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- Israel orders mass evacuations as it widens offensive
- 11 bodies recovered after volcanic eruption in Indonesia
- Assembly poll results won't impact INDIA bloc: Opposition leaders
- 4.45 lakh FIRs on 'crime against women' in 2022 in India: NCRB

Zoramthanga blames anti-incumbency for MNF's debacle in the assembly polls

ZPM dethrones MNF with 27 seats in Mizoram

AIZWAL, Dec 4: The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) stormed to power in Mizoram by dethroning the Mizo National Front (MNF) and bagging 27 seats in the 40-member house on Monday.

Prominent ZPM winners include the party's CM face Lalduhoma, who secured the Serchhip seat defeating his MNF rival J Malsawmzuala Vanchhawng by 2,982 votes.

The ruling Mizo National Front won nine seats and was leading in one.

The BJP won the Palak and Saiba seats.

The Indian National Congress bagged the Lawngtlai West seat.

Prominent losers include deputy

chief minister and MNF candidate Tawnluia, who lost to ZPM candidate in Tuichang, health minister and MNF candidate R Lalthangliana, who lost to ZPM's Jeje Lalpekhluia in South Tuipui and rural development minister Laruatikima, who lost to ZPM nominee Lalngthinglova Hmar in Aizawl West II, according to the Election Commission.

Power and electricity minister R Lalzirliana lost in Aizawl North-I by a margin of 5,485 votes to ZPM's Vanlalhlana. Lalzirliana, while C Lalrinsanga, who holds the agriculture and irrigation departments lost from Lunglei West by 1,282 votes. Food, civil supplies and consumer affairs minister K



Lalrinliana, lost by 1,169 votes from Kolasib to ZPM's Lal-famkima. Excise minister Lalri-

nawma in Tuikum to ZPM's P C Vanlalruata. On the other hand, minister of state for parliamentary

affairs T J Lalnunluanga also lost to ZPM's Lt Col Clement Lalhmingthanga by 329 votes.

The only saving grace for MNF ministers were school education minister Lalchhandama Ralte and minister of state for tourism Robert Romawia Royte who have won the Tuivawl and Hachhek constituencies by 2,019 and 306 votes respectively. Ralte secured 6,501 votes against ZPM's J M S Dawngliana's 4,482 votes.

Chief minister and MNF chief Zoramthanga lost to ZPM's Lalthansanga by 2,101 votes, it said. ZPM emerged winners in Kolasib, Chalfilh, Tawi, Aizawl North-I, Aizawl North-II, Aizawl North-III, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

PM Modi asks opposition not to vent frustration over poll defeat in Parliament

Winter session golden opportunity for opposition: Modi



NEW DELHI, Dec 4: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday asked the opposition not to vent its frustration over the assembly polls defeat inside Parliament and move forward leaving behind 'negativity', saying that may change the people's perspective towards them.

Speaking to the media outside Parliament building ahead of the winter session, he said the session was a 'golden opportunity' for the opposition.

"The country has rejected negativity. We always have dialogue with opposition friends at the start of a session; we always seek cooperation of everyone. This time also all such processes have been completed," he said.

This 'temple of democracy' is a very important platform for people's aspirations and strengthening foundation of a developed India, Modi said and urged all members to come well prepared and hold thorough discussions on bills so that good suggestions come to the fore.

But if discussion does not take place, the country misses those things, Modi said.

"If I speak on basis of the assembly poll results, this is a golden opportunity for friends in opposi-

tion. Instead of making plans for venting frustration over defeat, they should learn from this defeat, leaving behind the habit of negativity of the last nine years, if they move forward with positivity this session, the country will change its perspective towards them. A new door could open for them," he said.

"They are in the opposition, but still I am giving them good advice," Modi added.

The Prime Minister urged the opposition to come forward with a positive mindset.

"Everyone's future is bright, there is no need to lose hope but please don't vent the frustration of defeats suffered outside inside Parliament and disappointment, also your colleagues would need to show their strength but don't make this temple of democracy that platform," the Prime minister said.

"I say on the basis of my experience, I would say change your (opposition) direction a bit, leave the habit of opposing for the sake of opposing. Support constructive things that are in country's interest, debate the shortcomings that are there and you will see that the hatred among the people over such things, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

India re-elected to International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

LONDON/NEW DELHI, Dec 4: India got re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)'s council for the 2024-25 biennium with the highest ever votes in its favour at IMO's 33rd assembly.

This further consolidates India's effort to enhance its representation at the apex maritime organisation in the world as per the Maritime India Vision (MIV2030) to enhance and explore possibilities in maritime trade.

India was elected under the category of 'the largest interest in International Seaborne trade' along with Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Speaking on the occasion, the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, Sarbananda Sonowal, said, "It is a wonderful news for all of India's



maritime sector as we continue our pursuit to be among the top maritime powers in the world. Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, India has garnered immense diplomatic leverage from across the world. Our attempt at enhancing our international representation at the apex maritime body is met with an exuberant and wide support from

across the world, a dividend of PM Modi ji doctrine of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. We are humbled by this outpour of support in favour of India."

"This verdict is also a testament of India's resurgence as a top maritime player in the world under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. I must congratulate the (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

AGP MP raises issue of increasing crude oil royalty to Assam in RS

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) leader Birendra Prasad Baishya on Monday asked the central government if it was considering raising the crude oil royalty to the Assam government in line with international prices.

Raising the issue in the Rajya Sabha, Baishya asked whether the Centre was seriously thinking of raising the crude oil royalty to Assam.

To this, Union petroleum and natural gas minister Hardeep Singh Puri said, "As far as Assam is concerned, I am hundred per cent sure that with the effort that are made to expand capacity and produce and refine more (crude

oil), more royalty will come." Puri said earnings of a state come from a variety of aspects of the "ecosystem dealing with energy".

"Royalty is one aspect. ...When you refine more, you will get more royalty," he said.

Replying to another query, the Union minister said Assam got a royalty of ₹ 9,291.17 crore from crude oil production and ₹ 851.12 crore from natural gas between 2019-20 and 2022-23.

Apart from royalty, the state received more employment and a direct and indirect rise in economic activity, he said. The minister said in view of the revenue (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



KAAC CEM stresses on need to preserve Karbi traditional beliefs



HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 4: Karbi traditional believers gathered on Monday gathered at Arboretum-Craft Centre on the initiative of the chief executive member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang. The motive is to have a common platform and prevent the influence of other religions from creeping in.

The CEM, Ronghang, who is a Karbi traditional believer, said, "We Karbis have our age old belief that is call Aron Barim or Honghari. We are neither ISKCON, Lohkimon, Hindu nor Christian. Our belief and faith is distinct. We offer sacrifice to Hemphu, the almighty and other deities. We are not going to defame or point finger at other religions. We are organising this gathering to discuss having a common platform to strengthen and retain our age old belief."

He further said, "Different religions organise their religious gathering. We will also organise a massive gathering of more than 2 lakhs Karbi Aron Barim believers in January next year ahead of the Karbi Youth Festi-

val. To organise the gathering a committee has been formed. A gathering of two lakhs people will invoke 'Horibong Arnam Kepu', which will be a Guinness Book of World Record."

Horibong arnam kipu is the invocation to almighty with a rice beer filled gourd shell in hand.

He said that 2000 bighas of land will be allotted for 'Karbi Aron Barim. There will be a complex in which there will be offices and meeting halls for organisations of 'Karbi Aron Barim.'

"We will ask the state government for ₹ 100 crores for Karbi Aron Barim," Ronghang said.

In the meeting MLA, Darsing Ronghang was appointed the chairman for Karbi Aron Barim Rat Ameipi, executive member (EM), KAAC, Surjya Rongphar was made the secretary and EM, KAAC, Amarsing Tisso was made the finance secretary. While the CEM is the chief patron, MLAs Rupsing Teron, Bidyasing Englang and Dharamsing Teron are patrons. The next meeting will be held on December 12 at Sarsing Teron Memorial Town (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Bill aimed at regulating legal profession tabled in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: A bill which aims to regulate the legal profession by a single act and seeks to target 'touts' was tabled in the Lok Sabha on Monday with Union law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal saying there should be no role of touts in the country's courts.

"The legal profession is a noble profession. The law commission was given a mandate to bring judicial reforms as per new circumstances. There should be no role of touts in the court premises in the country. Hence, it was felt that in the amendment there should be provisions related to touts," Meghwal said.

Initiating the debate, Karti Chidambaram of the Congress said, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice and touts thrive because of the complexity in dealing with our legal system.

"Because of the asymmetry in our society in terms of education, access to people in authority and wealth, sometimes people do not know how to navigate the legal system. This is what is being exploited and some people step in as touts. Touts thrive because of the complexity in dealing with our legal system," the Sivaganga MP said.

"We largely welcome the amendment...however, I urge the government to focus on the big fish rather than targeting the touts in the small courts," he added.

The Rajya Sabha had passed the Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2023, during the monsoon session.

The bill provides that every high court and district judge can frame and publish lists of touts (those who procure clients for legal practitioners in return for any payment).

According to the provisions, people named in the list of touts will be excluded from entering the court premises. Any violation of this provision will entail punishment with imprisonment of up to three months and a fine. (PTI)

8,522 murder cases registered in India in 2022, 78 every day: NCRB

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: A total of 28,522 FIRs of murder were registered in 2022 with an average of 78 killings every day or more than three every hour across India. This has gone down from 29,272 in 2021 and 29,193 in 2020, according to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data.

"Disputes" with 9,962 cases was the motive in highest number of murder cases in 2022 followed by 'personal vendetta or enmity' in 3,761 cases and 'gain' in 1,884 cases, said the data in the annual crime report of the NCRB, which functions under the Union ministry of home affairs.

The rate of murder per lakh population across the country stood at 2.1, while the charge sheeting in such cases was 81.5, according to the NCRB.

Uttar Pradesh saw the highest number of such FIRs at 3,491 in 2022 followed by Bihar (2,930), Maharashtra (2,295), Madhya Pradesh (1,978) and Rajasthan (1,834), with the top five states together accounting for 43.92 per cent of murder cases in the country, the data showed.

The top five states with the least number of murder cases in 2022 were Sikkim (9), Nagaland (21), Mizo-

ram (31), Goa (44), and Manipur (47), according to the NCRB, which is tasked with collection and analysis of crime data.

Among Union Territories, Delhi, the national capital, registered 509 cases of murder in 2022 followed by Jammu and Kashmir (99), Puducherry (30), Chandigarh (18), Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (16), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (7), Lakshadweep (5) and Lakshadweep (Zero).

Across India in 2022, the murder rate was highest in Jharkhand (4), followed by Arunachal Pradesh (3.6), Chhattisgarh and Haryana (both 3.4), Assam and Odisha (both 3).

Uttar Pradesh (1.5), Bihar (2.3), Maharashtra (1.8), Madhya Pradesh (2.3) and Rajasthan (2.3) fared better in terms of crime per lakh population.

In terms of age, 95.4 per cent victims of murder were adults.

Of total murder victims, 8,125 were female and nine third-gender persons, with men constituting about 70 per cent of victims, according to the NCRB.

In a note of caution about the annual report, the NCRB said the primary (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

3 'abducted' labourers rescued in Assam

SILCHAR Dec 4: Three stone-quarry labourers, allegedly abducted by Manipur-based militants from Assam's Cachar district, were rescued in neighbouring Dima Hasao on Monday, police said.

The labourers of Chirri quarry in Udharbond area were reportedly abducted on Saturday by suspected members of the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF), inspector general of police (Law and Order), Prasanta Kumar Bhuyan said.

Police launched a search operation and rescued the trio from Lodi Kuki area in Mahur town of Dima Hasao, he said.

The abductors fled the spot, and a search operation was underway to nab them.

The labourers have been identified as Raju Tanti, Amit Orang and Biswa Dhar, all residents of Udharbond in Cachar district. (PTI)

Local weavers urged to maintain original texture and pattern of Eri products to capture global market

Weavers receive training on rearing of Eri silkworms

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 04: A workshop on skill upgradation of rearing Eri silkworms and spinning of Eri silk under was organized at the Farmer's Growth Centre in Diphu on Monday, where more than 150 local women weavers from Diphu, Manja and Dhansiri areas participated.

The workshop was organized by the Karbi Anglong district administration with an aim to upgrade the capacity and skill of the silkworm rearers and spinners of the district to produce quality Eri silk using natural dye to compete in the international market.

The district administration has brought in trainer Satish Chaudhury, of Polokbari, Barpeta. Chaudhury himself spins eri silk



threads on his eri silk spinner called 'Saraswati', which he invented himself. He also produces cloth from Eri silk. He also taught the participants to spin threads from eri silkworm cocoons on his

spinning machine.

Inaugurating the training workshop MLA for Diphu (ST) LAC and chairman of the Assam Hills Small Industries Development Corporation (AHSIDC), Bidyasing

Englang said, "Eri-silkworms has been traditionally in use among the indigenous communities here. There has been rearing of Eri-silkworms and the cocoons are being spun into threads for making of garments. The training conducted today will help women to gain better knowledge in rearing and spinning of Eri-silk."

The MLA also appreciated the initiative taken by the district administration in organising such workshops to help weavers to have better knowledge on spinning of Eri-silk using machines. He urged the local weavers to maintain quality in their product to reach the international level.

Executive Member (EM), Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

India to become \$5 trillion economy early in Amrit Kaal: MoS Finance

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: India will become a USD 5 trillion economy early in the 'Amrit Kaal' on the path to achieve the goal of becoming an advanced economy by 2047, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected India to become a USD 5 trillion economy with the third largest GDP in 2027-28.

The USD 5 trillion milestone will be crossed with the help of a strong rupee which will result from macroeconomic stability, he said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

"The government has set the goal of becoming an advanced economy by 2047. In the process, it will become a USD 5 trillion economy early in the Amrit Kaal," Chaudhary said. At the end of 2022-23, the Indian GDP stood at USD 3.7 trillion.

In 1980-81, size of the Indian economy was USD 189 billion, which increased to USD 326 bil-



lion after a decade. In 2000-01, the size of the GDP rose to USD 476 billion. In 2010-11, India's GDP jumped to USD 1.71 trillion, and further increased to USD 2.67 trillion in 2020-21.

Chaudhary said the exchange rate is not an overlooked factor as it ranks India's GDP size in the

world. "India is a market economy, and the government monitors economic progress through market-determined GDP and exchange rate," Chaudhary said.

He further said both domestic and international markets are the mechanisms that determine India's

GDP, exchange rate and contribution of various sectors to GDP.

Contribution of agriculture, industry and services to nominal GDP in 2022-23 stood at 18.4 per cent, 28.3 per cent, and 53.3 per cent, respectively.

Chaudhary said the government also contributes to economic progress through policy interventions, including the measures announced in annual budgets.

Major initiatives taken by the government in the last 9 years for directly increasing the GDP include, implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (IBC) Code, recapitalisation of public sector banks, rollout of Goods and Services Tax (GST), reduction in corporate tax, boost in effective capital expenditure, introduction of Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme in 14 sectors, continuous liberalisation of the FDI regime, and building of digital infrastructure. (PTI)

Avg monthly GST mop-up at ₹ 1.66 trn so far this fiscal: FM Sitharaman

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: The GST collection has been showing an upward trend on an annual basis since its rollout on July 1, 2017, and the average gross monthly mop-up in the current fiscal so far is ₹ 1.66 lakh crore, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, she said the GST collection crossed ₹ 1.50 lakh crore mark in every month of the current fiscal and had touched a record high of ₹ 1.87 lakh crore in April 2023. "GST collection has been showing an upward trend on year-on-year basis since the implementation of GST w.e.f. 1st July, 2017... The average gross monthly GST collection in FY 2023-24 now stands at ₹ 1.66 lakh crore and is 11 per cent more than that in the same period in the previous financial year," Sitharaman said.

The average monthly Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection in 2022-23 was over ₹ 1.50 lakh crore, higher than ₹ 1.23 lakh crore in 2021-22. In 2020-21, the average monthly mop-up was ₹ 94,734 crore. In reply to a separate question, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said the monthly average gross GST collection for 2021-22 and 2022-23 have shown 30 per cent and 22 per cent year-on-year

growth respectively.

"GST is paid on self-assessment basis and tax administration at Central and State level is empowered to take action against cases where GST is not paid and short paid. Detection of such cases and recovery of taxes not paid or short paid is a continuous process," Chaudhary said.

He said the government, on the recommendation of the GST Council, has been bringing several reforms in GST and these measures would improve the GST compliance and increase the GST collection.

These include structural changes like calibration of GST rates for correcting inverted duty structure and pruning of exemptions; measures for improving tax compliance such as mandating e-way bill, ITC matching, mandating e-invoice, deployment of artificial intelligence and machine-based analytics, Aadhaar authentication for registration, calibrated action on non-filers, stop filers.

Also, system-based analytical tools and system-generated red flag reports are being shared with central as well as state tax authorities to take action against tax evaders. (PTI)

Corporate bond market likely to double by 2030: Crisil

KOLKATA, Dec 4: The Indian corporate bond market is poised for rapid growth despite clocking a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nine per cent over the past five years.

Crisil Ratings expects the outstanding size of the market to more than double from around ₹ 43 lakh crore as of last fiscal to ₹ 100-120 lakh crore by fiscal year 2030, a statement said on Monday.

"The growth will be driven by a confluence of factors. Large capital expenditure (capex) in the infrastructure and corporate sectors, growing attractiveness of the infrastructure sector for bond investors, and strong retail credit growth are expected to boost bond supply, while the rising financialisation of household savings should drive demand. Regulatory interventions are also helpful," Crisil senior director, Somasekhar Vemuri said.

Capex in the infrastructure and corporate sectors is anticipated to be propelled by decade-high capacity utilisation, healthy corporate balance sheets, and a favourable economic outlook, he said.

Crisil envisions a capex of around ₹ 110 lakh crore in these sectors between fiscals 2023 and 2027, approximately



1.7 times higher than that of the past five fiscals. The rating major expects this pace of capex to continue beyond fiscal 2027. The corporate bond market is projected to finance about a sixth of the anticipated capex. Infrastructure assets are emerging as strong contenders for investment owing to their improving credit risk profile, promising recovery prospects, and long-term nature. Currently, infrastructure accounts for only about 15 per cent of the annual corporate bond issuance by volume, the note said. However, structural improvements facilitated by a raft of policy measures are expected to make infrastructure bond issuances more attractive to patient-capital

investors, particularly insurers and pension funds, who constitute the key investor segment in the bond market.

Crisil estimates assets in the managed investment segment to double to around ₹ 315 lakh crore by fiscal 2027, and the trend is expected to continue well past fiscal 2027. These investments will be in both equity and debt and a good portion of it may flow to the corporate bond market. The agency stated that retail credit growth is expected to maintain its momentum, fueled by private consumption growth and the formalisation of last-mile credit flow. The bond market, being a crucial funding source for larger NBFCs and accounting for a third of the funding mix, will play a pivotal role in financing retail credit flow.

Managed investments are expected to continue to outpace bank deposits in terms of growth. Factors such as increased digitisation, rising investor sophistication in retirement planning, higher awareness and utilisation of insurance, investment objectives aimed at surpassing inflation, and a burgeoning middle-income population are contributing to the growth of managed investments. (PTI)

Oil palm is sustainable and can aid small farm holders in NE: Solidaridad

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 4: Consuming around 13% of the total global oil palm production, India is the world's largest importer and 2nd largest consumer of Oil Palm amounting USD 10.17 bn in 2021-22 to the country's exchequer.

The Mega Oil Palm Plantation Drive earlier this month across the country was aimed to create awareness and increase area under Oil Palm cultivation so as to decrease the import expenditure in the coming years.

"Without touching any forest cover, around 9 lakh ha of potential area is available and suitable in the Northeast for oil palm plantation," said Dr Suresh Motwani, Veg Oil programme head - India, Solidaridad Network.

"With a possibility of converting areas under Jhum cultivation or barren lands into oil palm plantations, it can aid reduce environmental impact while securing the livelihoods of indigenous communities," he further added. Solidaridad Network is involved in running sustainable oil palm programmes worldwide. With special initiatives surrounding small farm holders, the organisation has also played a critical role in developing India's own standards for sustainable palm oil - IPOS. IPOS would provide sustainability framework for effective implementation of ambitious Oil Palm Mission of Government of India namely National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil palm (NMEO-OP) to pro-

mote oil palm cultivation for making the country Atmanirbhar in edible oils.

