

- Over 40 acres of poppy cultivation destroyed in Manipur
- Indian Army commemorates 52 years of victory in 1971 in NE states
- Citizens must remain healthy for India to become 3rd largest economy: VP Dhankhar
- INDIA bloc's immediate task is to win 2024 Lok Sabha elections: P Chidambaram

Explore new avenues in higher education for brighter future: Himanta

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday urged students to consider venturing into unconventional subjects and streams for higher education.

Emphasizing abundant opportunities for a promising career, Sarma advised students to maintain an optimistic perspective on their educational journey. He said this while addressing a gathering in Jalukbari LAC, where he also laid the foundation stone of Bongshar mini stadium.

"He appealed to the students to explore the possibilities of pursuing higher education in newer subjects and streams in a departure from the conventional subjects. Stating that there are enough opportunities for all to have a bright career, he asked the students to remain optimistic in their outlook,"



an official statement quoted him as saying. The contrast between the figures this year and that of the year 2002 when Jalukbari LAC students were felicitated for the first time by him is a reflection of the progress the area has managed to achieve in the realm of education, the statement added. Sarma congratulated the parents of the meritorious students for the exceptional results displayed by their wards in the board examinations. The chief minister appealed to the students who shall be enrolling into higher secondary courses to continue their educational journey with a sense of responsibility and dedication.

The chief minister expressed happiness over the large number of students from Jalukbari LAC who secured a minimum of first division in the last (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

KAAC CEM sounds election bugle

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, Dec 17: The chief executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Tuliram Ranghang on Sunday sounded the election bugle at a huge rally of the ruling BJP in Namati constituency of Karbi Anglong District Autonomous Council. Chief executive member Tuliram Ranghang was the chief guest at a huge election campaign rally of the BJP in Akreg of Namati constituency. He presented an account of various development works in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. He promised to resolve the issues of the letter completely. The chief executive member also promised to increase the salaries of government village headmen by ₹ 1,000 from 2024 and also assured to solve the problems of Howraghat Junior College.

3rd annual conference of ASMAWA held in Langhin

HT Bureau

HOWRAGHAT, Dec 17: The 3rd Annual Convention of Assam State Mini Anganwadi Association, affiliated to the country's oldest labor organisation, AITUC, was held at the public wedding hall in Langhin town on Saturday.

After the flag hoisting ceremony, a general council meeting was held among the Assam State Mini Anganwadi workers from various districts of the state. The meeting was chaired by the Presidential Board and was attended by AITUC members Fani Das, Ramen Das and Ratul Bora.

The meeting also adopted several important resolutions and demanded regularisation of jobs of Assam State Mini Anganwadi workers.

In the meeting, a new executive committee of 31 members was formed with Biju Mohanta as president, Debeshwari Boro as executive president and Prabha Sandiky as secretary.

Assam Guv commends Lachit Barphukan's heroism and patriotism

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Saturday lauded the indomitable spirit and patriotism of Lachit Barphukan, recognising him as a great hero whose legacy continues to inspire citizens to work for the protection of "Maa Bharati."

He said this while attended the concluding ceremony of the 15-month long celebration of the 400th birth anniversary of Bir Lachit Barphukan and 11th triennial state conference of Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti, Assam at Borbari here in Guwahati.

"Lachit Barphukan was a great hero whose unwavering patriotism inspires all the countrymen to work for the protection of Maa Bharati", he added.

Commending, Lachit's heroic efforts in safeguarding Assam from Mughal invasions, Kataria said that

Arunachal Guv, CM mourn former MLA's death

ITANAGAR, Dec 17: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen K T Parinaik and chief minister Pema Khandu on Sunday mourned the death of former MLA Yumsen Matey, who was gunned down by a suspected militant in Tirap district a day before.

While condoling the death of the former Congress legislator, Parinaik said those responsible for the attack will be brought to book.

The governor said in the demise of Matey, the state lost a social activist who made immense contributions in various capacities.

A suspected militant shot dead Matey at Raho village in Tirap district where he had gone for some personal work on Saturday.

The district police along with Assam Rifles have launched a search operation to find the culprit, officials said. "I am deeply anguished at the demise of Matey and strongly condemn the horrific act. My deepest condolences to the family and I assure that the state government stands firmly with them in this moment of grief," Khandu said in a social media post. Police have (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

India to become third largest economy in my third term: Modi

'We are working to become a USD 5-10 trillion economy as well as taking exports to a record high'

SURAT, Dec 17: India will be among the top three economies in the world in his third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Sunday after inaugurating the sprawling Surat Diamond Bourse, which he said was the "symbol of strength and determination of new India".

Addressing a gathering on the occasion, Modi said the Surat diamond industry is giving jobs to 8 lakh people, and another 1.5 lakh jobs will be added due to the new bourse, the world's largest and most modern centre for the international diamond and jewellery business. The Surat Diamond Bourse (SDB) building, the world's largest office complex with more than 67 lakh square feet of floor area, is located at Khajod village near Surat city.

"One more diamond is added to Surat's grandeur. The diamond is not small but the world's best.



Even the biggest buildings of the world pale before the glint of this diamond. Whenever one talks about this diamond bourse in the world, Surat and India will be mentioned," the PM said.

The Surat Diamond Bourse shows the capability of Indian de-

sign, designers, material and concept. "This building is the symbol of new strength and determination of new India," he said.

"You all know India has risen to become the fifth biggest economic power in the world from 10th in the last 10 years. Now, Modi has

given his guarantee that in his third innings, India will be among the world's top three economies," he said.

"The government has also set targets for the next 25 years. We are working on the target of becoming a USD 5-10 trillion economy as well as taking exports to a record high," he said.

Asserting that Surat and its diamond industry have increased manifold, the PM said the city should set a target to increase its contribution to the country's exports, which is both a "challenge and an opportunity for the diamonds and gems and jewellery sector". India leads in the export of diamonds, including silver cut and laboratory-grown diamonds, but the country's contribution in world exports of gems and jewellery is just 3.5 per cent, the PM pointed out. "If Surat decides, then very soon we can (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

Mid-day Meal Cooks and Helpers Association demands pay hike

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Dec 17: In a collective plea for improved working conditions, the Mid-day Meal Cooks and Helpers Association of Bokajan Educational Block have voiced their demand for a pay hike and permanent employment.

During a meeting convened at Bokajan Project Head Quarter LP School, the association, led by Anjali Rongpharpi, addressed the pressing issue of their pending pay for the past four months.

The cooks and helpers, who currently receive a monthly remuneration of ₹ 1,500, argued that this amount is insufficient for meeting their living expenses.

"The remuneration should be increased to ₹ 9,600 to ensure a dignified living for us," stated Anjali Rongpharpi during the meeting.

The cooks and helpers expressed their concerns about the prolonged

duration of receiving ₹ 1,500 and emphasised the need for a substantial increase to meet the rising cost of living.

The association's members have not only faced financial hardships but also demanded job security. The cooks and helpers of mid-day meals in schools aspire to secure permanent employment, providing them with stability and assurance in their roles.

The meeting witnessed the participation of various associations, including the Karbi Anglong Mid-day Meal Cooks cum Helpers Association and the All Assam Cooks cum Helpers Association.

Rupali Bepi, the president of Karbi Anglong Mid-day Meal Cooks cum Helpers Association, and Sunil Rongpi, secretary of All Assam Cooks cum Helpers Association, were among the attendees.

3 drug peddlers held with drugs worth ₹ 10 lakh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Dec 17: Three drug peddlers were arrested with 3 kg 90 grams of drugs from the Monabari Hindu Gaon area in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh on Saturday night. The estimated market value of the seized drugs is ₹ 10 lakh.

The drug peddlers have been identified as Abhijit Gogoi, Ashim Hazarika, and Monoranjan Gogoi from the Lahowal area.

"After receiving a tip-off, we launched an operation and successfully arrested three drug peddlers with 3 kg 90 grams of suspected drugs. We have sent them to jail," said a police official.

"Abhijit Gogoi was earlier arrested for drug peddling and spent several months in jail. After his release, he was once again involved in drug peddling due to his connections with drug smugglers. This time, he (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

Cong to hold CWC meeting to strategise for 2024 polls: Sources

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: The Congress has called a meeting of its working committee on December 21 to deliberate on the strategy for the 2024 general election and chalk out a plan for its poll campaign to take on the BJP, sources said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has called the meeting, which will take place at the All India Congress Committee headquarters two days after the INDIA bloc meeting on December 19, to deliberate on the political situation in the country and the way forward, they said.

Seat sharing and campaign is likely to be top of the agenda, they added. The meeting is also likely to discuss the possibility of a yatra that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi could undertake before the 2024 polls with unemployment and price

rise as its main planks, the sources said. An east-to-west yatra in hybrid mode, including on-foot, is being mulled by the party and a final decision is expected to be taken soon, they said. Ahead of the Congress Working Committee meeting, the 4th meeting of the leaders of INDIA parties will be held at 3 pm on December 19 in New Delhi.

Evolving a "core positive agenda", seat sharing and a programme to hold joint rallies are among the main challenges before the opposition INDIA bloc that will be taken up at its next meeting.

The parties intend to move forward with the unity theme -- "Main Nahin, Hum" (We, Not Me) -- as a counter to the prime minister at the meeting, a senior leader of the Congress said. The CWC meeting will also analyse (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

Karbi Students Association alleges misappropriation of funds

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Dec 17: Karbi Students Association, Bokajan District Committee (KSA-BDC) alleged that the principal of Eastern Karbi Anglong College, Dr Anil Chandra Das had misappropriated the fund meant for holding a seminar and for an educational excursion.

In a press conference held at Hanjanglangso Press Club on Saturday evening, the president of KSA-BDC, Raju Englang said that the principal of Eastern Karbi Anglong College had defrauded the fund meant for holding a seminar and for taking the students on an educational excursion.

Further, the KSA BDC President Englang urged the chief executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and the executive member for education of KAAC, Richard Tokbi to take action in this regard.

Earlier, the Karbi Students Association (KSA Jemson Timung) stated that government funds have been allegedly misappropriated in guise of renovation works at Diphu Government College.

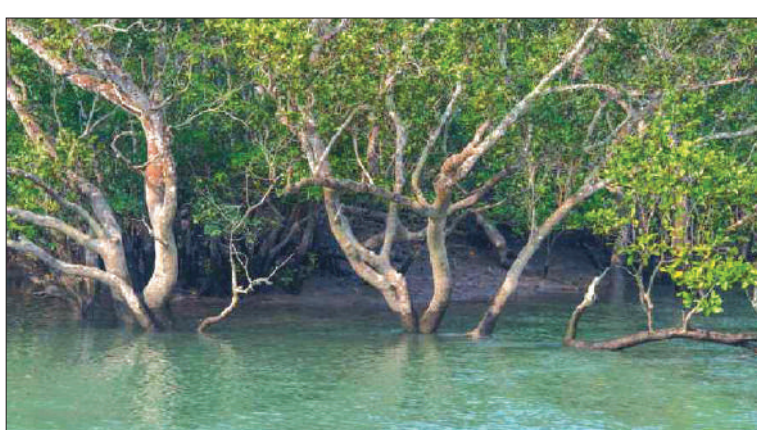
Speaking on the same, KSA general secretary, Ramsing Tokbi said that the amount of money sanctioned against (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

The world's largest mangrove forest cover region is an archipelago of over 100 islands

BSF plans marine battalion, drone squadron to secure Sundarbans

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, Dec 17: A marine battalion comprising more than 1,100 personnel, a squadron of about 40 drones and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are part of a plan devised by the BSF to secure the strategic Sundarbans mangrove region along the India-Bangladesh border against smuggling and infiltration.

The blueprint of the plan has been prepared by the Eastern Command of the border force based in Kolkata and a final approval and financial sanction from the Union Home Ministry in Delhi is awaited, official sources told PTI. The Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest cover region is an archipelago of over 100 islands and a complex network of streams, rivers, tidal creeks and channels spread over an area of 9,630 sq km in India. The rest falls in Bangladesh. It lies on the delta of the Ganga,



Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers in the Bay of Bengal.

"Sundarbans is a strategic and vital area along the India-Bangladesh international border. Its effective domination and security is the need of the

hour as there are inputs suggesting this tricky forest and riverine area could be used for cross-border infiltration of terrorists and criminals," a senior officer said. The force has hence decided to raise an exclusive marine battalion

of its personnel for this task, deploy sturdy drones that can undertake long-haul surveillance sorties and station some ATVs to access these areas for better patrolling, the officer said.

Another officer said the new battalion will have more than 1,100 trained personnel and about 40 large drones and 12-14 ATVs will be deployed.

The plan will be set in motion once the proposal is approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the second officer said. The BSF, at present, patrols the Sundarbans area with a fleet of about 50 small and large speedboats and vessels. The vessels are called floating border outposts (BoPs).

The border force is tasked with guarding the entire 4,096 km of the India-Bangladesh border on India's eastern flank, of which 2,216.7 km lies in West Bengal. Out of this 2,216.7 km, 300 km is (CONTD. ON PAGE-7)

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FPIs flood Indian equity markets, infuse ₹ 1.5 lakh crore in 2023 despite global uncertainty

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: In a dazzling resurgence, foreign investors have graced the Indian equity markets with an influx of nearly ₹ 1.5 lakh crore in 2023, fuelled by optimism over the country's resilient economic fundamentals amid shadows of a gloomy global scenario. Experts believe that the positive trend may continue in 2024.

This follows Indian equities witnessing the worst-ever net outflow of ₹ 1.21 lakh crore by FPIs in 2022 on aggressive rate hikes by the central banks globally after net inflows for three consecutive years.

Going forward, as the general elections approach next year, political stability and economic growth will become focal points for foreign investors. Besides, global cues on the inflation and interest rate scenario would dictate the flow of foreign money into Indian equities, said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director – Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India.

India, with its promising position for economic growth, is expected to continue attracting foreign investment flows, he added. As of now, the foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net investment of around ₹ 1.5 lakh crore in the Indian equity markets and around ₹ 60,000 crore in the debt market. Collectively, they pumped over ₹ 2 lakh crore into the capital market, according to data available from the depositories.

Of ₹ 1.5 lakh crore net equity market inflow, close to ₹ 43,000 crore have been invested in the first two weeks of December following the enhanced political stability, owing to the BJP's success in recent elections across three significant states. If this trend persists, it could become the best year for



FPI flow.

FPIs made a net infusion of ₹ 25,752 crore in equities in 2021, ₹ 1.7 lakh crore in 2020, which was the best year, and ₹ 1.01 lakh crore in 2019.

In the year 2022, the flows from foreign investors were largely driven by factors like inflation and interest rate scenarios in developed markets, such as the US and UK, currency movement, the trajectory of crude oil prices, geopolitical scenario and the health of the domestic economy, among others, Srivastava said.

Heightened FPI investment was triggered by the nation's resilient economic fundamentals, forward-looking policy reforms, optimistic corporate earnings outlook, global liquidity trends, and a growing recognition of India's enduring long-term growth potential, said Bharat Dhawan, Managing Partner, Mazars in India. Mazars is an international audit, tax and advisory firm.

"India is one of the top investment destinations of FPIs. There is a near consensus now in the global investing community that India has the best prospects among the emerging economies for sustained growth for many years to come," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief In-

vestment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

"This growth has the potential to create phenomenal wealth through the stock market. FPIs are investing to benefit from this potential wealth creation," he added.

After pulling back for three consecutive years, foreign investors made a comeback in the debt markets as well this year, as they injected around ₹ 60,000 crore in 2023 (till December 15), marking a noteworthy shift in their capital flow.

They took out funds totalling ₹ 15,910 crore in 2022, ₹ 10,359 crore in 2021, and ₹ 1.05 lakh crore in 2020.

The announcement by JP Morgan Chase & Co in September that it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June next year has influenced the inflow in the country's bond markets this year, said Mayank Mehra, Smallcase Manager and Principal Partner at Craving Alpha.

This landmark inclusion, scheduled for June 2024, is expected to benefit India by attracting around USD 20-40 billion in the subsequent 18-24 months. This can make Indian bonds more accessible to foreign investors and poten-

tially strengthen the rupee, thereby, bolstering the economy.

In terms of sectors, FPIs preferred financial, IT, pharma, and energy sectors owing to the country's strength in technology and healthcare, and commitment to sustainable development contributed to the appeal for foreign investors.

FPIs started the year on a negative note, and a departure of "hot money" was seen in the first two months when they pulled out over ₹ 34,000 crore.

But, FPIs shifted gears and turned buyers in March and incessantly purchased equities till August on the resilience of the Indian economy amid an uncertain global macro backdrop. During these six months, they pumped in ₹ 1.74 lakh crore.

