also face higher risks of poor mental health, partner violence, and food insecurity following extreme weather events.

Displacement due to climate change fur-



ther accentuates the vulnerability of women. It is estimated that 80 per cent of individuals displaced by climate change are women, exposing them to heightened risks of violence, including sexual violence.

Women worldwide, especially in low and lower-middle-income countries such as India, heavily depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. They bear a disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel.

Agriculture, a sector significantly affected by climate change, employs a large number of women who face increased workloads during periods of drought and erratic rainfall. This leaves less time for women to access training and education, develop skills or earn income.

Regressive social norms and childcare responsibilities prevent women from migrating or seeking refuge in other places or working when a disaster hits. There are evident gender disparities between men and women in political and economic status, land ownership, housing conditions, exposure to violence, education and health. Climate change is an added stressor that aggravates women's vul-

nerability.

Women as agents of change
Despite the challenges, women play a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Their unique experiences can significantly contribute to building climate-resilient communities.

Studies have shown that when women are involved in decision-making at both local and national levels, better climate change adaptation and mitigation outcomes are achieved. A 2019 study revealed that increasing women's representation in national parliaments led to the adoption of more stringent climate change policies and resulted in lower emissions.

Similarly, at the local level, women's participation in natural resource management has been associated with better resource governance and conservation outcomes. Therefore, addressing gender disparities is not just a matter of justice, but a crucial step towards achieving substantial and sustainable climate action.

The forthcoming COP28 summit presents a unique opportunity to address the gender disparities in climate impacts and to champion women's empowerment as an integral facet of the global climate agenda. Through a concerted effort to acknowledge and act upon the different ways in which climate change affects men and women, especially those from marginalised communities, we have the potential to forge a more equitable and effective global response to the climate crisis, ensuring a future where justice and sustainability coexist harmoniously. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Fight the freeze! How to protect your lips in winter

By: Shahnaz Husain

With the cold winter weather gripping much of the country, many people are experiencing dry, cracked and painful lips. The cold air, the chilling wind and the centrally heated air inside strips the moisture away from your lips leaving them chapped, flaky, slit, sore and painful, a condition known as common cheilitis. The harsh winter winds have a significant effect on our body particularly on our lips leaving them dry, chapped, flaky, cracked and even painful.

Exposure to sun, wind and cold, dry air can further contribute to chapped lips because the skin on the lips is thinner and more delicate than the skin on the face and the rest of the body.

Furthermore, dry lips can be due to other factors like lifestyle disorder, the spike in

blood sugar, blood pressure, an allergic reaction to your toothpaste, lipstick or beauty products and pollution in the environment.

The skin on our lips is very thin, sensitive and lacks sweat glands, so they're almost always exposed to the elements. The skin on our lips has just three to five cellular layers, compared to typical facial skin, which has up to 16 layers.

The skin on lips dries out 10 times faster than the rest of the skin on our face.

The harsh winter winds may be the reason your lips feel super tight and dry but that doesn't mean you have to wait till spring to wear your favourite lipstick or get a picture-perfect pout for a selfie.

Nutritional deficiencies can also lead to dry, chapped lips. Sometimes, even cracks may develop. Vitamins A, C and B2 are important for the lips. So, foods like citrus fruits, ripe pa-

paya, tomatoes, carrots, green leafy vegetables, nuts, whole grains, oats, and milk products may be included in the diet. Of course, it's best to take your doctor's advice before making changes in your diet, especially if you have any medical condition.

Use glossy lipsticks and lip balm. Avoid soap and powder on the lips. Remove lipstick with a cleansing cream or gel. Apply almond oil or cream at night and leave on.

After washing the face, the lips may be rubbed gently with a soft towel to remove dead skin. Apply cream of milk (malai) daily and leave on for an hour. If the lips become dark, add a few drops of lemon juice to the cream of milk. At night, apply pure almond oil daily on the lips and leave on overnight.

Honey can be mixed with sesame seeds or walnut powder and used as a scrub for the lips.



A little almond oil may also be added.

Oils like Argan and Coconut oil also help to nourish the skin on the lips. Argan oil is actually native to Morocco, where it has been traditionally used for food purposes, as well as to treat skin and scalp problems. Today, it is being increasingly used for cosmetic purposes to make cosmetics like moisturisers, creams, lotions, face packs, hair oils, hair conditioners, etc.

Argan oil is rich in unsatu-

rated fatty acids and Vitamin E. Since it contains Vitamin E and antioxidants, it helps to delay the visible ageing sign and even rejuvenate the skin. It protects the youthful properties of the skin, like elasticity and resilience. As it is easily absorbed by the skin, it can be ideal for the care of the lips. The fatty acids also nourish and soften the skin. The oil was used for medicinal purposes to cure skin problems and also heal and soothe burns. It nourishes the

skin and improves skin texture. Argan oil can be used directly on the skin. Use only a few drops directly on the lips.

Coconut oil has also been valued for its nourishing and moisturizing ability. It has a great skin-softening ability and helps to make the skin soft and smooth. It may be applied on the lips and is also said to protect the skin from the damage caused by exposure to ultraviolet rays of the sun. It is said to protect the skin better than cream. It also helps to heal cracks on the lips. In fact, it can be used to remove make-up from the face, including the lips.

Coconut oil may be applied on the lips and left on overnight. Or, it can be left on for 15 minutes and wiped off with moist cotton wool. The advantage is that unlike other preparations that may contain synthetic ingredients, coconut oil can be safely applied on the

lips and even ingested. Another advantage is that unlike other oils, coconut oil does not become rancid. Coconut oil and

Argan oil-based lip balms and lip creams can also be used for the care of the lips.

Licking your lips seems to be the best idea to make them moist. Licking will make your lips drier and the constant biting can cause bleeding. Once you put saliva on your lips, the air causes the saliva to evaporate pretty quickly, making your lips dry and can leave the delicate skin feeling irritated as well. Digestive enzymes and bacteria in saliva can make them dry out faster, making your lips even drier overall.

Also, don't touch your lips unnecessarily as the bacteria and germs from your hands can transfer to your lips and can lead to infection. (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called herbal queen of India)

Egypt floats plan to end Israel-Hamas war; the proposal gets a cool reception

CAIRO, Dec 26: Israel and Hamas on Monday gave cool public receptions to an Egyptian proposal to end their bitter war. But the longstanding enemies stopped short of rejecting the plan altogether, raising the possibility of a new round of diplomacy to halt a devastating Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip.

The Egyptian plan calls for a phased hostage release and the formation of a Palestinian government of experts to administer the Gaza Strip and occupied West Bank, according to a senior Egyptian official and a European diplomat familiar with the proposal.

The Egyptian official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the proposal, said the details were worked out with the Gulf nation of Qatar and presented to Israel, Hamas, the United States and European governments. Egypt and Qatar both mediate between Israel and Hamas, while the U.S. is Israel's closest ally and a key power in the region.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not comment directly on the proposal. But speaking to members of his Likud Party, he said he was

determined to press ahead with Israel's offensive, launched in response to an Oct. 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people and took 240 others hostage.

"We are expanding the fight in the coming days and this will be a long battle and it isn't close to finished," he said.

Hamas has continued to fire rockets into Israel throughout the fighting. Late Monday, it launched a barrage of rockets, triggering air raid sirens in the southern city of Ashkelon. AP video showed what appeared to be several interceptions by Israel's rocket defense system. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries.

The Egyptian proposal falls short of Israel's declared goal of crushing Hamas. It also appears to be at odds with Israel's insistence on maintaining military control over Gaza for an extended period after the war.

But Netanyahu faces heavy domestic pressure to reach a deal to bring home the more than 100 Israeli hostages who remain in captivity in Gaza. As he vowed to continue the war during a



speech in parliament, relatives of the hostages interrupted him and called for their immediate return. "Now! Now!" they shouted.

The rising death toll of Israeli soldiers from the ground operation also threatens to undermine public support for the war. The Israeli military announced the deaths of two more soldiers Monday, bringing the total killed in the war to 156.

Netanyahu's War Cabinet was expected to meet late Monday. It was unclear if they would discuss the Egyptian proposal.

Hamas did not officially react to the proposal. But it is unclear if Hamas would agree to relinquish power after controlling Gaza for the past 16 years.

Izzat Rishq, a senior Hamas official who is believed to be based in Qatar, issued a statement repeating the group's position that it will not negotiate without a "complete end to the aggression." He said Hamas would not agree to a "temporary or partial truce for a short period of time."

Word of the proposal came as Israeli airstrikes heavily pounded central and southern Gaza.

In the Maghazi refugee camp Monday, rescue workers were still pulling bodies from the wreckage of a strike the previous night. Records at the nearby Al-Aqsa Hospital seen by The Associated Press showed at least 106 people killed, making it one of the deadliest strikes of Israel's air campaign.

The United Nations' World Health Organization visited the hospital on Monday, Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

"The hospital is taking in far more patients than its bed capacity and staff can handle. Many will not survive the wait," he said in a post on X, for-

merly Twitter. The war has devastated large parts of Gaza, killed more than 20,600 Palestinians and displaced almost all of the territory's 2.3 million people.

U.N. officials have warned that a quarter of the population is starving under Israel's siege of the territory, which allows in only a trickle of supplies. In the southern Gaza Strip, Hamas admitted to shooting dead a 13-year-old boy who was among a group of people who tried to seize aid from a truck. The shooting prompted a violent protest and rare public criticism of Hamas.

The Egyptian proposal is an ambitious bid not only to end the war but also to lay out a plan for the day after. It calls for an initial cease-fire of up to two weeks during which Palestinian militants would free 40 to 50 hostages, among them women, the sick and the elderly, in return for the release of 120-150 Palestinians from Israeli prisons, the Egyptian official said. At the same time, negotiations would continue on extending the cease-fire and the release of more hostages and bodies held by Palestinian militants, he said. (AP)

The Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, under an umbrella of Iranian-backed militants, claimed credit for the attack

Biden orders strike on Iranian-aligned group after 3 US troops injured in drone attack in Iraq

WASHINGTON, Dec 26: President Joe Biden ordered the US military to carry out retaliatory airstrikes against Iranian-backed militia groups after three US servicemembers were injured in a drone attack in northern Iraq.

National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson said one of the US troops suffered critical injuries in the attack that occurred earlier on Monday.

The Iranian-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, under an umbrella of Iranian-backed militants, claimed credit for the attack that utilised a one-way attack drone.

Biden, who is spending Christmas at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, was alerted about the attack by White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan shortly after it occurred on Monday and ordered the Pentagon and his top national security aides to prepare response options to the attack on an air base used by American troops in Erbil.

Sullivan consulted with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin. Biden's deputy national security adviser, Jon Finer, was with the president at Camp David and convened top aides to review options, according to a US official, who was not authorised to comment publicly and requested anonymity. Within hours, Biden convened his national security team for a call in which Austin and Gen. CQ



Brown, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefed Biden on the response options. Biden opted to target three locations used by Kataib Hezbollah and affiliated groups, the official said. The US strikes were carried out at about 4:45 a.m. on Tuesday in Iraq, less than 13 hours after the US personnel were attacked.

According to US Central Command, the retaliatory strikes on the three sites, "destroyed the targeted facilities and likely killed a number of Kataib Hezbollah militants."

"The President places no higher priority than the protection of American personnel serving in harm's way," Watson said. "The United States will act at a time and in a manner of our choosing should these attacks continue."

The latest attack on US troops follows months of escalating threats and actions against American forces in the region since the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel that sparked the devastating war in Gaza.

The dangerous back-and-forth strikes have escalated since Iranian-backed militant groups under the umbrella group called the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and Syria began striking US facilities October 17, the date that a blast at a hospital in Gaza killed hundreds. Iranian-backed militias have carried out dozens of attacks on US bases in Iraq and Syria since the start of the Israel-Hamas war more than two months ago. Last month, US fighter jets struck a Kataib Hezbollah operations centre and command and

control node, following a short-range ballistic missile attack on US forces at Al-Assad Air Base in western Iraq.