Highlighting the benefits for small farm holders, a peculiar situation in the region, he said that 0.26 ha of land has a potential to produce 1T Palm Oil as compared to 2 ha of land needed to produce same amount of Soybean Oil. Hence with the plantations requiring significantly less land compared to other oilseed crops, having a remarkable capacity to yield up to 8 times more oil and also enabling intercropping it has a potential to translate into economic prosperity for smallholders. Furthermore, as per the studies conducted by The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) - Indian Institute

of Oil Palm Research (IIOPR), oil palm plantations require less water compared to crops like rice, banana and sugarcane for its optimum production. Being an evergreen tree with spreading branches, it has a potential to protect soil erosion due to heavy rainfall and helps in conserving moisture due to evaporation. "Contrary to misconceptions, modern oil palm cultivation practices are not synonymous with monoculture. As many less water intensive intercrops like pepper, ginger, cocoa etc can be grown under partial shade condition in the existing plantations, it not only enhances the environmental resilience of the cultivation but also generates additional revenue streams for farmers," said Dr. Motwani.

Stock markets surge over 2 pc to hit lifetime highs after state poll results

MUMBAI, Dec 4: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty soared more than 2 per cent to settle at record high levels on Monday, marking the fifth straight day of gains as the BJP's victory in assembly polls in three states boosted investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,383.93 points, or 2.05 per cent, to close at a lifetime high of 68,865.12. The index touched an intra-day record peak of 68,918.22. The barometer logged its biggest single-day jump since May 20, 2022.

The total market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies surged by ₹ 5.81 lakh crore to ₹ 343.48 lakh crore.

The broader Nifty also climbed 418.90 points, or 2.07 per cent, to hit its all-time closing high of 20,686.80. On the 50-stock benchmark Nifty, 44 closed with gains.

Analysts said BJP's clear majority in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh state polls strengthened the positive sentiment built up last week following robust macroeconomic numbers and unabated foreign fund inflows.

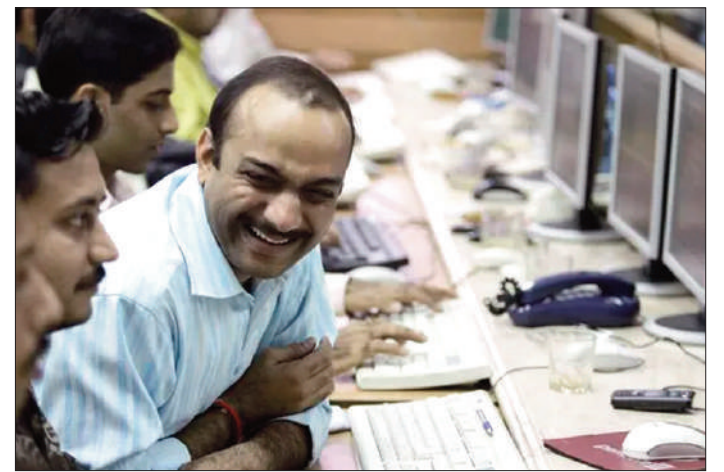
Besides, crude oil prices hovering below USD 80 per barrel fuelled investors sentiment, they said.

Among the Sensex firms, ICICI Bank and SBI led the index with the maximum gains of 4.68 per cent and 3.99 per cent, respectively. Other major gainers were Larsen & Toubro, Kotak Mahindra Bank and HDFC Bank.

On the other hand, Wipro and Tata Motors defied the trend and traded in negative.

"The benchmark index hits its all-time high following the landslide victory of BJP in elections in three states. It spurred a rally with an anticipation that the country will witness a stable government post the general elections next year," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

"All the sectors have broadly participated in the rally with an op-



timism that the FIIs will continue its value buying, indicating positive commentary on the global inflation data and stable domestic macroeconomics," Nair said.

Rupak De, Senior Technical analyst at LKP Securities, said the Nifty "kicked off with a gap up, propelled by BJP's exceptional performance" in three state elections.

"Technically, the Nifty had already surged past the critical resistance level of 19850. Since then, there has been a significant shift in Put positions towards higher strike prices, foreseeing a robust upward rally in the near future. The overall sentiment appears highly bullish, until Nifty fall below 20400. On the higher end, the index might move towards 21,000," De said.

Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said all sectors participated in the move wherein banking majors contributed the maximum to the gains.

"The buoyancy in the banking pack is leading from the front now while others are playing a supportive role and we feel the same trend could continue in the coming days. Besides, cues are favorable from the global front too, further adding to traders' comfort," Mishra said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.19 per cent and smallcap index climbed

1.20 per cent.

All the sectoral indices recorded gains with oil and gas surging the highest 3.77 per cent followed by bankex rising by 3.56 per cent. While power sector index went up 2.99 per cent, financial services advanced 2.98 per cent and utilities jumped 2.94 per cent.

Foreign institutional investors purchased shares worth ₹ 1,589.61 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, Hang Seng fell 1.10 per cent while Japan's Nikkei 225 was off 0.70 per cent and China's Shanghai Composite finished 0.29 per cent lower.

European markets were mixed with Germany's DAX trading higher by 1.10 per cent and France's CAC 40 gaining 0.05 per cent. London's FTSE 100 declined 0.67 per cent. The US markets ended mixed with S&P 500 registering a gain of 0.59 per cent on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.65 per cent to USD 78.37 a barrel.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,511.15 points or 2.29 per cent, while the Nifty climbed 473.2 points or 2.39 per cent.

The market capitalisation of listed companies on the NSE has surpassed the USD 4 trillion (₹ 334.72 trillion) mark for the first time ever on Friday. (PTI)

Investors wealth rises by ₹ 4.97 lakh cr in morning deals as markets rally

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: Investors became richer by over ₹ 4.97 lakh crore on Monday as equity benchmark indices jumped more than 1 per cent to hit life-time peaks after the BJP's win in three Hindi heartland states.

BJP's clear majority in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh state elections fuelled the positive investor sentiments. Robust macroeconomic numbers and unabated foreign fund inflows also supported the rally in the domestic markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 877.43 points, or 1.30 per cent, to a new peak of 68,358.62 in early trade.

Following the rally, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms jumped by ₹ 4.97 lakh crore to ₹ 342.64 lakh crore from ₹ 337.67 lakh crore on Friday.

Among the Sensex firms, Adani Enterprises and Adani Ports led the index with the maximum gains of 6.79 per cent and 4.52 per cent, respectively. Other major gainers were SBI, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, NTPC and Larsen & Toubro.

In five trading sessions, investors' wealth has gone up by ₹ 13.92 lakh crore.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.03 per cent and smallcap

index climbed 1.09 per cent.

The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE reached the USD 4 trillion-milestone for the first time ever on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the market capitalisation of listed companies on the NSE has surpassed the USD 4 trillion (₹ 334.72 trillion) mark for the first time ever on Friday.

"The BJP's resounding victory in three of the four major state elections will further strengthen the market's bullish sentiment. The BJP significantly outperformed pre-poll and exit-poll expectations, which will further strengthen the prospects of the BJP retaining its majority in the Lok Sabha and the market's conviction of the BJP winning the 2024 general elections.

"We expect election-linked market volatility to remain low, which may result in the market trading at rich valuations in the near term," Kotak Institutional Equities said in a research note.

Domestic equity markets are expected to take cues from global trends, trading activity of foreign investors, and RBI's interest rate decision to be announced later this week, analysts said. (PTI)

LOST

I have lost the following document of mine- original Assam University Registration Certificate bearing Registration No. - 2021002604 of 2021-2022 somewhere around Diphu on December 04.

Anybody finding the same may contact the number and address below.

Contact No.- 60023 32899
Sainjali Hasnu,
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AFFIDAVIT

I, Sri Tula Kumar Rajbongshi, S/o late Maheswar Rajbongshi, resident of village Laharjan Bazar, P.O. Laharjan & P.S. Khatkhathi, district Karbi Anglong, Assam, do hereby solemnly affirm that my permanent address is Laharjan Bazar, P.O. Laharjan & P.S. Khatkhathi, district Karbi Anglong, Assam, but in my service Book/certificate vide No. F/75898Y, Rank Rfn. (Tlr), my permanent address has been recorded as "3rd Miles Bazar, P.O. Dimapur, NRS-Dimapur, district Kohima, State Nagaland, Pin Code 797112" instead of "Laharjan Bazar, P.O. Laharjan, NRS-Dimapur Railway Station, P.S., Khatkhathi, district Karbi Anglong, Assam. Verified on this day the 4th day of December, 2023 at Diphu that the contents of the above mentioned are true and correct and nothing material has been concealed. Solemnly affirmed before me by a deponent who is identified by Dihn Teronpi, Advocate, Diphu Court.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor Associates with Hornbill Music Festival

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 4: Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), on Monday proudly announced its association with the prestigious Hornbill Music Festival in Nagaland, India, for the second consecutive year through the title sponsorship. This most popular music festival is being held at the Naga Heritage Village, Kisama in the Kohima District of Nagaland from Dec 1 to 10.

TKM's association with the Hornbill Music Festival reflects the company's core social values, aligning with its vision to preserve and promote the unique and rich local culture and heritage, thereby forging a strong connection with the Nagaland community.

The Hornbill Festival, organised by the department of state tourism and the department of art & culture, government of Nagaland, presents a diverse array of cultural exhibitions under a single roof. It

is a 10-day celebration of Nagaland's rich cultural heritage, showcasing the vibrant traditions of Naga tribes through music, dance, feasts, traditional archery, Naga wrestling, indigenous games, and other athletic sports. This year, the inaugural session of the festival was graced by Geetanjali Kirloskar, chairperson and managing director of Kirloskar Systems, pvt ltd, Masakazu Yoshimura, managing director & CEO - TKM, along with other senior leadership from TKM - Tadashi Asazuma, executive vice president, Vikram Gulati, country head and executive vice president and Varinder Kumar Wadhwa, general manager - strategic business unit (East). The event also witnessed the presence of TKM's valued business associates Takayuki Ueda, managing director and CEO, Toyota Tsusho Insurance Broker India pvt ltd and Y Vikheho Swu, managing direc-

tor of Okusa Toyota. As a part of its active involvement, TKM has created a dynamic car pavilion at the Hornbill Music Festival venue, showcasing an array of its best-in-class vehicle models that includes Innova Crysta, Innova Hycross, Legendre, Glanza, Urban Cruiser Hyryder, Rumion, Camry, Vellfire and the specially customised Hilux for forest patrolling.

TKM places special importance on the Northeastern region, striving to elevate its customer experiences. With 24 touch points already established, TKM is actively shaping the automotive landscape by offering top-notch products and services. The company is further committed to expand its dealer network in the region to cater to the ever-growing demand for its product offerings. Aligned with its strategy, TKM has set-up Regional Stockyard (RSY) in Guwahati, complemented by a



Regional Parts Centre (RPC) as well as an Area Office in the North-east, reflecting its commitment to enrich Toyota's ownership experiences through effective and efficient customer service in the Northeast.

Commenting about TKM's association with the Hornbill Music

Festival 2023, Mr. Varinder Kumar Wadhwa, General Manager - Strategic Business Unit (East) of Toyota Kirloskar Motor, said, "TKM's association with the much-celebrated Hornbill Music Festival, for the second consecutive year, presents another exciting moment where we aim to promote

the local culture and rich heritage of Nagaland that represents the north-eastern part of our incredible nation. This dynamic platform allows us to engage with the local community, highlighting our commitment to both the automotive landscape and contribute to preserve the Northeast's unique cultural tapestry. TKM's specially curated car pavilion, featuring varied models including the specially customized Hilux for Forest Patrolling, exemplifies our enthusiasm to showcase our diverse product offerings, aimed at providing 'Mobility for All' with awe-some experiences."

Speaking on the occasion, Theja Meru, chairman, Task Force for Music and Arts said, "The Hornbill Festival stands as a testament to Nagaland's cultural richness and diversity, and we are thrilled to have TKM's consistent support for the second consecutive year."

'Over confidence' cost us Rajasthan, MP, Chhattisgarh: Assam Congress chief

GUWAHATI, Dec 4: Assam Congress chief Bhupen Kumar Borah on Monday said that the grand old party lost the assembly elections in the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh due to "over confidence".

He praised the "fighting spirit of the BJP" in the three states and said that the saffron party was "striving for victory even when all indications were pointing at the BJP's defeat".

"The results of the assembly elections were a warning for us not to be too confident," Borah told reporters at state party headquarters Rajiv Bhavan here.

He said that during his interaction with Congress leaders of these states, there was no indication from them that the party could lose the assembly polls.

"We have to give it to the BJP that they fought till the end even when they were told that they are losing. But we (Congress) thought that we had already won," he said.

"It is a lesson for us in Assam also (not to be over confident)," Borah added.



The BJP retained Madhya Pradesh, while it wrestled Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh from the Congress in the state assembly polls, the results of which were declared on Sunday. Telangana was the only state where the grand old party emerged victorious.

He maintained that the electoral results in these states would not have any bearing on the party's fortunes in Assam.

"The election issues are state-specific. In

Assam, our main issues will be corruption and syndicate raj by the BJP-led regime here. Whenever we fought with corruption as the main agenda, like in Karnataka or Telangana, we emerged victorious," he said.

Borah claimed that central agencies such as CBI and ED, which the opposition accuses of working at the behest of the BJP-led NDA government, would align with the INDIA bloc as soon as they see that public opinion was in favour of the now opposition camp.

"These agencies are being used to create problems for Congress leaders. But in 2024, as soon as the agencies see that INDIA bloc is gaining ground, they will shift allegiance towards us," he added.

The state Congress chief urged the party workers not to be disheartened by the poll results as the grand old party has a long history of bouncing back.

"Whether it's victory or defeat in the elections, our ideological battle will continue," he added. (PTI)

Lions International celebrates International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 4: Lions International, Dist 322G marked the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on Sunday, at the Industrial Training Institute (ITI) ground in Gopinath Nagar, Opp. Dr. B. Barooah Cancer Institute, Guwahati. The celebration was conducted in collaboration with the National Career Service Centre for Differently Abled (NCSC-DA), Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), and Special Olympics Bharat Assam—an organisation for children and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities.

The event was attended by Lions District governor Nirmal Bhura, Arvind K Ramteke from NCSC-DA, Mukesh Mishra from ALIMCO, Shyamanta Majumder from Special Olympics Bharat, NH Mazumdar (Senior Principal, ITI), VDG-II Pankaj Poddar, and various Lions leaders, Past District Governors, and members from different Lions Clubs and Leo members.

Sanjay Sanganeria, the project chairperson, extended a warm welcome to all the dignitaries, guests, and participants. Nirmal Bhura highlighted Lions International's commitment to organising such programs as a service to humanity. The day-long program included



various sports activities organised by Special Olympics Bharat, Assam, for special children and differently-abled individuals. Prizes, gifts, medals, and blankets were distributed, and arrangements were made for fruits, lunch boxes, snacks, and refreshments throughout the day for the participants, numbering more than 250 special children and differently-abled individuals. Around 300 members from Lions and Leo clubs, along with guardians and attendants, were present to encourage and motivate the participants.

A distribution camp for various aids and appliances was set up, providing 11 wheelchairs, 7 tricy-

cles, 4 CP chairs, 6 hearing aids, and 12 smartphones for the visually impaired to deserving candidates. Additionally, for the promotion of self-employment, 20 sewing machines, 11 electronic and appliances repairing tool kits, 5 welding machines, and 5 drill machines were handed over to trained entrepreneurs to help them sustain their livelihoods.

Sanjay Sanganeria expressed gratitude to the sponsors Perfect Writing Instruments Pvt. Ltd, Bajaj Healthcare Ltd (Mumbai), Star Cement Ltd, Tribeni Foundations, and various Lions Clubs and members who generously contributed to the program.

Sivasagar Advocates Association observes National Advocates' Day

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Dec 4: The Sivasagar Advocates Association (SAA) marked National Advocates' Day on Sunday, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Dr Rajendra Prasad, an eminent lawyer, and the first President of India. Formed a year ago by members of the legal profession denied membership in the Sivasagar Bar Association, SAA organised a meeting to observe the occasion. The meeting, presided over by Advocate Bikash Kumar, featured addresses from distinguished legal professionals. Justice (Retd) RR Handa, the adviser, shared his thoughts and encouraged the association to uphold the esteemed status of the legal profession by working ethically.

Formation of Hojai district committee of AAJU

HT Correspondent

DOBOKA, Dec 4: The Hojai district committee of the All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU) was formed with 31 members during the 2nd plenary convention held at Sutargoan GP's conference hall in Doboka, Hojai district. The convention, presided over by AAJU president Pankaj Kumar Nath, had Abdul Hakim briefing the significance of the meeting.

During the event, AAJU vice president Rajesh Dutta, executive member Apurva Bora, and Sadiq Zaman spoke about the organisational activities of AAJU. Abdul Hakim and Sohail Alom were elected as the president and general secretary, respectively. Ismail Ali and Sadiq Zaman were nominated as state representatives, and Mahananda Bordoloi, Basit Alam Choudhry, Sanjib Saikia, Subrata Sarkar, and Sanjib Dey were appointed as advisors.

Empowering communities: Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra in state

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 4: The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra continues its journey, leaving a trail of progress and community welfare in Assam. Two significant events took place on Monday in Guwahati, one at the playground of Arya Vidyapeeth College and the other at the Chatribari Christian Hospital. At both locations, Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) vans showcased short films highlighting various government welfare schemes. Attendees included beneficiaries of schemes such as PM Ujjwala

Yojana, PM Awas Yojana, PM Svanidhi, etc., who expressed their joy at the benefits received through these initiatives.

In Biswanath district, the IEC van reached Panibhoral Gram Panchayat. An event was organised, where the agriculture department demonstrated the use of drones to spray nano urea in paddy fields. Beneficiaries of PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, PM Matru Vandana Yojana, PM Awas Yojana, and more attended, expressing gratitude for these government schemes.

Likewise, in Hojai district,

the yatra reached Ajarbari development block, where an event at the Bhalukmari market was organised. Officials from various government departments explained the public about the benefits of various government schemes. Local beneficiaries of various welfare initiatives were present at the event.

The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra remains an ongoing initiative, bringing progress and welfare to the heart of Assam. Each event underscores the government's commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of its citizens.

Guwahati to host 1st Asian Ranger Forum with participants from 20 countries

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 4: The inaugural Asian Ranger Forum (ARF) is set to commence at Sri-manta Sankardeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati, featuring a flag-raising and inauguration ceremony in the presence of Assam's forest minister, Chandra Mohan Patowary, and Maharashtra's forest minister, Sudhir Mungantiwar. The event, scheduled from December 5 to 8, has drawn 146 participants, including 35 women, from 20 countries, along with representatives of local communities. Of these participants, 89 are active Rangers responsible for overseeing various biodiversity-rich protected areas across the planet.

The ARF is a collaborative effort organised by the Assam Forest Department, biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak, International Ranger Federation (IRF), Ranger Federation of Asia (RFA), and Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA), in conjunction with other NGO partners. Chris Galliers, president of the International Ranger Federation, expressed excitement about the forum, stating, "It is really exciting to be part of the first-ever Asian Ranger Forum and seeing the regions rangers coming together to strengthen networks, to hear their challenges and also for rangers to share ranger-led solutions to the multitude of challenges that Asia's rangers face."

The ARF provides a platform for Rangers to share knowledge, build partnerships, and enhance their capacities through various activities, workshops, and training sessions under the theme "Asia's biodiversity guardians for 30x30." Discussions are expected to focus on

four key areas: inclusive workforce, conditions, conduct, and capacity. Participants will initiate discussions on existing challenges and opportunities, including addressing cross-cutting issues like climate risks, biodiversity loss, and diseases.

The event will also feature the recognition of Asian awardees of the IUCN WCPA International Ranger Award, including ranger teams from Bhutan, Malaysia, and the Philippines, honouring their outstanding contributions to protecting and conserving natural heritage.