However, FPIs departed from equities in September, and the negative trend continued in the succeeding month, owing to economic uncertainties in the US and Eurozone regions as well as growing concerns about global economic growth.

Additionally, higher crude prices, sticky inflation numbers, and the expectation that the interest rate may continue to remain at elevated levels longer than expected prompted foreign investors to adopt a wait-and-watch approach.

In November, FPIs again turned buyers with a net investment of ₹ 9,000 crore, and the positive momentum has continued this month on the outcome of recent elections across three significant states.

Internationally, signals from the US Federal Reserve about three prospective rate cuts in the upcoming year marked a departure from the prevailing high-interest rate regime also prompted FPIs to invest. (PTI)

Ideas and opinions of critics should be attacked but not their motives: Rajan

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan, who has often been trolled for his frank views, says ideas and opinions of critics should be attacked but not their motives, as for India's progress listening was more important than preaching like a know-all vishwa guru.

In an interview with PTI, Rajan defended joining Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' saying he very strongly believed in the ideas of national integration and of love, not hate and thought the 135-day foot march was an attempt to make that point.

Rejecting as "just ridiculous" the charge by government backers that he was responsible for some of the mess in the economy that Prime Minister Narendra Modi inherited, he said he had brought down inflation from double digits and had cleaned up the bad debt which the government is taking credit for now.

He also stuck to his comment -- 'India will be lucky if it achieves 5 per cent growth in 2023-24 fiscal year', saying the country was indeed lucky to achieve a 6.5 per cent expansion and he was "very happy" with a faster growth rate.

Rajan, presently Katherine Dusak Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at Chicago Booth, USA, was in India to talk about his new book 'Breaking the mould: Reimagining India's economic future', written jointly by him and Rohit Lamba, assistant professor of economics at Pennsylvania State University.

Rajan said: "You don't just designate an opponent by questioning their motives. Attack their ideas. Don't question their motives. Don't say so and so is anti-national."

According to Rajan, having debates on India's progress is much more important than just sitting and saying 'I know everything, main vishwa guru hun'.



He further said he very strongly believes in the ideas of -- national integration, inclusion, decency in public life, love not hate.

"I thought that Bharat Jodo Yatra was an attempt to make that point. So I thought it was important to support that idea of India, the idea of India that my parents grew up with," he said.

Rajan emphasised that disadvantaged communities, women will have to be much more included in the process of growth and development of India.

Responding to a question on his last year's comment in which he had said India will be lucky if it achieves 5 per cent economic growth in 2023, Rajan said, "I was absolutely right. We were lucky ... the world grew much more strongly." To buttress his argument, he said the USA beat its economic growth estimate by three percentage points, adding, "We are now (growing) at may be six and a half (per cent). That is a percentage and a half point more."

Rajan said that he is very happy to see Indian economy growing at faster rate and wants it to accelerate to 8 per cent.

While noting that all economic forecasts have a band of error, he said it is ultimately expectations of what will happen and things work out one way or the other way.

Rajan attributed the sharp uptick in GDP in the first half of the cur-

rent fiscal to infrastructure spending and good performance by large economies of the world, but added that India has to do a lot of catching up and the USD 5 trillion economy goal for 2025 is nearly impossible.

Rajan further said that even as India's growth rate is strong, private investment and private consumption have not picked up.

He noted that over the last four years, from the pre-pandemic days till today, the Indian economy has grown about 4 per cent a year.

"That is way below our growth potential (economic growth rate) of 6 per cent."

"So you said inflation is contained. One of the reasons inflation is contained is we haven't even grown at our potential rate," Rajan said. Noting that for democracy to work, the government needs to share the data with the people, he said, "You can not simply pull numbers out of a hat and say...we will be a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025."

According to Rajan, it is virtually impossible for India to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 unless a "miracle" happens.

"Because we are now maybe USD 3.5 trillion economy, to be a USD 5 trillion economy, you have to grow at 12 to 15 per real growth rate over the next two years," he explained.

Rajan wondered whether the government has any plan for increasing India's economic growth from the current 6 per cent-plus to 12-15 per cent.

"So you need some sensible discussion in public...you have to take economists into your conference," he suggested.

Replying to a question on his earlier prediction that India is 'dangerously close' to the Hindu rate of growth, Rajan said he was right to worry that India's economic growth had slowed down. (PTI)

Reliance biggest wealth creator, Adani Ent top all-round creator: Study

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Reliance Industries Ltd was the biggest wealth creator during the five-year period from 2018 to 2023 while Adani Enterprises Ltd was the top all-round wealth creator, according to a study by Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

The study, based on stock market performance of companies, said for the fifth time in succession, Reliance emerged as the largest wealth creator, adding ₹ 9,63,800 crore wealth over 2018-23.

It was followed by Tata Consultancy Services (₹ 6,77,400 crore wealth addition), ICICI Bank (₹ 4,15,500 crore), Infosys (₹ 3,61,800 crore) and Bharti Airtel (₹ 2,80,800 crore).

"A low-profile company, Lloyds Metals, has emerged the fastest wealth creator with 2018-23 price CAGR of 79 per cent," it said. Adani Enterprises Ltd, the flagship incubator firm of the Adani Group, is a close second with a CAGR of 78 per cent.

It said ₹ 10 lakh invested in 2018 in the top 10 fastest wealth creators would be worth ₹ 1 crore in 2023, a return CAGR of 59 per cent.

Motilal said Capri Global is the most consistent wealth creator, outperforming the BSE Sensex in all the last five years with the highest price CAGR of 50 per cent.

Defining 'all-round wealth creators' as one which is the biggest, fastest and consistent stock market performer, the study said Adani Enterprises has emerged as the best all-round wealth creator. It is the 9th biggest wealth creator, second fastest and fifth most consistent.

It is followed by Varun Beverages, Adani Power, Tube Investments and ICICI Bank. Reliance is ranked at No.10 on this list.

"During 2018-23, the top 100 wealth creators of India Inc created wealth of ₹ 70.5 lakh crore, lower than (₹ 92.2 lakh crore in) the previous 5-year period 2017-22. Pace of wealth creation at 21 per cent CAGR is also lower than (28 per cent) in the previous 5-year period, but well higher than the BSE Sensex return of 12 per cent," the study said. Reliance emerging as the largest wealth creator for the fifth time in succession has taken the company's overall No.1 tally to 10 in the last 17 five-year study periods. TCS and Infosys continuously remain among the top 5 wealth creators. "HDFC Bank does not feature in the top 10 list of wealth creators for the first time in several years," the report said.

The technology sector has emerged as the largest wealth creating sector for the second year in a row, ahead of consumer and retail and financials. Technology has also gained a significant share of wealth creation - 20 per cent versus 9 per cent five years ago. Like last year, the new kid on the block is chemicals/fertilizers with 3 per cent share. The biggest losers are rate sensitive financials and auto. "Two key factors have driven PSU wealth creation, turnaround by two banks (SBI and Bank of Maharashtra) and growth in the defense sector (Bharat Dynamics, Bharat Electronics and Hindustan Aeronautics)," it added. (PTI)

Emaar India to invest ₹ 900 crore to develop luxury housing project in Gurugram: CEO

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Realty firm Emaar India will invest ₹ 900 crore over the next four years to develop a luxury housing projects in Gurugram as part of its expansion plan, a top company official said.

The company, which is part of Dubai-based Emaar Properties, has launched and already sold 424 luxury homes in its group housing project 'Urban Oasis' located at Sector 62, Golf Course Extension Road in Gurugram.

In an interview with PTI, Kalyan Chakrabarti, CEO of Emaar India, said, "We launched a residential project after a gap of almost four years, and were humbled by the response from the market."

Emaar India has sold out all 424 flats launched in the first phase for ₹ 1,723 crore in revenue. It received 10 times subscription with 4,259 expression of interests for the 424 homes available.

He said the demand for luxury homes in all major cities including Gurugram is very strong from both end users and investors.

Asked about the project cost, Chakrabarti said it will be around ₹ 900 crore excluding cost of the land.

"We enlisted one of the big-4 audit firms -- E&Y - for overseeing the process fairness and transparency, while leveraging the robustness of SFDC software for

a streamlined registration process," he said.

On the status of existing projects, Chakrabarti said the company has completed all legacy housing projects and the possessions are being given to customers.

He said the company would focus on launching more residential projects in Delhi-NCR and other locations in North India where it has land bank.

Emaar Properties entered the Indian real estate market in 2005 in partnership with India's MGF Development and invested ₹ 8,500 crore through the joint venture firm Emaar MGF Land.

In April 2016, Emaar Properties decided to end the JV through demerger. Chakrabarti said the demerger process got completed in 2018, although "some residual" issues are still there with the erst-

while JV partner and being sorted out. "We are now looking forward to a solid performance ahead with respect to launches and with respect to taking care of some of the residual problems that we are trying to solve," Chakrabarti said.

The market scenario has been kind because of the economic growth, he said.

"However, it's clear that we want to develop more and more. There are a lot of projects in the pipeline that we will bring," Chakrabarti said. (PTI)

LIC to play key role in achieving 'Insurance For All by 2047': Chairman

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: In a bid to achieve 'Insurance For All by 2047', LIC will play a significant role and to meet that objective it is planning to launch a product especially designed for rural areas.

"The focus would be how to cover maximum rural masses who actually need insurance. In coming days, rural share will also go up to our total business kitty," LIC Chairman Siddhartha Mohanty told PTI.

He said to achieve the objective of 'Insurance For All by 2047', LIC will play a very significant role and in that direction the insurer has already started working. "I must thank the regulator. The regulator IRDAI has already proposed 'Bima Vistar', a composite product. The product will consist of life, health and property insurance," he said.

To sell those products Bima Vahak would be engaged, he said, adding, it will be a women-centric distribution channel model.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a clarion call to make India a developed nation by 2047, when the country achieves 100 years of independence from British rule. As of now, India is the fifth largest economy in the world but insurance penetration is low compared to the global average.

In June this year, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) came out with draft guidelines for 'Bima Vahaks', which seeks to establish a dedicated distribution channel at the level of Gram Panchayats.

The guidelines proposed Corporate Bima Vahaks and Individual Bima Vahaks for the distribution chan-

nel. Corporate Bima Vahak would be legal persons registered in accordance with the respective laws and engaged by an insurer.

Corporate Bima Vahak would be legal persons registered in accordance with the respective laws and engaged by an insurer. Individual Bima Vahak could be any individual appointed by an insurer or appointed by a Corporate Bima Vahak.

Meanwhile, LIC has initiated a total digital transformation project DIVE (Digital Innovation and Value Enhancement) and appointed a consultant to steer the project. "Our objective is to get best-in-class digital initiatives for all our stakeholders, customers, intermediaries, marketing people and everybody through the project DIVE," he said.

In the first phase, the customer acquisition part is going to be transformed, he said.

Customer acquisition is done through three modes - agent, bancassurance and direct sale. LIC gets most of its new customers through its agents.

Subsequently, other areas would see the transformation, he said, adding, that services like claims settlement, loans and other services will be made available at the click of a button.

"Customers need not come to the office. Sitting at home on his mobile he can access our required services...We are focussing on fintech as well and will harness its potential in expanding business," he said.

LIC is also exploring options of having its own fintech arm that can be developed as a business model, he added. (PTI)

Tata Steel aims to complete Kalinganagar project expansion, begin ops by Dec 2024: Rajiv Kumar

KALINGANAGAR (ODISHA), Dec 17: Tata Steel aims to complete expansion of its Kalinganagar project by December next year, a company official said. The company had commenced the second phase of expansion of its Kalinganagar project in Odisha in Nov 2018 to reach the production capacity of 8 million tonnes per annum, from 3 MTPA, with an investment of ₹ 23,500 crore. "We are aiming to complete the project and make it operational by December end next year," Rajiv Kumar, vice-president, Operation, Tata Steel Kalinganagar (TSK), told

PTI in an interaction. The project includes raw material capacity expansion, upstream and mid-stream facilities, infrastructure and downstream facilities including a cold rolling mill complex, he said, adding that the new blast furnace being installed is India's largest with 5,870 cubic metres (cum) of inner volume. The phase 2 expansion will increase the production of flat steel at the plant to meet the growing requirements of automotive, general engineering, oil & gas, lifting & excavation and other value-added segments in the country, Kumar said. On the status

of the expansion project, the vice-president said around 80 per cent work stands completed as on date and the remaining 20 per cent is progressing well. Along with its 8 MT of annual production capacity at Kalinganagar, the total output capacity of Tata Steel's India operations will reach 26.6 MTPA. The company has an output capacity of 12 MTPA at its plant in Jamshedpur (including 1 MTPA acquired from Usha Martin), 5.6 MTPA at Tata Steel Meramandali (erstwhile Tata Steel BSL) in Dhenkanal, and 1 MTPA of NINL at Kalinganagar. (PTI)

Growth rate at 6 per cent, India will remain lower middle economy by 2047, says Raghuram Rajan

HYDERABAD, Dec 17: Former Reserve Bank Governor Raghuram Rajan said India will still remain a lower middle country if the potential growth rate remains at 6 per cent annually without any rise in population by 2047 (Amrit Kaal) and will be reaching the end of the demographic dividend by then.

Speaking at a programme organised by Manthan here on Saturday, the economist said if the country does not grow faster, it will grow older (demographically) before it gets richer, which means there is the burden of an aging population to deal with also at that point.

Rajan said the GDP growth in India for the past two quarters was in the region of 7.5 per cent and if one looks at the labor force participation, it is very low and when it comes to female participation, "it is the lowest in the G20".

"India's growth potential is today about 6 per cent a year, GDP growth. If you do the math, at 6 per cent a year, you double every 12



years and therefore in 24 years, we'll be four times our per capita income. Today, the per capita income in India, as you know, is just a little below \$2,500 per person. Multiply by four, we get \$10,000 per person...So if you do the math, at our current rate of growth, you know, strong as it is highest in the G20, we don't get rich but we stay lower middle income till 2047," he

said. The former RBI chief said some southern states are growing with regards to population at below reproduction rate, in other words, the fertility rate has fallen below reproduction rate thus slowing the growth.

"In other words, we will start the process of aging at some point around that time, which leads to the alarming question if we don't

grow faster, we will grow old before we grow rich, which means we all have all the burdens of an aging population to deal with also at that point," he opined.

According to him, the current pace of growth is not enough to employ all those who are entering the labour force and insufficient to make the country get richer, before it gets older.

Describing that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 100 years of Independence by 2047 as "Amritsar Kaal", he said it is going to be an ear of plenty.

Rajan said some of the developed nations moved from manufacturing to services as part of moving up the value chain after they became richer.

Those countries are largely services economies with 70 per cent of the workforce in rich countries, typically in the service industry and 20 per cent in manufacturing, five per cent each in construction and agriculture, he noted. (PTI)

Govt schemes transforming lives in remote border areas: Rijiju

Rijiju participates in 'Bharat Bikash Sankalpa Yatra' in Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Dec 17: On Sunday, Union minister of Earth Sciences, Kiren Rijiju, actively participated in the 'Bharat Bikash Sankalpa Yatra' event held at Kapahera Stadium in Bhakatgaon Gaon Panchayat, a part of the Dalanghat Development Zone in Morigaon district. Addressing the gathering, minister Rijiju affirmed the Union government's unwavering commitment, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to the welfare of the underprivileged and all segments of society. Highlighting the government's focus on women empowerment, he announced the upcoming introduction of the 'Namo Drone' initiative, set to revolutionise the agricultural sector in the next five to six months. The scheme entails training women from self-help groups to proficiently operate drones in agricul-



tural settings.

Expressing a deep emotional bond with Assam, Rijiju declared a sense of belonging to the state, even predating Arunachal Pradesh's establishment as a separate state. State BJP president and Rangia MLA Bhavesh Kalita, present at the meeting, underscored various government schemes and encouraged the pub-

lic to leverage these opportunities. Stressing that the success of these initiatives hinges on ensuring that every eligible individual receives their entitled benefits, Kalita urged eligible beneficiaries to proactively engage with different government schemes and seek assistance from relevant departmental officials if needed.

District commissioner

Devashish Sharma, another attendee, extended a warm welcome to the participants and outlined the program's objective of raising awareness about the government's flagship schemes. Sharma reassured that eligible individuals yet to benefit from government schemes could avail themselves of the opportunities presented during the program.