Iranian-backed militias also carried out a drone attack at the same air base in October, causing minor injuries. The US has also blamed Iran, which has funded and trained Hamas, for attacks by Yemen's Houthi militants against commercial and military vessels through a critical shipping choke point in the Red Sea.

The Biden administration has sought to prevent the Israel-Hamas war from spiralling into a wider regional conflict that either opens up new fronts of Israeli fighting or that draws the US in directly. The administration's measured response — where not every attempt on American troops has been met with a counterattack — has drawn criticism from Republicans.

The US has thousands of troops in Iraq training Iraqi forces and combat-ing remnants of the Islamic State group, and hundreds in Syria, mostly on the counter-IS mission. They have come under dozens of attacks, though as yet none fatal, since the war began on October 7, with the US attributing responsibility to Iran-backed groups.

"While we do not seek to escalate conflict in the region, we are committed and fully prepared to take further necessary measures to protect our people and our facilities," Austin said in a statement. (AP)

Over 28,626 candidates file nominations for Feb 8 elections in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Dec 26: At least 28,626 candidates have filed their nominations to contest the February 8 general elections in Pakistan, authorities said here on Monday. The election will be held for 1,085 seats of the National Assembly (NA) and four Provincial Assemblies.

According to the details shared by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the aspirants include 7,713 candidates, including 471 women, who have filed nominations to contest the upcoming elections on 266 general seats of the National Assembly.

In Punjab, 3,871 candidates, including 277 women, filed nomination papers for 141 NA seats, while 1,681 candidates, including 110 women, submitted nominations for 61 NA seats in Sindh.

At least 1,322 candidates, including 39 women, are contesting for 45 general seats in the National Assembly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) while 631 nominees, including 12 women, filed nomination papers against 16 NA seats in Balochistan. As many as 208 candidates, including 26 women, submitted nominations for three National Assembly seats in the federal capital. About 459 candidates

filed nomination papers against 60 reserved seats for women in the National Assembly, including 195 from Punjab, 118 from Sindh, 97 from KP, and 49 from Balochistan. Also, 150 nominations, including 10 women, filed nominations against 10 reserved seats for non-Muslims in the National Assembly.

Both women and non-Muslims can also contest on all 266 general seats apart from participating on the 60 and 10 seats reserved for them respectively. When it comes to the provincial assembly, at least 18,546 candidates, including 802 women, submitted their nominations for 593 general seats of the four provincial assemblies.

For Punjab Assembly's 297 general seats, 9,029 candidates have filed nominations, including 437 women. Another 4,265 candidates, including 205 women, filed nominations against 130 general seats of the Sindh Assembly, while 3,464 candidates, including 115 women, filed papers for 115 general seats of the KP Assembly and 1,788 candidates, including 45 women, submitted documents for 45 general seats of the Balochistan Assembly.

Also, 1,365 candidates are in the run for 132 reserved seats for

women in the four provincial legislatures. They include 601 against 66 seats in Punjab, 309 for 29 seats in Sindh, 321 for 26 seats in KP, and 134 against 11 seats in Balochistan. As many as 393 candidates, including 32 women, filed nominations against 24 seats reserved for minorities in provincial assemblies. The ECP data showed that 3,139 women (over 11 per cent) of the total 28,626 candidates have filed nomination papers for 2024 general elections across the country, far more than the number of women who submitted nominations for the 2018 and 2013 general elections.

As many as 471 women, including Maryam Nawaz, filed nomination papers to contest elections on general seats of the National Assembly, while another 802 women are contesting on the provincial assemblies' seats. For the seats reserved for women in national and provincial assemblies, 459 and 1,365 nomination papers were filed, respectively. The number of women candidates went up as compared to the last two elections as 1,687 women had filed nomination papers in 2018 general elections while a total 1,171 women in the 2013 elections. (PTI)

A Turkish parliamentary committee resumes debate on Sweden's NATO bid

ANKARA, Dec 26: The Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee was poised on Tuesday to resume deliberations on Sweden's bid to join NATO, days after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan linked the Nordic country's admission on U.S. approval of Turkey's request to purchase F-16 fighter jets.

NATO-member Turkey lifted its objection to Sweden joining the trans-Atlantic alliance in July but the ratification process has since stalled in parliament. Turkey accuses Sweden of not taking Turkey's security concerns seriously enough, including its fight against Kurdish militants and other groups that Ankara considers to be security threats.

This month, Erdogan threw another obstacle by openly linking ratification of Sweden's NATO membership to the U.S. Congress' approval of Turkey's request to purchase 40 new F-16 fighter jets and kits to modernize its existing fleet. The Turkish leader also called on the two legislatures to act "simultaneously" and said Canada and other NATO allies must lift arms embargoes imposed on Turkey.

The White House has backed the Turkish F-16 request but there is strong opposition in Congress to military sales to Turkey.

The Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee had begun discussing Sweden's membership in NATO last month. The meeting however, was adjourned after legislators from Erdogan's ruling party submitted a motion for a postponement on grounds that some issues needed more clarification and that negotiations with Sweden had not "matured" enough. (AP)

2023: SL strengthens ties with India amid economic challenges and regional complexities

COLOMBO, Dec 26: As Sri Lanka and India marked their 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2023, New Delhi has again emerged as a steadfast ally of Colombo, playing a pivotal role in the debt-trapped island nation's steady economic recovery.

When the unprecedented economic turmoil struck Sri Lanka last year, India swiftly extended a lifeline to the country with assistance of over USD 4 billion, surpassing the International Monetary Fund's 48-month bailout of about USD 3 billion.

The timely financial support from India was a testament to the strong bond between the two countries. Sri Lanka, acknowledging India's role, successfully navigated the IMF negotiations in March this year, crediting India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for her role during the early stages of discussions with the global lender.

A significant development was Sri Lanka's decision to utilise the first

tranche of USD 330 million of the IMF bailout to repay Indian loans. This underscored India's patience and generosity in assisting its neighbour in overcoming economic challenges.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe's official visit to New Delhi in mid-July, albeit delayed, marked a crucial diplomatic engagement between the two nations.

During his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President Wickremesinghe tried to address India's concerns over Tamil issues, emphasising the importance of resolving the matter. India reiterated its long-standing insistence on the full implementation of the 13th Amendment as a solution to the demand of the Tamil minority community for political autonomy in the north and east regions of the island nation. Ahead of his India trip, Wick-

remesinghe's engagement with Tamil parties showcased a proactive approach toward addressing the long-pending demand of the Tamils for political autonomy. As if to assure India, the president outlined plans for devolution, pledging that 13A with full powers, except police powers, would be implemented. As part of his continued efforts to address the thorny issue of ethnic reconciliation of minority Tamils, Wickremesinghe in December held parleys with the Tamil political parties represented in the north and east.

According to the president's office, the discussions focused on various issues, including the provision of land rights for the people in the Northern and Eastern provinces, the implementation of laws related to resettlement and reconcilia-

tion, and the challenges faced by Sri Lankans in refugee camps in India. "Issues concerning district development in the Northern and Eastern provinces were addressed," it said. However, analysts here opine that the lack of tangible progress on the implementation of 13A could raise concerns in New Delhi, constituting unfinished business in the bilateral relationship. The year 2023 also saw the navies of Sri Lanka and India reinforcing their strong ties. Many Indian naval ships, including the INS Bati Malv, INS Nireekshak, and INS Delhi, docked at Sri Lankan ports.

However, at the same time, India remained concerned over the frequency of Chinese research ships berthing at Sri Lankan ports. Colombo has also consistently expressed solidarity with New Delhi's security concerns in the Indian Ocean, responding to apprehensions raised regarding the frequent port calls by Chinese research ships on alleged spy missions. (PTI)



জাননী

অসম সংখ্যালঘু উন্নয়ন ব'ৰ্ডৰ তৰফৰ পৰা ২০২৩-২৪ বিত্তীয় বৰ্ষৰ বাবে নিম্ন উল্লেখিত সামগ্ৰী বিতৰণৰ বাবে আৰ্থ-সাহায্যৰে অসমৰ স্থায়ী বাসিন্দাৰ অধিসূচীত ধৰ্মীয় সংখ্যালঘু (মুছলিম, খ্ৰীষ্টান, শিখ, বৌদ্ধ, জৈন আৰু পাৰ্চী) সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ বাবে (I) e-Rickshaw মুঠ খৰচৰ ৮০% চৰকাৰী অনুদান আৰু ২০% হিতাধিকাৰীয়ে বহন কৰিব লাগিব আৰু (II) Sewing Machine, (III) Fashion Design Machine (IV) Automatic Paper Plate Making machine ইত্যাদি সামগ্ৰী সম্পূৰ্ণ বিনামূলিয়াকৈ বিতৰণৰ বাবে আবেদন বিচৰা হৈছে। আবেদনকাৰী সকলৰ বহুকেইগৰা আয় তিনি লাখ (৩.০০ লাখ) টকাতকৈ অধিক হ'ব নোৱাৰিব। আবেদনকাৰী সকলে অনলাইনযোগে প্ৰ-পত্ৰ পূৰণ কৰিব লাগিব আৰু আবেদনৰ লগতে যাবতীয় নথি-পত্ৰ আপলোড কৰিব লাগিব। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও এই নথি-পত্ৰ সমূহৰ ফটোকপি মূল কপি বাহিনী প্ৰক্ৰিয়াৰ সময়ত লৈ আহিব লাগিব। বাহিনীকৃত আবেদনকাৰী সকলক অসম সংখ্যালঘু উন্নয়ন ব'ৰ্ডৰ তৰফৰ পৰা জনোৱা হ'ব। ইচ্ছুক আবেদনকাৰী সকল তথা আত্ম সাহায্যক গোট সমূহক অহা ১৭/০১/২০২৪ তাৰিখৰ ভিতৰত <https://amdb.assam.gov.in> (Assam Minorities Development Board) ৱেবছাইটত অনলাইন যোগে আবেদন দাখিল কৰিব লাগিব। অসম্পূৰ্ণ আবেদন প্ৰ-পত্ৰ গ্ৰহণযোগ্য নহ'ব। অসম সংখ্যালঘু উন্নয়ন ব'ৰ্ডৰ বাহিনী কমিটিৰ সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত হ'ব।