Additionally, the Exploring Womanhood Foundation Van Durga Conservation Award 2023 will be presented to women rangers from Gujarat, Meghalaya, and Rajasthan, India. A special award will recognise the spouse of a ranger from Maharashtra for their extraordinary contributions to biodiversity conservation.

The Guwahati Declaration, a statement by rangers for rangers, will be announced during the Forum, emphasising the crucial role of rangers in nature conservation, promoting inclusivity and diversity in the ranger workforce, and outlining recommendations to support and empower Asian rangers in their duties. The Guwahati Declaration will contribute to the upcoming 10th IRF World Ranger Congress in 2024 (October 2024, France).

The International Ranger Federation (IRF) is a global, non-profit organisation that advocates for and promotes the Ranger profession. The Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) is a time-bound initiative supporting the IRF to recognise the ranger occupation as a skilled, trusted, and respected profession.

Students enact play to promote coexistence with elephants in HEC-affected villages

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 4: Leveraging drama as a powerful medium for mass communication, the premier biodiversity conservation organisation in the region, Aaranyak, has used theatrical performances to encourage cooperation from villagers in facilitating coexistence with wild elephants in areas affected by human-elephant conflict (HEC).

Aaranyak's team enacted a play involving school students with the aim of educating villagers about the importance of coexistence with wild elephants. The play revolves around a conversation between a grandfather and his grandson, where the grandfather narrates how their village once lived in harmony with elephants. He describes how large herds of elephants coexisted peacefully

with villagers in the adjacent forest. However, he mourns the sudden developmental changes in the village that have negatively impacted both the lives of elephants and villagers. The portrayal of the village's history moves the young boy, instilling hope that people will one day make paths for the elephants to return to the jungles that were once their delightful abode.

To enact the play, Aaranyak's team conducted a four-day training for 25 students from the 9th standard of Paneri Higher Secondary School in Udalguri district, Assam. The first performance took place on November 28 in the school auditorium in the presence of students and teachers, many of whom come from high human-elephant conflict areas in the district. The play was scripted

and conceptualized by Aaranyak's senior conservation biologist Dr. Alolika Sinha and penned down by researcher Anushka Saikia. Other team members who played active roles in the successful event included Rabiya Daimary, Abhijit Saikia, Reshma Narzary, Mon-deep Basumatari, Pradip Barman, and Bikash Tossa.

This theatrical initiative aims to sensitize locals about the increasing conflict with wild elephants, highlight the key reasons behind the conflict, and emphasize the need for coexistence with these gentle giants, which are crucial for biodiversity conservation. The drama is expected to be enacted in two more HEC conflict zones in Udalguri district to further raise awareness among the local communities.

Attention : Taxpayers

TO MAKE YOUR ITR FILING FRUITFUL

ALWAYS BE TRUTHFUL

Report Accurately (Examples)

1. House Rent Paid
2. Principal and interest-paid on Home Loan
3. Interest paid on Education Loan
4. Health insurance premium paid for self and family
5. Deduction for disabled individuals
6. Donations to political parties/ charitable institutions/ trusts

Before claiming any deduction/ exemption, kindly remember your ITR is your responsibility and ensure:

1. All deductions are bonafide and genuine;
2. It is supported by genuine payments and documents;
3. It does not result in misreporting of income.

Consequences:

Misreporting of income may result in penalty and prosecution proceedings under provisions of Income Tax Act, 1961.

How to Correct:

- ✓ File a revised ITR for A.Y. 2023-24.
- ✓ File an updated ITR for A.Y. 2021-22 and A.Y. 2022-23.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough. - Og Mandino

BJP receives booster for 2024

The recent state poll results, particularly the resounding victories in the 'Hindi Heartland,' have propelled Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP into a commanding position for the upcoming General Elections in 2024. Modi wasted no time in asserting the dominance of the BJP and emphasizing the impact of their welfare schemes. The Prime Minister, attributing the BJP's success to the "double-engine ki Sarkars," highlighted corruption as a key issue resonating with the electorate. Notably, the Congress's strategy of focusing on ousting Modi failed, with Rahul Gandhi's "Panauti" jibe seemingly ineffective. Modi's references to a "hat-trick" and the potential guarantee of another in 2024 underscored the BJP's confidence. The victories in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh provided an opportunity for Modi to counter Rahul Gandhi's narrative, labeling him as the "bad omen." While the Congress secured a victory in Telangana, the overall results served as a wake-up call for the opposition. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's call for an emergency INDI-Alliance meeting reflects the urgency felt within the party. However, the meeting may face challenges given the setbacks and the BJP's swift momentum.

Looking ahead, the BJP is expected to intensify its focus on the Hindu card, particularly after Rahul Gandhi affirmed the Congress's adherence to its ideology, including the Muslim card. Modi's emphasis on aggressive Hindu appeasement, notably with the grand opening of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir on January 24, aligns with the party's strategy for 2024. The BJP's success in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh was attributed to the effective implementation of welfare schemes. Chief Ministers Shivraj Chouhan and Yogi Adityanath capitalized on initiatives like the "ladli behna" scheme and a medley of 'labarthi schemes.' Modi issued a warning to the opposition, urging them to refrain from ridiculing the BJP's welfare schemes. The dismissal of the Opposition's "Caste Census" demand and countering Rahul Gandhi's "jiti abaadi, utni hisedaari" OBC card will likely be key points for the BJP. With Modi presenting the BJP's narrative around "four castes" — "mahila, kisan, yuva, and garib" — as a foil to Rahul's "Caste Census," the Prime Minister has solidified his position as a definite winner for a third term. The transformation from a frontrunner to a winner is evident, while Rahul Gandhi faces a shift to an "also-ran" status.

As of now, there seems to be little standing in the way of Prime Minister Narendra Modi securing a third term, a scenario unimaginable just three months ago. The BJP's unexpected victories in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh have positioned Modi as a formidable force. Going forward, Modi is likely to employ strategic words to provoke Rahul Gandhi into 'Panauti' moments, serving as a guarantee that the BJP will fight the 2024 General Elections on Modi's name and face. In the aftermath of the state poll triumphs, the BJP's momentum remains formidable, prompting speculation about whether the party peaked too early. The victories in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh have energized the BJP rank and file, but the party must navigate the challenge of maintaining this momentum leading up to 2024. Meanwhile, the Congress, facing setbacks, must urgently reassess its strategy and rhetoric to mount a credible challenge. As the political landscape evolves, the BJP's emphasis on welfare schemes, Hindu appeasement, and Modi's leadership stands as a potent formula, leaving the opposition with a daunting task of regaining lost ground.

Examining the Constitutional validity of Section 6A in Assam's Citizenship Act



The Supreme Court announced on Monday (06th November 2023), that it will hear pleas challenging the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, which was inserted through an amendment in 1985 as part of the Assam Accord. The hearing, originally scheduled for Tuesday (07th November 2023), was deferred after the Solicitor General of India and senior counsels representing the petitioners' side requested an adjournment due to the last working week before Diwali. In response, the apex court fixed the matter for hearing on December 5, to be presided over by a five-judge Constitution bench consisting of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices AS Bopanna, MM Sundresh, JB Pardiwala, and Manoj Misra.

Background:

In 1985, the Rajiv Gandhi government signed an accord with Assam student leaders, addressing the prolonged agitation against illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in the state. This accord led to the amendment of Section 6 of the Citizenship Act. The amended Section 6A serves as a significant provision within the Assam Accord, establishing a unique cut-off date for the detection and deletion of "foreigners." Currently, the constitutional validity of Section 6A is under scrutiny, with a plea challenging the 1971 cut-off date and advocating for the use of the 1951 cut-off date instead.

The Assam Accord's Clause 5 designates January 1, 1966, as the base cut-off date for identifying and removing "foreigners." However, the accord also allows for the regularization of individuals who arrived in Assam after that date but prior to March 24, 1971. Consequently, March 24, 1971, has become the cut-off date for entry into the state, thus categorizing those who came after that date as "illegal immigrants."

Assam's unique cut-off date:

It is important to note that Assam is the only state in India that has such a specific cut-off date for citizenship. This uniqueness is attributed to the historical context and regional concerns regarding immigration from

neighbouring Bangladesh. While the intention of the accord was to resolve the issue of illegal immigration and safeguard the rights of indigenous Assamese people, the constitutional validity of Section 6A has come under question.

Challenging Section 6A:

The current challenge to Section 6A questions the appropriateness of the 1971 cut-off date and suggests reverting to the 1951 cut-off date instead. The plea argues that a revised cut-off date would ensure a more comprehensive and accurate inclusion in the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Evaluation of arguments:

Those in favour of the 1971 cut-off date contend that it aligns with the basic principle of the Assam Accord and takes into account the years of prolonged agitation against illegal immigrants. Supporters assert that reverting to the 1951 cut-off date would undermine the purpose and ethos of the accord, as it fails to account for the substantial influx of illegal immigrants during the intervening years.

On the other hand, those challenging Section 6A argue that the 1971 cut-off date is arbitrary and outdated. They suggest that a broader scope, including the 1951 cut-off date, would serve as a more accurate representation of the native population, as it predates the significant influx of immigrants from across the border.

The constitutional validity of Section 6A in Assam's Citizenship Act is of utmost significance. The ongoing evaluation by the bench will determine whether the 1971 cut-off date remains valid or if the 1951 cut-off date ought to be reinstated. The decision will have far-reaching implications, shaping the future direction of Assam's immigration policies and the inclusion of individuals in the National Register of Citizens. As the nation awaits the verdict, it is crucial to balance the concerns of regional security, indigenous rights, and the principles of equality and inclusive citizenship. *(The author can be reached at shashankadas0007@gmail.com or 9706619975)*

BJP's success in the Hindi belt through local factors

The political landscape has witnessed notable shifts, with the BJP securing convincing victories in the northern states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, while the Congress celebrates a significant win in Telangana, marking its first triumph since the state's inception a decade ago. The interpretation of these results varies: first, as a reaffirmation of the BJP's influence in the Hindi heartland; second, as a clear expression of anti-incumbency in the four states, despite the BJP's ascension following Jyotiraditya Scindia's defection in Madhya Pradesh; and third, as a looming disaster for the Congress, with implications for its standing in the INDIA formation leading up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Among these perspectives, the second, highlighting anti-incumbency emerges as the most plausible interpretation.

The BJP finds itself in a peculiar position atop the victory stand, with internal challenges brewing in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Despite these party fissures, the triumph seems to temporarily conceal these issues. However, for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, this victory poses a trial, given the leadership challenges prevalent in the aforementioned states. Asserting that these electoral wins endorse Modi as the party and national leader becomes a tough proposition, as the stark reality unveils the absence of the Modi factor in all four states. The Assembly election outcomes are predominantly influenced by intricate local factors that defy easy enumeration or categorization.

The BJP's inclination to rejuvenate Modi's image using these results represents a valid political strategy. Over the past nine years, the luster of the Modi

image has worn thin, and despite the party and the leader clinging to the charisma of the leader concept, they are well aware of its diminishing impact. The enigma persists regarding the party's victory, and as long as they continue to triumph, there seems to be little urgency in delving into the intricacies of the situation.

These Assembly elections present an intriguing aspect wherein, despite the prominence of headline numbers indicating seats won and lost, the underlying narrative shifts when examining the vote share. Contrary to the impression of complete obliteration suggested by the majorities, the Opposition's resilience in these states emerges as a positive sign. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP commands nearly 50 percent of the vote (48.50 percent precisely), contrasting with the Congress' 40.37 percent.

However, the margin of difference in vote share appears narrower than expected, given the BJP's double the number of seats compared to the Congress - 150-plus to 71-plus. Likewise, in Rajasthan, though the victory margin is less pronounced than in Madhya Pradesh (with the BJP securing 110-plus seats to the Congress' 65-plus), the vote share difference is relatively modest: 42 percent-plus for the BJP and 39 percent-plus for the Congress. In Chhattisgarh, where the BJP leads with over half the seats in a 90-member House, and the Congress hovers at 35-plus, the vote share gap is closer, with the BJP at 45.84 percent and the Congress at 41.82 percent. The evident disparity between seat numbers and vote share highlights a notable discrepancy that we must come to terms with.

It has been a battle between two dominant parties in each state, with the role of the local leader yet to be fully unraveled. In Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the Congress established clear leadership with Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel, respectively. However, in Madhya Pradesh, the absence of clarity persisted, as Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Kamal Nath held nominal leadership roles in their respective parties within the state. Notably, the BJP entered the polls in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh without a prominent local leader taking the forefront. Simultaneously, it became evident that the

party's victory in these states was not solely attributed to Prime Minister Modi. This dynamic reveals that people vote in ways that disrupt even the most well-conceived plans of parties and their leaders. The enigmatic nature of the people's choices persists, defying attempts by politicians and pundits to pinpoint the reasons behind victories and losses. In many ways, this unpredictability is beneficial for democracy, as the electorate's unplanned and collective exercise of the vote consistently keeps everyone guessing, and perhaps, even on tenterhooks.

It is only natural that, buoyed by victories in three states, the BJP will transition into campaign mode with heightened enthusiasm and confidence. Leaders of the party, including Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, have consistently displayed a penchant for boastfulness, whether in victory or defeat.

The recent triumphs in the three states are likely to amplify their sense of confidence. Meanwhile, the Congress is confronted with the challenging task of

strategizing how to reclaim its foothold in North India - a pivotal factor in the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. However, a closer look at the vote share reveals that the Congress is regaining substantial ground, offering a glimmer of hope and dispelling the need for despair. The party remains a formidable force in regions where the electoral battle is waged between the BJP and the Congress.

The BJP may desire to proclaim loudly that the victories constitute an endorsement of its Hindu-first program, attributing the success to the influence of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on public sentiments. However, the actual reasons behind these triumphs are more ordinary, albeit intricate. In the typical political playbook, details often take a backseat to the overarching importance of victory.

Once the triumph is secured, it becomes a canvas on which any narrative can be painted. With the BJP emerging victorious in the three Hindi-speaking states, it now has the liberty to ascribe the success to the Ram Mandir factor, even if it might not have played as significant a role as suggested.

The outcomes of these Assembly elections should not be regarded as a direct indicator of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Even if the BJP emerges victorious - seemingly likely based on current assessments - it would not necessarily attribute its success to the wins in these Assembly elections. Both the Congress and INDIA, the Opposition conglomerate, must approach the 2024 contest as an entirely new and distinct round, with the results of these Assembly elections serving as a separate chapter in the political narrative. *(The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)*

Despite hiccups, Chinese President Xi Jinping's OBOR project making good progress

By: Kunal Bose

India's unreserved opposition to China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative launched across four continents over ten years ago by President Xi Jinping with great fanfare was given vent to from time to time by powers that be, including prime minister Narendra Modi. More recently, India's external affairs ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi found an occasion to tear to shreds the decade ago minted Chinese policy to win over the global south by promising and also funding all kinds of infrastructure projects - from roads to sea and river ports to new city development.

The provocation for Bagchi to do so in the strongest possible words till date was Maldives' then president elect (president since) Mohamed Muizzu praising the role of Beijing's flagship global infrastructure programme in the development of aid receiving countries. Incidentally, China too bears a grudge against India for not only being not a participant in OBOR but also being its one of the most strident critics all this while.

The neighbour India, which is the world's fifth largest economy and clocking the highest rate of growth among all the countries, not an OBOR participant takes a whole lot of shine off the initiative. Beijing may not agree, but New Delhi's derision of the grandiosity of Chinese ambition is quite enervating for it. No wonder then, as Bagchi confirmed, unlike on past occasions, Beijing did not send an invitation to India to join the third Belt and Road forum that was held on 17th and 18th October. New Delhi is aware that verbal assault alone from time to time will not be enough to counter China's attempt to ingratiate itself with the global south.

But India needs the backing of developed countries, particularly the US to offer the global south something that will match the Chinese OBOR, which, however, has undergone radical transformation to become less and less ambitious. Ahead of the recent G-20 summit in Delhi, India was engaged in rounds of discussions with the US to bring it on board concerning this country's ambitious plan to build a corridor to run through India, West Asia and Europe. Such a corridor requiring unprecedented investments in development of road, rail and ports will be an effective way of economic integration of countries in the three continents.

While presenting the colossal corridor plan, Modi said: "In its development journey, India has accorded the highest priority to this area." At the same time, he used the occasion where so many world leaders, including the Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang were present to present OBOR as a way of casting the net of China's "debt trap diplomacy wide in a bid to establish its hegemony over especially resource rich or strategically important middle and lower income countries." The truth is China has already spent a trillion dollars to expand its influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America through its belt and road infrastructure programme. At the same time tens of billions of dollars of loans have gone sour and many development projects have stalled.

Most of the countries that received loans from China to give shape to infrastructure projects have defaulted in servicing debts. Poor project implementation combined with slowing global economy, high interest rates and high inflation queered the pitch for them. Simultaneously, the slowing of the Chinese economy and Covid-19 battering continue to engage Beijing attention to exercise caution on project selection leading to virtual overhauling of the original OBOR narrative. In fact, as Beijing is pressuring countries to honour the debt servicing and repayment conditions, many African countries facing economic turmoil want China to revise loan terms to their advantage.

Nearly a decade ago China launched a mission to be loved and admired by the global south riding on OBOR initiative. But the enthusiasm with which the initiative was embraced in the beginning has started fading. Xi keeps on claiming that the initiative is on the right side of history and conforms to the centuries old spirit of the Silk Road. But the world did not fail to notice that only 21 heads of state and government were present at the third Belt and Road forum. The presence was much thinner than what was seen in the earlier two forums. Remember Italy is the only G-7 nation to have endorsed Xi's signature foreign policy initiative. This happened following Xi's significant investment of political capital to bring Rome into China's orbit.

Italy endorsing OBOR by signing a memorandum of understanding with Beijing could not have been to the liking of Washington and many European nations. (The MOU signed by Italy provides that an official decision as to whether to

renew or cancel it must be taken by the end of 2023.) Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has said on a number of occasions since coming to power that her country wants to exit OBOR. In fact, at the recent G-20 summit Meloni raised the OBOR quitting issue with the Chinese Premier at a bilateral meeting. It was heard in diplomatic grapevine that Li urged Meloni for a 'silent renewal' of MOU. But in no case she should go for an exit ahead of the OBOR third forum. Meloni heading a conservative coalition is working to evolve a China policy that is in alignment with that of the US and European Union.

That there is no enthusiasm about Xi's attempt to bring the global south firmly under China's influence through OBOR in the EU became embarrassingly clear for Beijing that only the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban from the 27 member EU member countries attended the 3rd forum. This could not have been otherwise considering Orban's friendly disposition to Kremlin. Italy has seen how famously President Emmanuel Macron of France is doing business with China without having anything to do with Xi's flagship programme. Then why endorse OBOR to court the US displeasure, seems to be the reason driving Melon not to remain part of global infra development initiative of China. A good development for India.

But the challenge for New Delhi has since the launch of OBOR was to present a infrastructure development programme similar or near similar to Xi's ambition. The Chinese President has never missed an opportunity to underline the Silk Road spirit of traders carrying goods on the camel back or by boat and doing business and promoting economies of trade partners peacefully unlike the hegemonic designs of Western colonial powers. This has, however, not stopped New Delhi to see in OBOR designs of 'debt trap diplomacy.'

What no doubt has emboldened India to propose a corridor encompassing India, West Asia and Europe is Biden commitment: "Together with our partners, we are working to mobilise trillions (dollar) of investments needed to close infra gaps around the world." Besides economic and practising democracy considerations, there is also convergence of US and India interest in neutralizing Chinese belligerence in the Indo-Pacific region. All this has prompted Biden to support India's corridor programme. *(IPA Service)*

Counterintuitive Palestine politics: Hamas may be treading a path paved by PLO earlier

By: James M Dorsey

Spanish philosopher George Santayana didn't have Palestine in mind when he coined the phrase, 'history repeats itself.' Yet, Santayana's maxim may apply to Hamas when comparing the group's political evolution to the 16-year-tortuous road traversed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from classification by Israel and its Western allies as a terrorist organization to establishing the Palestine Authority on Israeli-occupied Palestinian land.