The meeting also included a demonstration of nano urea utilising drone technology, organised by the Department of Agriculture. Cultural programs added a vibrant touch to the event. Notable figures such as Zila Parishad chief executive officer Lakhi Nandan Sohar, district development commissioner Devayani Chowdhury, superintendent of police Hemant Kumar Das, social workers Ashok Kumar Bhatnari, and BJP's president Pabin Medhi, along with beneficiaries of the scheme, were also in attendance.

Muga Reshom Krishi Mela for sericulture farmers concludes in Guwahati



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: The Muga Reshom Krishi Mela 2023, organised by Muga Eri Silkworm Seed Organisation (MESSO) in Guwahati, concluded successfully on December 14, 2023. The event aimed at promoting the holistic development of sericulture farmers in North Eastern India, with a specific focus on muga silk production, a pride of Assam.

The North East region, comprising 8 states, plays a pivotal role in

muga silk production, contributing almost 100 percent of the country's output. The event gathered over 380 farmers, scientific and academic delegates, representatives from the Department of Sericulture, Government of Assam, scientists, and Central Silk Board Guwahati staff.

Chief guest Dilip Kumar Borah, IAS, Secretary of the Department of Finance, Handloom, Textiles & Sericulture, Government of Assam, highlighted the region's

significant contribution to muga silk, oak tasar, and eri silk production. He also discussed utilising vacant land for sericulture, initiatives for decreasing carbon footprint, and developmental policies benefiting Assam's farmers.

During the inaugural session, Dr K Neog, director MESSO, emphasised the organisation's role in the muga and eri silk industry. Other dignitaries, including Lakheshwar Saikia, Dr R Murugesan, Dr Arup Kumar Misra, and Dr Jogesh Deuri, shared insights on topics like 'vocal for local', women and youth empowerment in sericulture, climate change's impact on sericulture, and scaling sericulture activities in the region.

The event featured discussions, solutions for farmers' issues, and facilitation of six progressive muga farmers from Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh. An exhibition at the CSB Complex showcased the achievements and potential of Vanya sericulture, contributing to the Atmanirbhar vision and generating employment and income in the agrarian economy.

Cancellation & diversion of trains in Rangiya division

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: In preparation for pre non-interlocking and non-interlocking works at Changsari and Agthori stations within the Rangiya division, aimed at commissioning a double line in that section, the cancellation, diversion, and partial cancellation of several trains have been outlined.

A range of trains, including the New Bongaigaon-Guwahati Passenger, Alipurduar Jn.-Guwahati Sifhung Express, and Guwahati-Dhubri Express, scheduled to commence journeys from December 17 to December 26, 2023, will remain cancelled.

Train No 05809 (New Bongaigaon - Guwahati) Passenger, Train No 05803 (New Bongaigaon - Guwahati) Passenger, Train No 15753/15754 (Alipurduar Jn. - Guwahati - Alipurduar Jn.) Sifhung Express, Train No 15769/15770 (Alipurduar Jn. - Lumding - Alipurduar Jn.) Intercity Express, Train No 05020 (Guwahati - Mendipathar) Special, and Train No 15602 (Guwahati - Dhubri) Express, all scheduled from December 17 to December 26, 2023, will remain cancelled. Similarly, Train No 05810 (Guwahati - New Bongaigaon) Passenger, Train No 05804 (Guwahati - New Bongaigaon) Passenger, Train No 05019 (Mendipathar - Guwahati) Special, and Train No 15601 (Dhubri - Guwahati) Express, scheduled from December 18 to December 27, 2023, will also remain cancelled. Furthermore, Train No 15417 (Alipurduar Jn. - Silghat Town) Rajya Rani Express and Train No 15418 (Silghat Town - Alipurduar Jn.) Rajya Rani Express, scheduled on specific dates from December 17 to December 25, 2023, will remain cancelled, along with several other trains detailed in the official announcement.

Several trains will experience partial cancellations, including Train No 15612 (Silchar - Rangiya) Express and Train No 15611 (Rangiya - Silchar) Express, with altered termination and origination points between Guwahati and Rangiya.

Certain trains will be diverted via different routes, such as New Bongaigaon-Goalpara Town-Kamakhya and Kamakhya-Goalpara Town-New Bongaigaon. These diversions will be in effect from December 18 to December 26, 2023.

The adjustments are essential to facilitate crucial infrastructure development, and passengers are advised to check updated schedules to plan their travel accordingly during this period.

Poi Pee Mau Man Tai Festival celebrated

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Dec 17: Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society, Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Student Association and Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Pab20 Pas20 (Mouth) Association celebrated Poi Pee Mau Man Tai 2118 (Man Tai New Year) Festival on December 12 at Jetavan Buddhist Monastery, Cultural Complex with a daylong colourful celebration.

In a press release by Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society said that the celebration started with the flag hoisting of Poi Pee Mau Man Tai 2118 (Man Tai New Year) by Chau Prabin Shyam, Sarkari Gaon Bura of Bansai village followed by various competitions of traditional dances and songs and food exhibition. A public meeting was held which was presided over by Chau Promod Shyam chief adviser, Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society.

In the meeting, the role of Poi Pee Mau Man Tai (Man Tai New Year) celebration and development and preservation of the culture and traditions of Man (Tai-Speaking) community was discussed. In the evening a cultural night was organised, where cultural troupes and local artists along with invited artists entertained the evening.

Earlier in the after the community welcomed Man Tai New Year 2118 by cutting of New Year cake followed by flying of 100 sky lanterns and lighting of crackers. In another press statement by Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society stated that the apex body of Man (Tai-Speaking) community have convened a joint meeting with Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Student Association, Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Pabao Pasao (Youth) Association, Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society, Bansai, Sarkari Gaon Bura and Gaon Bura of Man (Tai-

Speaking) community on December 3 at Puppargung Buddhist Monastery, Bansai Karbi Anglong. The meeting was presided over by Chau Gonesh Singpho Lozom, Sarkari Gaon Bura of Bansai village. The meeting discussed on re-constituting of central executive committee (CEC) of Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society, since the old executive committee has been completely defunct since long. Accordingly the meeting revived and re-constituted the CEC of Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society.

The statement said that on public demand and obtaining suggestions from the organisations like the Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Student Association, Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Pabao Pasao, Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society, Bansai, Sarkari Gaon Bura, Gaon Bura of Man (Tai-Speaking) community and culture activists the CEC of Karbi Anglong Man (Tai-Speaking) Cultural Society has been re-constituted. The new executive body will be executed in all functionalities relating to Man (Tai-Speaking) culture and tradition.

Nang Wanglow Shyam has been appointed as president, Chau Robert Chiring as vice president and Nang Shwamathi Chowhai as secretary respectively. Organising secretary has been appointed to Chau Mihingda Lozom, publicity secretary to Chau Khamoon Shyam, joint secretaries to Chau Mrimmy Ching, Nang Chaham Chau, Chau Kaushik Shyam and Chau Biswajit Shyam. Finance secretaries have been appointed to Nang Minoti Shyam, Nangkham Thowmung and Nang Bulbuli Gogoi Shyam. While Chau Gonesh Singpho Lozom, Dr. Dipyoti Shyam, Chau Susen Shyam, Nang Eva Singpho, Chau Bharat Shyam, Chau Binmang Thowmun and Chau Bipul Shyam were being appointed as advisers.

Balipara Foundation to host 11th Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics Forum in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Balipara Foundation is set to host the 11th edition of the annual Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics Forum in Guwahati, with the theme 'The Great People's Forest 2030'. Balipara Foundation eagerly anticipates hosting this event on December 18 and 19, 2023. The theme taking centre stage this year is the call for the 'Great People's Forest 2030', bringing together 60 people from over 15 countries. Over December 18 and 19, speakers and participants will tackle key themes to build a restoration agenda for the region to achieve by 2030, in accordance with the UN Decade of Restoration and pledges made to reverse forest degradation by 2030 under various climate and biodiversity agreements.

The Forum was launched at a curtain-raiser with contributions from leading figures such as Dr Vandana Shiva, an environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and founder of Navdanya; Dr Richard Jee, senior vice president, Asia Pacific Field Division, Conservation International; Jason Knauf, Global Leadership Fellow, Conservation International; Purnima Devi Barman, UN Champion of the Earth and wildlife biologist; Ranjit Barthakur, founder forester, Balipara Foundation, and panel moderator, Sweetlana Ranjan, co-founder of i-Behind the Ink & co-designer of the Balipara Foundation's Rural Futures Fellowship. Ranjit Barthakur, founder

of Balipara Foundation, pointed out the importance of the third pole, which is the Himsagar region. He stated, "The third pole, which is the region from Tibet to the Indian Ocean, is a predominant part of the ecological balance." He added that the initiative by Balipara Foundation will continue to support and regenerate the Great Eastern Himalayas.

Dr Vandana Shiva, an environmental activist and founder of Navdanya, an initiative to promote biodiversity, stated, "If you look around in the North-East, where the forest ends and the farm begins, it's difficult to see. So, one of the things we must do is get rid of what I think is a monoculture of mind." She emphasised that the separation must be extinct to be a part of this initiative.

Jason Knauf, a Global Leadership Fellow at Conservation International and chair of The Great People's Forest Project Board, stated, "The launch of the GPF first rapid-scaling portfolio, an initiative by Balipara Foundation and a coalition of partners including ATRREE and TERI at COP28 is an incredible example of action and vision at pace, working in harmony." He added that while there is just vision but no action, Balipara Foundation is a great example of action and vision together. He applauded the efforts taken in this decade.

Notably, the Eastern Himalayan region holds 30 percent of South Asia's forests. It is a vital lifeline for the region because of the criti-

cal role it plays in regulating the region's hydrogeology: drawing water into the ground, minimising soil erosion & replenishing its soils. It is also facing high levels of degradation - the north-east has been a hotspot for forest loss for the past two rounds of the Forest Survey of India.

The Global Stocktake signed by countries at COP28 explicitly mentions the importance of conserving, protecting & restoring nature, with an explicit call-out to halting & reversing forest degradation by 2030 while ensuring social & environmental safeguards aligned with the Montreal-Kunming Biodiversity Framework. With its rich forests, the Eastern Himalayan region has the opportunity to play a global role in setting an example for transboundary land restoration and management led by communities on the ground.

The Forum will explore critical themes on people, policy, economy, and technology to identify the regional capacities that need to be leveraged to create a unified regional restoration agenda. These conversations will explore the power of young people in building regional environmental leadership, the pathway to a complementary regional policy around regenerative economies, and leveraging natural capital to drive this. The Forum will also touch on key basics - land, energy, waste, water, air & carbon (LEWWAC) that are foundational to moving towards a green economy in the region.

Seventh edition of Tihar Samaroh held at Fateki

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Dec 17: The Sootea Regional Committee of the All Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU) organised the seventh edition of Tihar Bidai Samaroh at Fateki in the southern part of Sootea. The day-long program included Deusi, Bhaili, and Sangini competitions following the inaugural and felicitation sessions. Twenty-five teams from various

parts of the greater Sootea area participated in the Deusi, Bhaili, and Sangini competitions. Sunil Sutar and Prakash Khanal, president and secretary of Biswanath district AAGSU, Prem Chetey, Ghanalal Biswakarma, Anup Sarma, Bholanath Chetry, and other dignitaries attended the event. The proceedings of the day-long program were conducted by Ajay Karki, Dhiraaj Bhandary, Yadav Pandey, and Chakrapani Karki.

Assam Rifles organises career counselling program

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Dec 17: In an effort to guide and inspire local youths in Lokra, the Assam Rifles organised a 'Career Counselling for Children' program at the Battalion headquarters in Lokra, Sonitpur district, on Sunday. Tailored for students in Class 10 and 12, the program aimed to equip them with valuable insights and guidance to make informed decisions about their future careers. The comprehensive Career Counselling Programme featured experienced career counsellors who shared their expertise on a wide range of professions, educational

opportunities, and skill development. The initiative included interactive sessions, aptitude tests, and personalised consultations tailored to individual interests and aptitudes. With an active commitment to nurturing the aspirations of the youth in Lokra, the Assam Rifles' initiative provided essential knowledge to empower the students on their journey toward a successful career path. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of 33 children who engaged wholeheartedly in the program, showcasing their eagerness to explore and plan for their future endeavours.

Literary icon Padmanath Gohain Baruah remembered on 152nd birth anniv

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Dec 17: Padmanath Gohain Baruah, the founder president of Assam Sahitya Sabha and a significant figure in early modern Assamese literature, was commemorated on his 152nd birth anniversary in Tezpur. Various socio-cultural and literary organisations, including Baan Theatre, Tezpur Municipality Board, Asamiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha, Asamiya Club, Padmanath Gohain Baruah branch Sahitya Sabha, and Tezpur Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, organised a daylong commemoration programme.

The day's events began with the lighting of a ceremonial lamp by Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha, district commissioner Deba Kumar Mishra, and Pari Gohain Baruah. Floral tributes were paid at the statue of Padmanath Gohain Baruah, located in the heart of Tezpur, by the organisations.

Padmanath Gohain Baruah, renowned for his excellence in novels, poetry, drama, and insightful writing, was also the first chair-

man of the Tezpur Municipality Board. As part of the commemoration programme, a book launching and memorial lecture took place at the Baliram Lahkar auditorium of Asamiya Club.

MLA Prithiraj Rabha, in his speech, highlighted Padmanath Gohain Baruah's contributions to Assamese literature and society. Rabha acknowledged Gohain Baruah's pioneering efforts, including writing the first Assamese novel 'Bhanumat' and the second novel 'Lahori'.

Gohain Baruah addressed the educational needs of Assamese students and teachers by producing textbooks on various subjects, history, geography, moral science, teacher handbooks, and a book on physical exercise. He also penned biographies of several Assamese stalwarts in collaboration with his schoolmate Panindranath Gogoi.

During the programme, a book titled 'Dersa Basaria Joyantir Pradarsonir Aat Dhor...' Sahitya Kandirir Smriti Bijarita Samal Samuh Aru Kisu Kotha', edited by

Memorial Gate inaugurated for former MP Lt Mohiram Saikia

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Dec 17: On Sunday, Rekha Sharma, a prominent academician, educationist, and former activist of Assam Agitation, inaugurated the memorial gate dedicated to the former principal of Nowgong College, three-time MP of Nagaon, and former Union minister Lt Mohiram Saikia. The gate, situated at Nowgong College (Autonomous) in Nagaon, was unveiled with the financial support provided by the retired superintendent engineer of the Water Resource Department, along with Lt Mohiram Saikia's son and family.

As part of the inauguration ceremony, a book highlighting the life and contributions of Lt Mohiram Saikia was released. Authored by a dozen renowned writers, the book serves as a tribute to the legacy of the late academician and MP. The event was graced by the presence of local MLA Rupak Sarma, senior journalist Prakash Mahanta from Guwahati, Dr Sarat Borkatoki (principal of Nowgong College), former AGP minister Girindra Kr Boruah, and various other dignitaries. The memorial gate stands as a testament to Lt Mohiram Saikia's significant contributions to Nowgong College and the community at large.



Mrigen Kalita, was launched by former chairman of Assam Higher Secondary Education Council Dr Doyananda Borgohain. Dr Bhupen Saikia, president of Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha, also delivered a speech on

the life and works of Padmanath Gohain Baruah. The events celebrated the literary legacy of the iconic figure and his invaluable contributions to Assamese language and literature.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

From a small seed a mighty trunk may grow.
- Aeschylus

Stock Markets and Global Optimism

In a remarkable surge, the Indian stock markets are experiencing unprecedented highs, buoyed by a positive outlook in both the domestic and global economy. The BSE Sensex has witnessed a nearly 1000-point increase in intraday trading, while the NSE index climbed by almost 300 points on Friday, leaving investors reaping substantial gains. As the markets reach new heights, questions arise about the sustainability of this upward trend and the potential for corrections. Market experts suggest a correction might be on the horizon later in the month, though predicting such fluctuations remains speculative. The optimism driving the financial markets is rooted in a fortuitous convergence of factors. Notably, low inflation, a rare occurrence, has emerged as a key positive development. The expectation of an easier monetary policy and downward revisions of policy rates accompanies this low inflation environment. While the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been cautious and closely monitoring inflation, the U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman, Jerome Powell, surprised markets with indications of a faster-than-anticipated rate revision cycle. This unexpected signal acted as a potent catalyst for the market, triggering enthusiastic responses and substantial buying of stocks in the U.S. financial markets.