ক্রমিক নং	আবেদনকাৰীৰ নাম	অৰ্হতা
১	e-Rickshaw	১) আবেদনকাৰীৰ ধৰ্মীয় সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ হ'ব লাগিব। ২) আবেদনকাৰীৰ কমেও পঞ্চম শ্ৰেণী উত্তীৰ্ণ হ'ব লাগিব। ৩) আবেদনকাৰীৰ বয়স ১৮ ৰ পৰা ৫০ বছৰ বয়সৰ ভিতৰত হ'ব লাগিব। ৪) আবেদনকাৰীৰ ঘৰৰ ঠিকনাৰ প্ৰমাণ পত্ৰ গাওঁ পঞ্চায়ত, পৌৰ নিগম বা টাউন কমিটিৰ কতপক্ষৰ পৰা ল'ব লাগিব। ৫) আবেদনকাৰীৰ ভোটাৰ কাৰ্ড ও পৰিচয় প্ৰমাণ পত্ৰ দিব লাগিব। ৬) বহুকেইগৰা আয়ৰ প্ৰমাণ পত্ৰ সংশ্লিষ্ট কতপক্ষৰ পৰা সংগ্ৰহ কৰিব লাগিব।
২	Sewing Machine	১) আবেদনকাৰীৰ ধৰ্মীয় সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ ও মহিলা হ'ব লাগিব। ২) আবেদনকাৰীৰ কমেও পঞ্চম শ্ৰেণী উত্তীৰ্ণ হ'ব লাগিব। ৩) আবেদনকাৰীৰ বয়স ১৮ ৰ পৰা ৫০ বছৰ বয়সৰ ভিতৰত হ'ব লাগিব। ৪) আবেদনকাৰীৰ ঘৰৰ ঠিকনাৰ প্ৰমাণ পত্ৰ গাওঁ পঞ্চায়ত, পৌৰ নিগম বা টাউন কমিটিৰ কতপক্ষৰ পৰা ল'ব লাগিব। ৫) আবেদনকাৰীৰ ভোটাৰ কাৰ্ড ও পৰিচয় প্ৰমাণ পত্ৰ দিব লাগিব। ৬) বহুকেইগৰা আয়ৰ প্ৰমাণ পত্ৰ সংশ্লিষ্ট কতপক্ষৰ পৰা সংগ্ৰহ কৰিব লাগিব।
৩	Fashion Design Machine	১) আবেদনকাৰী আত্মসহায়ক গোটটো পৰীক্ষণ হ'ব লাগিব আৰু ইয়াৰ প্ৰমাণ পত্ৰ সংশ্লিষ্ট কতপক্ষৰ পৰা সংগ্ৰহ কৰি আপলোড কৰিব লাগিব। ২) আত্মসহায়ক গোটটো কমেও ১০ জন সদস্য থাকিব লাগিব। ৩) আত্মসহায়ক গোটৰ নামত বেংক একাউন্ট (active) থাকিব লাগিব। ৪) আত্মসহায়ক গোটৰ সদস্যৰ ঠিকনা ও পৰিচয় পত্ৰ দিব লাগিব। ৫) আবেদনকাৰী আত্মসহায়ক গোটৰ সদস্য সকল ধৰ্মীয় সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ হ'ব লাগিব।
৪	Automatic Paper Plate Making machine	১) আবেদনকাৰী আত্মসহায়ক গোটটো পৰীক্ষণ হ'ব লাগিব আৰু ইয়াৰ প্ৰমাণ পত্ৰ সংশ্লিষ্ট কতপক্ষৰ পৰা সংগ্ৰহ কৰি আপলোড কৰিব লাগিব। ২) আত্মসহায়ক গোটটো কমেও ১০ জন সদস্য থাকিব লাগিব। ৩) আত্মসহায়ক গোটৰ নামত বেংক একাউন্ট (active) থাকিব লাগিব। ৪) আত্মসহায়ক গোটৰ সদস্যৰ ঠিকনা ও পৰিচয় পত্ৰ দিব লাগিব। ৫) আবেদনকাৰী আত্মসহায়ক গোটৰ সদস্য সকল ধৰ্মীয় সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্ৰদায়ৰ হ'ব লাগিব।

বি.শ্ৰ: ১) The above schemes will be implemented by Assam Minorities Development Board subject to receipt of FOC from the Govt.
২) All the documents as mentioned above should be received from Competent authority and must be uploaded.
৩) For any official clarification: Cell No. 7635998002 (M)
স্বাক্ষৰ/ সঞ্চালক, অসম সংখ্যালঘু উন্নয়ন ব'ৰ্ড
ৰাধা গোবিন্দ বৰুৱা পথ, গণেশগুৰি, গুৱাহাটী-৬

জাননী

অসম সংখ্যালঘু উন্নয়ন ব'ৰ্ডৰ তৰফৰ পৰা ২০২৩-২৪ বিত্তীয় বৰ্ষৰ বাবে নিম্ন উল্লেখিত পাঠ্যক্ৰম আৰ্থ-সাহায্যৰে (পাঠ্যক্ৰমৰ মুঠ খৰচৰ ৮০% চৰকাৰী অনুদান আৰু ২০% হিতাধিকাৰীয়ে বহন কৰিব লাগিব) অসমৰ স্থায়ী বাসিন্দাৰ অধিসূচীত ধৰ্মীয় সংখ্যালঘু (মুছলিম, খ্ৰীষ্টান, শিখ, বৌদ্ধ, জৈন আৰু পাৰ্চী) ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীৰ বাবে পাঠ্যক্ৰম ব্যৱস্থা কৰা হৈছে। ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীৰ অভিভাৱকৰ বহুকেইগৰা আয় তিনি লাখ (৩.০০ লাখ) টকাতকৈ অধিক হ'ব নোৱাৰিব। বাহিনী মেধাভিত্তিক কৰা হ'ব আৰু কিছু আসন বিভিন্ন শ্ৰেণীৰ বাবে সংৰক্ষিত থাকিব। ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীয়ে অনলাইনযোগে প্ৰ-পত্ৰ পূৰণ কৰা আবেদনৰ প্ৰতিলিপি লগত যাবতীয় নথি-পত্ৰ আপলোড কৰিব লাগিব। ইয়াৰ উপৰিও এই নথি-পত্ৰ সমূহৰ ফটোকপিসহ মূল কপি কাউন্সিলিৰ সময়ত লৈ আহিব লাগিব। ইচ্ছুক ছাত্ৰ-ছাত্ৰীয়ে অহা ১৭/০১/২০২৪ তাৰিখৰ ভিতৰত <https://amdb.assam.gov.in> (Assam Minorities Development Board) ৱেবছাইটত অনলাইন যোগে আবেদন দাখিল কৰিব লাগিব। অসম্পূৰ্ণ আবেদন প্ৰ-পত্ৰ গ্ৰহণযোগ্য নহ'ব। অসম সংখ্যালঘু উন্নয়ন ব'ৰ্ডৰ বাহিনী কমিটিৰ সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত হ'ব।

ক্রমিক নং	পাঠ্যক্ৰমৰ নাম	শিক্ষাগত অৰ্হতা	পাঠ্যক্ৰমৰ সময়সীমা	বয়স
১.	ই.উ.পি.এচ.চি. পাঠ্যক্ৰমৰ প্ৰৱেশ পৰীক্ষাৰ বাবে প্ৰশিক্ষণ (Coaching Exam for Entrance Exam for UPSC)	ই.উ.পি.এচ.চি. ৰ বাবে স্নাতক (১০+২+৩) যিকোনো শাখাত উত্তীৰ্ণ হ'ব লাগিব।	১২ মাহ	২১-২৭ বছৰ

বি.শ্ৰ: ১) ই.উ.পি.এচ.চি. পাঠ্যক্ৰমৰ প্ৰৱেশ পৰীক্ষাৰ বাবে প্ৰশিক্ষণ পাঠ্যক্ৰমৰ মুঠ খৰচৰ ৮০% চৰকাৰী অনুদান আৰু ২০% হিতাধিকাৰীয়ে বহন কৰিব লাগিব।
২) The above scheme will be implemented subject to receipt of FOC from the Govt.
৩) Annual Income Certificate should be received from competent authority and must be uploaded.
৪) For any official clarification: Cell No. 7635998002 (M)
স্বাক্ষৰ/ সঞ্চালক, অসম সংখ্যালঘু উন্নয়ন ব'ৰ্ড
Janasanyog /DF/2224/23/27-Dec-23 ৰাধা গোবিন্দ বৰুৱা পথ, গণেশগুৰি, গুৱাহাটী-৬

No. E-392562/1

ADVERTISEMENT

Applications are invited from the eligible Indian citizen as defined in Article 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India and permanent residents of Assam for filling up **205 vacant posts** of (1) Graduate Teachers (Arts), (2) Graduate Teacher (Science), (3) Graduate Teacher (Hindi) and (4) Graduate Teacher (Sanskrit) of the different Government Secondary Schools under the Directorate of Secondary Education, Assam in the scale of pay of **Rs.14,000/- to 70,000/-** including Grade Pay of **Rs. 8,700/-** PM (under Pay Band-2) plus other allowances as admissible under rules.

The **District-wise, subject-wise, medium-wise and category-wise posts details as well as date and time of receipt of online applications for TET cum Recruitment Test and other details** will be notified in the official website at www.madhyamik.assam.gov.in in due course of time. Vacancies may vary due to administrative reasons. The Director of Secondary Education, Assam reserves the right to make changes in sequence of the recruitment process after publication of this advertisement.

The Director of Secondary Education, Assam reserves the right to cancel or postpone the recruitment at any stage without assigning any reason.

The aspiring candidates must be ready to serve in their respective places of posting in terms of choice of their Districts.

➤ CONDITIONS OF RECRUITMENT:-**(A) Minimum educational and professional qualifications for direct recruitment in the post of Graduate Teacher (Arts & Science).**

1.	For the post of Graduate Teacher (Arts), the candidate must be Arts / Commerce Graduate or Post Graduate in Arts / Commerce having from recognized University with at least 50% marks in either Graduation or Post Graduation (or its equivalent) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) from National Council for Teacher Education recognized Institution(s).
2.	For the post of Graduate Teacher (Science), the candidate must be Science Graduate or Post Graduate in Science having from recognized University with at least 50% marks in either Graduation or Post Graduation (or its equivalent) and Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) from National Council for Teacher Education recognized Institution(s).
3.	In pursuance of the Govt. OM No. ASE.238/2014/213, dtd. 22.11.2019, those institutions having territorial jurisdiction outside the State of Assam but having a study centre in the State and such study centers if not recognized by DEC under UGC, the degrees / certificates issued by such off campus institutions shall not be considered as valid for the purpose of employment under Education Department. However, degrees / diplomas conferred by KKHSOU, IGNOU, IDOL under Gauhati University and Distance Education under Dibrugarh University shall be considered as valid for the purpose of employment.

(B) Minimum educational and professional qualifications for direct recruitment in the post of Graduate Teacher (Hindi).

1.	Pravin / Ratna in Hindi with 50% marks and degree qualification with 50% marks or post Graduate degree in Arts with 50% marks from any recognized University, Or BA with 50% marks and having Hindi as one of the subjects with 50% marks or post Graduate in Arts with 50% marks provided that he has passed BA with one of the subjects as Hindi with 50% marks in Hindi
2.	B.T. / B.Ed. degree from any recognized University (PARANGAT to be treated as B.Ed. degree only for the purpose of Hindi teaching).
3.	In pursuance of the Govt. OM No. ASE.238/2014/213, dtd. 22.11.2019, those institutions having territorial jurisdiction outside the State of Assam but having a study centre in the State and such study centers if not recognized by DEC under UGC, the degrees / certificates issued by such off campus institutions shall not be considered as valid for the purpose of employment under Education Department. However, degrees / diplomas conferred by KKHSOU, IGNOU, IDOL under Gauhati University and Distance Education under Dibrugarh University shall be considered as valid for the purpose of employment.

(C) Minimum educational and professional qualifications for direct recruitment in the post of Graduate Teacher (Sanskrit).

1.	Shastri with 50% marks and having degree qualification with 50% marks or post Graduate degree in Arts with 50% marks from any recognized University, Or BA with 50% marks and having Sanskrit as one of the subjects with 50% of marks or Post Graduate Degree in Arts with 50% marks in Sanskrit.
2.	B.T. / B.Ed. degree from any recognized University.
3.	In pursuance of the Govt. OM No. ASE.238/2014/213, dtd. 22.11.2019, those institutions having territorial jurisdiction outside the State of Assam but having a study centre in the State and such study centers if not recognized by DEC under UGC, the degrees / certificates issued by such off campus institutions shall not be considered as valid for the purpose of employment under Education Department. However degrees / diplomas conferred by KKHSOU, IGNOU, IDOL under Gauhati University and Distance Education under Dibrugarh University shall be considered as valid for the purpose of employment.

➤ In addition to the academic and professional qualification as per sub-rule 10 (5) Sub-Rule 1 (i) to (v) of the Assam Secondary Education (Government Schools) Service Rules of 2020, the candidate must satisfy the following criteria:-

- In case of Assamese Medium School, the candidate must have passed HSLC or equivalent Examination with Assamese Language as one of the subjects or have Diploma in Assamese Language issued by the Axom Sahitya Sabha or read up to HSLC level in Assamese Medium School.
- In case of Bengali Medium School, the candidate must have passed HSLC or equivalent examination with Bengali language as one of the subjects or have Diploma in Bengali language issued by the Barak Upatyaka Bangya Sahitya O Sanskriti Sammelan or read up to HSLC level in Bengali Medium School.
- In case of Hindi Medium School, the candidate must have passed HSLC or equivalent Examination with Hindi language as one of the subjects or read up to HSLC level in Hindi Medium School.
- In case of Bodo Medium School, the candidate must have passed HSLC or equivalent Examination with Bodo language as one of the subjects or read up to HSLC level in Bodo Medium School.
- In case of English Medium School, the candidate must have passed HSLC or equivalent Examination with Alternative English as one of the subjects or read from Class XI onwards in English Medium School.