To be sure, there is no guarantee that Hamas, despite its brutal October 7 attack on Israel and wanton slaughter of 1,200, mostly civilian Israelis, will emulate the PLO in eventually recognising Israel and abandoning the armed struggle. Moreover, Hamas' current notion of realpolitik falls far short of anything that would qualify it as an acceptable and credible party to the negotiation of a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Even so, the parallels between the PLO and Hamas' political evolution are noteworthy. The PLO embarked on its road to recognition of Israel and abandonment of the armed struggle in 1974 with a first ever direct appeal to Israelis published as an advertisement in Yediot Ahranot, a leading Israeli newspaper, by Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) leader Nayef Hawatmeh.

The PLO refused to address Is-

raelis directly prior to publication because that would acknowledge the Jewish state. The DFLP's pioneering advocacy of Palestinian engagement with Israel and recognition of the Jewish state as part of the PLO's endorsement of a two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not stop the group's primarily Gaza-based paramilitary wing, the National Resistance Brigades, from participating in Hamas' October 7 attack. The Brigades said it had lost three fighters in combat with the Israeli military. It said it had engaged Israeli forces in the towns of Kfar Aza, Be'er, and Kissufim. The October 7 attack claimed the lives of at least 130 Israeli civilians or ten percent Be'er's residents, including women, children, and infants.

The publication of Hawatmeh's appeal was negotiated by American activist and journalist Paul Jacobs as part of an initiative that would have included talks hosted by Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba between the PLO and two prominent Israeli politicians, Arie Eliav, a member of parliament and former secretary general of the then governing Labour Party, and Yitzhak Ben-Aharon, the head of Histadrut, Israel's national trade union, that was closely aligned with Labour. The plan was scuttled months after the advertisement when DFLP operatives attacked a girls' school in Maalot. They took 115 people hostage and killed 31, including 25 schoolgirls. The DFLP attacked Maalot to reestablish its credibility among Palestinians after being heav-

ily criticised for its outreach to Israelis. The attack overshadowed the significance of the PLO's first formal steps towards accepting a two-state solution a month after the incident.

The PLO's parliament, the Palestine National Council, meeting in Cairo, adopted a 10-point programme that called for "the establishment of the people's independent combatant national authority over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated." The Council endorsed three years later the Palestinians' right to "establish their own independent national state over their national soil." For the first time, the PLO stressed "the importance of connecting and coordinating with the Jewish progressive and democratic forces inside and outside the occupied homeland." It took the PLO another decade to unambiguously recognise Israel and declare an end to its armed struggle.

Similarly, Hamas adopted an updated charter in 2017 that differed significantly from its 1988 fundamental document but was as ambiguous and ambivalent as the PLO pronouncements in the 1970s. Hamas' original 1988 charter called for the killing of Jews based on a saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Hamas dropped the call to kill Jews in its new charter. The 1988 charter also insisted on a Palestinian state in all of historic Palestine that would replace the State of Israel.

Significantly, Hamas adopted its first charter months before PLO leader Yasser Arafat recognised Is-

rael. The revised charter still calls for Israel to be replaced by a Palestinian state in all of historic Palestine but allows for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel as an interim step provided it does not involve recognition of the Jewish state. Instead, the charter advocates a long-term ceasefire that would de facto acknowledge Israel's existence.

Complicating Hamas' potential to follow the PLO's path is the group's rejection of an Israeli and US negotiating framework that demands recognition of Israel and abandonment of the armed struggle as a prerequisite rather than an outcome of negotiations that was adopted by Arafat. Hamas concluded from the failure of the PLO's approach and the 1993 Oslo accords to produce an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel that Palestinian concessions upfront were counterproductive.

The brutality of Hamas' October 7 attack ensures that any role for Hamas or a potential successor in future negotiations will have to adopt the Israeli-US framework. This reduces the likelihood that Hamas or its successor may follow in the PLO's footsteps. Even so, the jury is out on whether Hamas, or a possible successor, will retain spoiler capability.

Irrespective of whether Hamas adopts the PLO model, Palestinian moderation has proven to be a tortuous process. It often adheres to the principle of two steps forward, one step backwards. To be sure, Hamas' decision to randomly kill or kidnap anyone, Jewish or non-Jewish, dur-

ing the October 7 attack rather than only target Israeli military personnel and facilities is a huge step backwards that has reeked unimaginable Palestinian suffering, which is not to absolve Israel of responsibility for its conduct of the Gaza war.

The jury is out on who Palestinians will hold responsible for the Gaza carnage, Israel and/or Hamas. Even so, it is becoming increasingly clear that Israel is unlikely to wipe Hamas off the face of the earth. Even if Hamas is destroyed, its hardline philosophy will survive, probably embodied in a successor. More than 30 years after Arafat recognised Israel and abandoned the armed struggle and three decades after the conclusion of the Oslo accords it is evident that Palestinian moderation is a fragile process that needs nurturing. Israel's emphasis on the stick rather than the carrot coupled with the Palestine Authority and Hamas' failure to provide good governance and effective leadership created the environment for a nascent armed resistance on the West Bank, the October 7 Hamas attack, and the DFLP's participation in the assault. To be clear, nothing justifies the random killing of innocent civilians. Even so, more killings and greater repression of Palestinians is not a solution.

A pathway towards a solution lies in fewer Israeli sticks and more Israeli carrots. It lies in empowering Palestinians rather than undermining them. It resides in encouraging Palestinian moderation rather than stymieing it. *(IPA Service)*

In the age of artificial intelligence, a 1973 Supreme Court ruling threatens privacy rights

By: Prashant Khurana

On an October evening in 1964, two doctors and several policemen sat around a landline in a Mumbai suburb, intently listening to a conversation between two doctors and an officer of the coroner's court, which is responsible for the conduct of post-mortems for police investigations. Supervised by the police, the doctors were negotiating the mechanics of a pay-off to the coroner court officer to tweak a postmortem report and escape liability for medical negligence.

Recording the conversation through a large magnetic tape recorder attached to the doctors' phone was Assistant Commissioner Sawant. His hope was that the recording would help secure the conviction of the coroner court officer for corruption.

Little did Sawant know that his recording of a phone call would set a judicial precedent that would come to haunt India's post-colonial criminal jurisprudence, incentivising an unbridled invasion of the privacy of Indians for decades to come.

Sawant's phone conversation recording was challenged in the Supreme Court in the 1973 case of *RM Malkani vs State of Maharashtra* as illegal phone tapping and consequently liable to be excluded from evidence. The defence argued that in attaching the tape recorder to a phone without proper authorisation, the police had violated the Telegraph Act, which prohibits tampering with telecom infrastructure for intercepting communications.

As was the case in jurisdictions like the United States at the time – the only prominent democracy in 1973 where illegally obtained evidence is inadmissible – the accused sought to exclude the illegally recorded phone conversation from being used against them in court. It may seem odd to suggest that the court should refuse to consider relevant evidence simply because it had been obtained illegally. The person committing the illegality could be separately punished, but once the evidence was available, courts should be able to review it.

However, the exclusion is critical to a fair trial. In any criminal trial, an accused is at a significant disadvantage compared to the State, and likely in the physical custody of the police. Creating a perverse incentive for the State to commit crimes to extract evidence in such cases increases the probability of using illegal and despicable means, such as confessions coerced through torture.

But in the case of *RM Malkani's* case, Justice AN Ray went against conventional judicial wisdom, and, re-



lying on an 1861 British ruling, held "it matters not how you get it; if you steal it even, it would be admissible in evidence". What Ray did not acknowledge was the contrary position in the United States and that even the British had since modified their position, only permitting a narrow set of circumstances where illegally obtained evidence could be used against an accused.

In the US, for instance, the Fourth Amendment to the American Constitution precludes admission of evidence obtained from an unauthorised search or seizure.

But Ray's ruling has since made its mark in several cases – consider the numerous allegations of police misconduct in high-profile cases ranging from the arrest and death sentencing of Afzal Guru in the 2010 Parliament terror attack to the more recent cases involving Opposition politicians and Central agencies, like the Enforcement Directorate.

In December last year, for instance, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court upheld the rationale of the *RM Malkani* ruling while adjudicating on the preventive detention orders issued during the abrogation of the former state's special status under Article 370 of the Constitution in August 2019.

What is more concerning now is how this ruling will play out as new surveillance technologies are deployed.

Smartphones, to start with, are password protected but there have been frequent incidents of police demanding passcodes and access to phones, including during routine stops on the street – like the Hyderabad police in September.

While the legal position on this matter is not settled, there is a strong argument that the practice of law enforcement seeking passwords or biometric information – face ID or fingerprints – to access smartphone data of the accused violates the right against self-incrimination and the

right to privacy. This practice has continued unabated: when the police and officials of central agencies raided the homes of NewsClick journalists on October 3, they also seized devices, including the phones, of some employees.

This is because even if the privacy protections precluding access to a person's smartphone and personal computers were enforced by a court or guaranteed by legislation, the ruling in the *RM Malkani* case would permit the use of any evidence gathered from such an unlawful search and seizure. An accused in such a case will not be protected from any adverse material found on their phone from being used against them. The prospect of the police officer being charged with a separate offence subsequently does not effectively deter such actions since enforcement in these kinds of cases has been fairly limited.

Crucially, emerging artificial intelligence-based surveillance technologies risk worsening the existing situation. Chief among these is real-time biometric tracking. Developments in artificial intelligence can leverage the current infrastructure of face-detection cameras enabling real-time identification tracking of thousands of individuals simultaneously.

Such infrastructure is coming up fast in major cities across the world. While today, the technology can be used to identify individuals but the process is time-consuming and requires sifting through large volumes of data. In most cases therefore, identification and tracking of only specific individuals can be undertaken and real-time tracking is difficult to accomplish. Though not ideal from a privacy standpoint, this constraint places natural guardrails against misuse, such as the need to enrol relatively large number of people in the analytics process and the time taken for completing the analysis.

Real-time biometric identification systems will enable round-the-clock

tracking of thousands of individuals simultaneously. Such technologies will invariably be deployed to track and gag dissidents, journalists and Opposition politicians. With a precise map of someone's life, it will not be hard to selectively use circumstantial information and people's imperfect lifestyles to malign reputations.

The deployment of such systems will be sold to the public as a panacea for national security with "safeguards" designed against abuse. If the past is any guide, such safeguards will be broadly worded to allow for wide ranging discretion to the State or law enforcement. Even where these safeguards work, the incentives to abuse the system for advantage will remain. A law enforcement agency could always choose to breach the limited safeguards since the resulting information will still be available for use against an accused or suspect, thanks in large part to the *RM Malkani* case.

The legal theory that permits illegally obtained evidence to be admissible in a case may not itself be responsible for most emerging challenges to privacy. However, as advances in surveillance technologies make them more pervasive, the precedent set by *RM Malkani* further skews the balance in favour of the State and against the individual. It fosters a fundamentally undemocratic and paternalistic ideology that requires people to be transparent to the State.

Tragically enough, Ray could have still convicted the corrupt officer without permitting the admissibility of illegally obtained evidence – the police recorded the call at the doctors' end with their consent and it could be argued that such a recording did not constitute an interception in violation of the Telegraph Act. Ray did note this fact but nonetheless went on to hold that all illegally obtained evidence remains admissible. Such a blunt force approach to individual rights is typical of Indian jurisprudence. Often disgusted by the crime at hand, citizens tend to cede ever greater authority to law enforcement without regard for its future consequences or necessity – consider, for instance, the expansive authority of the Enforcement Directorate and the vast powers of the draconian Unlawful Activities Prevention Act.

We are increasingly creating a top-sided two-track privacy framework that enforces rigorous protections in private contracts, but forces the individual to be subordinate and transparent to the interests of the State. For privacy to be a real right, this approach needs to end and India needs to follow in the footsteps of other democracies to enforce sensible limits on the rights of the State. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Why 'Friends' continues to resonate with the Indian youth even now

By: Sneha Banerjee

Matthew Perry's sudden demise shocked and threw an entire community of fans of the timeless, famous American sitcom *Friends* under a range of grief, filled with nostalgia and memories of their character Chandler Bing. The globally acclaimed and loved show also boasts a huge community of fans in India – which with every year keeps increasing, as every year a new generation of young adults binge on this timeless show. Social media was flooded with scenes, quotes, and BTS videos of Matthew Perry and his moments from the show shared by people between the age group of early teens to those in their late 40s.

Taking a few moments back in time, one would realize that when *Friends* was first aired in the year 1994, the show was not easily accessible to the Indian audience until 1999, nor the final season until 18 months after its conclusion. Indian millennials, who were teens back then, would find various methods to download this 'comfort watch' and watch it as leisure and community viewing with friends and same-aged cousins back home. However, I unfortunately hoped on to the series only during the lockdown along with my partner and truly, madly fell in love with it.

I realized how millennials and the GenZ Indian population today, dream and are unknowingly carving trends that match those showed in the show back then and finally living the aspirational, fulfilling life set in the show today.

My 16-year-old cousin told me in 2018, that she longed to stay with her friends and find roommates rather than stay with elders – a cultural phenomenon that is gradually finding its way into homes amongst teenagers and millennials who are finding comfort aging with a 'selected' set of friends over family – mainly due to a match in sensibilities and lifestyle choices. Recent surveys have highlighted that in 2001, 51.2 million single women were living in India.

By 2011, this number had risen by 39 percent to cross 71 million, while another report issued by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation last year showed the disinterest among young, educated adults in marriage. Indians are slowly discovering solace in community living, travelling, and aspiring for newer adventures in life that go beyond settling in matrimonial engagements.

Young Indians are now seeking compatibility to political opinions, food & lifestyle choices, career aspirations, digital engagement, and other aspects; triggers that were unheard of in the late 90s. The surge in the number of community travel groups, entertainment and leisure groups,

and hobby forums – has paved the way for young adults to seek companionship with friends and like-minded peers over an engagement that includes wedding nuptials.

Hustle status, career diversions & parenting. The show's other characters – each very distinct from the other – portrayed very mature and diverse career professionals – things that we read and hear from the working professionals around us. Rachel Green's career trajectory started with serving coffee to then becoming a fashion professional – these are things that are now getting formally accepted and embraced by the working sector in India.

We see people taking breaks from their routine jobs to pursue their passion projects in teaching, learning music, pursuing theatre, shooting documentaries, taking up a baking course, and more. This is also backed by greater wealth creation in families, and higher salaries that are now allowing Indians to go off track and not live their lives from one paycheck to another.

One also sees souls like Joey, who are hopping, and hustling continuously to make a life out of a creative career. Everyone had a very different career path and that was fleshed out with humour, statistics, sarcasm, and intelligent wit – something we are gradually observing in our circles wherein not every individual is an engineer or a doctor. We are now talking about different career choices and diversions more positively today.

The show also showcased three very contrasting choices of parenting made by couples and single women – the conversations around surrogacy, adoption, co-parenting with a homosexual partner, and single motherhood were concepts that were woven very intricately into the episodes.

The show's treatment of concepts of dating, sexual freedom, bromance, evolution of digital tools, and lifestyle choices is being loved, and absorbed and will somehow sow its seeds of cultivation in every new generation that watches the show – which is now accessible on OTT platforms at very reasonable pricing – making it even more accessible.

As Indian youth continues to embrace more contemporary, nuanced notions of work, styling, lifestyle and living; they will continue to shadow the choices shown by the show years later and also continue to identify with the six characters of the show on and off screen – the idea behind establishment of The Matthew Perry Foundation and Perry's thoughts on leaving behind an appropriate legacy have resonated with the young Indians – who continue to seek inspiration from the forever lasting vibe the show has created for itself. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)



What to know about vegan diets

By: Jamie Smith

A vegan or plant-based diet excludes all animal products, including meat, dairy, and eggs. The benefits can include reducing the risk of chronic diseases and supporting weight loss.

Increasing numbers of people are moving toward vegan diets due to health, animal welfare, or environmental concerns. A 2018 Gallup poll reports that about 3% of people in the United States are fully vegan and notes that sales of plant-based foods are rising.

Vegan diets tend to be rich in nutrients and low in saturated fats. Research suggests that the diet can improve heart health, protect against cancer, and lower the risk of type 2 diabetes. However, people eating only plant-based foods need to be more aware of how to obtain certain nutrients, including iron, calcium, and vitamin B-12, that usually come from an omnivorous diet.

In this article, we take a close look at the vegan diet, including its health benefits and risks, as well as important things to consider before trying it out. We also provide recipe ideas and tips for following a vegan diet.

What is a vegan diet?

A vegan diet involves eating only foods comprising plants. Those who follow this diet avoid all animal products, including meat, dairy, and eggs. Some people also avoid eating honey. For some, being vegan is a dietary choice, while for others, it is a lifestyle choice.

People who choose to live a vegan lifestyle may also avoid clothes, soaps, and other products that use or contain parts of animals, such as leather and animal fur.

Some adopt this lifestyle for its environmental benefits as a sustainable diet.

Vegan diets tend to include plenty of fruits, vegetables,

beans, nuts, and seeds. Eating a variety of these foods will provide a wide range of important vitamins, minerals, healthful fats, and protein.

People following this diet should, however, take care to get key nutrients that people usually consume in animal products. These nutrients include iron, protein, calcium, vitamin B-12, and vitamin D.

Vegan vs. vegetarian

The main difference between vegetarians and vegans is that although vegetarians do not eat meat (including cows, pigs, chicken, and fish), they consume dairy products, eggs, or both. The vegan diet excludes all products with animal-based ingredients.

The vegan diet is more restrictive, so people will need to think more about where their nutrients are coming from to ensure that they meet their daily dietary requirements.

Benefits

Vegan diets can provide all of the nutrients that a person needs, and they can eliminate some of the possible risks that research has associated with harmful animal fats. Research has linked the vegan diet with a range of health benefits, including those below.

Better heart health

A large scale 2019 study has linked a higher intake of plant-based foods and lower intake of animal foods with a reduced risk of heart disease and death in adults.

Animal products – including meat, cheese, and butter – are the main dietary sources of saturated fats. According to the American Heart Association (AHA), eating foods that contain these fats raises cholesterol levels. High levels of cholesterol increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Plant foods are also high in fiber, which the AHA link with better heart health. Animal products contain very little or no



fiber, while plant-based vegetables and grains are the best sources.

In addition, people on a vegan diet often take in fewer calories than those on a standard Western diet. A moderate calorie intake can lead to a lower body mass index (BMI) and a reduced risk of obesity, a major risk factor for heart disease.

Lower cancer risk

According to a 2017 review, eating a vegan diet may reduce a person's risk of cancer by 15%. This health benefit may be due to the fact that plant foods are high in fiber, vitamins, and phytochemicals – biologically active compounds in plants – that protect against cancers.

Research into the effects of diet on the risk of specific cancers has produced mixed results. However, the International Agency for Research on Cancer report that red meat is "probably carcinogenic," noting that research has linked it primarily to colorectal cancer but also to prostate cancer and pancreatic cancer.

The agency also report that processed meat is carcinogenic and may cause colorectal cancer. Eliminating red and processed meats from the diet removes these possible risks.

Weight loss

People on a vegan diet tend to have a lower body mass index

(BMI) than those following other diets.

The researchers behind a 2015 study reported that vegan diets were more effective for weight loss than omnivorous, semi-vegetarian, and pesco-vegetarian diets, as well as being better for providing macronutrients.

Many animal foods are high in fat and calories, so replacing these with low calorie plant-based foods can help people manage their weight.

It is important to note, though, that eating lots of processed or high fat plant-based foods – which some people refer to as a junk food vegan diet – can lead to unhealthy weight gain.

Lower risk of type 2 diabetes

According to a large 2019 review, following a plant-based diet can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. The research linked this effect with eating healthful plant-based foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and legumes.

Nutrients to consider on a vegan diet

A vegan diet removes some sources of nutrients from the diet, so people need to plan their meals carefully to avoid nutritional deficiencies.

People may wish to talk to a doctor or dietitian ahead of adopting a vegan diet, especially if they have existing health con-

ditions. Key nutrients that may be low in a vegan diet include:

Vitamin B-12: Vitamin B-12 is mainly present in animal products. It protects the nerves and red blood cells. Plant-based sources of this vitamin include fortified cereals and plant milks, nutritional yeast, and yeast spreads. Read more about vegan sources of vitamin B-12.