The resultant effect has been a significant influx of foreign investment into Indian markets. Anticipating U.S. rate cuts, investors have been exploring alternative markets, and India has emerged as an attractive destination. The Chinese market, once a formidable contender, is grappling with internal challenges, causing a decline in investor confidence. India, on the other hand, boasts a favorable macroeconomic situation. Recent softening of prices, reflected in the lower consumer price index, has alleviated concerns that previously prompted interventions by the RBI through higher interest rates. With the prospects of rising interest rates in India appearing remote, investment opportunities are perceived as bright. Foreign institutional investors have demonstrated confidence in the Indian market, pouring an average of ₹ 4000 crore per day in the first ten days of December. Even before the U.S. Federal Reserve's announcement of potential interest rate cuts, foreign investors had injected ₹ 9000 crore in the previous month.

These statistics underline the positive sentiments surrounding investments in India, with experts anticipating continued strong fund flows from overseas. The prevailing conditions suggest that the next year could be a fruitful one for investors who possess the resources and courage to engage in the Indian equities market. While the current upward trajectory is undeniably exciting, caution is warranted. Rapid mood swings in the market can lead to equally strong reactions. The challenge lies in balancing this enthusiasm with an awareness of potential risks and corrections that may occur in the volatile world of financial markets. In summary, the current bullish trend in the Indian stock markets is a result of global factors, with the U.S. Federal Reserve's optimistic forecast playing a pivotal role. As the Indian markets continue to rise, fueled by positive macroeconomic indicators, the stage is set for a potentially prosperous period for investors willing to navigate the dynamic landscape of equities. The Indian stock markets surge to unprecedented heights, propelled by a confluence of global optimism and positive domestic indicators. Bolstered by the unexpected U.S. Federal Reserve's optimistic forecast, foreign investment inflows are on the rise. With a favorable macroeconomic backdrop and diminishing concerns about inflation, India emerges as a preferred destination for investors.

Britain is 'dangerously close to recession', TUC warns as GDP falls

By: Ceren Sagir

Britain is "dangerously close to recession," the TUC warned the Sunak Government as news that the economy shrank in October dealt a blow to one of the Prime Minister's five priorities. Gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have fallen by 0.3 per cent during the month, down from a 0.2 per cent growth in September, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

It came as all three of the main sectors that the ONS tracks fell into negative territory for the first time since July. Economists had expected GDP to contract by just 0.1 per cent. The worse-than-expected reading comes as the Bank of England is to set a new interest rate on Thursday.

PM Rishi Sunak's priorities for the year were to halve inflation, grow the economy, reduce debt, cut NHS waiting times and stop small boat crossings. But the fall in GDP shows that the overall picture for 2023 is set to be one of stagnation. On his promise on inflation, and with figures falling to 4.6 per cent in October, Sunak said that he has "delivered" on his "top priority" for the year and asked the public to judge his government on "results."

Economists have suggested the fall was largely due to lower energy costs and rising interest rates rather than government action. And BoE governor Andrew Bailey previously voiced caution, saying it was "much too early to declare victory" against inflation and that it remained "too high" at more than double the bank's target rate of 2 per cent.

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said that the "red warning lights should be flashing," adding: "These grim figures

show the UK is dangerously close to recession. "Unemployment is rising, vacancies are falling and living standards have plummeted. "Rishi Sunak - and his cabinet of millionaires - may be cushioned from flatlining growth. "But this Conservative economic failure is hitting jobs and living standards across Britain." Nowak warned that Britain is "stuck in a rut and the Tories have no plan for getting us out of it."

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "It's no surprise that growth continues to stagnate after two years of interest rate hikes and an autumn statement promising more spending cuts. "When politicians tell workers that they have to wait for growth before they can have a pay rise, we know that's just an excuse for another lost decade of falling living standards. "The growth that matters to people isn't GDP figures but putting cash in their pockets. "We won't see sustainable growth until we see sustainable rises in wages."

Shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves said Sunak has ended the year having failed to deliver on his promise to grow the economy. The Labour MP said: "Economic growth is going backwards leaving working people worse off. "After 13 years the Conservatives have failed on the economy and after the chaos of the past few weeks Rishi Sunak is clearly too weak to deliver for Britain."

Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt said: "It is inevitable GDP will be subdued whilst interest rates are doing their job to bring down inflation. "But the big reductions in business taxation announced in the autumn statement mean the economy is now well placed to start growing again." (IPA Service)

Unanswered questions: Supreme Court's verdict on Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir

The move by the Narendra Modi government, shortly after its triumph in the May 2019 Lok Sabha elections, to introduce a bill in Parliament in August 2019 aimed at abolishing Article 370 of the Constitution was a clear instance of political maneuvering. This decision transpired at a juncture when Jammu and Kashmir had no elected government, having transitioned from Governor's Rule in December 2018, which was initially valid for six months, to President's Rule in June 2019.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, with a longstanding desire to revoke Article 370 dating back to its Jan Sangh days in the 1950s under Syama Prasad Mookerjee, successfully realized a crucial aspect of its political agenda. Legitimate politics, regardless of one's disagreement with the right-wing party's ideology, played out. Despite holding a parliamentary majority, the party refrained from openly campaigning on its agenda to remove Article 370. The strategic political maneuvers, characterized by a certain degree of stealth, could be argued as a legitimate and calculated tactic.

The legal challenge to the abrogation of Article 370, the elimination of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, and its division into two Union territories

(UTs) - Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh - surfaced in the Supreme Court in 2019. However, the Supreme Court opted to address the issue only at this juncture, paralleling its approach in the Ayodhya's Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi case in November 2019 and the demonetization matter of November 16, 2016, which it deliberated on in 2022.

The political resonance of the Article 370 abrogation and the bifurcation of the state into two Union Territories had subsided, with no anticipation that the Supreme Court would nullify the Article 370 revocation or the dissolution of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood.

Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, accompanied by Justices B.R. Gavai and Surya Kant, affirmed the abrogation in a 352-page judgment, albeit in an indirect manner. The judges found it convenient to lean on the stipulated provision declaring it a temporary measure, while dismissing the feeble argument presented by senior lawyer Kapil Sibal and others. They contended that once Kashmir's Constituent Assembly concluded in 1956, there existed no avenue to amend Article 370.

The remaining two members of the five-member bench, Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Sanjiv Khanna, issued concurring



judgments. Surprisingly, Chief Justice Chandrachud and his colleagues opted to assert that Jammu and Kashmir relinquished its

sovereignty with the Instrument of Accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh in October 1947. Consequently, they argued that the special status provision of Article 370 was unsustainable.

The judges' contention that the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir and Article 370 suggested residual sovereignty is indeed intriguing. The notion becomes peculiar when considering that once Jammu and Kashmir became part of the Dominion of India in 1947 and India attained republic status in 1950, the concept of separate sovereignty for Jammu and Kashmir ceased to be applicable. The temporary provision, Article 370, contained a clause stating,

"The President may, by public notification, declare that this article shall cease to be operative or only be operative with such exceptions..." The subsequent proviso, however, emphasized, "Provided that the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State referred to in clause (2) shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification."

This has been rationalized by highlighting the absence of a state legislature, with Governor's Rule transitioning to President's Rule, making it the prerogative of Parliament to make the decision. However, from a standpoint of democratic morality, it would have been preferable for a significant decision, such as the abrogation of Article 370, to occur when there was an elected Legislative Assembly and government in Jammu and Kashmir.

While the entire process was legally sound, its political implications were, to say the least, questionable.

The second major issue revolved around whether the Centre possesses the authority to abolish a state or divide it into two Union territories. The Supreme Court opted not to delve into the matter as solicitor-general Tushar Mehta assured the judges that elections would be conducted, and Jammu and Kashmir's statehood would be reinstated.

However, it would have been fitting for the court to pronounce its judgment on the legality of the abolition of statehood. While Article 3 grants unrestricted powers to the Union to modify state boundaries, the question arises whether federalism, considered a fundamental part of the Constitution's basic structure, was violated by the government's actions. It becomes imperative for the court to take a stance on whether the move encroached upon the federal, and thereby the basic, structure of the Constitution.

The Supreme Court and the Narendra Modi government find themselves in alignment on significant issues of concern, with only minor variations. Given this, it comes as no surprise that Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his contentment with the

Supreme Court's verdict in a written article. However, a crucial question lingers: Have the BJP and Modi successfully garnered the support of the people of Jammu and Kashmir?

The Kashmir Valley currently experiences a semblance of tranquility, yet the question arises: Is it a peace rooted in harmony or a peace born out of fear? Despite assertions by Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah proclaiming stability in the Valley, there lacks independent validation. While it is crucial to eradicate terrorism, it is equally essential to acknowledge and respect the divergent opinions held by the people of Kashmir towards both the state government and the Centre.

The new Union Territory status hasn't appeared even in the Hindu-majority Jammu. The only assertion the Modi government can put forth is that the alteration in the status of Jammu and Kashmir was driven by national security concerns. National security is undeniably a delicate matter, often serving as a rationale for significant changes. Nevertheless, the ultimate safeguard lies in the trust of the people of the former state. While the people stand with India, there is a crucial need for the governments to reciprocate that trust. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewsline@gmail.com)

Unemployed youths intruding Parliament is a desperate cry for help

By: Arun Srivastava

This is the second time in two decades that the security of Parliament has been breached. Nevertheless, the two incidents are distinctly different from each other in nature and probably in intention. The first was planned by terrorists "to wipe out the entire political leadership of India," to quote the then home minister L. K. Advani. In that attack at least eleven persons had lost their lives.

But today's attack does not appear to be inspired by any terrorist idea or intention. The two intruders, including one woman, Neelam, who were arrested outside the Parliament house were shouting: "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", "Inquilab Zindabad", "Jai Bhim", "Tanashahi Nahi Chalegi" (we would not tolerate dictatorship). It is a known fact that the word tanashahi is being used by opponents of Narendra Modi for him.

Neelam, the only woman, who was protesting outside the Parliament, claimed to be a student. She said she was unemployed. Her family members told the media that she was angry because she had no job, though she was highly qualified. They said she had also taken part in the 2020-2021 farmer protests. Neelam outright denied that she was affiliated to any party or organisation. This is nothing unusual. There are number of educated youths who are angry with the administration, but are not with any organisation. They belong to the angry young men/women genre, a role which the superstar Amitabh Bachchan assayed in countless films.

Nevertheless, the intrusion of two youths and using smoke bomb inside Parliament is undoubtedly the most audacious and alarming act of protest, justified or otherwise. Just after the incident, the police claimed that it was a meticulously and well-coordinated incident carried out by six people, all of whom were in contact with each other over Instagram and other social media platforms, where they hatched the plan.

However, after some hours, a police officer said: "A preliminary probe has revealed that Sagar Sharma, D. Manoranjan, Neelam Devi and Amol Shinde knew each other. They had become friends on social media and hatched the plan." But Neelam and Amol claimed they had no links with Manoranjan and Sagar, the officer said. Though police is trying to discover an 'anti-national' angle to the incident, it cannot absolve itself of the responsibility of utter failure. The police owe an explanation to the country as to how could the two persons entered the Parliament House, despite the building having an extremely tight security.

Moreover, it remains to be ascertained how the BJP's Mysore MP Pratap Simha issue could pass for the two persons without verifying their antecedents.

Usually an MP or MLA issues passes only to the persons who are known to them. Incidentally, the BJP MPs and MLAs are most judicious in this matter. The most important revelation of the police is: "They had the same ideology and hence decided to give a message to the government. The security agencies are trying to ascertain if they were instructed by anyone or any organisation. During interrogation, Amol said they were upset with issues like the farmers' protest, Manipur crisis, unemployment, that's why they committed this act."

In the backdrop of this revelation, the role of the BJP MP comes under the scanner, given that Mahua Moitra has been expelled from the Lok Sabha for merely sharing her login id to the businessman Hiranandani, citing national security threat. Obviously, the BJP MP Pratap Simha must have been aware of their protesters' ideology and the organisation to which they belonged. The police also did not elaborate the content of the message, which it claims, the intruders wanted to give to the government.

Though the police is trying to look through the narrow prism of a broader conspiracy angle, they

have failed to clarify why they did not take security warnings seriously. The day was close to the anniversary of the terror attack on Parliament on December 16, 2001; obviously it called for highest order of security alert.

Moreover, America-based Khalistani terrorist Gurbat Singh Pannu had already warned of an attack on Parliament on this day. In this backdrop, the role of police comes under scrutiny. It is unthinkable how they managed to carry smoke sticks and break into the Lok Sabha, despite security checks and scanners inside the building. There is one more lacuna. Initially, the police said that five of them stayed at Vikram's residence in Gurgaon/Gurugram before coming to the Parliament. Later it said that they had stayed at the Gurgaon residence of Lalit Jha.

Even police officers confess that the motive behind their action is still unclear. Of course, it is certain that they were disillusioned with the prevailing situation in the country. Two youths even claimed themselves as "deshbhakts (patriots)". A section of the Godi media tried to compare the incident with 93-year-old incident of the iconic youth revolutionary Bhagat Singh and his friends throwing bomb in the British colonial parliament to make them listen to the voice of the people.

Leader of the Opposition in the

Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge rightly said that "security breach that took place in Parliament today is a very serious matter. We demand that the home minister should come to both the Houses and give a statement on this."

The most important part of the entire story had been the Speaker of Lok Sabha, Om Birla seeking to play down the security breach, saying the youths had released "sadharaan and sansani failaniwali dhuwan" (normal smoke, meant to create panic), and told the MPs that there was nothing to worry. Usually, the political class becomes too aggressive in such cases. But Birla, on the contrary, was trying to play down. An insight into the whole episode would make it explicit that it was an attempt of the intruders to draw the attention of the people of the country towards the autocratic functioning of Modi and having little or no concern for the people, especially the unemployed youths.

Manoranjan's father Devaraj Gowda from Mysore said his son was an engineer who graduated in 2014. In absence of any job, he used to assist his father in farm. He said: "My son is an ardent follower of Swami Vivekananda. No one has perhaps read as many history books on Vivekananda as my son. He used to travel to different places for any celebration related to Vivekananda."

The intrusion of Parliament by

unemployed youths exposes the claim of Modi that India does not face the problem of unemployment. Exactly a month back, the Congress had accused Modi of leaving a legacy of record unemployment as India's jobless rate reaches a two-year high. It is a fact that growing "economic crisis" continues to spiral out of control. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge took a swipe saying that amidst recession and inflation, the Modi government has organised such an "unemployment fair" which is forcing crores of youth to wander from door to door.

The condition of rural India is bad. The fact is government's Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data itself says that the unemployment rate among graduate youth is 13.4%. Kharge said: "Now your false advertisements and new tricks to divert attention will no longer work. Be it the elections of five states or the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the youth of India will definitely take revenge from those who have wronged them."

Only the unemployed youth of the country will sound the bugle of the countdown of the BJP rule's end. CMIE data shows that unemployment rate in India is now at above 10%, the highest in over 2 years - when it already was the highest ever in five decades. Rural unemployment is 10.8%. (IPA Service)

COP28 may have avoided a showdown, but conflict points remain largely unresolved

By K Ravceendran

It is no surprise that COP28 Dubai has proceeded the way it has. As member countries grappled with how to formalise and approach towards the most sensitive issue of fossil fuels, the climate summit had to be extended to try and work out a consensus. According to latest reports emerging the vibrant city, the COP28 presidency has released a proposed text for the final declaration, which would call upon nations to move away from fossil fuels as part of the global fight against climate change.

This marks the success of some of the most vocal states that insisted on stronger language to indicate the resolve to end the fossil era, a goal that was being vehemently opposed by oil and coal producing countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The conflict was inherent in the very presidency of the summit, with the CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) sitting on that chair.

A remark by summit president Sultan Al Jaber there is 'no science' indicating that a phase-out of fossil fuels is needed to restrict global heating to 1.5C had caused eyebrows to be raised. He went to the extent of claiming that a phase-out of fossil fuels would not be sustainable. In fact, there were exchanges between him and delegates at a women-oriented event on the sidelines of the main summit, where he said there was no point in pointing fingers.

OPEC members have been promoting the idea of targeting emissions rather than fossil fuels, through technologies to capture and

store emissions. But the problem is that carbon capture is exorbitantly expensive so that the focus shifts to financial resources. This would mean replacement of phase out with phase down in the declaration's language. But the vast majority of countries preferred a phase-out.

India reportedly raised the issues relating to phasing out of coal, which it said won't be possible any time in the immediate future. New Delhi wanted differential goals to be set for phasing out, with developing countries requiring more time and financial resources to pursue climate change goals as there is a conflict between such goals and the aspirations of the people of developing countries, which add to the carbon footprint.

Globally coal has dominated the power sector for the past 30 years, and according to Rystad Energy 2024 will mark the start of the fuel's decline as solar and wind generation grow in popularity. New electricity supply from renewables is expected to outstrip power demand growth, leading to coal's displacement starting next year and compounding in the coming years. As a result, coal-fired generation will fall marginally to 10,332 terawatt hours (TWh) in 2024, down 41 TWh from 2023. This is a relative drop in the ocean, but it's a sign of things to come as renewables continue their growth trajectory.