Provided that for recruitment of teacher for teaching MIL subject, the candidate who passed HSLC examination with particular MIL subject shall be considered.

➤ Criteria for Selection of Graduate Teacher (Arts, Science, Hindi and Sanskrit):**(a) Teachers Eligibility Test cum Recruitment Test :**

140 marks in the following paper:-

The paper shall be of 140 marks (Pedagogy – 50 marks, About Assam and its People – 50 marks; General English – 30 marks; General Studies and Current Affairs – 10 marks).

(b) NCC / Sports / Fine Arts and Cultural Activities :

- 5 marks for NCC Certificates (5 marks for “C” Certificate and 3 marks for “B” Certificate)

Or

5 marks for participation in recognized sports at National Level representing Assam.

Or

5 marks for achievements in Fine Arts and Cultural Activities representing the State officially at National Level.

- Candidates who have passed the earlier High School TET and not been appointed till date shall get weightage @ 5% of the marks secured in the TET or maximum 5 marks for selection as a Graduate Teacher.

(c) During the advertisement the candidates shall apply in the particular stream in case of Graduate Teacher.**(d) There shall be one common question paper for all vacancies irrespective of streams, i.e. Arts, Science, Commerce, Hindi etc. for Graduate Teacher recruitment.****(e) The number of qualified candidates in the TET cum Recruitment Test shall be in the ratio of 1:1 of the vacancies advertised.****(f) In case, any post remains vacant after publication of the first Merit List as per the ratio of 1 : 1, then maximum 2 (two) more numbers of Merit List will be published.****(g) There shall be separate Merit List stream-wise (Arts / Science / Hindi / Sanskrit) in case of Graduate Teacher.****(h) The Merit List shall be prepared in the manner as proposed below:-**

- The marks secured in the TET cum Recruitment Test by the candidates of a particular stream, for instance Science Stream, shall be filtered out from the main list into a separate merit list of Science Stream. Similar process shall be adopted for all other streams.

➤ Other Criteria

- Candidates must have to give the choice of district as per the district drop down menu provided during online application.
- In case two or more candidates obtained equal marks in aggregate, then the seniority of age shall be preferred.
- A candidate must not be less than 18 years of age and not more than 40 years for unreserved category, 42 years for Ex-Servicemen, 43 years for OBC/ MOBC and 45 years for SC/ ST(P)/ST(H) and 50 years for Persons with Disability (PwD) as on **1st January, 2023** as per Govt. Office Memorandum vide No. ABP.6/2016/51 Dated 02/09/2020 and subsequent Corrigendum No. ABP.6/2016/52, dtd. 20.02.2021.
- No person having more than two living children on or after 01/01/2021 from a single or multiple partners shall be eligible for appointment as per the Govt. policy on Small Family Norms, the Guidelines contained in the Notification No. ABP.69/2019/17 dated 06/11/2019 and No. ABP.69/2019/18 dated 16/11/2019.
- No offline application will be accepted in this regard.
- The Online Applications and documents submitted by the candidates will be verified along with their original testimonials before appointment. The detailed schedule and venue for Screening/ Verification of documents will be notified in the official website. No TA/DA is admissible for verification process. Verification will be conducted simultaneously for all the Districts and the candidates will be informed either individually or collectively by the Director of Secondary Education, Assam in the official website.
- The Online Applications and documents submitted by the candidate will be verified using modern technology with the help of DigiLocker, Govt. of India and by scanning Barcode or QR Code for ensuring genuineness of the uploaded documents as well as by back office verification with the competent board/ council/ authority. But the authority if desires may conduct physical document verification at any point of time with proper notice.
- The candidate must ensure genuineness of all the information/ documents uploaded against the online application and he/ she will be solely responsible for the information/ documents uploaded against his/ her online application. Once uploaded there will be no scope of correction in respect of the credential submitted by the candidate. Any discrepancy will lead to cancellation of the candidature.
- The candidature will be cancelled forthwith, if any kind of fraudulence/ discrepancy regarding any information / documents uploaded by the candidate is established by appropriate authority at any point of time. The candidate will be debarred from any future recruitment under Government of Assam and subsequent legal action will also be initiated against such candidate.
- When the candidates appear for the verification of documents, they must produce original certificates, testimonials and documents that were uploaded during the application stage.
- Physical fitness as per Rule 11 of the Assam Secondary Education (Government Schools) Service Rules, 2020 :-
A candidate for direct recruitment shall be :-
(a) of sound health both mentally and physically and free organic defect or bodily infirmity which is like to interfere with the efficient performance of his duties and
(b) required to undergo medical examination before appointment to the service.
- The candidates having NOT CLEAR (NC) status against any qualification will not be eligible to apply.
- There shall be reservation for EWS / OBC / MOBC / SC / ST(P) / SH(H) / PWD / WOMEN / EX-SERVICEMEN / Tea Tribes and Adivasi etc., as per existing Government Rules.

N.B.

- The applicants are requested to visit www.madhyamik.assam.gov.in regularly for any update.
- Corrigendum and addendum will be published as and when required in the official website at www.madhyamik.assam.gov.in.

➤ Documents uploaded as mentioned below should be coloured scanned and clear in PDF format while uploading and applying online and all documents should be self attested.

- Passport Size Colour Photograph.
- HSLC Mark sheet and Admit Card (Age Proof).
- HSSLC Mark sheet and Certificate.
- Mark sheet and Certificate of Degree (in case of candidates for the posts of Graduate Teacher Arts and Science, shall submit all three year Mark sheet and Pravin / Ratna final examination mark-sheet and certificate in case of Hindi Posts and Shastri Examination in case of Sanskrit Posts.
- Post Graduate mark sheet and Certificate in case of less than 50% marks in Graduation.
- Any other mark-sheet and certificate of higher education.
- B.Ed. / Parangat Mark sheet (1st Year & 2nd Year) and Certificate.
- Caste Certificate (in case of SC/ST(P)/ST(H)/OBC/MOBC).
- The candidate belonging to EWS category should submit the EWS certificate issued by the competent authority as per rule.

(CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Review plea filed in SC seeking ban on screening children for nursery admission

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking review of its order refusing to direct the Delhi lieutenant governor to either give assent to or return a 2015 bill which proposed a ban on screening children for nursery admission.

The review petition filed by NGO Social Jurist contended that the plea assumes importance in view of the recent Supreme Court judgments voicing displeasure over the governors of Punjab and Tamil Nadu delaying assent to bills passed and readopted by state legislatures.

The petition referred to the apex court's observation that state governors must act in a manner consistent with the provisions of Article 200 of the Constitution. Article 200 outlines the process for a bill passed by the legislative assembly of a state to be presented to the governor for assent. The governor may either give consent to the bill, withhold assent or reserve the bill for consideration by the



President of India. The governor may also return the bill for the legislature's reconsideration.

The apex court had on October 13 dismissed the NGO's plea, saying it cannot pass a direction to enact a law.

"Can there be a mandamus to enact a law? Can we direct the government to introduce the bill? Supreme Court can't be the panacea for everything," the top court had said.

Earlier, the Delhi High Court had dismissed a PIL filed by the NGO, saying it cannot interfere with the legislative procedure and direct the LG to either give assent to the Delhi School Education (Amendment) Bill, 2015 or re-

turn it. The organisation, through advocate Ashok Agarwal, filed the appeal in the top court, contending the child-friendly bill banning the screening procedure for nursery admission has been "hanging" between the central and the Delhi government for the last seven years without any justification. The petition said it was against public interest and public policy.

Rejecting the PIL, a division bench of the Delhi High Court had said it was not proper for a high court while exercising its jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution to direct a governor, who is a constitutional authority, to set a time frame in matters which come purely within his domain.

"In the considered opinion of this court, even though the bill has been passed by the House, it is always open to the governor to agree or to send the bill back to the House and this court ought not pass a writ of mandamus directing the

governor to act," the high court had said. Article 226 empowers a high court to issue writs for the enforcement of the fundamental rights of citizens and for many other purposes. The appeal against the high court's judgement said it highlighted that the very objective and purpose of the 2015 bill is to protect children from exploitation and unjust discrimination in nursery admission in private schools.

The purpose of the bill was defeated by the delay, it said, adding the Delhi government had got the legislation passed by the assembly way back in 2015. The Bill, it said, was passed keeping in mind the 2013 decision of the Delhi High Court on a PIL filed by NGO Social Jurist.

The high court had said in 2013 that the government may consider making necessary amendments to the law to ensure that children seeking admission to nursery classes also get the benefits of the Right to Education Act. (PTI)

Changing Army officers won't solve the issue in Poonch: Farooq Abdullah

SRINAGAR, Dec 26: National Conference president Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday said shunting out army officers will not address the Poonch civilian deaths case and called for an investigation to find out why innocent people were "tortured" to death.

He also favoured talks with Pakistan, saying that otherwise "we will face same situation as is happening with Palestinians in Gaza". However, it was not clear why he compared the situation here with that in Gaza.

Three civilians were found dead after they were picked up by the Army for questioning following a terrorist ambush on two Army vehicles in Poonch last Thursday that killed four soldiers.

"Peaceful citizens, eight of them, were taken away and three were beaten so mercilessly and chilli powder rubbed into their wounds. Three of them could not bear the torture and succumbed. Five others are in the hospital. The brother of one of the victims is in the BSF and has been serving for the past 24 years... now he says that he has got brother's death in return to his services to the nation," Abdullah told reporters here.

He added, "The Army Chief has taken Northern Commander also from here to the academy in Dehradun but it will not resolve the problem. There should be an investigation into why this happened?"

If innocent people who have nothing to

do with terrorism are killed "which India are we living in", he asked. "Is this Mahatma Gandhi's India where we can live in peace? The hatred has spread so much that Hindus and Muslims think they are enemies of each other."

The former chief minister trashed the BJP claims about end of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Four years ago, the Home Minister made a speech in Chennai where he said Article 370 was responsible for terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. Now terrorism will finish in JK and development is being done... Four years later, he made a speech in the Parliament and said he had not said anything like that. This is how much they are lying. Terrorism has not ended, it is increasing. Trained (terrorist) people are coming in and they are not caught. Innocent people are being targeted," he said.

"I am once again saying that this (terrorism) will not end unless an atmosphere is created where talks can be held for finding a way to end it," he added. On the suspension of opposition MPs from Parliament, Abdullah, who is one of the suspended members, said all they were asking for was a statement by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on the Parliament security breach.

"Two persons came in (the Parlia-

ment). They raised the issue of unemployment.... However, they came in. How did they come in? Tomorrow, someone can come with a gun. The way they sprayed the gas, it could have been poisonous. Everyone is under threat. We had asked for the home minister to make a statement. We were not to fight him, just wanted to hear from him," he added.

In response to a question on whether India should hold talks with Pakistan, Abdullah referred to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's famous statement that "we can change friends but we cannot change neighbours".

"If we live in friendship with neighbours, we will both prosper but if we live in enmity, then we cannot progress rapidly. Modiji also has said war is not an option now and issues have to be resolved through dialogue. Where is that dialogue?"