Iron: Iron is important for blood health. Beans and dark leafy greens are good sources. Find out more about iron-rich vegan foods.

Calcium: Calcium is crucial for bone health. Eating tofu, tahini, and leafy greens will help keep calcium levels up. Learn about calcium-rich plant-based foods.

Vitamin D: Vitamin D protects against cancer and some chronic health conditions, and it helps strengthen the bones and teeth. Regularly eating vitamin D-fortified foods and spending time in the sun can boost vitamin D levels.

Omega-3 fatty acids: Important for heart, eye, and brain function, there are three types of omega-3 fatty acid: EPA, DHA, and ALA. Walnuts and flaxseeds are good sources of ALA, but seaweeds and algae are the only plant sources of EPA and DHA. Read about how to get omega-3 as a vegan.

Zinc: Zinc is important for the immune system and the repair of DNA damage. Beans, nutritional yeast, nuts, and oats are high in zinc. Read about zinc-rich vegan foods.

Iodine: Iodine is important for thyroid function. Plant-based sources include seaweeds and fortified foods.

A person may wish to ask for their doctor's advice on whether to take supplements or consume more fortified foods.

A vegan diet may be low in specific nutrients. Certain specialized foods and dietary supplements can help people meet their daily requirements. People can choose from a variety of brands online.

Vitamin B-12 supplements

- nutritional yeast and yeast spreads, which are rich in vitamin B-12
- iron supplements
- calcium supplements
- vitamin D supplements
- vegan omega-3 supplement
- zinc supplements
- iodine supplements

Plant-based food ideas

The change from an unrestricted diet can seem daunting, but there are many simple, tasty, and nutritious ways to pack a vegan diet with key vitamins and minerals.

Instead of cow milk, people can use plant-based alternatives. Compared with cow's milk, plant milks tend to be lower in calories and contain less saturated fat. Manufacturers often enrich them with vitamins and minerals.

People can also buy plant-based cheeses, yogurts, and butters or make their own. Read about dairy alternatives here.

Some people may have concerns about meeting their protein needs on a vegan diet, but many plant foods are excellent sources of protein. Read about the best plant-based sources of protein.

Soy products – such as tofu, tempeh, and seitan – provide

protein and also add a meat-like texture to many dishes.

Vegan recipes often use the following nutritious foods in place of animal products:

- tofu
- tempeh
- mushrooms
- potatoes
- jackfruit
- eggplant
- lentils
- beans and legumes
- cauliflower
- nuts
- peanut butter and other nut butters
- beets

Recipe ideas

People can find a huge variety of vegan recipes online. Some examples include:

- vegan mac'n' cheese
- sweet potato chickpea Buddha bowl
- southwest tofu scramble
- vegan falafel burgers
- butternut, sweet potato, and red lentil stew
- coconut cauliflower curry
- quinoa black bean tacos
- healthy pasta salad

There are plenty of sweet vegan recipes online, too:

- vegan cinnamon rolls
- apple buckwheat pancakes
- vegan avocado brownies
- peanut butter cookies
- vegan ice cream

It may take a little experimentation, but most people will be able to find a vegan meal plan to suit their taste.

Vegan diets are growing in popularity. A vegan diet can offer many health benefits, including better heart health, weight loss, and a reduced risk of chronic diseases.

Research also suggests that vegan diets are better for the environment.

People who wish to adopt a vegan diet will need to plan their meals carefully to ensure that they are getting enough key nutrients to avoid deficiencies. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

The death toll in the territory since October 7 has surpassed 15,500, with more than 41,000 wounded

Israel's military calls for more evacuations in southern Gaza as it widens offensive

DEIR AL-BALAH, Dec 4: The Israeli military on Monday renewed its calls for mass evacuations from the southern town of Khan Younis, where tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians have sought refuge in recent weeks, as it widened its ground offensive and bombed targets across the Gaza Strip.

The expanded offensive, following the collapse of a weeklong cease-fire, is aimed at eliminating Gaza's Hamas rulers, whose Oct. 7 attack into Israel triggered the deadliest Israeli-Palestinian violence in decades. The war has already killed thousands of Palestinians and displaced over three-fourths of the territory's population of 2.3 million Palestinians, who are running out of safe places to go.

Already under mounting pressure from its top ally, the United States, Israel appears to be racing to strike a death blow against Hamas — if that's even possible, given the group's deep roots in Palestinian society — before another cease-fire. But the mounting toll of the fighting, which Palestinian health officials say has killed several hundred civilians since the truce ended

on Friday, further increases pressure to return to the negotiating table.

It could also render even larger parts of the isolated territory uninhabitable.

The ground offensive has transformed much of the north, including large parts of Gaza City, into a rubble-filled wasteland. Hundreds of thousands of people have sought refuge in the south, which could meet the same fate, and both Israel and neighbouring Egypt have refused to accept any refugees.

Residents said they heard airstrikes and explosions in and around Khan Younis overnight and into Monday after the military dropped leaflets warning people to relocate further south toward the border with Egypt. In an Arabic language post on social media early Monday, the military again ordered the evacuation of nearly two dozen neighborhoods in and around Khan Younis.

Halima Abdel-Rahman, a widow and mother of four, said she's stopped heeding such orders. She fled her home in October to an area outside Khan Younis, where she stays with relatives.

"The (Israeli) occupation



tells you to go to this area, then they bomb it," she said by phone on Sunday. "The reality is that no place is safe in Gaza. They kill people in the north. They kill people in the south."

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said the death toll in the territory since Oct. 7 has surpassed 15,500, with more than 41,000 wounded. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths, but said 70% of the dead were women and children.

A Health Ministry spokesman asserted that hundreds had been killed or wounded since the cease-fire ended early Friday. "The majority of victims are still under the rubble," Ashraf al-Qidra said. The Palestinian Civil Defense department said an Israeli strike early Monday killed three of its rescuers in

Gaza City. The Palestinian Red Crescent rescue service said one of its volunteers was killed and an employee was wounded in a strike on a home in the urban Jabalia refugee camp, also in the north.

An Associated Press reporter in the central town of Deir al-Balah heard shooting and the sound of tanks south of the line across which Palestinians from the north were told for weeks to evacuate, but there was no immediate visual confirmation. The military rarely comments on troop deployments. Hopes for another temporary truce faded after Israel called its negotiators home over the weekend. Hamas said talks on releasing more of the scores of hostages seized by Palestinian militants on Oct. 7 must be tied to a permanent cease-fire.

The earlier truce facilitated

the release of 105 of the roughly 240 Israeli and foreign hostages taken to Gaza during the Oct. 7 attack, and the release of 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Most of those released by both sides were women and children.

The United States, along with Qatar and Egypt, which mediated the earlier cease-fire, say they are working on a longer truce. In the meantime, the U.S. is pressing Israel to avoid more mass displacement and the killing of civilians, a message underscored by Vice President Kamala Harris during a visit to the region. She also said the U.S. would not allow the forced relocation of Palestinians out of Gaza or the occupied West Bank, or the re-drawing of Gaza's borders.

But it's unclear how far the Biden administration is willing or able to go in pressing Israel to rein in the offensive, even as the White House faces growing pressure from its allies in Congress.

The U.S. has pledged unwavering support to Israel since the Oct. 7 attack, which killed over 1,200 people, mostly civilians, including rushing munitions and other aid to Israel. (AP)

11 bodies recovered after volcanic eruption in Indonesia, and 12 climbers are still missing

PADANG, Dec 4: The bodies of 11 climbers were recovered on Monday a day after a furious eruption of the Mount Marapi volcano as Indonesian rescuers searched for 12 apparently still missing.

Marapi has stayed at the third highest of four alert levels since 2011, a level indicating above normal volcanic activity and prohibiting climbers or villagers within 3 kilometres of the peak, said Hendra Gunawan, the head of the Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation.

"This means that there should be no climbing to the peak," Gunawan said, adding that climbers were only allowed below the danger zone, "but sometimes many of them broke the rules to fulfil their satisfaction to climb further."

About 75 climbers had started their way up the nearly 2,900-metre mountain on Saturday and became stranded. Eight of those rescued Sunday were rushed to hospitals with burns and one also had a broken limb, said Hari Agustian, an official at the local Search and Rescue Agency in Padang, the West Sumatra provincial capital.

All of the climbers had registered at two command posts or online through West Sumatra's conservation agency before they climbed, Agustian said. It was possible others took illegal roads or local residents were active in the area, but it couldn't be confirmed, he said.

Marapi spewed thick columns of ash as high as 3,000 metres in Sunday's eruption and hot ash clouds spread several miles (kilometres). Nearby villages and towns were blanketed by tons of volcanic debris. Volcanic dust and rain smeared the faces and hair of evacuated climbers, according to video on social media.

Falling ash blanketed several villages and blocked sunlight, and authorities distributed masks and urged residents to wear eyeglasses to protect them from volcanic ash. About 1,400 people live on Marapi's slopes in Rubai and Gobah Cumantiang, the nearest villages about 5 to 6 kilometres from the peak.

Gunawan said that Sunday's eruption was not preceded by a significant increase in volcanic earthquakes. Deep volcanic earthquakes were only recorded three times between November 16 and on Sunday, while the deformation equipment or tiltmeter on the peak showed a horizontal pattern on the radial axis and a slight inflation on the tangential axis.

"This shows that the eruption process is taking place quickly and the centre of pressure is very shallow, around the peak," he said.

Marapi has been observed regularly erupting since 2004 with a gap of 2 to 4 years, Gunawan said.

"Marapi eruptions are always sudden and difficult to detect using equipment because the source is near the surface," Gunawan said, "This eruption was not caused by the movement of magma."

West Sumatra's Search and Rescue Agency head Abdul Malik said rescuers found 11 bodies of climbers as they searched for those who still missing and rescued three others Monday morning.

"The evacuation process of the bodies and survivors are still ongoing," he said, adding that rescuers are still searching for 12 climbers reportedly still missing.

Marapi has been active since a January eruption that caused no casualties. It is among more than 120 active volcanoes in Indonesia, which is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin. (AP)



3 commercial ships hit by missiles in Houthi attack in Red Sea, US warship downs 3 drones

DUBAI, Dec 4: Ballistic missiles fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels struck three commercial ships on Sunday in the Red Sea, while a U.S. warship shot down three drones in self-defense during the hours-long assault, the U.S. military said. The Iranian-backed Houthis claimed two of the attacks.

The strikes marked an escalation in a series of maritime attacks in the Mideast linked to the Israel-Hamas war, as multiple vessels found themselves in the crosshairs of a single Houthi assault for the first time in the conflict. The U.S. vowed to "consider all appropriate responses" in the wake of the attack, specifically calling out Iran, after tensions have been high for years now over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program.

"These attacks represent a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security," the U.S. military's Central Command said in a statement. "They have jeopardized the lives of international crews representing multiple countries around the world."

It added: "We also have every reason to believe that these attacks, while launched by the Houthis in Yemen, are fully enabled by Iran."

The attack began around 9:15 a.m. local time (0615 GMT) in Houthi-controlled Sanaa, Yemen's capital, Central Command said.

The USS Carney, a Navy destroyer, detected a ballistic missile fired from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen at the Bahamas-flagged bulk carrier Unity Explorer. The missile hit near the ship, the U.S. said. Shortly afterward, the Carney shot down a drone headed its way, although it's not clear if the destroyer was the target, Central Command said.

About 30 minutes later, the Unity Explorer was hit by a missile. While responding to its distress call, the Carney shot down another incoming drone. Central Command said the Unity Explorer sustained minor damage from the missile.

Two other commercial ships, the Panamanian-flagged bulk carriers Number 9 and Sophie II, were both struck by missiles. The Number 9 reported some damage but no casualties, and the Sophie II reported no

significant damage, Central Command said. While sailing to assist the Sophie II around 4:30 p.m. local time (1330 GMT), the Carney shot down another drone heading in its direction. The drones did no damage.

The Carney, an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, has shot down multiple rockets the Houthis have fired toward Israel during that nation's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. It hasn't been damaged in any of the incidents and no injuries have been reported on board. The Defense Department initially described the assault as simply an attack on the Carney before providing more details.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed two of Sunday's attacks, saying the first vessel was hit by a missile and the second by a drone while in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. Saree did not mention any U.S. warship being involved.

"The Yemeni armed forces continue to prevent Israeli ships from navigating the Red Sea (and Gulf of Aden) until the Israeli aggression against our steadfast brothers in the Gaza Strip stops," Saree said. "The Yemeni armed forces renew their warning to all Israeli ships or those associated with Israelis that they will become a legitimate target if they violate what is stated in this statement."

Saree also identified the first vessel as the Unity Explorer, which is owned by a British firm that includes Dan David Ungar, who lives in Israel, as one of its officers. The Number 9 is linked to Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement. The Sophie II's owner, Kyowa Kisen of Imabari, Japan, told The Associated Press that the ship's crew were safe and the vessel did not sustain serious damage. Managers for the two other ships

could not be immediately reached for comment.

Israeli media identified Ungar as being the son of Israeli shipping billionaire Abraham "Rami" Ungar.

Iran has yet to directly address the attacks. However, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian threatened "that if the current situation continues, the region will enter a new phase" over the Israel-Hamas war. "All parties who are after igniting a war are warned, before it's too late stop the killing of women and children, of which a new round has started," Amirabdollahian said.

Iran's top diplomat described his

comments as coming after conversations with "resistance forces" in the region — a description Tehran uses for the Shiite militias it backs, including groups in Iraq, the Houthis and Lebanon's Hezbollah, as well as the Sunni fighters of Hamas. All have threatened or attacked Israel, Iran's regional archival, during the war.

The Houthis have launched a series of attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, as well as launching drones and missiles targeting Israel. Analysts suggest the Houthis hope to shore up waning popular support after years of civil war in Yemen between it and Saudi-backed forces.

The U.S. has stopped short of saying its Navy ships were targeted, but has said Houthi drones have headed toward the ships and have been shot down in self-defense. Washington so far has declined to directly respond to the attacks, as has Israel, whose military continues to try to describe the ships as not having links to their country.

Global shipping had increasingly been targeted as the Israel-Hamas war threatens to become a wider regional conflict — even as a truce briefly halted fighting and Hamas exchanged hostages for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. (AP)



China says a US Navy ship 'illegally intruded' into waters in the SChina Sea

BEIJING, Dec 4: The Chinese military said that an American naval ship had "illegally intruded" on Monday into waters near the Second Thomas Shoal, the site of a hot territorial dispute between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea. A Chinese naval force was mobilized to track the USS Gabrielle Giffords during the operation, according to a statement from the People's Liberation Army Southern Theater. The U.S. Navy did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

Chinese and Philippine naval and coast guard ships have confronted each other repeatedly around the Second Thomas Shoal in recent months as China tries to prevent the Philippines from resupplying and repairing a rusting warship that it intentionally ran aground in 1999 to serve as a military outpost.

Dwarfed by China's military might, the Philippines has sought America's help, agreeing to an expansion of the U.S. military presence in the country earlier this year and launching joint sea and air patrols with the United States late last month.

China says the U.S. is meddling in waters far from its shores and renewed its accusation that America is the one raising regional tensions following the sailing of the USS Giffords, a littoral combat ship designed to operate in coastal areas, near Second Thomas Shoal.

"The U.S. deliberately disrupted the situation in the South China Sea, seriously violated China's sovereignty and security, seriously undermined regional peace and stability, and seriously violated international law and basic norms governing international relations, fully demonstrating that the U.S. is the biggest threat to peace and stability in the South China Sea," the statement from the Chinese military's Southern Theater said. (AP)

Ukrainian diplomats negotiate both climate change and Russia's war on their nation at COP28 in Dubai

DUBAI, Dec 4: While Ukrainian diplomats take part in negotiations at the United Nations COP28 climate talks, Russia's war on the country lurks just in the background — even as the United Arab Emirates has seen its business ties to Moscow surge despite Western sanctions.

As Ukraine announced a 450 million euro (\$489 million) expansion Monday of a wind farm in its Mykolaiv region, officials highlighted how its turbines would be spread far enough apart to survive any Russian missile attack. They decried continued attacks by Moscow on its energy infrastructure as snow storms grip the country. And an American diplomat forcefully denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin at an event that's seen demonstrators stopped from naming Israel in their protests over its pounding airstrikes and ground offensive in the Gaza Strip against Hamas.

"The war in Ukraine — Putin's invasion — represents a fundamental challenge to the international system that the United States and our allies and partners are trying to build," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Energy Resources Geoffrey R. Pyatt told The Associated Press. "Putin is dragging us back to the law of the jungle. He has to be defeated."

The Russian embassies in Abu Dhabi, the UAE's capital, and Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The war looms large over Ukraine's pavilion at the COP28 summit. A brick roof from the war-torn Kherson region serves as a physical reminder of the collapse of the Kakhovka Dam and the rush of water from the country's largest reservoir that washed away villages and cities in June. The dam's destruction led to deadly flooding, endangered crops in the world's breadbasket, threatened drinking water supplies for thousands and unleashed an environmental catastrophe.

Ukraine puts blame for the collapse on Russia, which had the means, motive and opportunity to bring down the dam. Russia has blamed Ukraine for the dam's collapse through a variety of allegations, though even Putin acknowledged it provided his retreating troops cover and disrupted Ukraine's counteroffensive this summer.

Monday's event at the pavilion saw private Ukrainian energy producer DTEK sign a memorandum of understanding with the Danish firm Vestas to expand its wind farm project in Mykolaiv. Its first phase was built for 200 million euros (\$217 million) amid the war, with crews spending about a third of their time in bomb shelters during the project, said Maxim Timchenko, the CEO of DTEK.

"They work in (body) armor and they see missiles flying above



their heads," Timchenko said. "That's why we are proud of this achievement. And moreover, it gives us more confidence to build the second phase and complete this project. We are ready to fight."

The new 450 million euros in funding comes from banks with government guarantees and war-risk insurance, Timchenko said, praising Denmark for its role in securing the project's financing.

The energy grid expansion comes as Russia still occupies Europe's largest atomic power plant in Ukraine, the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, and fighting still endangers others. At risk as the cold sets in this winter is power, too.

Russia last winter destroyed about half of Ukraine's electricity infrastructure, including generating plants and power lines. Ukraine says it has repaired that damage during the summer, but the largest-ever wave of Russian attacks using Iranian-supplied drones last month has renewed fears that its grid again will come under attack.

"Putin has made energy one of his weapons," said Pyatt, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. "He's done that with his drone and missile attacks on civilian energy infrastructure. He's done that by turning off the gas pipelines in order to try to weaken Europe's resolve to support the Ukrainians."

"So we have recognized from day one that for Vladimir Putin, energy is just about as much a part of his war strategy as are his tanks and his missiles." (AP)

Former Pak PM Imran Khan, ex-foreign min Qureshi to be indicted in cipher case again on Dec 12

ISLAMABAD, Dec 4: A special court here ruled on Monday that jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan and ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi would be indicted again on December 12 in the cipher case for allegedly leaking a diplomatic cable.

The in-prison hearing of Khan, 71, and Qureshi, 67, began from the start on Saturday after a ruling by the Islamabad High Court last month declared the jail trial illegal on procedural grounds and also nullified its proceedings.

Special Court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain issued the directive while hearing the case at the Adil

ala jail premises in Rawalpindi, where both the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party leaders are currently jailed, the Dawn newspaper reported.

PTI party chief Khan has been incarcerated at the high-security Adiala jail since September 26. Qureshi was also arrested in the cipher (secret diplomatic cable) case and is imprisoned in the same prison.

The hearing of the cipher case was again shifted to jail after the order by the trial judge, followed by its approval by the Cabinet and notifications issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice as required under the law.

On Monday, Judge Zulqarnain adjourned the hearing till December 12 and said charges would be framed against the PTI leaders of the same day, the report said.

Family members and lawyers of the incarcerated leaders attended the hearing along with special prosecutor Zulfikar Abbas Naqvi and Rizwan Abbasi, according to the report.

Six members of the media were allowed to attend the proceedings, it added.

The cipher case was launched in August this year after a case was filed against Khan for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act by disclosing a

secret diplomatic cable — called the cipher — sent by the country's embassy in Washington in March last year.