Investments in coal capacity and overall usage have fallen in Europe and North America in recent years due to a combination of strict emissions policies and abundant availability of affordable natural gas supplies. Yet, enduring growth in Asia, primarily China, has

kept global coal consumption buoyant. Even so, coal will be gradually displaced by the rapid development of low-carbon power sources, ushering in a cleaner, leaner system even as investments in new capacity in Asia continue over the next few years.

Thanks to abundant coal reserves and the need to add energy supply quickly to support economic growth, Asia is responsible for more than three-quarters of the world's coal power generation. Coal generation capacity continues to grow in the region, but the pace of new projects is slowing amid environmental concerns. Countries around the world that are highly dependent on coal, like China, Germany and the US, are developing renewable capacity fast enough and at favorable economics to displace coal easily.

Europe and North America are systematically replacing coal generation with cleaner sources like natural gas and renewables, reducing coal power capacity by more than 200 GW since 1990. Europe's decline is mainly driven by strict emissions policies, while North America has primarily replaced coal generation with gas power as abundant regional production has slashed prices.

Asia has added more than 40 GW of new coal capacity in each of the last five years and is expected to add 52 GW next year. In other words, Asia will add more coal capacity in 2024 than the total installed capacity in Argentina. Most of this new capacity is in China, followed by India and Indonesia. The additions are expected to continue until 2027, albeit slower, after which coal power plants will begin to decline. (IPA Service)

Pioneering precision: The modern approach to knee surgery in India

By: Dr Bhushan Nariani

Knee pain is a common concern affecting a significant portion of the Indian population, with millions seeking relief every year. Among these individuals, many face the challenges of osteoarthritis, a condition that erodes joint cartilage, leading to debilitating pain, stiffness, and limited mobility. For those grappling with these difficulties, knee replacement surgery often emerges as the most promising solution to restore their quality of life.

However, not all knee replacement procedures are created equal. Conventional implants, typically made from materials like metal or ceramic, may fall short in terms of durability and functionality, especially for younger, more active patients. Additionally, traditional surgical techniques sometimes struggle to achieve the precise alignment and balance necessary for optimal joint restoration, potentially resulting in sub-optimal outcomes and complications.

In response to these challenges, Dr. Bhushan Nariani, a distinguished Orthopaedic and Joint Re-



placement Surgeon based at BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital in New Delhi, has embraced cutting-edge technology and precision-driven approaches to revolutionize knee surgery in India. This innovative approach offers the promise of more precise and personalized knee replacements, tailored to the unique anatomy and biomechanics of each patient.

The integration of advanced technology and precision-driven techniques into knee surgery represents a significant leap forward in the field of orthopaedics. Dr. Nariani utilizes state-of-the-art robotic-assisted systems that provide unmatched precision and control during surgery. These systems, while not a replacement for the surgeon's expertise,

serve as invaluable tools that enhance precision and outcomes. They empower surgeons like Dr. Nariani to meticulously plan each procedure, accounting for factors such as optimal implant size, position, and alignment, all based on the individual characteristics of the patient.

Moreover, robotic-assisted surgery allows for the selective removal of diseased bone while preserving as much healthy tissue as possible.

This not only results in reduced blood loss during surgery but also contributes to faster postoperative recovery, enabling patients to return to their daily activities sooner.

The advantages of incorporating advanced technol-

ogy and precision-driven approaches into knee surgery are not limited to the operating room. They extend to the implant materials used as well. Modern materials like oxidized zirconium offer exceptional properties that improve implant longevity and performance. These advanced materials, combined with the use of robotics, further enhance the benefits of surgery.

Clinical studies have demonstrated that these advancements surpass conventional alternatives, offering extended durability and superior performance. Furthermore, they exhibit lower friction and reduced metal ion release, thereby potentially reducing the risk of inflammation, infection, and metal allergies. The lightweight nature of these implants also minimizes stress on the bone, contributing to enhanced joint stability.

Dr. Bhushan Nariani's pioneering approach, which includes the use of robotics for assisted surgery and innovative implant materials, has yielded remarkable results for his patients. They've reported reduced pain, improved functionality, and increased satisfaction with their new knees. Thanks to these advance-

ments, patients are able to resume their daily routines more quickly and with renewed confidence.

As a dedicated surgeon committed to delivering the best possible care, Dr. Nariani continually seeks ways to enhance his practice and improve patient outcomes. His embrace of advanced technology, precision-driven approaches, and innovative implant materials in knee surgery underscores this commitment, as these innovations go beyond mere tools – they represent the means to provide intelligent and effective results.

If you are grappling with knee pain and considering knee replacement surgery, Dr. Bhushan Nariani extends an invitation for you to consult with him at BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital in New Delhi. Together, you can assess your condition and explore the most suitable solution tailored to your knee issues, ultimately helping you regain your active lifestyle.

(The author is the Vice Chairman - Centre for Joint Replacement in Institute for Bone, Joint Replacement, Orthopaedics Spine & Sports Medicine at BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital, New Delhi)

How much protein do you need to build muscle?



By: Lindsey DeSoto

Protein is found in every cell and tissue in the body. While it has many vital roles in the body, protein is crucial for muscle growth because it helps repair and maintain muscle tissue.

The current recommended dietary allowance (RDA) to prevent deficiency in minimally active adults is 0.8 grams (g) of protein per kilogram (kg) of body weight. However, newer research suggests individuals trying to build muscle need more than this.

Consuming less protein than the body needs has been linked to decreased muscle mass. In contrast, increased protein intakes above the RDA may help increase strength and lean body mass when paired with resistance exercise.

Why is protein important for building muscle?

Protein is made up of amino acids that act as building blocks for cells and tissues in the body. There are 20 amino acids that combine to form proteins.

While some can be synthesized by the human body, others cannot. The nine amino acids that the body cannot make are called essential amino acids. These must be obtained through diet.

When a person eats protein, it is digested and broken down into amino acids, which are involved in many processes in the body, including tissue growth and repair, immune function, and energy production.

Like other body tissues, muscle proteins are continuously broken down and rebuilt. In order to build muscle, a person must consume more protein than what is broken down. This is often referred to as a net positive nitrogen balance, as protein is high in nitrogen.

If a person is not consuming adequate amounts of protein, their body tends to break down muscle to provide the body with the amino acids needed to support body functions and preserve more important tissues. Over time, this can lead to decreased muscle mass and strength.

Lastly, the body uses amino acids for muscle protein synthesis (MPS), the primary driver of muscle repair, recovery, and growth after strenuous exercises.

How much protein do you need?

According to the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, most healthy adults over 19 years old should get between 10-35% of their daily calories from protein. One gram of protein provides 4 calories.

This means that a person who eats 2,000 calories per day would need to consume between 50 and 175 grams of protein per day.

The current RDA of 0.8 g per kg of body weight for protein is based on the amount required to maintain nitrogen balance and prevent muscle loss. However, extending these recommendations to active individuals who are looking to build muscle may not be appropriate.

When it comes to building muscle mass, the ideal amount of daily protein a person should consume varies depending on several factors, including age, gender, activity level, health, and other variables.

However, several studies have given us a good idea of how to calculate the amount of protein adults need for muscle gain based on body weight.

What do studies say?

While most studies agree that higher protein intakes are associated with improvements in lean body mass and strength when combined with resistance training, the optimal amount of protein required to build muscle remains controversial. Here is what the latest research says.

One 2020 meta-analysis published in the journal *Nutrition Reviews* found that protein intakes ranging from 0.5 to 3.5 g per kg of body weight can support increases in lean body mass. In particular, researchers noted that gradually increasing protein take, even by as little as 0.1 grams per kilogram of body weight per day, can help maintain or increase muscle mass.

The rate of increase in lean body mass from higher protein intakes rapidly decreased after 1.3 g per kg of body weight was exceeded. Strength training suppressed this decline. This suggests that increased protein intake paired with strength training is best for gaining lean body mass.

Another 2022 meta-analysis published in the journal *Sports Medicine* concluded that higher protein intakes of around 1.5 g per kg of body weight daily paired with resistance training are required for optimal effects on muscle

strength. Researchers noted that the benefits of increased protein intake on strength and muscle mass appear to plateau at 1.5 to 1.6 g per kg of body weight per day.

Lastly, one 2022 systematic review and meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Cachexia, Sarcopenia, and Muscle* concluded that a protein intake of 1.6 g per kg of body weight per day or higher results in small increases in lean body mass in young, resistance-trained individuals. The results on older individuals were marginal.

Notably, 80% of studies examined in this review reported participants consuming a minimum of 1.2 g of protein per kg of body weight per day, which is still higher than the current RDA. This may be a potential contributor to the decreased effects of protein intervention in combination with resistance training in older adults.

While it is difficult to give exact figures due to varying study results, the optimum amount of protein for muscle-building appears to be between 1.2 and 1.6 g per kg of body weight.

This means a 180-pound (81.8 kg) male, for example, would need to consume between 98 and 131 g of protein daily, combined with resistance training, to support muscle growth.

What are the best protein sources?

A person can meet their daily protein needs by eating animal and plant-based protein sources.

Animal-based protein sources include:

- lean meats (beef, pork, or lamb)
 - poultry
 - eggs
 - fish and seafood
 - dairy products
 - whey protein powders.
- Plant-based protein sources include:
- beans
 - peas
 - nuts
 - lentils
 - seeds
 - soy products
 - plant-based protein powders.

Some nutritionists consider animal protein sources to be better than plant-based protein sources when it comes to building muscle mass. This is because they contain all the essential amino acids the body needs in sufficient amounts. They are also easy to digest.

Some plant-based proteins are less bioavailable and harder to digest. They also have varying amino acid profiles. However, individuals who opt for plant-based diets can easily supplement by eating more overall protein, and opting for a variety of foods.

To obtain all the necessary amino acids in a plant-based diet, individuals can pair ingredients such as rice and beans, hummus and pita bread, or peanut butter on whole wheat bread.

One notable exception is soy, which is highly bioavailable, has a good profile of amino acids, and is easy to digest.

How much protein is too much?

Doctors generally agree that healthy adults can safely tolerate a long-term protein intake of up to 2 g per kg of body weight per day without any side effects. However, some groups of people, such as healthy, well-trained athletes, may tolerate up to 3.5 g per kg of body weight. Most research suggests that eating more than 2 g of protein per kg of body weight per day can cause health issues over time.

Potential risks

Symptoms of excessive protein intake include:

- intestinal discomfort
 - nausea
 - dehydration
 - fatigue
 - weight gain
 - irritation
 - headache.
- More severe risks associated with chronic protein overconsumption include:
- heart disease
 - seizure
 - kidney and liver injuries
 - death.

When combined with resistance training, protein intakes above the current RDA can support muscle building. The best way to meet your daily protein needs is by consuming lean meat, fish, beans, nuts, and legumes.

Since the optimal amount of protein a person needs depends on age, health status, and activity level, consider speaking with a healthcare provider or a registered dietitian to discuss how much protein is suitable for you. *(Courtesy: Medical News Today)*

Adenoidectomy: What to know and when to have it done

By: Dr. Sumit Mrig

An adenoidectomy is a surgical procedure used to remove adenoid glands when they become swollen or enlarged due to infections or allergies. Enlarged and inflamed adenoids are known as adenoiditis; this makes breathing difficult and causes respiratory infections.

Adenoid glands are situated behind the nose at the roof. It is a mass of lymphoid tissue (which appears as a small lump of tissue) behind the nasal passage. Adenoids serve an important purpose in young children, as they act as a part of the immune system and protect the child's body from bacteria and viruses.

Removing adenoid glands can help the patient to breathe easily and sleep more comfortably. Adenoids automatically shrink around the age of 10-11 years and are completely gone by the teenage years.

When is Adenoidectomy surgery needed?

A patient needs adenoidectomy surgery when their adenoids gland becomes enlarged, which can partially or completely block the airway. Patients with enlarged adenoids can have breathing problems, infections, and other complications which may lead to snoring problems or condi-

tions such as sleep apnea.

It can cause complications such as chronic nasal drainage, sinus infections, frequent ear infections, or fluid in the ear which can lead to temporary hearing loss.

A patient with enlarged adenoids, who is not responding to medical treatment, needs immediate attention to remove adenoids through surgery and prevent complications that can have long-term effects.

A patient needs adenoidectomy surgery when:

- Antibiotics do not clear ear infections
 - Buildup in fluid in the ear due to adenoid swelling
 - When dentition and oral hygiene starts getting affected
 - Sleep apnea or snoring
- Diagnosis**

A patient with enlarged adenoids glands can have breathing problems, ear infections, and recurring sinusitis. A doctor will check the symptoms and patient's health history and examine the adenoids by placing a small cam-

era in the patient's nose. The doctor may also recommend imaging tests such as x-ray to examine the adenoids.

Based on symptoms and physical examination of the ears, nose and throat, doctors may recommend adenoidectomy.

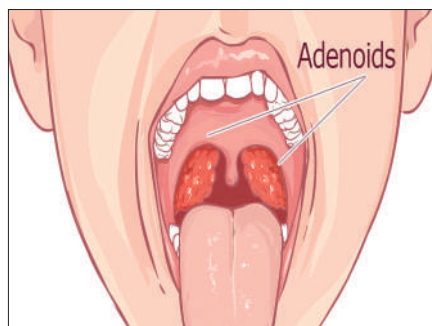
Treatment

Adenoidectomy is a short surgical procedure performed by an ENT surgeon (ear, nose, throat specialist). The procedure takes about 20 to 30 minutes on an average.

General anaesthesia is given to the patient before the surgery. The anaesthesiologist combines the mixture of gas and intravenous medication for general anaesthesia. This is given through the mouth and it keeps the patient asleep during the surgery.

The process of adenoidectomy:

- The surgeon places a small tool inside the mouth to keep it open
- Adenoids glands are removed using a debriider/coblator under endoscopic guidance



How much does exercise help with longevity? Insights from a Finnish study of twins



By: George M Savva

Surveys on lifestyle and longevity consistently find that people who do more exercise live longer. So it is surprising to see a report from the Finnish Twins Cohort Study that there is little direct effect of "leisure time physical activity" on lifespan. What makes this study different from others – and is it right?

Human behaviour and biology are complex and interact with wider society and the environment. How much exercise a person gets could be linked to their genetics, diet, disabilities, education, wealth, or just whether they have enough leisure time and a safe green space. Each of these factors could also be linked to lifespan in different ways.

You can probably think of a dozen other things that might be associated both with a person's health and the amount of exercise that they do. The direction of the causation will not always be clear. Although it is certainly true that people who exercise more will, on average, live longer, it is far more difficult to know how much is caused by the exercise itself, versus these other

factors.

How can we hope to isolate this single causal effect from the complexity of people's lives?

Studies of twins can help us here. Twins have similar or identical genetics and early life experiences, so we can more directly test how differences in their later-life behaviour affect lifespan.

This is precisely the approach taken by researchers at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. They used exercise questionnaires given to 11,000 pairs of adult same-sex twins in 1975, 1981 and 1990, and linked this to death records up to the year 2020.

Least and most active groups

They found that, as expected, the most active had a 24% lower rate of death compared with the least active. This effect is smaller than suggested by previous studies, and most of the excess risk was confined to the least active 10% of the study participants.

They also looked at biological age, measured by the degree of DNA damage (methylation) and, surprisingly, found that both the most and the least active groups appeared biologically older than the others.

Pairing twins deals with genetics and early life differences, but what about other aspects of health behaviour?

When smoking, alcohol consumption and body mass index, or BMI, were taken into account in the analysis, the link between exercise and longevity was much reduced, with only a 9% difference in death rate between the least active group and others – and no difference between the highly and moderately active. In other words, for a hypothetical twin pair with very different activity levels but the same smoking history, alcohol use and BMI, there would be very little difference in life expectancy.

But what does it mean to change exercise levels while all other aspects of health remain con-

stant? For example, if the effect of exercise on death was mediated by weight loss, then this analysis would not reveal that link. And if exercise increases but weight does not change, then must something else be compensating?

There was also some evidence that the effect of exercise was stronger in the first 20 years after the assessment compared to the subsequent decade. So it is possible that exercise needs to be maintained to keep its longevity benefits into later life.

This would agree with evidence from clinical trials that show more immediate benefits of exercise interventions on health in people with existing conditions.

Smaller role than previously thought

So what can we safely conclude from these new findings – which have won a national sports medicine prize in Finland, but are yet to be peer-reviewed?