He further added, "Leave aside Imran Khan. Now Nawaz Sharief is going to be the PM of Pakistan and he has been saying at top of his voice that they are ready for talks. Why are we not talking? If we do not resolve it through talks, I am sorry to say that we will face same situation as happening with Palestinians in Gaza who are being bombed every day. Anything can happen. May Allah have mercy on us!" he added. (PTI)

Is PM economist, asks Siddaramaiah at launch of registration of poll guarantee 'Yuva Nidhi'

BENGALURU, Dec 26: Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for criticising the five guarantees of the Congress government and wondered whether he was an economist.

He also took a dig at the Prime Minister for failing to offer two crore jobs a year as promised 10 years ago.

"Mr Prime Minister, our Congress government has implemented all the five guarantees in Karnataka. Your statement that the state will go bankrupt has proved wrong," he said.

Siddaramaiah was speaking at the launch of the registration of Congress party's fifth and final poll guarantee 'Yuva Nidhi' offering unemployment assistance of ₹ 3,000 to graduates and ₹ 1,500 to diploma holders who passed in the academic year 2022-23.

"Is Modi an economist? He had said that Karnataka will go bankrupt if the five guarantees are implemented. The reality is that the state has grown finan-

cially strong now with the implementation of five guarantees," the chief minister claimed.

"Have you (PM Modi) created two crore jobs a year as promised by you? You should have created 20 crore jobs in 10 years. Did you create so many jobs? You failed to keep up your word," Siddaramaiah charged.

The chief minister explained that the state government will offer free training to youth besides giving them Yuva Nidhi assistance. He also told the gathering that the disbursement of the benefit will start from Vivekananda Jayanti on January 12, 2024. The money will be directly deposited into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries.

Siddaramaiah also said that the government will take steps to fill the vacant jobs in the state.

Deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar, skill development and entrepreneurship minister Sharanaprakash Patil and transport minister Ramalinga

Reddy, were among those who were present on the occasion.

According to officials, financial assistance would be given to those who do not get a job even after completion of 180 days from the date of passing the degree/diploma. The candidates are required to prove domicile of Karnataka for a minimum of six years, they said.

The unemployment allowance would be given for a period of two years from the date of announcement of the result or till he/she becomes employed/self-employed whichever is earlier.

Candidates who are self-employed and continuing higher education are excluded from the scheme.

According to skill development and entrepreneurship minister Sharanaprakash Patil, this year ₹ 250 crore has been allocated to the scheme. Next year an expenditure of ₹ 1,250 crore is anticipated and the year after that the state may incur a spending of approximately ₹ 2,500 crore. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Govt issues advisory

language," it said. Platforms are obliged to ensure reasonable efforts to prevent users from hosting, displaying, uploading, modifying, publishing, transmitting, storing, updating, or sharing any information related to the 11 listed user harms or content prohibited on digital intermediaries. Deepfakes refer to synthetic or doctored media that is digitally manipulated and altered to convincingly misrepresent or impersonate someone, using a form of artificial intelligence. Recently, several 'deepfake' videos targeting leading actors went viral, sparking public outrage and raising concerns over the misuse of technology and tools for creating doctored content and fake narratives. (PTI)

Assam witnesses zero

crore. Furthermore, the chief minister highlighted the skilling and ability enhancement training provided to surrendered militants, who are now actively contributing to the state's economic growth.

Assam State Election

of the BJP Assam Pradesh on Tuesday. In this election, a few new candidates were included, such as Mohet Hojai, Niranjani Hojai, Rupali Langthasa, S T Jem Hrangkhoh, and Namrang Jeme. "Apart from this, several new faces were seen in constituencies like Mahur, Langting, Dautuhaja, Maibang (E), and Maibang (W). In the prestigious Hailong constituency, where the BJP has never won an election so far, the saffron party has chosen the present president of BJP Dima Hasao," the statement added. On the other hand, Congress also released a list of its party candidates for the said election.

Govt working towards

Our rich heritage of Ayurveda can also flourish from the local rich traditional medicinal practices. With this idea, the institute incorporated Ayurveda to further rejuvenate with a wider range of patient care solutions. In order to further bolster its effort, we are committed to develop this institute as the national hub of folk medicine," he added.

With a total investment of ₹ 53 crore, additional infrastructure will be developed at the NEIAFMR. He further said that the Modi government has committed investment to build additional infrastructure at the NEIAFMR which will build its capacity to act as a catalyst to strengthen its research and development in Ayurveda and folk medicine from the region.

"I am also happy to share with you all that a new centre on Sowa Rigpa will be set up in Arunachal Pradesh soon," he stated. Speaking on the same, Khandu said, "We are very happy that an institution of Arunachal Pradesh - North Eastern Institute of Ayurveda and Folk Medicine Research (NEIAFMR) - is working towards harnessing the richness of folk medicine of the Northeast".

Khandu said that under the inspiring leadership of PM Modi, the institute capacity is being expanded that will not only help the traditional medicine from the region but also is an opportunity to document our age old folk medicine in a scientific manner for wider application in patient care beyond its traditional geographical reach.

"Modi has always laid emphasis on the rejuvenation of India's traditional medicine as it has proven its effectiveness to treat various ailments and enabling a better life experience. The region's rich variety of medicinal plants with great commercial potential for Pharmaceutical, Ayurvedic and aromatic sectors unlocking commercial avenues for the state as well as for the Northeast," Khandu added.

The event was also graced by the speaker of Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Pasang Dorjee; the minister of Health & Family Welfare, Women & Child Development and Tribal Affairs, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Alo Libang; the MP (Lok Sabha) for Arunachal East, Tapir Gao; MLA of 38 Pasighat East, Kaling Moyong; MLA of Pasighat West, Ninnog Ering; state information commissioner of Arunachal Pradesh, Gunjhum Haider; the vice chancellor of Arunachal Pradesh State University, Prof Tomo Riba among other dignitaries.

Cases of Covid-19

with one new death reported from Kerala in the last 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am stated. The JN.1 (BA.2.86.1.1), emerged in August 2023 in Luxembourg and is a descendant of the BA.2.86 lineage (Pirola) of SARS COV2. (PTI)

Stealth guided missile

Limited, Mumbai. INS Imphal is the first warship to have been named after a city from northeast India. INS Imphal was delivered to the navy on October 20 after the completion of a rigorous and comprehensive trial programme both in the harbour and at sea. "Subsequently, the ship successfully test-fired the extended-range supersonic BrahMos missile in November 2023, a first for any indigenous warship before commissioning, thus demonstrating the navy's thrust on combat effectiveness and confidence in its cutting-edge indigenous weapons and platforms," the navy said. Project 15B (Visakhapatnam class) is the latest in the lineage of Project 15A (Kolkata class) and Project 15 (Delhi class) indigenous destroyers with upgraded capabilities and greater indigenous content. Measuring 163 metres in length, displacing 7,400 tonnes and with 75 per cent indigenous content, Imphal is "one of the most potent warships" to have been constructed in the country, the navy said. INS Imphal is capable of achieving speeds in excess of 30 knots and is packed with sophisticated 'state of the art' weapons and sensors, such as Surface to Surface Missile and Surface to Air Missiles. The ship is fitted with a modern surveillance radar that provides target data to the gunnery weapon systems of the ship. The ship's anti-submarine warfare capabilities are provided by the indigenous developed rocket launchers, torpedo launchers and ASW helicopters. The ship is equipped to fight under Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) warfare conditions and has a high degree of automation and stealth features further enhancing her combat capability and survivability, the navy said. It added that some of the major indigenous equipment/system onboard Indigenous Medium Range Surface to Air Missiles, surface to surface missiles, torpedo tubes, anti-submarine rocket launchers, super rapid gun mount, besides combat management system, integrated platform management system, automated power management system, foldable hangar doors, helo traversing system, close-in weapon system and bow mounted sonar.

The time taken to build Imphal and for its trials is the shortest for any indigenous destroyer, the navy said. Its keel was laid on May 17, 2017 and the ship was launched into water on April 20, 2019. The ship sailed out for her maiden sea trials on April 28 2023 and has completed a comprehensive schedule of trials, both in the harbour and at sea. It was delivered to the navy on October 20 2023, within a record time frame of six months - the fastest for a ship of its size, the navy added. (PTI)

Diphu band 'Ambush'

competed in the finals on December 23. They were Ambush, Chromatic, Guns from Countryside, Hamartia from Shillong, Mana, Mirik from West Bengal, Ek Cup Chai from Sikkim and Enchanter from Uttarakhand. The band's bassist, Jitu Tokbi said the band was formed in 2015 with five members.

"We have already won several competitions in the northeastern region and outside. We have won the first runners up in the 2017 Falcon Festival held at Umrangso and the Shi Rock competition in Manipur in 2018 and the second runners up in the National Rock Contest of the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland in 2018," said Jitu Tokbi.

The band has also performed as the opening act during the Michael Angelo Batio, an American heavy metal guitarist's visit in Diphu. The band also participated in the Sun Fire Rock Contest in Bangalore and broadcast videos on MTV Indies. The band also played at the MTV Indies Rhythm 8, Dwijing Fest in Udalguri and CIT in Kokrajhar. Anbush will also perform in the golden jubilee celebration of the Karbi Youth Festival at Taralango in January 2024.

Plane grounded in France

on board, a local official had said. Makeshift beds were arranged for the stranded passengers, who were given access to toilets and showers and provided meals and hot drinks in the hall of Vatry airport, the official had said.

The flight, which was operated by Romanian charter company Legend Airlines and bound for Nicaragua, had landed at Vatry on Thursday for a technical stopover en route from Dubai when French police intervened.

French authorities launched a judicial investigation into the conditions and purpose of the trip, with a unit specialising in organised crime investigating suspected human trafficking. Nicaragua has become a popular destination for those seeking asylum in the US. As many as 96,917 Indians attempted to enter the US illegally in the financial year 2023, signalling a 51.61 per cent jump from the previous year, according to data made available by the US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP).

At least 41,770 of those Indians attempted to enter the US via the Mexican land border, CBP data shows. Flights to Nicaragua or third countries where obtaining travel documents is easy have come to be known as 'dunki' flights. (PTI)

Contd from Page 8

10. Candidates with disabilities will have to enclose certificates of disabilities issued by Govt. authority.
11. Scanned Signature.
12. Certificate of Ex-servicemen issued by the Director, Sainik Welfare Board.

Please Note:

- a. Candidates should be cautious while submitting the online application as once the application is submitted, they will not be allowed to re-submit any online documents or application for the second time.
- b. After successful submission of the online form, candidates shall take a print out of the form and submit the same along-with self-attested copies of mark-sheets and certificates in support of educational qualification, caste, disability, B.Ed. and co-curricular activities at the time of document verification before the District Selection Committee. Candidates must also produce original documents that have been uploaded with the online application at the time of physical verification of documents.
- c. After submitting the online application form, the candidates will get a Unique Number against the submitted application and will keep the printout of the unique Number for all future references.
- d. Candidates may note that failing to qualify in Screening / Verification of documents will result cancellation of their candidature.
- e. The office will not be responsible for any lapse in submission of online application due to any technical problem.
- f. Application seeking condonation / relaxation of any criteria should be made to appropriate authority as per applicable norms at least 7 days prior to filling up of online applications.
- g. In case of PWD candidates, screening of selected candidates will be done before appointment by the competent authority.
- h. The following self-attested coloured copies of certificates and documents to be submitted online
 - i. Mark sheet of HSLC, HSSLC and BA/ B. Sc./B.Com.
 - ii. Pass Certificate of HSLC, HSSLC and BA/ B. Sc. / B.Com.
 - iii. Pass Certificate / Admit Card of HSLC in support of age.
 - iv. Certificate and Mark sheet of B.Ed.
 - v. Certificates in support of Schedule Caste / Schedule Tribe (Plains or Hills) / OBC / MOBC.
 - vi. Candidates with disabilities will have to enclose certificates of disabilities issued by Govt. authority.
 - vii. Certificate of NCC (B & C Category only).
 - viii. Certificate of recognized Sports at national level representing Assam.
 - ix. Certificate of Achievements in fine arts and cultural activities representing the state officially at national level.
 - x. Certificate of Ex-servicemen issued by the Director, Sainik Welfare Board.