The diplomatic cable reportedly went missing from Khan's possession.

Khan and Qureshi, who had claimed that the cable contained a threat from the United States to topple the PTI's government, were indicted on October 23.

Both Khan and Qureshi have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Khan was ousted through a vote of no-confidence in April 2022. More than 150 cases have been registered against him since his ouster from power. (PTI)

Mizoram DyCM Tawnluia loses to ZMP candidate in Tuichang seat



AIZAWL, Dec 4: Mizoram deputy chief minister and MNF candidate Tawnluia lost to ZPM candidate in the Tuichang Assembly seat, according to the Election Commission.

Tawnluia of Mizo National Front (MNF) received 6,079 votes while the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) candidate W Chhuanawma got 6,988.

Congress candidate C Lalhratia received 1,674 votes while the Independent candidate Lalhmuni-ami got only 67 votes, the EC said.

The counting of votes polled in the assembly elections in Mizoram began at 8 am on Monday amid tight security.

Additional Chief Electoral Officer H Lianzela told PTI that the counting was being held in 13 centres across the state. (PTI)

The man who guarded Indira Gandhi Lalduhoma, set to be next Mizoram CM

AIZAWL, Dec 4: From earning the dubious distinction of the first MP to be disqualified under the anti-defection law to being all set to becoming the chief minister of Mizoram, 73-year-old Lalduhoma's political journey has been all about battling against odds.

Lalduhoma, an ex-IPS officer who served as the in-charge of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's security, is the chief ministerial face of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM).

The ZPM which was registered as a political party only in 2019 secured a majority in the Mizoram assembly on Monday, winning 27 of the 40 seats and leading in one other, as votes were being counted, according to the Election Commission (EC).

Lalduhoma himself bagged the Serchhip seat by defeating his nearest MNF rival J Malsawmzuala Vanchhawng by 2,982 votes.

For over three decades, chief ministership in the northeastern state has been a see-saw affair between two senior politicians — Lal Thanhawla of the Congress and MNF's Zoramthanga.

Lalduhoma first contested the Mizoram assembly polls on a Congress ticket in 1984, but lost to People's Conference party nomi-



nee Lalhmingthanga by a margin of 846 votes.

The same year, he contested the Lok Sabha polls as a Congress candidate and was elected unopposed.

The ZPM leader resigned as state Congress president and withdrew his primary membership from the party in 1986, after he was accused of conspiring against then chief minister Lal Thanhawla and some cabinet ministers.

Lalduhoma became the first MP to be disqualified under the anti-defection law after he quit the Congress in 1988.

He was also disqualified by Mizoram Assembly Speaker Lalrinliana Sailo in 2020, after 12 Mizo National Front (MNF) legislators

filed complaints, alleging he defected to the ZPM by actively participating in party activities, though being elected as an independent in the 2018 polls.

Lalduhoma was the first legislator to have been disqualified under the anti-defection law in Mizoram, but he managed to win the by-election to the Serchhip seat in 2021.

Besides the Congress, he was once part of the MNF. He had floated his own party, the Zoram Nationalist Party, and was also instrumental in the formation of the ZPM.

In the 2018 assembly polls, Lalduhoma won two seats — Serchhip and Aizawl West-I. He had defeated incumbent legislator and

Lalduhoma wins Serchhip seat by 2,982 votes

AIZAWL, Dec 4: Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) CM face Lalduhoma won the Serchhip seat by 2,982 votes, according to the Election Commission.

Lalduhoma got 8,314 votes while J Malsawmzuala Vanchhawng of Mizo National Front received 5,332 votes.

R Vanlalhuanga of Indian National Congress secured 4,241 votes, BJP candidate K Vanlalruati got 97 votes while Independent candidate Lalawmpuia Renthlei received 69 votes and Ramhlun Edena got 21 votes.

The counting of votes polled in the assembly elections in Mizoram began at 8 am on Monday amid tight security. (PTI)

five-time chief minister Lal Thanhawla from Serchhip by a margin of 410 votes.

Lalduhoma subsequently vacated the Aizawl West-I seat to retain Serchhip.

Prior to the 2018 elections, Lalduhoma had successfully contested polls as a ZNP candidate from the Ratu seat in 2003 and Aizawl West-I seat in 2008. (PTI)

Mizoram Assembly polls: 3 women candidates win elections



AIZAWL, Dec 4: Only three women candidates won in the Mizoram Assembly elections, the results of which were declared by the Election Commission of India on Monday.

Out of the 174 candidates in the fray, only 16 were women. Of them, two contested in two constituencies each, making it 18 seats having women candidates fighting the Assembly elections.

The Mizoram Assembly has 40 members.

Notably, NFR, in 2022, opened the Shokhuvi Railway station in Nagaland, the second railway station in the state after Dimapur, which was opened after a gap of more than 100 years. NFR on behalf of Indian Railways, is significantly contributing towards transformation of the Northeastern states by executing several new railway line connectivity projects. Construction of new railway lines to connect all the state capitals of north-eastern region with rest of the nation is being undertaken as top priority projects.



infrastructure in the region. Apart from the Kohima connectivity project, which is slated to be commissioned by 2026, NFR also aims to provide direct rail connectivity between Kohima & Imphal, that are the capital cities of Nagaland and Manipur respectively. The general manager also updated the CM about its status. The Reconnaissance Engineering cum Traffic survey for Zubza-Imphal new line has been completed. NFR is now in a stage to start the Final Location Survey shortly for this new line, contract for which is already

in place. Notably, NFR, in 2022, opened the Shokhuvi Railway station in Nagaland, the second railway station in the state after Dimapur, which was opened after a gap of more than 100 years. NFR on behalf of Indian Railways, is significantly contributing towards transformation of the Northeastern states by executing several new railway line connectivity projects. Construction of new railway lines to connect all the state capitals of north-eastern region with rest of the nation is being undertaken as top priority projects.

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Will not join any political grouping at national level: Lalduhoma

AIZAWL, Dec 4: Lalduhoma, the chief ministerial face of the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), on Monday said the next Mizoram government will maintain good relations with the Centre but his party won't join any political grouping at the national level. The opposition party emerged victorious in the Mizoram assembly polls, bagging 27 of the 40 seats.

In an exclusive interaction with PTI Video, Lalduhoma, an ex-IPS officer who had served as the security in-charge of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, expressed satisfaction with his party winning a majority of the seats in the House and emphasised the importance of building strong ties with the Union government.

"We will maintain good relations with the Centre but we will not join any political grouping at the national level," he said.

Lalduhoma, who was elected as an MLA from Serchhip seat, attrib-

uted his party's electoral success to the common people of Mizoram and said his priorities as the new chief minister will be to complete the unfinished projects.

He said the party would hold a meeting and then decide on oath-taking.

The ZPM declared its intention to stake claim to form the government in Mizoram. The decision will follow a consultative meeting involving newly elected MLAs and senior party leaders.

ZPM working president K Sapdanga said that the meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, and Lalduhoma, currently in Serchhip, is en route to Aizawl to meet the newly elected MLAs.

In the assembly polls, ZPM, the opposition party, secured a sweeping victory by winning 27 out of 40 seats. The ruling Mizo National Front (MNF), led by Chief Minister Zoramthanga, secured 10 seats, while the BJP won two seats and the Congress one. (PTI)

BJP wins 2 Assembly seats in Mizoram



AIZAWL, Dec 4: The BJP won the Palak and the Saiha Assembly constituency in Mizoram on Monday, according to the Election Commission. BJP candidate K Hrahmo won the Palak Assembly constituency defeating his MNF rival K T Rokhaw by 1,241 votes, the EC said.

Hrahmo got 6,064 votes while Rokhaw secured 4,823 votes. Indian National Congress candidate I P Junior received 3,729 votes while Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) nominee K Robinson got 1,378 votes.

BJP candidate K Beichhua won the Saiha Assembly seat defeating his MNF rival H C Lalmalsawma Zasai by 616 votes.

Beichhua received 6,740 votes while Zasai got 6,124 votes. N Chakhai of the Indian National Congress secured 3,607 votes while ZPM candidate K H Beithie got 2,219 votes.

The BJP had won one seat in the 2018 Mizoram Assembly election. The counting of votes polled in the assembly elections in Mizoram began at 8 am on Monday amid tight security. (PTI)

BJP's victory in 3 states will pave way for 2024 LS poll win: Tripura CM

AGARTALA, Dec 4: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha on Monday asserted that the BJP's victory in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh will pave the way for the party's win in Lok Sabha elections due next year.

He said that people have rejected the Congress's "divisive campaign" in the three states.

"The Congress, which had spearheaded a divisive campaign in the three states, got a befitting reply with people rejecting it. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tireless efforts for the development of women, poor, farmers and youth have paid off," he told reporters at the party headquarters.

"The BJP's massive victory in the three states will pave the way for the saffron party's win in the Lok Sabha elections due next

year. The massive mandate in favour of the BJP indicates that the saffron party not only formulates welfare schemes but also ensures those reach the beneficiaries," he added.

Claiming that the result in the three states has sent a clear message to "those who give bogus promises and assist anti-national forces", Saha said people have overwhelmingly accepted the PM's "strong steps against corruption".

Heaping praises on the well-crafted election strategies of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and party's national president J P Nadda leading the party to victory in the assembly polls, Saha said the party hopes to win both the Lok Sabha seats in Tripura in the 2024 general elections. (PTI)

Famous Tripura Rosem player Thanga Darlong dies at 103

AGARTALA, Dec 4: Famous Tripura musician Thanga Darlong, a Padma Shri awardee died of old-age-related ailments, officials said on Monday.

The 103-year-old widely revered Rosem player was admitted to Kailashahar District hospital on November 15 following the instruction of chief minister Manik Saha. He died on Sunday.

Saha on Sunday took to Facebook to condole the death of a legendary folk player. "I am deeply saddened by the demise of famous Rosem (bamboo-made flute) player and Padma Shri awardee and folk music artist Thanga Darlong. I express my condolences to all the members of the bereaved families including well-wishers. May God give them strength to bear this sorrow of separation and may his departed soul rest in peace," the CM said.

Born on July 20, 1920, in Tripura's Murai village of Unakoti district, Thanga Darlong got training from his father. Darlong had attended several traditional music festivals. (PTI)

NFR GM calls upon Nagaland CM

GUWAHATI, Dec 4: The general manager of NF Railway Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, in regards to the railway projects in the state called upon the chief minister of Nagaland, Neiphiu Rio on December 4.

The meeting held between the duo was to chalk out areas of concern related to the smooth and easy execution of various railway projects in the state.

The general manager assured the chief minister that the railway connectivity in the ongoing Dhansiri-Zubza new line project till Molvom and Pherima will be achieved by September, 2024. Railway will also be developing a Goods Yard at Molvom as requested by the state authorities. General Manager also assured that NF Railway will develop rail infrastructure in the state as per the requirement of the state.

The CM of Nagaland also accepted NFR's request to set up a high-level committee in the state to sort out the issues pertaining to railways. The committee will now be sitting on a quarterly basis. NFR aims to redefine the railway



infrastructure in the region. Apart from the Kohima connectivity project, which is slated to be commissioned by 2026, NFR also aims to provide direct rail connectivity between Kohima & Imphal, that are the capital cities of Nagaland and Manipur respectively. The general manager also updated the CM about its status. The Reconnaissance Engineering cum Traffic survey for Zubza-Imphal new line has been completed. NFR is now in a stage to start the Final Location Survey shortly for this new line, contract for which is already

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Run for conservation of Hornbill

'How can we celebrate Hornbill Festival without Hornbill?'

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Dec 4: With hornbills becoming nearly extinct in Nagaland and as part of the ongoing Hornbill Festival at Kisama, the Nagaland environment, forest and climate change department organised a 6-km run named "Run for hornbill: Against time" here on Monday morning.

The run that began at Green Park to create awareness in the minds of the people about conservation of hornbills culminated at Zoological Park with a commitment to conserve the endangered bird species.

State environment, forest and climate change CL John flagged off the run that saw participation of 219 runners that included both males and females.

Addressing the runners, John said though the Hornbill Festival is being celebrated for the last 24 years, no awareness has been created to conserve hornbills.

"Therefore, we have decided to organise the first ever hornbill run



to make people aware of the importance of conserving hornbills," he said.

John asserted that the hornbill run will be held every year to push for protection of hornbills.

In his address, commissioner and secretary, environment, forest and climate change, Y Kikheto Sema

lamented that no awareness has been initiated in the state for protection of hornbills in the past.

He said the department organised the hornbill run for the first time in the state during the Hornbill Festival to create awareness for protection of hornbill.

"How can we celebrate Hornbill

Festival without hornbill," he asked.

Sema urged people not to use original hornbill feathers during any festivals or ceremonies and to plant trees where the bird can feed and nest.

Principal chief conservator of forest and head of Nagaland forest force Dharmendra Prasad said the run signified the efforts to take up the cause of nature.

"Through the run, we want to send a message to the people of Nagaland that we love nature and its conservation," he added.

Noting that hornbill species are almost extinct in Nagaland, another principal chief conservator of forest and chief wildlife warden Vedpal Singh said only three hornbills were sighted in Nagaland in the last three to four years.

He said though there was no formal survey, the bird had almost disappeared from the state. Singh urged everyone to resolve to contribute to conserving hornbills.

Assam's traditional healers (bez) participate in Ethnopharmacology convention, national seminar

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Dec 4: The 10th convention of the Society for Ethnopharmacology, India, and the National Seminar on Ethnopharmacology for Bio-economy (EBNP-2023) took place at the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)-North East Institute of Science and Technology (NEIST) in Jorhat. The event witnessed the active participation of traditional healers, known as "bez" in Assamese, in an exhibition, adding a unique dimension to the conference's overall purpose.

The objective of the conference was to present and discuss scientific research in the context of traditional knowledge related to the use of locally available herbs and organisms for curing diseases. This knowledge has been practiced by tribal people and their forefathers for genera-

tions. The northeastern region, known for its biodiversity, is a hotspot for traditional medicinal practices that are still trusted and in use.

Organised by CSIR-NEIST, Jorhat, in association with the Society for Ethnopharmacology, India, the three-day program was attended by eminent scientists and researchers from across the country. Dr G. Narahari Sastry, director CSIR-NEIST, Jorhat, and Chief Patron of EBNP-2023, delivered the inaugural address. Dr Jatin Kalita, the organising secretary, provided an overview of the seminar.

Keynote speakers included Dr Madhu Dikshit, former director, CSIR-Central Drug Research Institute (CSIR-CDRI), who spoke on 'Unlocking the Potential of Ashwagandha in Healthcare: Ethnopharmacology Insights and Opportunities.' Other notable speakers

included Professor Rabinarayan Acharya, Director-General CCRAS, Union Ministry of AYUSH, New Delhi, Dr Indraneel Das, Vice-President, Ethnopharmacology Society of India, Professor Pulok Kumar Mukherjee, Director IBSD, Imphal, Dr. PK Mishra, Vice-Chancellor, Assam Kaziranga University, Dr. Viswajit J Sattigeri, Head, CSIR-TKDL, among others.

The presentations covered oral, poster, invited, and keynote sessions, discussing the effectiveness of traditional knowledge on locally available plant species and organisms as medicines for contemporary ailments. The discussions explored the potential to integrate traditional knowledge with modern medicinal practices by developing medicines from locally available natural entities through scientific testing and validation.

4.45 lakh FIRs on 'crime against women' in 2022 in India, highest on average in Delhi: NCRB

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: A total of 4,45,256 cases of crime against women were registered across India in 2022, almost 51 FIRs every hour, up from 4,28,278 in 2021 and 3,71,503 in 2020, according to the latest NCRB data.

The rate of crime against women per lakh population stood at 66.4 while the charge sheeting in such cases was logged at 75.8, showed the data in the annual crime report of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which functions under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

The majority of crimes against women under the Indian Penal Code were of cruelty by husband or his relatives (31.4 per cent) followed by kidnapping and abduction of women (19.2 per cent), assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (18.7 per cent), and rape (7.1 per cent), the NCRB said.

With 14,247 cases in 2022, Delhi registered the highest rate of crime against women in the country at 144.4 -- way above the country's average rate of 66.4.

Such cases in Delhi stood at 14,277 in 2021 and 10,093 in 2020, the official data showed.

In absolute numbers, Uttar Pradesh (65,743) registered the maximum FIRs in cases of crime against women in 2022 followed by Maharashtra (45,331), Rajasthan (45,058), West Bengal (34,738) and Madhya Pradesh (32,765), it showed.

These five states together contributed to 2,23,635 (or 50.2 per cent) of the total cases lodged in India last year, according to the NCRB, which is tasked with the collection and analysis of crime data.

In 2021 and 2020, Uttar Pradesh registered 56,083 and 49,385 cases in this category followed by Rajasthan (40,738 and 34,535), Maharashtra (39,526 and 31,954), West Bengal (35,884 and 36,439) and Madhya Pradesh (30,673 and 25,640), it showed.

A total of 12 states and Union Territories recorded crime rates higher than the national average of 66.4.

Delhi topped the list at 144.4 followed by Haryana (118.7), Telangana (117), Rajasthan (115.1), Odisha (103), Andhra Pradesh (96.2), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (93.7), Kerala (82), Assam (81), Madhya Pradesh (78.8), Uttarakhand (77), Maharashtra (75.1) and

West Bengal (71.8).

The rate of crime in Uttar Pradesh -- which alone contributed nearly 15 per cent of the cases in India -- stood at 58.6, according to the NCRB.

In a note of caution about the annual report, the NCRB said the primary presumption that the upward swing in police data indicates an increase in crime and thus a reflection of the ineffectiveness of the police is fallacious.

"Rise in crime" and "increase in registration of crime by police" are clearly two different things, a fact which requires better understanding. Thus an oft-repeated expectation from certain quarters that an effective police administration will be able to keep the crime figures low is misplaced," it stated.

"Increase in crime numbers in a state police data may in fact be on account of certain citizen-centric police initiatives, like launching of e-FIR facility or women helpdesks," it said.

"The increase or decrease in crime numbers, however, does call for a professional investigation of underlying factors pertaining to the local communities to suitably address the pertinent issues," it added. (PTI)

Assembly poll results won't impact INDIA bloc, need to work harder, say opposition leaders

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: The recently concluded Assembly polls that saw the BJP win three states will not impact the INDIA bloc but the opposition parties need to work harder for the Lok Sabha polls next year, opposition leaders said on Monday.

The BJP swept Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on Sunday, inflicting a resounding defeat on the Congress to tighten its stranglehold in the Hindi heartland, in a big boost for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and setting the tone for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

In some consolation for the Congress in the face of the saffron wave after it lost Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the party ousted the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) in Telangana.

A day after the results, National Conference (NC) leader Farooq Abdullah said the opposition INDIA bloc parties will have to work harder.

Asked about the results and its possible impact on the alliance, he said, "It will make no difference to the alliance. We will have to work harder."

"Victories and losses happen. We should learn from the defeat, as well as from those who have won.



India has to be one, it is for everyone, and we need to strengthen the country," the NC leader said.

Asked about the Samajwadi Party not being accommodated in Madhya Pradesh by the Congress while announcing its candidates for the state and its possible impact on the results, Abdullah said, "All will have to be accommodated and we will have to move forward."

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Manoj Jha also said the results will not impact the alliance.

"These were state polls. These should be left behind. National

elections will be held on different issues. It (Assembly poll results) will not have any impact, everyone will have to understand the unity of the INDIA bloc... there is no contradiction," he said. Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal said his party will introspect on what went wrong in the polls and maintained that it will not impact the opposition grouping.

All opposition parties attended the meeting at Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's office in Parliament on Monday morning, he said.

On the issue of SP not being made an alliance partner in Madhya Pradesh, Venugopal said, "They have the freedom to complain and some complaints may be genuine too. We will examine and make required corrections."

Meanwhile, Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) MP Chirag Paswan blamed Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar and the caste survey held in Bihar responsible for the loss. Paswan joined the BJP-led NDA in July.

"The opposition was making self goals and it is Bihar CM Nitish Kumar who has caused maximum damage to the INDI Alliance. The comments he made against women, the kind of remarks they made against Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes leaders... the kind of remarks made against former Bihar CM Jitan Ram Manjhi impacted them," he said.