Clearly, people who exercise more live longer on average. Genetics, social factors, existing health and other aspects of lifestyle explain some of the association. We should not rule out a direct link between exercise and longevity, but this study suggests that it may have a smaller role than previously thought.

Nevertheless, experimental evidence shows that exercise can prevent illness and disability, improve mood and overall quality of life, which many would regard as more meaningful outcomes than lifespan alone.

It can be difficult for people to maintain lifestyle changes, and so social and environmental efforts, such as maintaining high-quality green spaces, to support healthy lifestyles are important.

Social inequalities in health and lifespan exist and are growing so it's vital that we continue to refine our understanding of the reasons why and what we should do about it. *(Courtesy: Scroll.in)*

Over 40 acres of poppy cultivation destroyed in Manipur

Chief minister Singh took to Twitter to express his appreciation for the team's dedication



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: The central and state forces in a joint operation have destroyed over 40 acres of poppy plantations across Kangpokpi and Ukhrul

districts, sources said. Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh has lauded the dedicated efforts of the team involved in the successful operation.

The operation, conducted on December 14 and 15, targeted poppy plantations in Makui and Langka villages of Kangpokpi district, and along the Sihai hill range in Ukhrul district.

A combined team of CRPF, Assam Rifles, Kangpokpi Police, Forest officials, and the SDC T. Waichong worked in close coordination to eradicate the illegal crops.

Chief minister Singh took to Twitter to express his appreciation for the team's dedication.

In his tweet, he acknowledged the contributions of each participant, from the CRPF and Assam Rifles to the local police and Forest officials.

He highlighted the importance of such joint efforts in ensuring community well-being and upholding the rule of law.

Another mass burial ritual ceremony to be held at Churachandpur



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Another mass burial ritual ceremony to be held at Churachandpur in Manipur on December 20, sources said. The first mass burial had taken place on Friday in Kangpokpi district.

This district predominantly inhabited by the Kuki-Zo tribal is stated to be the epicenter of the ongoing communal violence.

A total of 87 bodies of Kuki-Zo tribals are currently lying at the mortuary of the Churachandpur district hospital for a mass burial ceremony at a place near the Khuga Dam close to Sehken village in Manipur's

Churachandpur district on December 20, 2023.

Churachandpur district is the epicenter of the ongoing communal violence in Manipur.

After circulating public information, the mass burial program will be carried out as per the wishes of the next of kin of the deceased, according to the Joint Philanthropic Organisation (JPO).

Officially, 106 corpses belonging to the Kuki-Zo community were arranged for the last rites of which 19 bodies were already been put to rest at the Kangpokpi district on Thursday.

Out of these, 46 bodies are already lying at Churachandpur district hospital and 41 corpses brought from different hospitals in Imphal on Thursday are being prepared for final mass burial programmes on December 20, 2023.

In the violence-wracked Manipur, around 200 persons from two communities — the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo lost their lives.

The violence erupted after a "Tribal Solidarity March" which was organised on May 3, 2023, in the hill districts of the state to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Indian Army commemorates 52 years of victory in 1971 in NE states



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Commemorating 52 years of Indo-Pak 1971 war which resulted in liberation of Bangladesh, a large number of events were held all across the NE states by Spear Corps of Indian Army.

A solemn wreath laying event was held at Spear Corps War Memorial at Rangapahar Military Station wherein the chief of staff and all officers paid homage to the fallen heroes of the 1971 war.

Assam Rifles Sector in Agartala organised an Indo-Bangladesh Maitri Bike Rally, "Fuelled by Freedom, Ride by Friendship", comprising of 60 Bikers, 25 soldiers and 35 civilians from Sabroom near Indo-Bangladesh, Maitri Bridge to Agartala traversing more than 200 kms. The bike rally was flagged-in on December 16 by Governor of Tripura, N Indrasena Reddy at the Albert Ekka War Memorial in Agartala.

A cycling team, the 'Pedaling Patriots' representing the Spear Corps also, reached their final destination, the iconic Albert Ekka War Memorial, at Agartala marking the culmination of their remarkable journey. The local community extended a warm and enthusiastic welcome, with school students from various institutions and NCC cadets lining on the road, ensuring the team received a fitting reception. Shri Indrasena Reddy Nallu, Governor of Tripura, flagged-in the cyclists.

The patriotic and cultural events to mark the day continued in the evening with a series of cultural and patriotic performances by various performers, in the esteemed presence of Dr (Prof) Manik Saha, the chief minister of Tripura and Maj Gen Sumit Kabthiyal, general officer commanding, Red Shield Division. People from all corners of the state attended and cherished the event.

It was a day when Spear Corps, Red Shield Division in unison with local populace of Agartala paid homage to the supreme sacrifice of our war heroes of 1971 and saluted the spirit of Indian Army. The chief minister took the opportunity to meet and felicitate the Ex-Servicemen (ESMs) and Veer Naris.

A painting competition for children was also organised earlier in the month with patriotic themes to instill pride and patriotism in the young minds, the winners of which were also felicitated by the chief minister during the cultural evening.

Principal arrested for thrashing students failing to recite prayer

ITANAGAR, Dec 17: The principal of a school in Arunachal Pradesh's Pakke Kessang district was arrested for allegedly beating up students who failed to recite the prayer properly and lacked proficiency in Sanskrit, police said on Sunday.

The school was operated by the Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust, which terminated the services of the principal after the allegations surfaced, they said.

The principal was arrested from Fatehpur district in Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, Pakke Kessang's Superintendent of Police (SP) Tasi Darang said.

The incidents of physical abuse came to light after the parents of a class 1 student noticed bruises on his body. Following this, a complaint was lodged at the Sejoisa police station on December 10, he said.

On the basis of the complaint, a case was registered under IPC section 342 (wrongful confinement) and 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) along with the Juvenile Justice Act's section 75 that deals with cruelty to children, he added.

At least 20 students who were in classes 1 to 4 were physically abused by the principal, a woman, the SP said.



The students were threatened with severe consequences if they reported the abuses to their parents, he said.

"Many students were physically abused for not chanting the school prayer properly, while some were beaten up for their apparent lack of proficiency in Sanskrit," the SP said.

Earlier, the Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (APSCPCR) said that the school had been operating since 2019 without registration. (PTI)

Manipur witnesses revision of excise duty & VAT

Aim to boost revenue generation

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: The Manipur government has decided to revise excise duty and VAT in a bid to boost the state's revenue generation.

This decision was taken in a meeting of the Manipur cabinet, chaired by chief minister N Biren Singh.

This revision of excise duty and VAT is expected to generate a revenue of around ₹ 600 crore annually for Manipur.

The cabinet revised the excise duty and VAT (Value-added Tax) under which the excise duty slab on 12 bottles will be around ₹ 600 to ₹ 6000 according to the prices of the Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL).

The VAT levied on the public will be increased to 35 percent from 20 percent but on military and other exempted categories, the levy will be increased from 12 per-



cent to 20 percent.

30 percent of the revenue collected from sales of beverages plus 30 percent of VAT revenue will be used in public health and welfare measures.

It may be mentioned here that the Manipur government recently had lifted the ban on liquor sale and consumption in the state.

Furthermore, the Manipur cabinet also gave its nod for establishing a Manipur State Beverages Corporation Limited (MSBCL). Sources close to the chief minis-

ter on Saturday said that the MSBC with the state finance minister as the ex-officio chairman will look after the manufacture, production, possession, purchase, sale, consumption, import-export, and transportation of beverages at some selected areas.

The MSBCL, initially, will look after the retail sale of beverages, and an open advertisement will be made to select bonded warehouses. It will also handle standardization and licensing for the production and sale of local liquor or Distilled Indigenous Country (DIC) Liquor.

Sale and consumption of beverages within a 100-meter radius of educational institutions, hospitals, and places of worship is banned. Sale of beverages will not be allowed within 500 meters of National Highways.

However, this will not be applied in areas under Municipality.

UNC sends Christmas greetings, appeals for peace

SENAPATI, Dec 17: The United Naga Council (UNC), while sending out Christmas greetings, has appealed to all to shun violence.

"With Christmas round the corner, all believers around the world are praying for peace and prosperity. In our violence stricken state, prayers for restoration of peace and normalcy have been whispered from the lips of many for the past months. This Christmas, we continue to uphold our prayers with a strong faith that the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace will heal the wounds of the oppressed; young and old," the UNC message said.

The Naga body then said the war is not yet over and the two warring communities have not budged an inch to put to an end the long drawn conflict that has taken many precious lives, destroyed properties and caused untold sufferings to victims of the conflict. "Without being biased to either community, the United Naga Council, as a neutral organization, has been actively advocating for the restoration for peace in the state ever since the conflict started on May 3, 2023," it added.

In continuance to this, while sending out good tidings on the eve of Christmas, the UNC appealed to all concerned to shun from violence so as to ensure that all is well during this festive season. "As families wait on the return of their near and dear ones studying and working outside the state, let us all work to uphold peace so that no harm come upon them in their journeys," the UNC also said.

The message of the Naga body then said, "Just as Christ asked us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, it is our appeal to all the communities living in close proximity with the Naga villages to spend the festive season in the spirit of peaceful companionship rather than one of tension and trepidation." The UNC also "earnestly" pleads all the communities to refrain from lawless activities such as extortion, harassment, and thefts of vehicles that will only dampen the spirit of Christmas. All communities residing in the state, regardless of whether they are involved in the ethnic clash have been deeply affected, it added. "May this Christmas be a time for all communities to reassess their stance on violence and to come to the realisation that violence is not the answer to the prevailing situation. Let the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord bring about a birth of peace in our war torn state. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas," the UNC message further added. (NNN)

Manipur police recovers stolen car

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Manipur police recovered a stolen car and apprehended a suspect in Thoubal district on Sunday, police sources said. Acting on a tip, a joint team of central and state forces scoured the Usoipokpi-Tharaorou hills near Lilong police station for four hours, leading them to the silver car, equipped with a fake smart card.

70-year-old Thupam Kaboklei, residing in the vicinity, was arrested for questioning and for allegedly harbouring the stolen vehicle. Police combed through 30 houses and verified the identities of around 100 individuals during the operation.

Furthermore, the recovered car is currently in the custody of Lilong police station, and police urged anyone who has fallen victim to car theft to come forward and identify their vehicle.

In a follow-up action, another joint search operation was conducted in Tangieng Manging village, Kakching district, but yielded no recoveries or arrests.

GANGTOK, Dec 17: Sikkim will remember 2023 mostly as a gloomy year due to the deaths of scores of people in a massive flash flood in Teesta River triggered by a cloudburst in glacial South Lhonak Lake.

At least 42 people were killed, while 77 others remained missing and thousands were displaced as the raging Teesta, which was in spate after the cloudburst in north Sikkim on October 4, inundated towns and villages downstream.

At least 1,173 houses were damaged and 13 bridges washed away, while the Chungthang hydroelectric power dam in Mangan district was completely destroyed. Over 25,000 people were displaced and sheltered in 22 relief camps.

However, the visit of Dalai Lama to the Himalayan state in December after over a decade brought some solace to the people scarred by the devastation, as over 30,000 people listened to his sermons on Buddhist philosophy at Gangtok's Paljor Stadium.

Loktak Hydroelectric Power Project lifespan extension receives objections

IMPHAL, Dec 17: Extension of lifespan of Loktak Hydroelectric Power Project for another 25 years, a proposal of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited's (NHPC), received strong objections from the stakeholders concerning the Loktak Lake.

The Loktak Hydroelectric Power Project had a lifespan of 35 years which had completed in 2018 but was then extended for another five years and now NHPC seeking further extension for another 25 years.

The NHPC has recently sought approval from the Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change on leasing the fresh life to the project for another 25 years.

The proposal received a strong objection from various quarters and a people's convention on the topic "Impact of Loktak Hydro Electric project in Manipur" held on December 10 had resolved to oppose the extension of lifespan of the project and related activities of the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation's on Loktak Lake for another 25 years.

While adopting the resolution, the convention alleged that NHPC Ltd has exceeded its intended lifespan and since then people have raised concerns about its adverse environmental impact on the ecosystem and livelihoods of thousands of individuals in Manipur valley.

All Loktak Lake Areas Fishers Union, Manipur (ALLAFUM), a body of fishermen of Loktak Lake, strongly condemned the arbitrary move of the NHPC while joining the chorus objecting to the extension of the lifespan of the project.

In a statement, ALLAFUM alleged that the NHPC sought the extension of the project without



taking into confidence the concerned Manipur government and the thousands of fisher and farmer families affected by the hydro project since it was commissioned in 1983.

The ALLAFUM questioned the motive behind NHPC not informing the Loktak Development Authority, the Manipur government and the Loktak fishing community as primary stakeholders for placing the proposal before the government of India.

The NHPC proposed furthering the productivity lifespan of the project without first addressing four decades of ecological and human disasters due to the functioning of the man-made structure Ithai Barrage which has been the bone of contention between the project managers and the people of Manipur for nearly forty years now.

The NHPC must clarify their stand to the people of Manipur on how they propose to rehabili-

tate and resettle the thousands of human population impacted by the project, and how they propose to bring back the near natural status of the freshwater lake which is now termed as 'ageing rapidly' due to the human-led engineering intervention by the project managers, the fishers' body demanded.

"ALLAFUM makes its stand very clear that unless NHPC clarifies on these issues, it cannot go ahead with its plans to lease new life to the destructive Loktak hydro project," the statement signed by ALLAFUM secretary Oinam Rajen Singh asserted.

It alleged that the people of the state have suffered extensively because of the hydro project and the lives of the lake dependent communities cannot be further exploited by the project for another two decades and more.

"The Loktak fishing community is suffering acutely from declining fish population in the lake and this is directly impacted by Ithai Barrage of the Loktak hydro project," it also said.

It added that Loktak is suffering from siltation, pollution and eutrophication, and the native vegetation of food and fodder value is fast disappearing from the lake.

"Loktak is suffering massive biodiversity loss because of the hydro project," the ALLAFUM stated while calling upon the Manipur government to redress the grievances of the affected people before any move to extend the lifespan of the project is considered.

The NHPC should not be allowed to freely extend the project's lifespan without taking the people's concerns into confidence, the ALLAFUM warned. (NNN)

Tripura: VHP to invite people to join Ram temple inauguration in Ayodhya

AGARTALA, Dec 17: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) will launch a statewide campaign to invite the people of Tripura for the inauguration of Ram Mandir in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya, a leader on Sunday.

The newly built temple is set to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22.

"Eight brass pots containing 'prasad' from Ayodhya have already arrived in the state. The pots will be sent to various district headquarters. Our volunteers will invite people to Ayodhya for the inauguration of Ram Temple on January 22," said VHP Tripura prant (chapter) president Sachin Koloj at a press conference.

"The statewide drive to invite people will begin from January 1 and continue till January 15," he said.

The VHP will also organise a special ritual (puja) at a temple in each mandal of the state on January 22 to mark the historic event, said Sankar Roy, VHP secretary, Tripura chapter. (PTI)

Gloomy 2023 for Sikkim as flash flood wreaks havoc

Dalai Lama's visit brings some solace



protests.

The state also witnessed violent protests after the body of Padam Gurung, a student leader of Namchi Government College, was found in a drain in June. Opposition political parties and various other organisations staged protest rallies demand-

ing a CBI inquiry into the incident.

Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPc were imposed in Namchi town in south Sikkim in August after protestors turned violent during a rally demanding justice for Gurung. Police baton-charged the agitators and fired tear gas shells at

them to bring the situation under control.

The state government constituted a one-man inquiry committee comprising a retired high court chief justice, who in the first week of November submitted his report in which it was stated that Gurung's death was "accidental".

Meanwhile, heinous crimes against women shook the peaceful Himalayan state.

A nine-year-old girl was kidnapped, raped and murdered by a taxi driver in Pangthang area near Gangtok town when she was returning from school in April.

Another 22-year-old woman was gang-raped by a taxi driver and two of his accomplices in Ranipool area near the state capital when she was returning home after attending a graduation party.

The accused persons in both cases were nabbed, with demands being raised from various quarters for capital punishment for the rape-murder accused.

The state also witnessed incidents of political violence as the opposition Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) alleged its members were beaten up and pelted with stones when they went for political meetings.

The SDF submitted various memorandums to the governor and the Centre demanding the imposition of President's Rule in the state over the "situation of political violence and vendetta politics".

SDF members also staged symbolic protests in various parts of the state wearing helmets to highlight the stone-pelting incidents.

Footballer-turned-politician Bhaichung Bhutia merged his Hamro Sikkim Party with prime opposition SDF and officially joined the party on November 23.