Authorities reserve the rights to cancel the candidature of any candidate as and when any ineligibility condition is detected. If any information declared by the candidate is found to be false at any stage, the candidate will be penalized as per prevailing laws/rules. The decision of the authority as to the eligibility or otherwise of a candidate shall be final.

Sd/-
Director of Secondary Education, Assam
Kahilipara, Guwahati-781019

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'DUNKI' EARNS ₹ 256.40 CRORE WORLDWIDE

MUMBAI, Dec 26: Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Dunki" has added ₹ 45.37 crore to its worldwide gross box office collection (GBOC), taking the comedy drama's total earnings to ₹ 256.40 crore within five days of its release.

Based on real incidents, the Hindi film is directed by Rajkumar Hirani, who has co-written the story with Abhijata Joshi and Kanika Dhillon. It was released in theatres on Thursday.

Production house Red Chillies Entertainment on Tuesday shared the box office update on its official X page.

"Yeh kahani badi pyaari hai. Tabhi toh... aapka pyaar milna jaari hai," the banner said in the post, which also stated that the film had earned ₹ 256.40 crore worldwide in GBOC.

Unlike his previous two 2023 films "Pathaan" and "Jawan", which earned over ₹ 1,000 crore each worldwide, "Dunki" has not been able to make a splash at the ticket window and has been receiving

mixed reviews.

The film, based on an illegal immigration technique 'donkey flight', also stars Taapsee Pannu, Vicky Kaushal, Boman Irani, Vikram Kochhar and Anil Grover.

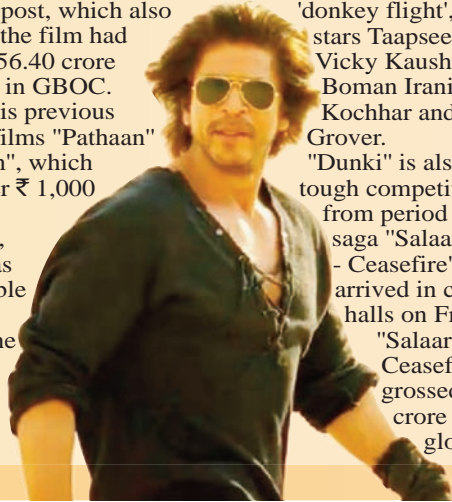
"Dunki" is also facing tough competition from period action saga "Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire", which arrived in cinema halls on Friday.

"Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire" has grossed ₹ 402 crore at the global box

office in its opening weekend, according to Hombale Films. The makers of the Prabhas and Prithviraj Sukumaran-starrer claim the movie earned ₹ 178.7 crore, registering the record for the best opening day figures for any Indian title in 2023.

The day one domestic earnings of "Dunki" stood at ₹ 30 crore nett, which was significantly lower than both "Pathaan" and "Jawan", which had amassed ₹ 55 crore and ₹ 65.5 crore nett on their opening days in India, respectively.

"Dunki" is also presented by JIO Studios and Rajkumar Hirani Films. (PTI)



Singer Dua Lipa visits Humayun's Tomb, Bangla Sahib Gurdwara with family

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Pop singer Dua Lipa, who is on a vacation in India, on Tuesday visited the Humayun's Tomb and Bangla Sahib Gurdwara along with her family.

Lipa's father Dukagjin Lipa shared a series of photographs and a video on Instagram. "The Indian journey starts at New Delhi #humayunstomb," he captioned the post. The 28-year-old singer, popular for songs such as "Levitating" and "Houdini", recently shared pictures from her stay in Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

"Happy Holidays from me to youuuuu, sending love, light health and happiness for the year ahead (sic)" Lipa wrote in the caption of the pictures.

This is not her first visit to India. She last came to the country in November 2019 for a music festival in Mumbai. (PTI)



Ronit, Neelam Bose Roy renew vows on 20th wedding anniversary

MUMBAI, Dec 26: Actor couple Ronit Bose Roy and Neelam Bose Roy tied the knot once again as they celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary in an intimate ceremony. According to Ronit's Instagram posts, they got married at their home temple. "Doosri baar toh kya, hazaron baar byaah tujhi se karoon! (I'll marry you a thousand times over) Happiest 20th anniversary my love," the "Kasautii Zindagii Kay" actor captioned a montage of the ceremony. Neelam, embracing the role of a quintessential bride, radiated elegance in a traditional red lehenga. She embodied the timeless charm of Indian matrimony. Ronit, ever the romantic, playfully captioned one of the photos with, "Mujhse shaadi karogii??? Phir Se? (Will you marry me again)," showcasing his infectious enthusiasm for this remarkable milestone. As the actor continued to share more glimpses of the ceremony, he labeled it as "Renewing our vows: Part 2". This indicated the significance of this momentous event in their journey of togetherness. Ronit Roy's notable contributions to the Indian television industry include his portrayal of Rishabh Bajaj in "Kasautii Zindagii Kay" and the iconic character Mihir Virani in "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi." From 2009 to 2011, Ronit captivated audiences with his stellar performance as Dharamraj in NDTV Imagine's "Bandini". It earned him accolades for his portrayal of a crude and ruthless diamond merchant. Beyond the glitz and glamour of showbiz, Ronit Roy and Neelam Bose Roy's enduring love story continues to inspire. (AGENCIES)



Dino Morea shares pictures with PM on Christmas lunch

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Actor-model Dino Morea on Tuesday expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi for inviting him and other members of the Christian community to his residence here on the occasion of Christmas.

The prime minister hosted a Christmas lunch for the community at 7, Lok Kalyan Marg, on Monday.

Morea, known for films such as "Raaz", "Aksar" and "Pyaar Mein Kabhi

Kabhi", shared a series of pictures with the PM on his official Instagram page.

"Christmas lunch was beautiful this year. Dear Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister, @narendramodiji, thank you for inviting us to your home for a lovely Christmas lunch. "To meet you and listen to you speak, and experience how gracious a host you are has been truly memorable. Thank you Sir," the actor wrote. Morea was most recently seen in the Malayalam film "Bandra". (PTI)



Feel fortunate I can relate to a wide spectrum of people: Adarsh Gourav

MUMBAI, Dec 26: Moving from a small town to a mega city like Mumbai was challenging but Adarsh Gourav believes it honed him as an actor by giving him a chance to connect with people from different walks of life. The Jamshedpur-born actor made his acting debut as a child star in "My Name is Khan" and went on to feature in Sridevi-starrer "Mom" before finding international fame with his lead role in "The White Tiger".

He currently stars in "Kho Gaye Hum Kahan", a story of three friends navigating life and romance in the age of social media.

"I had a fairly simple life. Then I was overnight forced to move to Mumbai, which was never planned. I had to adapt to a completely new city, to take in its culture, to take its way of life. I feel that it gave me a wide per-

spective of life in general, like what it is to come from a small town and experience big city life," Gourav told PTI in an interview.

The actor, who has also starred in TVF's teen comedy series, "Hostel Daze" and Netflix show "Guns and Gulaabs", looks back at his journey from small town India to a big city to international territories with fondness.

"I feel fortunate to meet people from different walks of life and I feel I'm naturally an empathetic person. So, I can relate to a wide spectrum of people. Like, if I'm playing an Indian-American in 'Alien', or playing Balram in 'A White Tiger' or Neil Pereira from 'Bandra' in 'Kho Gaye Hum Kahan', they are all different from me but I can relate to all of these characters. It doesn't feel like impossibility," he said. Also starring Ananya Panday and Siddhant

Chaturvedi, "Kho Gaye Hum Kahan" is streaming on Netflix. Gourav plays the role of callisthenics instructor in the film, which is produced by Excel Entertainment's Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar and Tiger Baby's Reema Kagti and Zoya Akhtar, and directed by debutant director Arjun Varain Singh.

The actor, 29, said it was fun working with people of similar age.

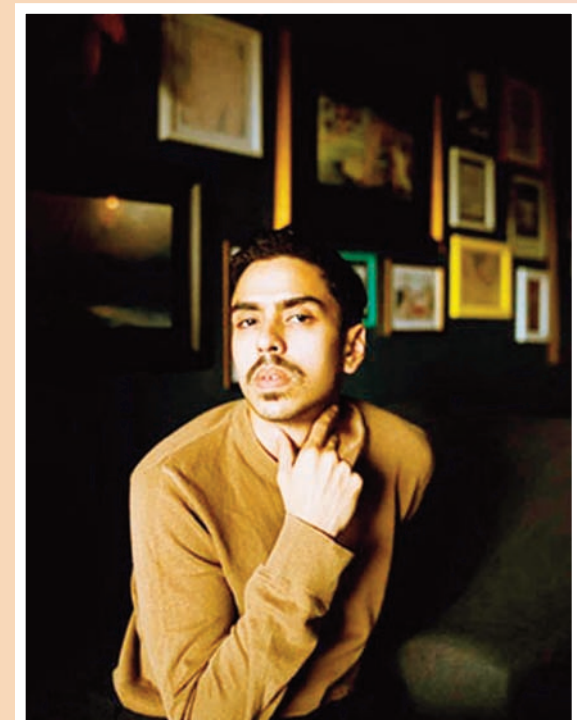
"My biggest motivation (to do the film) was that I got to work on my body, which I never had, and it felt really good. I felt really sexy and I got to work with Tiger Baby, Arjun, who was super clear about his vision and how he wanted to execute it. Apart from 'Hostel Daze' I've never worked with people who are my age and are my contemporaries," Gourav said.

In the film, his character of Neil Pereira is a

social media influencer who connects with his fans and followers through his fitness journey.

Asked how important social media is for young actors, Gourav said it can be a tool to market oneself in the beginning.

"When you are starting out, and when people don't know and nobody knows where you come from, you need to market yourself to some extent. That's (social media) the only way you can market yourself, like to be on Instagram and Twitter and tell the world, 'Hey, this is who I'm, this is what I do, these are the things that I'm interested in'." Gourav's next project is the "Alien" prequel series, which is produced by veteran Hollywood filmmaker Ridley Scott. The Indian actor stars alongside Sydney Chandler, Kit Young, Alex Lawther, Samuel Blenkin and Essie Davis. (PTI)



FIFA threatens to suspend Brazil over confederation president's removal by court

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 26: FIFA warned Brazil on Sunday it could suspend its national teams and clubs from international competitions if an intervention by its soccer body leads to the election of a new president in January.

FIFA said in a letter to a Brazilian soccer executive that the country's soccer body CBF could face suspension if it does not heed its call to wait and instead holds a swift election to replace Ednaldo Rodrigues as president regardless. The document was obtained by The Associated Press. A Rio de Janeiro court removed Rodrigues and all his appointees at CBF from office on Dec. 7 due to irregularities in his election last year. Brazil's two highest courts upheld that ruling last week.

Soccer's governing body FIFA historically rejects government and third-party interference in its member associations, which ultimately could leave five-time World Cup winners Brazil out of major competitions until the crisis is solved.

The Rio court ruling also named José Perdiz, the head of Brazil's top sports court, as an intervener to organize new elections for the presidency within 30 working days. FIFA said in previous letters to CBF it considers the intervention to be undue.

Sunday's letter was signed by FIFA's Kenny Jean-Marie, its chief members' association officer, and CONMEBOL's deputy secretary-general, Monserrat Jiménez García.

FIFA and South American soccer



body CONMEBOL also said in the letter they will form a commission to discuss the matter in Brazil on Jan. 8.

"FIFA and CONMEBOL would like to strongly emphasize that, until such mission takes place, no decision affecting CBF, including any elections or call for elections, shall be taken. Should this not be respected, FIFA will have no other option but to submit the matter to its relevant decision-making body for consideration and decision, which might also include a suspension," the letter said.

"For the sake of good order, we would also like to underline that

should CBF be eventually suspended by the relevant FIFA body, it would lose all of its membership rights with immediate effect and until the suspension is lifted by FIFA. This would also mean that CBF representative and clubs teams would no longer be entitled to take part in any international competition while it is suspended," it added.