"Their own policy backfired. Their leaders said they would conduct caste surveys. But the people of those states realised that there were discrepancies in the caste survey in Bihar... This affected the alliance and I believe Nitish Kumar is the main reason for the damage to the INDI Alliance," Paswan said. (PTI)

RS panel holds Raghav Chadha guilty of presenting misleading facts

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: AAP MP Raghav Chadha was on Monday held guilty of presenting misleading facts to the media by the Privileges Committee of Rajya Sabha and was allowed to attend the House proceedings after his suspension was ended through a motion.

Chadha was also held guilty by the RS Committee of adding names of members in the proposed select panel without their consent.

A motion to end his suspension was moved in the house by BJP member GVL Narasimha Rao, which was adopted by a voice vote, that said his suspension so far is "sufficient punishment" for him. Ahead of the motion, Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said, "the committee after deep and thoughtful consideration finds Raghav Chadha guilty of both the charges."

"Charge 1: that he intentionally and deliberately presented misleading facts to the media, misinterpreted proceedings of the Council resulting in affront to the authority of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha and engaged in outrageous defiance of the resolutions of the House and directives of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha," the chairman said while reading out the panel report.

"Charge 2: For including the names of Members in proposed Select Committee without their

consent in blatant transgression of rule 72 of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha)," the chairman also announced.

Dhankhar said, "As regards the sentence, 'the Committee finds the suspension suffered by him since 11th August, 2023 from the House thus far as sufficient sentence that will meet the ends of justice'."

"The Committee stands committed to upholding the sanctity of parliamentary proceedings and safeguarding the integrity of the institution. The Committee expresses hope that Shri Raghav Chadha, Member will reflect and introspect."

"The Committee expects Shri Raghav Chadha to uphold the expected standards of conduct and decorum befitting a Member of Parliament," the Chairman said. Earlier, Elamaram Kareem, a member of the panel, presented the report of the Privileges Committee of the Rajya Sabha in the House. Later, GVL Narasimha Rao, who is also a member of the RS privileges panel, moved the motion under Proviso to Rule 256 (2) of the Rules of Procedure for Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha).

"That this house resolves that Shri Raghav Chadha, member, be held guilty of breach of priv-

ileges, and the suspension suffered by him so far be taken as sufficient punishment and the house may consider discontinuance of suspension of Shri Raghav Chadha, member, from the service of the Council from this day," the motion read as it was put to vote by the Chairman and was adopted by a voice vote.

After the motion was adopted, Dhankhar announced that Chadha can now attend the House proceedings.

"Shri Raghav Chadha may attend the Session," the Chairman said after the adoption of the motion. Chadha was suspended from the Upper House on August 11, during the Monsoon session of Parliament. He had earlier moved the Supreme Court against his suspension and thanked the apex court for its intervention.

After he was allowed back in the House, Chadha thanked the Supreme Court and Rajya Sabha chairman.

"I am happy that my suspension was ended. I am thankful to the Supreme Court and Rajya Sabha chairman for this. During the 115 days, I got a lot of love and blessings from people. I got strength from you guys. I am thankful to you from the bottom of my heart," the AAP MP said in a video message later. (PTI)

Delhi HC seeks Centre's stand on PIL against deepfakes, artificial intelligence

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: The Delhi High Court on Monday sought the Centre's response on a public interest litigation against the unregulated use of artificial intelligence and deepfakes. Deepfakes are videos or images that are created using Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered deep learning software that show people saying and doing things that they didn't say or do. A bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Manmohan observed that technology cannot be "reined in" and the issue raised by the petitioner required deliberations which only the government could undertake.

"There is no easy solution. It requires a lot of deliberation. It is a very complicated technology," the bench, also comprising Justice Mini Pushkarna, said. Maintaining that the matter required balancing several factors as there were certain positive uses of the technology, the court added, "It is something that only the government with all its resources can do."

The central government counsel said it was public knowledge that the government was looking into the issue and sought time to seek instructions. Regulations are in place and the ministry has already said it is a serious issue, he stated.

The petitioner, represented by advocate Manohar Lal, said while technological development was happening by leaps and bounds, the law was moving at a snail's speed. Law by its nature lags behind, the court said as it listed the case for further hearing on January 8.

Petitioner Chaitanya Rohilla, a lawyer, sought directions to the Centre to identify and block websites providing access to deepfakes and regulate artificial intelligence to protect the fundamental rights of citizens. (PTI)

Michaung intensifies into severe cyclonic storm, heavy rains in parts of Andhra

AMARAVATI, Dec 4: Cyclone Michaung looming over west-central and coastal south Andhra Pradesh has intensified into a severe cyclonic storm, leading to heavy rainfall in several parts of the state, said an official on Monday.

The severe cyclonic storm is likely to intensify gradually and move northwards almost parallel and close to south Andhra Pradesh coast and cross between Nellore and Machilipatnam, close to Bapatla during forenoon of December 5, said an Amaravati Meteorological Centre official in a press release.

Up to 8:30 am on Monday the weather system moved northwards with a speed of eight km per hour and lay centred in the region off south Andhra Pradesh and adjoining north Tamil Nadu coasts.

It is centred 90 km east to northeast off Chennai, 17.0 km southeast of Nellore, 200 km northeast off Puducherry, 300 km south to southeast off Bapatla and 320 km south of Machilipatnam, said the official.

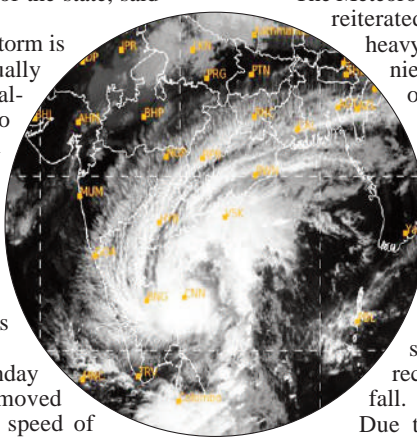
The weather system is expected to blow maximum sustained winds reaching up to speeds of 100 kmph and gusting to 110 kmph as well.

The Meteorological Department reiterated its forecast of heavy rainfall, accompanied by gales in parts of Andhra Pradesh over the next three days from Monday to Wednesday.

In the wake of the Michaung severe cyclonic storm, several places in the southern state are receiving heavy rainfall.

Due to incessant rains, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has temporarily denied permission for devotees to take holy bath at Sri Kapilathirtham waterfalls.

TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh postponed his 'Yuva Galam' padyatra (political walkathon) by three days in view of the inclement weather. (PTI)



Delhi HC to hear plea seeking quashing of money laundering case tomorrow

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: The Delhi High Court Monday said it will hear on December 6 a plea by alleged conman Sukesh Chandrasekhar seeking quashing of a case lodged against him by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the anti-money laundering law in connection with the 2017 Election Commission bribery matter.

Chandrasekhar was alleged to have taken money from former AIADMK leader TTV Dhinakaran in order to secure for the VK Sasikala faction the party's 'two leaves' symbol for contesting a by-poll in Tamil Nadu. Justice Amit Sharma, before whom the matter came up for hearing, transferred it to the bench dealing with cases involving legislators.

Chandrasekhar sought quashing of the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) and prosecution complaint (charge sheet) in the money laundering case. He also sought a direction to the trial court to not proceed with the criminal case pending before it. At the outset, the counsel representing the ED contended that a petition filed by Chandrasekhar with similar prayers is already pending in the high court. Responding to him, Chandrasekhar's counsel said his earlier plea challenged the framing of charges against him.

The petition said the money laundering



case is at the stage of prosecution evidence and trial will be concluded soon. However, according to the settled principle of law with respect to the PMLA, a person cannot be convicted of money laundering if they have been acquitted in the criminal case, that is, the predicate offence, or the case has been quashed.

The petition said the trial arising out of the scheduled or predicate offence is at a halt due to the stay granted by the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court, and that there is every possibility that the same may be quashed and set aside resulting in the whole process getting terminated.

The plea alleged the investigation and the trial proceedings in the ED case are being conducted in total violation of the settled principles of law, are highly arbitrary and whimsical in nature, and simply intended to harass and cause grave prejudice to the pe-

tioner.

"On bare perusal of the prosecution complaint filed by the respondent (ED), it can be clearly seen that the petitioner is not even involved in the generation of money laundering and, in fact, it is TTV Dhinakaran and his associates who were actually involved in the process of money laundering...," it alleged.

The money laundering probe against Chandrasekhar has arisen from a 2017 Delhi police case which alleged he took money from former AIADMK leader TTV Dhinakaran to bribe Election Commission officials to secure the party's 'two leaves' symbol for the VK Sasikala faction in a by-election to the R K Nagar assembly seat in Tamil Nadu. In 2019, the high court had stayed the trial against Dhinakaran and Chandrasekhar in the bribery case.

The trial court had framed charges against Chandrasekhar in the money laundering case probed by the ED in October last year after he was arrested earlier that year while he was in jail in connection with another case. Chandrasekhar is also facing proceedings for allegedly cheating and extorting money from some prominent people, including individuals like former Fortis Healthcare promoter Shivinder Mohan Singh's wife Aditi Singh. (PTI)

Heavy rains disrupt normal life in north TN, holiday declared for offices, schools today

CHENNAI, Dec 4: Life was thrown out of gear in Chennai and its neighbouring districts on Monday as relentless rains pounded various parts leading to inundation, raising fears of a repeat of 2015 deluge. People were seen scrambling to buy and refill supplies and essential items with drinking water being on high demand. There was no let up in the downpour that led to power outages and internet disruption.

Cyclonic storm Michaung, which is likely to cross the coast in Andhra Pradesh on the forenoon of Tuesday lay near Chennai and Puducherry, bringing heavy rains. The name 'Michaung' was suggested by Myanmar. It means strength or resilience. Transport services took a severe hit as number of trains and flights were cancelled. Heavily inundated roads posed a challenge to road users who were few and far.

Many parts of the state capital and the adjoining districts of Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur came under sheets of water even as the government machinery was deployed to clear the stag-



nant water and inundation. In the last 24 hours ending 8.30 am today, Perungudi in Chennai received 29 cm rainfall while Avadi in Tiruvallur district recorded 28 cm and Mamallapuram in Chengalpattu received 22 cm.

In its latest update, the weather office said the 4 districts are likely to experience heavy to very heavy rainfall and strong winds till late on Monday.

"Severe Cyclonic Storm 'MICHAUNG' centered over the west central and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal off south Andhra Pradesh and ad-

joining North Tamil Nadu coasts moved northwards during past 6 hrs and lay centered at 1130 hrs IST of December 4 over the same region about 90 km north-east of Chennai.

"It is likely to move nearly northwards and close to south Andhra Pradesh coast and cross between Nellore and Machilipatnam (AP) during forenoon of December 5 as a Severe Cyclonic Storm at a speed of 90 to 100 KMPH," an update from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin over the phone today and inquired about the prevailing situation in the state in the wake of cyclonic storm Michaung and assured all possible help from the Centre.

The CM said he would seek the Centre's assistance for carrying out relief work post cyclone if required. In view of the cyclone, the Tamil Nadu government has declared a public holiday on Tuesday for all educational institutions, government and private offices, financial institutions and banks in Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram and Chengalpattu districts. (PTI)

No.KOK/BLDG/Tech-50/Pr-III/2022-23/3978 Date 30/11/23

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Separate sealed tenders affixed Non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 (One hundred eighty) days which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed F-2 Form are invited from the intending Registered contractors of classes of the Assam FWD (Bldg.) and BTC for submitting tender for the works stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up-to 1-30 pm of 09-12-2023 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.00 Pm.

Sl. No.	Name of work	(Approx.) Estimated value of work	Earnest money 2% for GNL & 1% for ST/SC/ OBC/ MOCB	Cost of tender document	Time of completion
1	Construction of waiting shed at Shukanjhora Bazar under Shukanjhora, Kokrajhar District	Rs.6,58,666/-	Rs.13,200/- & Rs.6,600/-	Rs. 500/-	4 (four) month
2	Construction of Entrance Gate of Mahamaya Temple at Bagribari in Kokrajhar District	Rs.13,17,000/-	Rs.26,400/- & Rs.13,200/-	Rs. 1000/-	4 (four) month

Detailed NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up-to 1-30 pm in all working days from 08-12-2023 to 09-12-2023 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Banker cheque/Bank draft/Demand draft duly pledged in favour of the Principal Secretary BTC, Kokrajhar. The contractor should submit up-to date Registration Certificate of contractor, latest clearance certificate of Income Tax and GST etc. along with the tender paper. In case the office is remain closed/bandh for any circumstances on tender receiving/opening date, then the same will be received/opened in the next working days.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, PWD,
Kokrajhar District & Chirang District
Territorial Building Division, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/873

Delhi HC seeks Centre's stand on PIL against use of public servants, Army for political propaganda

Exercise seems to be showing that government has conferred all kinds of benefits to people

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: The Delhi High Court on Monday sought the Centre's stand on a PIL against the alleged use of public servants and defence personnel to spread "political propaganda" by showcasing the achievements of the government in the last nine years.

A bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Manmohan observed though there should not be any objection to a government popularising its welfare schemes but asked the central government counsel to take instructions on publicising the work done in the last nine years.

"You can say recent. Why nine years?.. Make it recent issues or developments," the bench, also comprising Justice Mini Pushkara, said.

Petitioners EAS Sarma and Jagdeep S Chhokar, represented by lawyer Prashant Bhushan, said several selfie points were being installed with directions to soldiers to promote the work done by the ministry of defence, and public servants were being deployed as special officers in "Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra" to "canvass" for the ruling party in the upcoming elections.

Bhushan argued that the communications issued by controller general of defence accounts on October 9 and the department of personnel and training on October 17 about publicising the government's development activities amounted to "corrupt practice" under the Representation of the People Act



which prohibits the use of public servants for the benefit of the ruling party in elections.

The election of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was set aside for using government officials, he said.

"This is political propaganda of the government highlighting only achievement of the last nine years.. It says nothing about the scheme. Exercise seems to be showing that government has conferred all kinds of benefits to people (but) it says nothing about the scheme.. Unfortunately that public money is being used for government advertisement," Bhushan argued as he objected to the presence of photographs of the prime minister at these exercises.

The court observed using the

prime minister or chief minister's picture was a norm and these could be seen on top of advertisements, unless the model code of conduct was in force, as they become "poster boy" of the ruling dispensation. Political propaganda, it said, includes using the name of the political party in such exercises.

"Every person wants to be aware of the latest schemes.. people are uninformed," the court said.

"Miners were trapped in the tunnel.. If Indian Army wants to popularise that (their rescue work), I don't think there is a problem. There is no political party. There has to be a connection," it said.

The court also asked the counsel for the Election Commission to

seek instructions on the issue.

Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma opposed the petition and said the petitioners were wrongly assuming that the government was a political party.

"Government of India and party are different things. This is pure government, and for government, it is permissible. We will take instructions on nine years," he said.

The petition said the government's action of deploying public servants to showcase the achievements for a political purpose disturbs free and fair elections and the level playing field, which are essential parts of democracy.

"Centre's brazen move, referred to above, has wider implications. Firstly, considering that the campaign to showcase the NDA government's achievements, for the time being, will extend up to 25.01.2024, it will amount to deploying civil servants and public resources to influence the voters even during the 2024 Parliament elections," the petition said.

"Secondly, the Centre's move has set an unhealthy precedent to encourage the political leadership in each State going for elections to do likewise, deploying their government machinery and resources in electioneering, a situation that would certainly lead to anarchy and wholesale, irreversible erosion of democratic values," it further asserted.

The matter will be heard next on January 5. (PTI)

2 IAF pilots killed as Pilatus trainer aircraft crashes in Hyderabad

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: Two pilots of the Indian Air Force (IAF) were killed on Monday as a Pilatus PC-7 Mk II aircraft crashed near Hyderabad, the first such accident involving the Swiss-origin trainer jet.

The IAF has ordered a Court of Inquiry to ascertain the cause of the accident.

"A Pilatus PC 7 Mk II aircraft met with an accident today morning during a routine training sortie from Air Force Academy, Hyderabad," the IAF said in a statement.

"It is with deep regret that the IAF confirms both pilots onboard the aircraft sustained fatal injuries. No damage to any civil life or property has been reported," it added.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh condoled the deaths of the two pilots.

"Anguished by this accident near Hyderabad. It is deeply saddening that two pilots have lost their lives. In this tragic hour, my thoughts are with the bereaved families," he said on X.

The Pilatus PC-7 Mk II is a trainer aircraft designed and manufactured in Switzerland by Pilatus Aircraft.

The aircraft is capable of undertaking all basic training, including aerobatics, instrument, tactical and night flying.

In May 2012, India sealed a deal to procure 75 Pilatus PC-7 MkII aircraft for the IAF.

The IAF pilots undergo basic training on Pilatus PC-7 Mk II planes and Kiran Mk-1/1A jets. The IAF is now procuring an indigenously-developed trainer aircraft.

In March, the defence ministry sealed a deal with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to procure 70 HTT-40 basic trainer aircraft at a cost of more than Rs 6,800 crore for the IAF.

The HTT-40 contains approximately 56 per cent indigenous content, which will progressively go beyond 60 per cent through indigenisation of major components and subsystems. (PTI)

Discuss Moitra's expulsion report before taking any decision: Oppn members to LS Speaker Birla



NEW DELHI, Dec 4: Opposition members on Monday demanded a discussion in the Lok Sabha on the Ethics Committee report, recommending the expulsion of TMC member Mahua Moitra, before any decision was taken on the matter.

The opposition members made the demand during the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee chaired by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to finalise the agenda for the House this week.

Parliamentary sources said the report of the Ethics Committee on the expulsion of Trinamool Congress leader Moitra from the Lok Sabha was expected to be tabled in the House on Tuesday.

The report was listed for presentation in the Lok Sabha on Monday, but the agenda item was not taken up by the presiding officer, raising questions over the continuance of Moitra as a parliamentarian.

The Business Advisory Com-

mittee also decided to allot 12 hours for discussion on the three bills to replace the colonial-era criminal laws. It also decided to allocate three hours for discussion on the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill.

The Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee, chaired by BJP member Vinod Sonkar, had adopted its report at a meeting on November 9, recommending Moitra's expulsion from the lower house over the "cash-for-query" allegation.

Six members of the panel, including Congress member Preet Kaur who had earlier been suspended from the party, voted in favour of the report. Four members of the panel belonging to opposition parties submitted dissent notes.

The opposition members termed the report a "fixed match" and said the complaint filed by BJP Lok Sabha member

Nishikant Dubey, which the panel reviewed, was not supported by a "shred of evidence".

Moitra can be expelled only if the House votes in favour of the panel's recommendation.

Speaking to reporters outside Parliament, Moitra said that Trinamool leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay asked the presiding officer as to why the report of the Ethics Committee was not tabled in the Lok Sabha.

She said Congress' K Suresh and RSP's N K Premachandran also raised the same question but there was no reply.

Later, Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that for reasons best known to the committee, the report has not been tabled. He said there would have been some reason which "forced them" not to table the report on Monday.

"I think today or tomorrow, someday it will be tabled," he said outside the Parliament House.

Moitra said she will comment on the report when it is tabled. "They printed it as item number five. I don't know much about Parliament procedure, they know everything... As far as I know, if it is item number five, it should be read at least ... Let's see when they bring it," Moitra said.

The Winter Session of Parliament began on Monday and is scheduled to continue till December 22. (PTI)

Train's engine derails, catches fire after hitting lorry on tracks

KOLKATA, Dec 4: The engine of an express train derailed and caught fire after hitting a lorry, which came onto the tracks at a level-crossing, in West Bengal's Murshidabad district on Monday, an official said.

No casualty was reported in the accident that happened between Dhulian Ganga and Balalpur stations in the Malda division of the Eastern Railway in the early hours, he said.

The lorry dashed through the level-crossing gate, and came onto the tracks when the Kolkata-Radhikapur express was approaching, the ER official said.

Four wheels of the engine derailed after hitting the lorry, and caught fire, infringing both up and down tracks, he said.

The engine was detached immediately and the fire was extinguished with the help of the fire brigade, he added.