A new political party, Citizens Action Party, was launched, projecting itself as the third front in the state's politics dominated by the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) and opposition SDF. (PTI)

Citizens must remain healthy for India to become 3rd largest economy: VP Dhankhar

LUCKNOW, Dec 17: India will become the world's third largest economy in the next four-five years leaving behind Germany and Japan, but to achieve that the citizens of the country must remain healthy, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Sunday.

Addressing the inaugural function of the two-day 'Atal Swasthya Mela' here, Dhankhar also fondly remembered former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, saying he remained firm on principles and handled sensitive issues with care.

Talking about the country's progress, Dhankhar said India's economy has overtaken those of Canada, France and the UK.

"Today, we are the fifth superpower in the world in terms of economy. In the coming four-five years, Japan and Germany will also be behind us, and India is going to be the third largest (economic) superpower in the world!" he said.

"For all this, it is necessary that we remain healthy. No matter how much talent, ability and skill you have, if you are not healthy you will not be able to do anything," he said. He said former prime minister Vajpayee would have been very proud seeing where India has reached today.

Dhankhar, who also served as a Union minister of state for parliamentary affairs in the Chandra Shekhar ministry from 1990 to 1991, remembered his association with the former prime minister during that time.



"In 1990, I was a minister at the Centre. Our government had the support of the Bharatiya Janata Party. I had the privilege of visiting the European Parliament as a minister. I got the company of honourable Atal ji for 15 days in Europe. I miss Atal ji a lot and I definitely miss him today," he said.

A lot of attention has been given to health in our Vedas and Shastras, the vice president said.

Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Ayushman Bharat scheme and cleanliness campaign, he said that "establishing such a system in a country with a population of 140 crores is very praiseworthy."

Dhankhar said, "Had Atal ji been alive today, he would have felt very happy. His dream is being fulfilled. Quoting Syama Prasad

Mookerjee, Atal ji used to say that two symbols, two legislations will not work in the country, and today this is the ground reality."

Referring to changes in the system due to technology, he said, "Earlier if ₹ 100 was sent from the Centre, not even ₹ 10 would reach the beneficiaries, but today 100 per cent of the amount reach them. Being a farmer's son, I know the farmers' problems and my chest swells when I see how strong the health of the farmers is."

Dhankhar said the biggest attack on health is done by corruption. Due to corruption, the work of a common man stops and if he is unable to tackle the corrupt person, he becomes restless, the vice president said.

"Today, corrupt persons get scared when the clutches of the

law reach them. Earlier people used to feel pain that why are some citizens above the law. Now everybody is equal before the law," he said. Showering praises on Prime Minister Modi, the vice president said that today India is not dependent on the vision of any country. "India's own conscience about the world is important. Today India is showing direction to the world. Modi ji has taken the G20 event to such heights that hardly any country can reach there," he said.

He said, "It is the good fortune of this country that our government adopted the old medical system by forming the Ministry of AYUSH and the old method has been effective."

He also claimed that today "India's data consumption is more than that of China and America and what I mean to say is that today India is in strong hands and in active hands."

He also emphasised on the use of coarse grains.

Giving a piece of advice, the vice president said, "Put your country first in every situation. We should be proud that we are citizens of this great country. We cannot allow anti-national forces to progress in any way in this country. (We) cannot allow anti-national ideas to grow. We have to attack those ideas which hinder our progress." He expressed the possibility that in 2047, when India celebrates its centenary of Independence, it will be on the top of the world. (PTI)

Second home-built 700 MW nuclear plant at Kakrapar achieves first criticality

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: India's second home-built 700 MW nuclear power reactor at Kakrapar in Gujarat achieved its first criticality, the start of the controlled fission reaction, early Sunday, setting the stage for its gradual move towards producing electricity for commercial purposes.

The first criticality was achieved at 1.17 am in the presence of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) Chairman-cum-Managing Director B C Pathak.

Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP) Unit-4 is the second in the series of 16 indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR) of 700 MW each being set up in the country.

"Achievement of the criticality of KAPP-4, within six months of commercial operation of Unit-3 was significant," Pathak said addressing officials at the site.

The criticality was achieved after meeting all the stipulations of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), which had issued clearance after a rigorous review of the safety of the plant systems, a statement from NPCIL said.

After the first criticality, several experiments/tests will be conducted in KAPP-4 and the power level raised in steps, in line with the clearances of the AERB, ultimately culminating in the operation of the unit at full power, it said.

KAPP 3 and 4 (2x700 MW) are located at Kakrapar in Surat district of Gujarat, adjacent to the existing reactors KAPS 1 and 2 (2x220 MW), it said.

These indigenous PHWRs have advanced safety features and are among the safest reactors in the world, the NPCIL claimed.

While these reactors have been designed, constructed, commissioned and operated by the NPCIL, the supply of equipment and execution of contracts have been by Indian industries/companies, the corporation said.

Presently, the NPCIL operates 23 reactors with a total capacity of 7,480 MW and has nine units, including KAPP-4, with a capacity of 7,500 MW under construction.

In addition, 10 more reactors with a total capacity of 7,000 MW are in pre-project activities. These are expected to be completed by 2031-32. (PTI)

CM Vijayan accuses Kerala Gov of deliberately trying to 'destroy' peace in the state

PATHANAMTHITTA (KERALA), Dec 17: Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday accused Governor Arif Mohammed Khan of deliberately 'attempting to destroy' the peace in the southern state by making provocative statements.

The hard-hitting accusation by the CM came during a press conference held here as part of the Nava Kerala Sadas, an outreach programme of the state government. Responding to reporters' queries about the Governor calling the protesting SFI activists as "criminals", Vijayan said Khan has "reached a situation where he is saying whatever comes to mind".

"He (Khan) is forgetting that he is the Governor of Kerala," the CM said.

Vijayan said that he had earlier also pointed out that Khan was "deliberately attempting to destroy the peace in the state through his actions" and the same has been

proven by the Governor's subsequent actions.

"He (Khan) has tried to create the maximum possible provocation on every issue," he added.

The CM also criticised Khan for referring to the protesting activists of the CPI(M)'s student wing -- as "criminals" and "goondas".

"How can he use such rude words against the protesters?" he asked. Khan, a day ago, reiterated that the volunteers of the ruling CPI(M)'s students' wing were "criminals" to whom he was not accountable to explain any of his decisions.

He had alleged that the protesting students were "criminals hired by the chief minister".

Earlier this week, he had accused the CM of 'conspiring' to hurt him physically. Khan had made the accusation after his vehicle was allegedly attacked by SFI activists while he was on his way to the

Thiruvananthapuram International Airport to leave for Delhi. On Sunday, Vijayan lashed out the Governor for attempting to confront the protesting SFI activists when they had allegedly blocked his vehicle and attacked it earlier this week.

"Has anyone ever tried to physically confront or take on those waving black flags at them? And then he (Khan) boasts that they (protestors) ran away when he went towards them. Look how provocative his statements are. His actions and interventions are totally bereft of common sense," the CM said.

Claiming that the Governor's actions were in violation of all normal protocols, he said the central government needs to take a look into that.

The CM further said that when black flags are waved at him or his cavalcade, neither he nor the ministers or members of the Left front use derogatory words against the protesters. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Explore new avenues

high school leaving certificate (HSLC) and Higher Secondary board examinations. Speaking further at the event, Sarma informed that an amount of Rs 12 crore has been earmarked for the mini stadium that would be built across 11 bighas of land, adding, "Along with a 500-seating capacity pavilion, there shall be one football stadium and two volleyball courts".

Stating that arrangements have been made to install four light stands in the upcoming stadium, the chief minister also spoke about the possibility of installing flood-light if its need is felt later. Referring to the under-construction stadium at Suwalkuchi, Sarma said its construction activities are nearing completion.

"The construction activities for a massive stadium at Amingaon would begin soon," he added. He further extended confidence that the upcoming bridge over river Brahmaputra connecting Palashbari with Jalukbari would lend a new momentum to Jalukbari LAC's march towards progress and growth. The said event was also attended by the chief minister's wife Rini Rini Bhuyan Sarma, education advisor to Government of Assam Noni Gopal Mahanta, along with a host of dignitaries.

Arunachal Guv, CM mourn

been asked to expedite investigations and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to book at the earliest, the chief minister added.

Assembly speaker PD Sona also mourned Matey's demise. In a statement on Sunday, Sona condemned the incident and called for a comprehensive investigation. "My heartfelt condolences go out to the family and loved ones of Matey during this difficult and challenging period. May his soul find eternal peace," Sona added.

Matey was elected MLA from Khonsa West assembly constituency on a Congress ticket in 2009. He joined the BJP in 2015 and earlier this year, declared his willingness to contest the assembly polls in 2024. (PTI)

3 drug peddlers held

was arrested under the NDPS act," he added. Meanwhile, the police have launched a massive crackdown against drugs in Dibrugarh.

"So far, we have arrested many drug peddlers in Dibrugarh and seized a significant quantity of contraband drugs from their possession," said a police source.

Congress to hold CWC

the recent assembly poll results in which it was defeated in the Hindi heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan while winning and forming the government in Telangana.

The party also lost the polls in Mizoram. The CWC would deliberate on the reasons for the defeat and the way forward for the 2024 polls, they said.

The meeting is being held at a time when the challenge before the Congress is to come out with an alternative positive agenda to counter the BJP in the next general elections. There is a view in the party that it would need to think out of the box to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2024. (PTI)

BSF plans marine battalion

the riverine border in the Sunderbans. The force has also communicated its plan to the West Bengal government seeking its nod for stationing a small team of its patrol parties (personnel on foot patrol) in Forest Department 'chowkis' located in the Sunderbans, which falls under the jurisdiction of two districts -- North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas. The BSF patrol teams currently stay in the floating BoPs that constantly keep moving in the Sunderbans. (PTI)

India to become third

figure in double digits in gems and jewellery exports. And I give a guarantee that the government stands with you in all your efforts," he said. The Centre has already selected the sector as a focus area for export promotion and is taking efforts to encourage patented design, diversification of export products, search for better technology in collaboration with other countries and encouraging lab-grown and green diamonds.

The world today is inclined towards India and the country's reputation is high and being talked about all over, he said.

"Made in India has become a strong brand. Your business and jewellery sector will get benefit of this. So I urge you to take a pledge and fulfil it," he added. Surat's modern infrastructure is being enhanced to increase the capacity of businesses by way of an international airport, metro rail service, the Hazira Port, LNG terminal and multi cargo port, among others, the PM said. Surat is part of the bullet train network and work is progressing on the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, which will also strengthen the area's connectivity with northern and eastern India, he said. The Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will provide new opportunities to Surat businesses, he said, adding that "it is in a way the only city with such modern connectivity". City businesses should take advantage of all these aspects, he added.

The PM said "Modi's guarantee" is being talked about a lot these days and more due to the recent Assembly polls. "But the people of Surat have known about Modi's guarantees for a long time. The hard working people of Surat have seen Modi's guarantees turn into reality. And this Surat Diamond Bourse is an example of it," he said. The SDB will be a global centre for trading of both rough and polished diamonds as well as jewellery, as per an official statement. It will comprise a state-of-the-art 'Customs Clearance House' for import and export, jewellery mall for retail jewellery business and facility of international banking and safe vaults, it said.

The SDB is part of the Diamond Research and Mercantile (DREAM) City. With 67 lakh square feet of floor space, the SDB is now the world's largest office building having nearly 4,500 diamond trading offices, a release said. The mega structure, built on a plot of 35.54 acres inside the DREAM City, has nine towers of 15 floors with office spaces ranging from 300 sq ft to 1 lakh square feet.

Prime Minister Modi said the new terminal building of Surat airport has been inaugurated today and Surat airport has also got the status of international airport, fulfilling a demand of several years of the people of the city. With Surat airport, Gujarat now has three international airports, Modi said, adding that apart from the diamond trade, this will benefit the textile, tourism, education and several other sectors.

Modi said he has been closely associated with Surat city, which has taught him a lot, including how one can face the biggest challenges with collective effort. He said Surat has seen several ups and downs in the past, including plague and flood.

"Surat faced all the challenges together. I have seen those periods closely when Surat's spirit was challenged and negativity of different kinds was spread. But I was confident Surat will not only emerge from the crisis but will also make a place for itself in the world with new strength," he said. Today, Surat is among the top 10 fastest growing cities in the world, he said.

People of Surat have turned it into a diamond city with all their might and it has become a bridge city. "For lakhs of youth, Surat today is a dream city. The city is also growing in information technology, and getting a huge building in the form of a diamond bourse is a historic event," Modi said. (PTI)

Assam Guv commends

translations play a crucial role in comprehending the nation's heritage and understanding the contributions of these heroes beyond a limited scope," he suggested. He said that India has great history and no one has been able to erase it, adding, "Even after almost a thousand years of dominance by foreign rules, we are still deeply connected to our culture and literature. Our children should be taught history as it was, because only when a nation knows its real past and true history, it gets the right direction for the future".

The Governor also hailed the efforts of Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Samiti for conducting the conference and urged upon them to continue its role as an educational organisation. Rastriya Sangathan Mantri of Akhil Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojna Dr Balmukund Pandey, national general secretary Hemant Dhing Majumdar, vice chancellor of Cotton University Prof Ramesh Chandra Deka along with a host of other dignitaries were also present in the function.

Karbi Students Association

the said work does not meet the desired standards. In this regard, a memorandum was submitted to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, principal secretary on November 20 2023, he informed.

INDIA bloc's immediate task is to win 2024 Lok Sabha elections: P Chidambaram



KOLKATA, Dec 17: Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram has termed the party's debacle in the recently held Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan assembly polls as "unexpected" and "a matter of worry".

In an exclusive interview to PTI, Chidambaram on Sunday said the BJP fights every election "as if it is the last battle" and that is what opposition parties "must realise".

"BJP's victory in three states -- Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh -- is a major boost for the party ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The defeat of the Congress in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan was unexpected. The results are worrying and I believe the party's leadership will address the weaknesses," the former Union finance minister said.

The veteran leader, however, said the party's 40 per cent vote share in the four big states -- Rajasthan, MP, Chhattisgarh and Telangana -- where assembly elections were held recently "seems to be intact".

Chidambaram said he is hopeful that the party's vote share might increase up to 45 per cent ahead of the Lok Sabha polls by addressing issues such as last-mile campaign, booth management and bringing the dormant voter to the polling station on election day.

In the recently held elections, the BJP defeated the Congress in all the three states where the two were in a face-to-face fight, wresting control of both Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh and retaining power in Madhya Pradesh. The only consolation for the Congress was in Telangana where it pushed the BJP to the third place.

Expressing concern on BJP's "polarisation, veiled anti-Muslim and anti-Christian propaganda and hyper-nationalism", the Congress Rajya Sabha MP said the party must find a befitting response to it.

sponse to it.

"It is a potent combination. The BJP has given up its tirade against welfare measures (so-called freebies). But I am more concerned about polarisation, concealed anti-Muslim and anti-Christian propaganda, and hyper-nationalism. Northern and central Indian states seem susceptible to this kind of appeal. The Congress must find an appropriate response," he said.

On caste census being the party's top agenda for 2024 polls, Chidambaram said, "It is an important issue but may not be the determining factor. In my view, unemployment and inflation top the list. In every survey, these are the two issues that concern people the most."

Whether demonetisation, National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will affect the BJP vote bank in the upcoming polls, he said, "Demonetisation is an old issue. Its scars have faded. But we will talk about demonetisation in the context of the hordes of black money seized repeatedly. In the last round of assembly elections, the ECI had seized ₹ 1,760 crore of alleged unaccounted money."

"The NRC and CAA will become important issues if the government activates them and tries to implement them," he added.

On surveys predicting BJP win in the 2024 LS polls, Chidambaram said, "The wind is in BJP's sail. But winds can change direction. The BJP never takes an election lightly. It fights as if it is the last battle. The opposition parties must realise the fighting quality of the saffron party."

On INDIA bloc's preparations for LS polls, Chidambaram said the leaders of the alliance will have to identify candidates who can take on the BJP in at least 400-425 seats.

"I am not privy to the internal discussions that take place when INDIA bloc leaders meet. I am sure they realise that there are only three months before the next elections."

"The most important task is to identify at least 400-425 seats where the opposition alliance should field one candidate to take on the BJP," he added.

On INDIA bloc's PM face and its seat sharing plans, Chidambaram said people's response to the alliance's leaders will help in identifying the PM face, but more than that is the need to win the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls.