The document also says that any irregular interference in its member associations "can lead to sanctions as provided for in the FIFA Statutes, including a suspension, and this even if a third-party influence was/is not the fault of the member association concerned."

Perdiz said in a statement he sees FIFA's letter "as a positive sign." He also added he will "call for the elections within the established deadline, with the transparency and integrity that are demanded." Spokespersons for Rodrigues did not respond to a request for comment from the AP.

Rodrigues first took the job as interim president in 2021 after predecessor Rogério Caboclo was suspended. Local media reported he is currently in negotiations with other Brazilian soccer executives to either bid again for the presidency in new elections or to support another candidate. (AP)

Ratcliffe wants struggling Man United back at the top of English and European soccer

MANCHESTER, ENGLAND, Dec 26: British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe has finally got his hands on Manchester United after securing a stake of up to 25% in the Premier League club.

Ratcliffe's interest in sports — and soccer in particular — is longstanding. The 71-year-old owner of petrochemicals giant has been a United fan since childhood, and supporters will like his stated ambitions.

"We all want to see Manchester United back where we belong, at the very top of English, European and world football," Ratcliffe said Sunday after a deal, subject to Premier League approval, was confirmed following lengthy negotiations with the Glazer family, United's American owners.

The announcement comes after moves elsewhere in European soccer that could have seen Ratcliffe take control of one of United's main Premier League rivals as recently as last year.

Ratcliffe, one of the richest people in Britain, had initially looked to buy the Glazers' controlling stake of around 69%, but eventually agreed to become a minority shareholder.

He had to see off competition from Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, who withdrew in October from the bidding process after failing to agree a deal for a complete takeover.

Ratcliffe made a surprise late bid for Premier League club Chelsea in 2022, despite not being involved in a months-long bidding process.

A consortium led by Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital had already seen off competition — from the likes of Chicago Cubs owner the Ricketts family, and Boston Celtics co-owner Steve



Pagliuca — to enter exclusive talks to buy out former Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich when Ratcliffe made his move.

Despite his long-standing support of United being well-publicized, Ratcliffe was adamant his interest was serious.

"We are British and have great intentions for Chelsea," he said at the time. Ultimately his bid came too late to disrupt Boehly and Clearlake's takeover.

Later that year, Ratcliffe let it be known that was interested in buying United as rumors of a Glazer sale surfaced.

He then altered that stance.

"Our position has developed since the summer and we are now focusing our efforts in Nice and raising our ambitions for the club to make them into a top-tier club in France to compete with PSG," INEOS said in a statement. "This would represent much better value for our investment than buying one of the top-tier Premier League clubs."

Then came the Glazers' announcement that they would be

open to selling, and Ratcliffe launched a bid to buy out the Americans' stake.

While Ratcliffe is tasked with helping to make United competitive again in the Premier League — a competition it once utterly dominated — his Nice side is impressing in the south of France.

Ratcliffe completed the takeover of Nice four years ago. After some inconsistent seasons, Nice, under its philosophy-studying Italian coach Francesco Farioli, is challenging defending champion Paris Saint-Germain.

Nice is second in the French league, five points behind leader PSG after 17 rounds.

So Nice can realistically target second place and an automatic spot in next season's Champions League.

But that could be problematic. UEFA rules in place for more than 20 years do not allow two clubs where the same owner has "decisive influence" on how they are run to both enter European competitions if they could cross paths at any point in the season. (AP)

Liverpool star Mohamed Salah 'shares pain' of grieving families at Christmas amid Israel-Hamas war



LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND, Dec 26: Liverpool soccer star Mohamed Salah says he "shares the pain" of grieving families at Christmas amid the Israel-Hamas war. The Egypt international posted a message on X, formerly known as Twitter,

saying: "Christmas is a time when families get together and celebrate. "With the brutal war going on in the Middle East, especially the death and destruction in Gaza, this year we get to Christmas with very heavy hearts and we

share the pain of those families who are grieving the loss of their loved ones. "Please do not forget them and do not get used to their suffering. Merry Christmas." Egypt has floated an ambitious plan to end the war. (AP)

Eagles end 3-game skid, keep NFC East title hopes alive

PHILADELPHIA, Dec 26: Yes, of course, Jalen Hurts and coach Nick Sirianni heard the booming chants that echoed throughout the Linc from Eagles fans fed up with the pass-heavy offense that stalled in the second half.

"Run the ball! Run the ball!" "I think I'd hear that too even if I had a double headset on," Sirianni cracked.

No, of course, Hurts, Sirianni and offensive coordinator Brian Johnson weren't going to surrender to the whims of fickle fans and their play-calling proposal from way up in the cheap seats.

The Eagles eventually listened, and fans went wild when Kenneth Gainwell ripped off a 22-yard run and D'Andre Swift scored on a 5-yard run — yes, a rushing score that kept their chance of an NFC East title alive.

Hurts scored on the "tush push" that gave him the NFL record for most rushing touchdowns by a quarterback in a season and he threw for 301 yards and a touchdown to lead the Philadelphia Eagles past the New York Giants 33-25 on Monday night.

They even kept the fans happy — even if the Eagles weren't too pleased with the home crowd.

"They're supposed to get loud for the defense," Hurts said. (AP)

Lamar Jackson leads the Ravens past the 49ers 33-19 in a showdown of the top 2 teams

SANTA CLARA, CALIF. Dec 26: If the rare late-season matchup between the top teams in the NFL was a statement game, Lamar Jackson and the Baltimore Ravens delivered a loud one to the rest of the league.

Jackson threw two touchdown passes in a span of 18 seconds in the third quarter and the Ravens intercepted Brock Purdy four times in a 33-19 victory over the San Francisco 49ers on Monday night. "Our guys work hard. They compete hard. Everybody wants to be respected," coach John Harbaugh said. "There's one way to be respected, and that's to go out there and earn that." Jackson and the Ravens (12-3) turned a highly anticipated matchup between the top two teams in the NFL into a lopsided win with strong performances on both sides of the ball.

Kyle Hamilton and the defense set the tone early by intercepting Purdy on three of the first four drives of the game for the 49ers (11-4) before Jackson

started to take over.

He scrambled 30 yards to set up a field goal on the final play of the first half to give the Ravens a 16-12 lead and then helped put the game away early in the third quarter.

After Baltimore forced a punt on the opening drive of the second half, Jackson capped a drive by throwing a 6-yard touchdown pass to Nelson Agholor.

Purdy then was intercepted by Patrick Queen on the next play from scrimmage. Jackson immediately turned that into another score with a 9-yard TD pass to Zay Flowers that made it 30-12. "I thought Lamar had an MVP performance tonight," Harbaugh said. "It takes a team to create a performance like that, but it takes a player to play at that level, to play at an MVP level, it takes a player to play that way. Lamar was all over the field." Jackson threw for 252 yards, ran for 45 more and vaulted past Purdy to become the MVP favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook. His only real

mishap came when he got called for intentional grounding in the end zone after nearly tripping over the umpire, leading to a safety in the first quarter.

"We got the W," Jackson said. "I don't really care about performance. I just want to win. That's what happened tonight. On Christmas, I got my gift."

Purdy had his roughest game as a pro, becoming the first 49ers quarterback to throw four interceptions in a game since Colin Kaepernick in 2015, adding a few more near interceptions and being unable to generate the big plays that made him the league's most efficient quarterback coming into the game. Purdy finished 18 for 32 for 255 yards before getting replaced by Sam Darnold after getting a stinger in the fourth quarter. "I didn't mind his demeanor," coach Kyle Shanahan said about Purdy. "He stayed in there and kept battling. Our whole team struggled there in the second half, so it wasn't just him." (AP)

India will need a little bit of luck to win series in South African conditions, says Rahul Dravid

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: India head coach Rahul Dravid on Tuesday said his team would not mind a bit of "luck" going its way as it aims to win a maiden Test series in South Africa and breach its 'final frontier' after 31 years of attempting.

Having first visited South Africa in 1992, India have made seven more tours and won four Tests but are yet to win a series, even though the Asian giants though have won Test series in England, Australia and New Zealand.

"We (have) come close a couple of times and we have played some good cricket here... just a few critical moments we have not been able to, maybe, get over the line, get the 34-40-50 runs that you probably need to be able to... to compete here," Dravid told Star Sports before the start of the opening Test at SuperSport Park.

The batting great said the team will take a lot of confidence from the manner in which it bowled on

the last tour two years ago, when India squandered a 1-0 advantage to lose the three-match rubber.

"Having said that, we looked at a lot of stuff and the way we bowled, I thought we bowled really well in the last series which gives us a lot of confidence that we have the ability to take 20 wickets here with the kind of attack that we have."

Dravid added, "You need a little bit of luck as well in these conditions, there are lot of plays and misses, you want to be the one playing and missing, and hopefully, the opposition edging those same ones. I think there is a little bit of luck involved."

"But, as long as you do your skills well and make sure that you are putting the ball in the right area, as batting with a certain level of discipline and patience when it is required, looking to capitalise when the ball gets a little bit softer and you are ahead of the game and recognising that you you are never 'in' in these

kinds of conditions in South Africa..."

"You might feel that you are in when batting on 34-40, but really, if you can convert that into a much more significant score that makes a big difference."

"So little things like that you need to get right against a really good team like South Africa, very strong team in these conditions, who know how to play well here. I hope that, over the course of the next two Test matches, we will be able to do that."

Dravid was also asked about seamer Prasidh Krishna who made his Test debut on Tuesday. The head coach called him a "promising prospect".

"Prasidh is a promising prospect, but we have to be realistic that this is his first Test match. He has not had a lot of first-class cricket to fall back on because of a number of reasons."

"But I am hoping he has a good game and enjoys himself. It is such a lovely moment when we



Having first visited South Africa in 1992, India have made seven more tours and won four Tests but are yet to win a series, even though the Asian giants though have won Test series in England, Australia and New Zealand. The batting great said the team will take a lot of confidence from the manner in which it bowled on the last tour two years ago, when India squandered a 1-0 advantage to lose the three-match rubber

to lose the three-match rubber

to lose the three-match rubber

to lose the three-match rubber

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to lose the three-match rubber

Rabada rattles India with a fifer, visitors reach 176 for 7 at tea



CENTURION, Dec 26: Kagiso Rabada bowled two of the most intimidating and incisive spells witnessed in recent times to completely rock the Indian batting line-up, which struggled to 176 for 7 at tea on the opening day of the first Test against South Africa here Tuesday.

One of the finest fast bowlers in contemporary cricket, Rabada (5/41 in 15 overs) bowled an absolute peach to dismiss Virat Kohli (38 off 64 balls) with the old ball after having bounced out Indian skipper Rohit Sharma (5) in his first spell.

In between, Shreyas Iyer (31 off 50 balls), who lived dangerously, got a shooter that completely exposed his defence.

Rabada's 14th five-wicket haul in Tests

also comprised the scalp of Ravichandran Ashwin, who was completely rocked by extra bounce, and Shardul Thakur (24), who after a gutsy effort was softened by a bouncer and then taken out with a length delivery.

KL Rahul (33 batting) looked solid but is slowly running out of partners as a first innings score of 250 looks a distant reality now.

Rabada, who was given a break from white ball leg, didn't need time to hit the rhythm as he bowled long spells, got a disconcerting bounce along with late swing that had the Indian batters in complete tangle.

The manner in which Kohli was forced into making a mistake was an education for

young pacers.

Rabada bowled a couple of incoming deliveries to peg him on the backfoot and then unleashed his lethal weapon.

He made a nearly 31-over-old Kookaburra to move in and kept it on fuller length as Kohli shaped himself to play inside the line of the delivery.

But to his amazement, the ball pitched and deviated late to take the outside edge en route to keeper Kyle Verreynne's hands.