"The person to lead the government will be selected after the elections. People's response will be the key to selecting the leader. The immediate task is to win the elections," he added. (PTI)

Parl panel recommends having provisions in AMASR Act to fix accountability of govt officials

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: A parliamentary panel has recommended to the Centre that in the upcoming amendment of the AMASR Act, "strong provisions" may be incorporated for fixing accountability of government officials to ensure necessary steps are taken timely for tackling encroachment of centrally protected monuments.

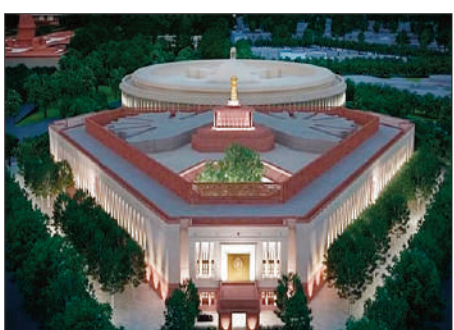
The department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, in its report, has also strongly recommended that provisions to "empower the local bodies for the protection of historical monuments" and to make them accountable may be incorporated in the amendment of the AMASR Act that is being worked upon by the Culture Ministry.

"Three Hundred Sixty Third Report on the Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations/ observations of the Committee contained in its Three Hundred Twenty-Fourth Report" on 'Issues relating to Untraceable Monuments and Protection of Monuments in India', was presented in both Houses last week.

The sites under the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) are maintained under the ambit of the AMSAR (Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains) Act.

At present, over 3,690 monuments are under the ASI.

"The Committee takes note of the existing framework and recommends that in the upcoming amendment of the AMASR Act being worked upon by the Ministry, strong provisions may be incorporated for fixing accountability of concerned



government officials to ensure that necessary steps are taken timely for tackling encroachment of Centrally Protected Monuments," the report says.

The officials concerned should be "liable to be prosecuted in case of gross negligence of their duties" with regard to tackling encroachment of CPMS, it said.

The Committee further recommends that the Culture Ministry may examine the powers given to District Forest Officers (DFOs) under The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and "consider granting similar powers to ASI officials" in order to effectively curb the issue of encroachment of centrally protected monuments, it added.

The ministry in its response has told the panel that "amendment in the AMASR Act, 1958 is under consideration".

The panel has further observed that it is "concerned to note that out of the 3,693 Centrally Protected Monuments, security guards are posted at

only 248 CPMS/sites/museums i.e. less than about 6.7 per cent of the total number of CPMS".

"The Committee notes with dismay that out of the total requirement of 7,000 personnel for the protection of monuments, the Government could provide only 2,578 security personnel at 248 locations due to budgetary constraints," the report says. The parliamentary panel observes that "budgetary constraints should not be an excuse for not providing security guards to protect our rich cultural heritage", adding it is the "bounden duty of the Government of the day to protect our cultural heritage sites".

The Committee, therefore, recommends that a budget may be provided by the government to appoint 7,000 personnel for the protection of the monuments or as per the study conducted by IIT, Delhi.

"In view of this worrying state of affairs, the Committee is of the strong view that the budgetary allocation available with the Ministry/ASI for safeguarding our centrally protected monuments needs a serious relook," it has said.

The Committee recommends that the Culture Ministry, the ASI may conduct an "urgent thorough assessment" of the security requirements and budgetary allocation required for the same and a "strong case may be made to the Ministry of Finance" requesting allocation of additional funds for this purpose so as to ensure a basic state of protection for all Centrally Protected Monuments across the country to preserve them for generations to come, the panel said in its report. (PTI)

ARSHDEEP (5/37 IN 10 OVERS) AND AVESH (4/27 IN 8 OVERS)

1ST ODI: ARSHDEEP, AVESH SKITTLE SOUTH AFRICA OUT FOR 116



JOHANNESBURG, Dec 17: Arshdeep Singh bowled a magical spell before ending with a five-wicket haul while Avesh Khan looked menacingly quick as India's fringe pacers dismissed South Africa for a paltry 116 in the first ODI here on Sunday.

Playing their first 50 over game post the World Cup final, it seemed that Arshdeep (5/37 in 10 overs) and Avesh (4/27 in 8 overs) had picked up a cue from their seniors Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah as a quality Proteas batting line-up were made to look like novices on a track that offered a lot of help.

It was Arshdeep's first five-wicket haul in ODIs and the Punjab left-arter would certainly feel good having drawn a lot of flak for his inconsistency in the shortest format.

In their last encounter at Kolkata's Eden Gardens, South Africa were bowled out for 83 under lights on a slow deck but never would have Aiden Markram envisaged that he and his men would be bullied at the 'Bull Ring' which has been a safe haven for them in white ball cricket. Their innings lasted only 27.3 overs.

Only three players-- skipper

KL Rahul, wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav and middle-order batter Shreyas Iyer, who played the World Cup final are a part of this current playing eleven, and India's back-up pacers gave a good account of themselves.

The two Indian pacers pitched it up and ensured that most of the South African batters stayed rooted to the crease and both in fact were on hat-tricks with dismissals off successive deliveries.

Arshdeep would get more credit as he blew away the top-order within the first Powerplay with four wickets and then left it to Avesh, who bowled fast and full, hurrying the batters for pace.

In between, Avesh would slip in the occasional short ball for the tail-enders, who were in two minds whether to go on the front-foot or back-foot.

It started with Reeza Hendricks (0), who dragged a delivery that was angled across the right-hander back onto the stumps and the dangerous Rassie van de Dussen (0) must have expected an away-going one but got one that darted back from middle-stump.

Tony de Zorzi (28 off 22

balls), chanced his arms and Mukesh Kumar (0/46 in 7 overs), who had an off-day, went for a few before Arshdeep showed his variation by digging one short and the ball ballooned for skipper Rahul to complete an easy catch.

However the wicket that completely broke the home team's back was Heinrich Klaasen's (6) dismissal, which would have even made the great Wasim Akram proud.

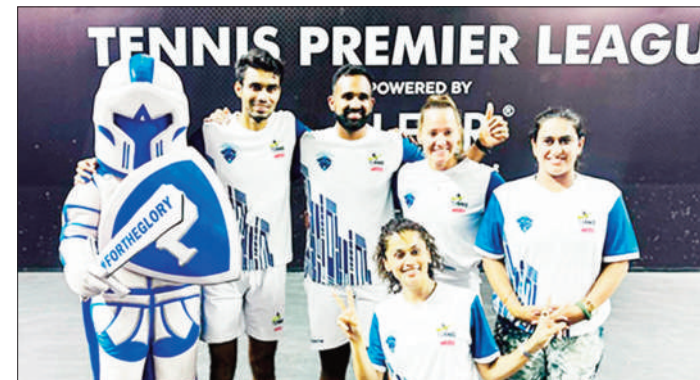
Arshdeep bowled one slightly back of length but flicked his wrists in a manner that it turned into a vicious in-dipper that clipped the leg stump bail, leaving the right-hander in complete daze.

The end of Powerplay didn't end Proteas' woes as skipper Markram played on, completely beaten for pace. David Miller (2) also fell prey to relentless pressure to a delivery pitched on drivable length while Wiaan Mulder and Keshav Maharaj found the speed of deliveries too hot to handle.

It was Andile Phehlukwayo, whose 33, coming in at No. 8, took the home team past 100-run mark before Arshdeep, in his second spell, complete his five-for. (PTI)

ODISHA MASTERS

Sathish Kumar wins men's singles title, Tanisha-Dhruv claim mixed doubles crown



CUTTACK, Dec 17: India's Sathish Kumar Karunakaran secured his maiden BWF super 100 title after outwitting world junior championship bronze medalist Ayush Shetty in an all Indian men's singles final at the Odisha Masters here on Sunday.

The 22-year-old Sathish, who won men's singles title at India International and had a runner-up finish at Maldives International this season, prevailed 21-18 19-21 21-14 over Ayush in an exciting final.

Indian pair of Tanisha Crasto and Dhruv Kapila also stood at the podium after winning the mixed doubles title following a thrilling three-game win over Singapore's Hee Yong Kai Terry and Tan Wei Han Jessica in a pulsating final.

Tanisha, 20, and 23-year-old Dhruv dished out a gallant fight to rally their way to outwit Hee and Tan 17-21 21-19 23-21 in an hour and 14 minutes.

Sathish had come into the final, having beaten Ayush at the Chhat-tisgarh India International Challenge this season.

However, there was hardly anything to separate the two Indians though Sathish showed better control and won the key moments to move ahead from 13-13 in the opening game.

From 14-18, Ayush tried to fight back but was erratic. Eventually, Sathish pushed one at the forehand corner to take two game points and sealed it with a smash.

Sathish kept the tempo high to eke out a 6-3 lead before staying ahead at 15-13 but Ayush stepped up and grabbed a one game point with a smash and then dominated a

flat exchange to take it to the decider.

Ayush fell into a pool of errors as he sprayed into net, smashed out and also made judgement errors to lag 1-7 in the decider. Sathish took a six-point advantage at the interval after his opponent sent another wide.

Ayush's game fell apart against some relentless hitting from Sathish, who grew in confidence and it showed in his body language. Sathish moved to nine championship points after Ayush found the nets. He squandered three chances before converting. He threw his racquet in the air in celebration.

Sathish had also won the mixed doubles titles with partner Aadya Variyath at the Maldives International and finished second best at Malaysia. He had also played for Chennai Superstarz in Premier Badminton League in 2020.

Tanisha will again be in action in the women's doubles final with partner Ashwini Ponnappa taking on the Indonesian combination of Meilysa Trias Puspitasari and Rachel Allessya Rose.

Sixth seeded Indian men's doubles pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Sai Pratheek K also progressed to the final and will face seventh seeded Lin Bing-Wei and Su Ching Heng of Chinese Taipei.

The BWF (Badminton World Federation) World Tour is divided into six levels, namely World Tour Finals, four Super 1000, six Super 750, seven Super 500, and 11 Super 300. One more category of the tournament, the BWF Tour Super 100 level, also offers ranking points. (PTI)

Ramandeep Kaur clinches WBC India light flyweight title

HYDERABAD, Dec 17: Punjab's Ramandeep Kaur clinched the prestigious WBC India title in the light flyweight division by eking out a narrow split decision win over eight rounds against Mamta Singh from Haryana.

The Indian Boxing Council (IBC) sanctioned event showcased 10 fights including two title fights -- WBC India & WBC Middle-East at the Gachibowli Stadium on Saturday.

Top-ranked Ramandeep entered her 14th pro bout with an impressive record of 10 wins and 3 losses while Mamta boasted an undefeated streak of four wins.

Mamta faced an uphill battle, shedding weight and adjusting to a lower weight class, unlike her usual super flyweight bouts.

The technical expertise of Ramandeep, seasoned in six previous six-round contests, was evident. She showcased superior technique from the outset, skillfully maneuvering and delivering precise punches, leaving Mamta struggling to find her rhythm. (PTI)

Hockey: Indian women go down 1-2 to Belgium in 5 Nations Tournament



VALENCIA, Dec 17: The Indian women's hockey team suffered its second consecutive defeat by going down 1-2 to Belgium in the 5 Nations Tournament here.

Belgium won the match riding on goals from Ambre Ballenghien (22') and Louise Versavel (37'). Meanwhile, Vaishnavi Vithal Phalke (56') scored the only goal for India on Saturday. India had lost 2-3 to Spain in the opener.

The match was intense from the first whistle, with both teams looking to breach the defence of the other, but a goal was not forthcoming. The teams ended the first quarter on level terms. The breakthrough finally came in the second quarter as Ambre scored, giving Belgium the lead going into the halftime break.

Both teams were eager to score next and it was Ver-

savel's shot on goal, early in the third quarter which extended Belgium's lead in the contest. India kept probing Belgium's defence in search of a goal in the last quarter. In the dying moments of the game, Vaishnavi found an opening and scored, swinging the momentum in their favour. However, India failed to capitalise further. India next face Germany on December 19. (PTI)

Australia crush Pakistan by 360 runs in 1st test inside 4 days

PERTH, Dec 17: Australia skittled Pakistan on a treacherous Perth pitch to record a thumping 360-run victory in the first test inside four days with Nathan Lyon achieving the elusive landmark of 500 test wickets on Sunday.

Pakistan was blown away for 89 all out in the final session on Day 4 for its 15th consecutive test defeat in Australia after the home team setup a daunting 450-run target when it declared its second innings at 233-5 around half an hour after lunch. Pakistan's top-order batters crumbled against the relentless pace of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and captain Pat Cummins on a

wicket that had variable bounce with plenty of batters taking body blows. Hazlewood and Starc snared six wickets between them, while Cummins nicely setup former Pakistan captain Babar Azam (14) before finding the outside edge of his bat as the visitors had no answer to Australia's nippy fast bowling.

Lyon reached the 500-wicket landmark when he successfully went for a leg before wicket referral against Faheem Ashraf and was embraced by his team-mates. The off-spinner raised the ball to the applause of the Perth crowd as he became the third Australian bowler after the late Shane Warne and



Glenn McGrath to join the exclusive club of eight players.

Lyon then clean bowled Aamer Jamal in the same over off a delivery which bounced no higher than ankle height to finish with 2-18 in his memorable test match.

Pakistan slumped to 17-3 inside the first seven overs of its daunting run-chase. Opener Abdullah Shafique fell caught behind to a brilliant Starc delivery in the first over as the left-arm fast bowler got his 200th test wicket at home.

Captain Shan Masood could make only 2 before he played a loose drive off Hazlewood and Imam-ul-Haq was pinned leg be-

fore wicket by Starc with another gem of a delivery that came sharply into the left-hander. Usman Khawaja holed out for 90 as Australia looked for quick runs after lunch.

Khawaja and Mitchell Marsh, shared run-a-ball 126 scoring his second successive half century at his home ground. Resuming Sunday at 84-2, Australia lost Steven Smith and Travis Head in the first hour of the day as Pakistan's bowlers took advantage of the tricky wicket and movement offered by the deteriorating Perth pitch to frequently trouble Australia's batters. (AP)

ASPL 2023: KAMSFC beat Gobinda Basumatary FA, move to top of points table

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 17: Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC (KAMSFC) has secured top of points table of Assam State Premier League (ASPL), 2023 of Assam Football Association (AFA) after they defeated Gobinda Basumatary FA in their last league encounter played at home ground Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium last evening (December 16).

Morning Star has collected a total of 35 points. The Club has become league champion with yesterday's win. Morning Star scored 4-1 against the visitors.

It has now qualified to play in the third division of Indian League (I-League). It will be the first club from Assam to get into I-League after playing in the state level league championship.

On the other hand the United Chirang Duar FC which sits at the second top position in the points table is the close contestant with the Morning Star. In their last outing in their league rounds



against Dima United FC played at Halflong has lost to the host team Dima United FC ending with 31 points.

Morning Star's Bishnu Banali Bordoloi drew first blood in the 34th minute followed by Samuel in the 44th minute. The first half ended with a lead of 2-0 for Morning Star. In the second half the blue giants (Morning Star FC) scored two more goals through Joseph in the 64th minute and Deshmah Murmu in the 78th minute.

During the 85th minutes the visitors got the opportunity for a score as Joseph of Morning Star was booked for a handball. Amarjit Singh's penalty shot made a perfect landing into the net. The visitors got their first goal here. Despite of the effort of Gobinda Ba-

sumatary boys to find the net, but failed and at the end of the match the score was 1-4 in favour of Morning Star.

With the final whistle from the referee the Morning Star boys rejoiced to celebrate the win as the club could retain the 2015 championship and also being qualified for the third division I-League.

The coach Horen Ingti Kathar at the field said he is happy that the team had won the league. The Morning Star was the champion 2015 and is overjoyed that the club could retain the 1st ASPL 2015 championship. The club is now qualified to play in the third division of I-League. It will be the first club from Assam to reach to the I-League after playing the state level league championship. Next will be semi final knock out stage. The top four teams will meet in the semi final rounds. Fixture will be out by Monday by AFA, Ingti informed. On the ASPL being over, the club will focus on playing in the third division I-League.



New India Literacy Programme

an initiative towards expanding literacy across the state



MADHURAM LEKTHE
EXECUTIVE MEMBER
i/c Adult Education Department
KAAC, Diphu



DR. TULIRAM RONGHANG
CHIEF EXECUTIVE MEMBER
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
DIPHU

Let's ensure our contribution towards this positive initiative of providing literacy to the illiterates/non-literates of Assam.

Under this initiative a survey will be conducted from 15 December to 31 December 2023.

Details of the survey:

- ✓ Identification of illiterate learners above 15 years of age.
- ✓ Identification of volunteer teachers.

Appeal to all sections of people to participate in 'New India Literacy Programme'

District Literacy Mission Authority, Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, Assam