Kohli got a massive reprieve in the first session when he was on four as Tony de Zorzi dropped a dolly at square leg off debutant Nandre Burger (2/39) but he then carried out the repair work with Iyer.

At the toss, Temba Bavuma took the ex-

pected decision of bowling first and his bowlers did make best use of the conditions during that first hour.

The steep tennis-ball like bounce was always going to create problems for the star-studded Indian line-up which for the last six months has played only white ball formats.

The compulsive puller that Rohit is, his opposite number Bavuma stationed a long leg like all international skippers deploy across formats.

Having bowled in and around off-stump, Rabada dug one short but the height was just above waist which allowed Rohit to take the bait going for the pull.

Burger standing at least 10 metres from the long-leg boundary had to just complete the formalities. Young Jaiswal, all of two Tests, was initially playing close to his body, which allowed any of the away going deliveries to just miss his bat.

He did clip Rabada through mid-wicket and also square cut Burger on the rise for boundaries.

Bowling slightly on the fourth stump channel, the left-arm paceman altered his line and pitched one on fuller length on the off-stump.

The ball held its line and enticed Jaiswal to go for a drive and the nick was accepted by Verreynne behind the stumps.

But the delivery that Burger bowled to dismiss Gill was a classic set-up.

He kept the stylish right-hander quiet with back-of-length deliveries on the middle-leg line, not giving him any room to play on the off-side.

Just like New Zealand left-earmer Neil Wagner relentlessly bowls the rib-cage line to right-handers, Burger changed his tactic and kept one right below Gill's arm-pit and the batter didn't have enough reaction time to prevent it from brushing his gloves on its way to the keeper's gloves. (PTI)

Vinesh Phogat returns Khel Ratna, Arjuna Award



NEW DELHI, Dec 26: World Championship medalist Vinesh Phogat on Tuesday returned her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award to the government protesting against the election of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh-loyalist Sanjay Singh as the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president, the wrestler wrote in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Vinesh's decision comes days after Olympic medalist Bajrang Punia and Deaflympics champion Virender Singh Yadav returned their Padma Shri awards.

"I am returning my Major Dhyanchand Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award," Vinesh announced through a letter that she posted in her X (formerly Twitter) account.

On Thursday, Sanjay Singh 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.

The wrestlers had demanded that no close associate of Brij Bhushan should enter the WFI administration.

Following the election, Rio Olympics bronze medalist Sakshi Malik announced that she would quit the sport.

However, the Sports Ministry had later suspended the newly-elected panel for not following the provisions of its own constitution while taking decisions and also asked the IOA to constitute an ad-hoc panel to manage the affairs of the sports body.

In suspending the fresh panel, the government cited its "hasty announcement" of organising the U-15 and U-20 nationals "without following due procedure and not giving sufficient notice to wrestlers" for preparations. (PTI)

If Proteas play 2 Tests a year how will Rabada reach 400 wickets, fumes Ntini



CENTURION, Dec 26: Kagiso Rabada is already in the pantheon of great South African fast bowlers, but if the Proteas play only a limited number of Tests a year, he can never surpass Dale Steyn's record of 439 wickets, reckoned Makhaya Ntini on Tuesday.

In fact, the on-going first Test against India here is only their third traditional format match in 2023.

Ntini, one of the pace greats from SA with 390 Test victims, was asked if Rabada, who now has 285 scalps can be termed among the stalwarts such as Allan Donald, Shaun Pollock, Steyn and Ntini himself.

"He is already up there (among greats). When you talk about those guys, when you talk about those bowlers, they have passed the 400-mark and KG (Rabada) is chasing the 300-mark. But we have got a massive problem.

"You are playing two Test matches a year and what is that? Do you think this guy (Rabada) can hold up till he gets to that milestone," Ntini, now a noted commentator, told PTI.

"It's not going to be easy for the nature of games (number of matches and formats) that is being given to South Africa to play against other countries," he said, citing the problem of Proteas playing just three Tests this year.

Then there is the mushrooming T20 leagues and the money they carry. Young SA pacer Gerald Coetzee attracted ₹ 5.60 crore (over a million SA Rands) from IPL outfit Mumbai Indians recently in the auction.

So, is Test cricket's priority shrinking? Ntini made no bones about how he looked at the situation.

"No! Your country is your priority. Take the example of Kagiso. How many Test matches has he played and he still continues to play IPL.

If Gerald Coetzee today thinks that he is getting a million rands and what he should do now, that will be his biggest mistake," said Ntini.

"When you continue playing Test matches, you get more understanding of the game because in

Tess, you get five days to consistently put the ball in right areas, so when you go to IPL, you know how to put the ball in right areas," he said.

Ntini is an old school person, who still believes in Test cricket's value.

"We were taught Test matches give you recognition throughout the world. If I want to bowl 10 overs and go for seven runs, they will call you expensive.

But in a Test match, you will have more time to come back. Your fitness is tested. In ODIs, you bowl six overs and its okay. In T20s, you bowl 2 overs, it can be okay. Where will you be recognised?"

So, has any IPL team ever approached him? "No IPL team has ever approached me. I haven't been approached here at home," pat comes the reply.

Ntini feels, perhaps, his outspoken nature has caused the trouble. "Man, I would never know. From my side of things, I am available to be part and parcel of the system but they don't see it that well. Some people don't like being outspoken," he quipped.

Ntini doesn't like interference in his work and that's the reason he could never be an establishment man.

"If I say to you 'My office is my office and I will come to you when I need you, and you can't barge into my office and tell me what to do, so if I don't do what you tell me to do, you are going to fire me,'" he said.

Why is Bumrah special? Having played against some quality fast bowlers like Javagal Srinath and Zaheer Khan during his playing days, Ntini has no qualms in admitting that Jasprit Bumrah is special.

"Look where Bumrah releases the ball. He releases the ball from the top of his head. So, he gets the angle to bring the ball back in. He can get deliveries to straighten after pitching.

I don't know if he has powerful wrists and action is always the same, that's how beautiful it is. His yorkers, he doesn't miss any, those are the things everyone gets to enjoy. India isn't the team without Bumrah," he added. (PTI)

I envy today's athletes because I was in wrong era: Anju Bobby George

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: India's first ever World Athletics Championship medalist Anju Bobby George says that she competed "in the wrong era", praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's eagerness for promoting and transforming sports in the country.

Speaking at a programme organised at the PM's residence on Christmas, the legendary long jumper said: "As a sportsperson, I was here for almost 25 years and I'm seeing a lot of changes. When I got India's first global medal 20 years ago, even my department was not ready to give me a promotion.

"But after Neeraj (Chopra) got a medal, I have seen the changes the way we are celebrating... I envy them because I was in the wrong era," Anju said during the event.

Anju, who won a bronze medal in the women's long jump at the 2003 World Championships in Athletics in Paris, spoke about



women empowerment and also how the country now also celebrates athletes' accomplishments. "Women empowerment is not just a word now. Every Indian girl is ready to dream and they know their dreams will come true," she said.

The PM interacted with the Christian community on the occasion of Christmas, and Anju was among the prominent persons who attended the event.

"I think in the near future, we will be at the top (of sports world)," she said.

Among her other achievements, Anju bagged a gold medal at the 2003 Afro-Asian Games and achieved her personal best of 6.83m at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, which brought her the fifth position.

She was awarded the Arjuna Award in 2002, Khel Ratna in 2003 and the Padma Shri, the fourth-highest civilian award, in 2004. (PTI)

Assam Premier Club Cricket: Demow CC beat Gypsy Club

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Dec 26: Demow Cricket Club defeated Gypsy Club by five wickets in Tuesday's match of the Premier Club Cricket Championship played in Durbur Field here. In reply to Gypsy Club's 122/10, Demow CC made 124 losing 5 wickets.

In an earlier match on Sunday, Griffon club defeated Gyenz by 111 runs. Griffon made 254/6 and bundled out Gyenz Club in 141/9. In another match on Monday, Finnix Club defeated Amguri Coaching Centre by 5 wickets.

In the inaugural match, Griffon Club defeated Gayenz Club by 115 runs. Opting to bat first Griffon scored a comfortable 256 runs losing 6 wickets in the allotted 30 overs while Gayenz scored only 141 runs losing 9 wickets in 26.7 overs. Sunny Parasharof Griffon Club was adjudged M-o-M.

Manoj Kumar Borthakur, vice president, Sivasagar Sports Association, inaugurated the zonal matches in Sivasagar by hoisting the flag.

Indian chess players' valuables stolen after multiple room break-ins in Spain

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Some of the frontline Indian chess players, including GM Sankalp Gupta, went through a torrid time while participating in the recent Sunway International chess tournament at Sitges, Spain, as they lost several valuables after break-ins at their apartments.

The train of unsavoury incidents started on December 19 with a break-in at the Apollo apartment, a property provided by the organisers for participants, where International Master Dushyant Sharma and Sankalp were sharing the accommodation.

This break-in happened when the duo was out of their room and Dushyant lost his passport, laptop and cash from the room.

Though Sankalp was robbed of his laptop and air-pods, his passport was safe.

But that was not the end of miseries for them as the translator interpreted wrongly that the players left the doors and windows open, hinting that the burglary was because of their negligence.

"We rectified this mistake in the report (to the organisers) later," said Dushyant. (PTI)



Hockey India names 34 probables for women's national camp

BENGALURU, Dec 26: A core group of 34 players will take part in a senior women's hockey coaching camp starting here on Wednesday, aiming to bolster preparations for the Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi and the Hockey5s World Cup.

The Indian players will be joining the camp after a short break from the trip to Spain after playing against Belgium, Germany, Ireland and the hosts in the 5 Nations Tournament.

The Olympic Qualifiers are set to be played in Ranchi from January 13-19 in which India are placed in Pool B along with New Zealand, Italy and the United States of America.

The Pool A consists of Germany, Japan, Chile and the Czech Republic.

India had produced a dominating performance in the Jharkhand

Women's Asian Champions Trophy in Ranchi and will be returning to their happy hunting ground hoping to continue with their momentum.

"The 5 Nations Tournament served as a good litmus test ahead of the Olympic Qualifiers. We identified areas for improvement, and we will use this festive period to dot all the i's and cross the t's," said Janneke Schopman.

"The squad is eager to return to Ranchi after their triumph in the Asian Champions Trophy. With the little time left, we will focus on refining our game to ensure we are in the best position — physically, tactically, and mentally — to secure qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympics."

Team India will then proceed to Muscat, Oman, wherein they will take

part in the Hockey5s World Cup from January 24-27.

India squad: Savita, Rajani Etmarmaru, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Bansari Solanki.

Defenders: Deep Grace Ekka, Gurjit Kaur, Nikki Pradhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary, Akshata Abaso Dhekale, Jyoti Chhatrari, Mahima Chaudhary.

Midfielders: Nisha, Salima Tete, Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Jyoti, Navjot Kaur, Monika, Mariana Kujur, Sonika, Neha, Baljeet Kaur, Reena Khokhar, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Ajmita Kujur.

Forwards: Lalremisiami, Navneet Kaur, Vandana Katariya, Sharmila Devi, Deepika, Sangita Kumari, Muntaz Khan, Sunelita Toppo, Beauty Dungdung. (PTI)

SA captain Bavuma walks off with hamstring strain, under medical evaluation



CENTURION, Dec 26: South Africa captain Temba Bavuma's participation in the on-going first Test against India was thrown into jeopardy after he limped off the field with a left hamstring strain here on Tuesday.

Bavuma went out of the field in the 20th over after chasing a drive from Virat Kohli off left-arm pacer Marco Jansen.

"Scans have revealed a left hamstring strain. He (Bavuma) will undergo daily medical evaluations to determine his participation in the match," said an update from Cricket South Africa (CSA).

Bavuma hobbled midway through that chase via extra cover region and soon walked off the ground with the help of the South African physio.

Dean Elgar, who is retiring after this series, stood-in as captain in the absence of Bavuma.

Wiaan Mulder replaced Bavuma on the field. (PTI)