A number of passenger trains were cancelled, diverted or short-terminated as a result of the accident, because of which the tracks were blocked, the official said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

ZPM dethrones MNF with

Aizawl East I, Aizawl East II, Aizawl West-I, Aizawl West-II, Aizawl West-III, Aizawl South-I, Aizawl South-II, Aizawl South-III, Lengte, Tuichang, Champhai North, Champhai South, Tuikum, Hrangturzo, South Tuipui, Lunglei North, Lunglei East, Lunglei West, Lunglei South, Lawngtlai East and Serchhip seats.

The MNF won in Hachhek, Mamik, Tuirial, Serlui, Tuivawl, East Tuipui, West Tuipui, Thorang and Tuichawng seats and was leading in one. Counting of votes, which began at 8 am, was held in 13 centres.

In some of the seats that had fewer number of voters, only two rounds of counting were held, but in most of the constituencies, five rounds were counted. The MNF, ZPM and Congress contested in 40 seats each, while the BJP fielded candidates in 23 seats. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which contested the assembly polls here for the first time, fought in four seats. There were also 17 Independent candidates.

Meanwhile, reacting to the poll outcome, the outgoing chief minister Zoramthanga on Monday said anti-incumbency was the main factor for his party's debacle in the state assembly polls.

He submitted his resignation to Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati in the evening after the MNF suffered a heavy defeat to the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM).

Speaking to reporters after submitting his resignation, Zoramthanga said that the 'anti-incumbency and Covid-19 onslaught are the main factors' for his party's defeat in the state assembly polls.

People were also not satisfied with the performance of the MNF government due to inconvenience caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, he said, adding that the outbreak of coronavirus infection had impacted the state economy adversely and impeded the government.

"Because of the anti-incumbency factor and people's dissatisfaction with our performance due to the Covid-19 onslaught, I lost my government," Zoramthanga said. The MNF chief said his party accepted the poll verdict. Asked whether MNF will be part of the BJP-led NDA, Zoramthanga said he has no intention of leaving the alliance but the final decision will be taken by the party.

"Remaining in NDA depends on the decision of our party. I am the founding member of NDA. Personally I have no intention of leaving the alliance," he said.

MNF is part of the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) and an ally of NDA at the Centre.

However, the party has no alliance with the BJP in Mizoram. The present Mizoram assembly term will end on December 15. (PTI)

PM Modi asks opposition not

that may change into love," he said. Modi said it is a chance for the opposition and they should extend co-operation in Parliament.

"I want to say from the political point of view that it is in your (opposition) interest also to give a message of positivity to the country. It is not good for democracy that your image is of hate and negativity," he said.

In democracy, the opposition is equally important and should be capable, Modi said.

The Prime Minister said, "2047 -- the country does not want to wait long for becoming developed. This is the feeling in every section of the society. Respecting this sentiment, all members should take forward Parliament proceedings, this is my request to them".

His remarks come a day after the BJP swept Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh inflicting a resounding defeat on the Congress to tighten its stranglehold in the Hindi heartland.

The Congress ousted the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) in Telangana to make it 3-1 for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the latest round of Assembly elections billed as a semi-final before next year's poll showdown.

In his remarks to the media, Modi said winters may be coming late but the political heat is increasing very fast.

"Only yesterday the election results of four states have come, the results are very encouraging. These are encouraging for those who are committed to the welfare of the common person of the country, who are dedicated to the bright future of the country," Modi said. He asserted that those who move forward on the principles of empowering the four castes -- women, youth, farmers and the poor -- ensure concrete policies for their future and last-mile delivery, receive full support of the people.

"And when there is good governance, complete support for people's interest, then the word anti-incumbency becomes irrelevant. And we are continuously seeing that... some people call it pro-incumbency, some call it good governance, some transparency, while some call it concrete schemes in national interest, but this is being experienced constantly," he said. When the new complex of Parliament was inaugurated, there was a small session and a historic decision was taken but this time there will be an opportunity to work in this house for a longer period, he said.

"It is a new house, perhaps some minor shortcomings in facilities may still be felt. When work goes on for long, the MPs, visitors and media people will also realise that it would be good if some things need to be fixed. And I am sure that under the leadership of the vice president and the speaker, those things are being monitored," Modi said. The winter session of Parliament is scheduled to have 15 sittings till December 22. (PTI)

India re-elected to International

team at the ministry of ports, shipping and waterways for this wonderful feat. With this opportunity, I firmly believe that India shall further anchor its role in the maritime trade and in shaping the route for the future of world's maritime development. The highest votes are indicative of the government's determination to strengthen India's varied contributions to international maritime operations."

The IMO is the leading authority that regulates the maritime industry, which supports global trade, transportation, and all marine operations. The Council is the executive organ of IMO and is responsible, under the Assembly, for supervising the work of the Organization. Between sessions of the Assembly, the Council performs the functions of the Assembly, except that of making recommendations to governments on maritime safety and pollution prevention. The newly elected Council will meet, following the conclusion of the 33rd Assembly, for its 131st session on December 7 and will elect its chair and vice-chair for the next biennium. The 33rd Assembly of IMO is meeting in London at IMO Headquarters from November 27 to December 6. All 175 member states and three associate members are entitled to attend the Assembly, which is IMO's highest governing body. The intergovernmental organisations with which agreements of co-operation have been concluded and international non-governmental organisations in consultative status with IMO are also invited to attend. Indian delegation was led by secretary of the Union ministry of ports, shipping and waterways (MoPSW), T.K. Ramachandran, with members including DG of shipping, Shyam Jagannathan, officers of DGS, High Commission of India at London and industry representatives.

With a view to enhance and garner maritime expertise for India, it is proposed that India should nominate at least 2 qualified candidates for the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Program at the IMO. The JPO Program is an established program within the United Nations with the main objective of providing young professionals an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in international cooperation under the supervision of specialists and to contribute to the advancement of their nation's mandate. (PTI)

AGP MP raises issue of increasing

and employment creation due to the energy sector, different states are now keen to enter it. There is more potential for crude oil production including in other states of the Northeast, he added.

The central minister said that the first oil well in Asia was dug at Digboi, Assam way back in 1886. The first commercial scale oil well was produced in 1889 with 20,000 gallons per day.

"We have come a long distance from there. Today, Assam produces 4.2 million tonnes of crude oil which accounts for 14.3 per cent of the total crude oil produced in the country," he said.

The state also produces 3.6 billion cubic metres of natural gas, accounting for 10.43 per cent of the country's natural gas production, he said. Oil PSUs have spent about ₹ 1,600 crore on corporate social responsibility activities in Assam between 2014 and 2023, he added. The minister said that after 2014, projects worth ₹ 44,000 crore have been taken up by oil manufacturing companies (OMCs) in Assam. Out of which, Numaligarh Refinery Expansion Project is about ₹ 18,968 crore, the North East Gas Grid is ₹ 9,265 crore, and the Paradip Numaligarh Crude Pipeline (PNCP) is ₹ 9,058 crore, he said. These projects have already been sanctioned and work is underway, he said. In Assam, OMCs have set up ethanol plants with a total production capacity of 1,150 kilo litres per day at an outlay of ₹ 1,370 crore. Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) is setting up a commercial 2G ethanol plant to be commissioned by 2024 at a cost of ₹ 4,200 crore, he added. (NRL) is setting up a supplementary on crude oil prices, the minister said petrol prices in the last two years have come down by 11 per cent and diesel in smaller amounts owing to reduction in central excise twice. Domestic crude oil production stands at 29.2 million tonnes, he added. (PTI)

KAAC CEM stresses on need

Hall. Representatives of Hemphu Mukrang Adarbar (HMA), Rasinja Asong (RA), Kurusar Chingrum Amei (KCA), Karbi Indigenous Youth Council (KIYC), Karbi Honghari Amei (KHA), Karbi Honghari So Arlo Amei (KHA), Karbi Honghari Youth Association (KHYA), Karbi Aron Barim Karli Amei (KAKA), Longri Krehini Sar Haba Amei (LKSHA), Waisong Ser Hongthom (WSH), Karbi Anglong Rong Asar Amei (KARAA), Ar-longchelu, Longchap Sarpo, Karbi Honghari Students Union (KHSU), Hema Asar and Wophong Asar (WA) also attended the meeting.

8,522 murder cases registered

presumption that the upward swing in police data indicates an increase in crime and thus a reflection of the ineffectiveness of the police is fallacious.

"Rise in crime and increase in registration of crime by police are clearly two different things, a fact which requires better understanding. Thus an oft-repeated expectation from certain quarters that an effective police administration will be able to keep the crime figures low, is misplaced," the NCRB report stated.

"Increase in crime numbers in a state police data may in fact be on account of certain citizen centric police initiatives, like launching of e-FIR facility or women Helpdesks, etc.

The increase or decrease in crime numbers, however, does call for a professional investigation of underlying factors pertaining to the local communities to suitably address the pertinent issues," it added. (PTI)

Weavers receive training on

for handloom and textiles, Madhuram Lekthe said the local weavers produce traditional garments, but are unable to exploit the market potential. On the other hand, the so-called traditional garments coming from outside the district miss the original texture and pattern, but these products have demand in the market.

Lekthe said that the government has already banned the entry of ready traditional garments from outside. Those shops violating government orders and still selling the products from outside will face stern action.

Encouraging local weavers to be entrepreneurs, the EM said that under Swanirbhar Nari Atmanirbhar scheme in Assam, the state government is helping those economically disadvantaged women to get financial support to start their own business. Under this scheme the government is also purchasing the finished products from the weavers. Now weavers don't need to worry about the market to sell products as the government is purchasing them. He urged the weavers to maintain the original texture and pattern, while producing their products and maintain quality. District commissioner (DC), Madhumita Bhagwati said Karbi Anglong has eri-silkworm rearers and spinners. The workshop will help weavers to upgrade their skills in eri silkworm rearing and spinning of Eri silk applying modern methods.

Odisha forms medical boards at district level to assist transgenders



BHUBANESWAR, Dec 4:

The Odisha government has set up medical boards at the district level to assist transgender persons, a health department order said.

The Health and Family Welfare department has constituted medical boards at district level for consultation, treatment and counselling facilities for transgender persons during their sex reassignment surgery, it said.

The medical boards have been set up as per the recommendation made by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to central

and state authorities.

"As per the advisory issued by NHRC for ensuring the welfare of transgender persons to the union and state government, in order to enhance the welfare and rights of transgender persons, a district level medical board is hereby constituted... to assist transgender persons regarding their health issues," said the order issued by the department on December 1.

Chief District Medical and Public Health Officer (CDM&PHO) has been appointed as chairman of the six-

member medical board while district medical officer (medical superintendent) is the member convener.

Specialists in surgery, obstetricians and gynaecologists, psychiatry or mental health and a clinical psychologist are the other members of the panel.

As per the order, the board will meet as and when required as per requests received from transgender persons.

Last month, complying with another recommendation made by the NHRC, the Odisha Higher Education department had directed registrars and principals of all the universities and degree colleges in the state to ensure the safety of the transgenders on campuses.

The department had requested the educational institutes to protect gender non-conforming students from bullying, harassment or other forms of violence in their respective jurisdictions.

On September 26, the NHRC had issued the advisory to the central and state governments and UT administrations to ensure the welfare of transgender persons. (PTI)

RANBIR KAPOOR'S 'ANIMAL' CROSSES ₹ 300 CRORE MARK IN THREE DAYS

MUMBAI, Dec 4: Crime drama "Animal", starring Ranbir Kapoor, has raised ₹ 356 crore gross at the worldwide box office, the makers said on Monday.

The Sandeep Reddy Vanga-directed film released on Friday in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam.

Production banner T-Series shared the weekend collection of "Animal" on X.

"Box office tsunami! Weekend collection ₹ 356 crore worldwide gross," the post read.

The pan-India movie also features Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol, Rashmika Mandanna, Tripti Dimri, Suresh Oberoi and Prem Chopra.

It showcases a violent world set against the backdrop of a troubled relationship between Ranbir's Ranvijay Singh and his father Balbir Singh, played by Anil Kapoor. The film was given A certificate by the CBFC ahead of its release.

"Animal" is produced by Bhushan Kumar and Krishan Kumar's T-Series, Murad Khetani's Cine1 Studios and Pranay Reddy Vanga's Bhadrakali Pictures. (PTI)



'HOUSEFULL 5' TO RELEASE ON JUNE 6, 2025



MUMBAI, Dec 4: "Housefull 5", starring Akshay Kumar and Riteish Deshmukh, will hit the theatres on June 6, 2025. Tarun Mansukhani, known for movies "Dostana" and "Drive", will direct "Housefull 5". The film, produced by Sajid Nadiadwala, was earlier scheduled to be released in theatres on Diwali 2024.

"The Housefull franchise owes its

massive success to the audiences, and we hope for a similar reception for 'Housefull 5'. The team has crafted an absolutely mind-blowing story that demands top-notch VFX.

"Therefore, we've made the decision to push the release to ensure we deliver five times the entertainment with great cinematic experience.

'Housefull 5' will now be releasing on

6th June 2025," the producer said in a statement posted on Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment's official X page. The franchise started with 2010's "Housefull", which was followed by three sequels -- "Housefull 2" (2012), "Housefull 3" (2016) and "Housefull 4" (2019).

The fifth part was officially announced in June this year. (PTI)

Parineeti embarks on fitness journey after gaining 15 kgs for Imtiaz Ali's 'Chamkila'

MUMBAI, Dec 4: Actor Parineeti Chopra says she put on 15 kgs for her role in filmmaker Imtiaz Ali's upcoming movie "Chamkila" and is now trying to get back to "looking like myself".

"Chamkila" is based on the life of iconic music star of Punjab from the 1980s, Amar Singh Chamkila. Punjabi actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh has essayed the titular role, while Parineeti portrayed his wife and singing partner Amarjot.

"I spent 6 months this year singing in Rahman sir's studio, and going back home to eat as much junk as I possibly could to put on 15 KILOS for Chamkila! (Coming soon on Netflix) Music and Food. That was my routine," the Bollywood actor wrote on Instagram alongside a video of her from the gym.

Now that the filming is over, Parineeti said she is trying to get back in shape.

"I miss the studio, and live in the gym trying to get back to looking like myself again. And not like Amarjot ji! It's been hard. But anything for you Imtiaz sir! And this role. Many more inches to go. Let's do this!" she added.

"Chamkila" presents the true story of Punjab's original rockstar of the masses, Amar Singh Chamkila (Dosanjh) who emerged from the shadows of poverty and rose to the heights of popularity in the 80s

due to the sheer power of his music, angering many on the way, which finally led to his assassination at a young age of 27, the official plotline reads.

Chamkila and Amarjot were killed along with two members of their band in 1988 in an assassination

which remains unsolved.

The film's music has been composed by Oscar winner AR Rahman, who previously collaborated with Ali on "Rockstar", "Highway" and "Tamasha". "Chamkila" will be released on Netflix next year.

Parineeti's last film effort was "Mission Raniganj", which released in October. The actor tied the knot with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Raghav Chadha in September. (PTI)



BVFF partners with Amazon Prime Video, offers filmmakers opportunity to pitch ideas to OTT giant

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 4: Providing a huge opportunity for the independent filmmakers of the region, the Brahmaputra Valley Film Festival (BVFF) has partnered with Amazon Prime Video to give them an opportunity to present their pitch directly to the leading OTT platform.

In an innovative step, BVFF is unveiling an unparalleled opportunity that has the potential to redefine the landscape for independent filmmakers. The festival is introducing an opportunity where filmmakers can submit their pitches directly to the leading OTT platform, Amazon Prime Video. This initiative is designed to empower

filmmakers, like never before, providing them with a stage to flourish, elevate the standards of filmmaking, and open doors within the film industry.

As the Brahmaputra Valley Film Festival (BVFF) is gearing up with immense excitement and enthusiasm for the 8th edition of the festival in Guwahati, to be held later this month, the festival has yet again taken steps to promote and showcase the huge talent of the filmmakers.

Building on the resounding success of the previous seven editions, the upcoming edition of Northeast India's most celebrated film extravaganza promises to be even more extraordinary. Speaking on the

upcoming edition and the partnership with Amazon Prime Video, Tanushree Hazarika, Festival Director of Brahmaputra Valley Film Festival said:

"As we gear up for the 8th edition of BVFF, we are thrilled to announce our partnership with Amazon Prime Video, a move that opens new horizons for independent filmmakers. This collaboration not only strengthens our commitment to fostering creativity but also provides filmmakers with a direct avenue to showcase their work on a global platform. We believe this initiative will redefine the landscape for aspiring filmmakers and contribute to the vibrant cinematic tapestry of the Northeast."

Kate Winslet on friendship with Leonardo DiCaprio: It's really something



LOS ANGELES, Dec 4: Actor Kate Winslet says she and her Titanic co-star Leonardo DiCaprio "clicked immediately" when they met on the set of the blockbuster movie.

The Oscar-winning actors played doomed lovers Jack and Rose in James Cameron's romance drama that went on to become one of the most successful movies in 1997. In a behind-the-scenes featurette from the film's upcoming 4K Ultra HD DVD release, Winslet, 48, also reflected on her bond with DiCaprio.

"Once I started working with Leo, we were able to kind of find our own rhythm, she said in a clip shared by Entertainment Tonight.

"And it's amazing to kind of look back and think about it all over again, she said adding that they "clicked immediately, right away."

"He was this kind of mess of long, skinny, uncoordinated limbs, and he was just very free with himself, and he had this effervescent energy that was really magnetic. And I remember thinking, Oh, this is gonna be fun. We're definitely

gonna get along.' And we just really did. We just really did.

Calling DiCaprio, 49, as a "ferociously intelligent man", Winslet said he was fascinated with the period.

The actor, who like DiCaprio has gone on to establish a successful Hollywood career, said they still take out time to speak to each other.

"You know, if you think about it, in the world that we live in now to have friendships that bind you, and that shared history, it's really something, she said. (PTI)



Maiden Call-Up: World Cup and Olympic gold top rookie Shreyanka's bucket list

MUMBAI, Dec 4: The elusive World title and an Olympic gold medal are topmost on young spinner Shreyanka Patil's wish-list as she is ready to embark on a journey in international cricket which promises to be an eventful one.

Patil made a name for herself in the inaugural edition of Women's Premier League (WPL) for Royal Challengers Bengaluru with a batting strike rate of 150 plus (151.22) and six wickets with her

off-breaks. She also became first Indian player to take part in Caribbean Premier League (CPL) for Guyana Amazon Warriors and picked up nine wickets in four games. The 21-year-old was rewarded with a call-up to senior women's side for the WT20I series against England to be played at the Wankhede Stadium on December 6, 9 and 10.

"My topmost goal is always about winning the World Cup for

India — I want to be a part of the winning squad. I am working towards that and when the Olympics happens, the gold medal for sure," Patil told PTI in an exclusive interaction after the conclusion of India Women's A series against England. Cricket was included in the Olympics program for Los Angeles 2028 Games after a gap of 128 years in October.

Patil had a successful outing against England A women with

the ball taking five wickets in three matches, including a 'Player of the Match' award in the first T20, but she knows that a lot has to be done with the bat too.

"I have been working particularly hard on my batting, maybe I have not exhibited as much as I should have in these matches, but I still trust my process and I believe that I can play the shots because I have done it previously," Patil said. As a bowling all-

rounder she has her priorities in order but more importantly, compartmentalising all aspects of the game is what Patil wants to focus on. "I know how to devote time -- be it (to) bowling, be it (to) batting. My first skill is obviously as a bowler, then comes the batting aspect. I really work hard but I should be 100 per cent in one skill at least so I can give 70 to 80 per cent to my batting and my fielding has to be 120 per cent," she said.

Having shared the dressing room with the legendary Ellyse Perry in the RCB camp as well as India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana and England skipper Heather Knight during the inaugural WPL, Patil terms it extremely beneficial to have learnt the nuances of the game from them.

"Before the WPL started, I was just a young girl playing for Karnataka. I was a domestic player, but once I was picked for WPL for

the RCB team, I got to rub shoulders with Perry, Smriti, Heather Knight, all of these legends," Patil said. "I could learn so much not just off the field but also on the field," she added.

"Playing (at) international (level), there is so much of difference, the field set, the speed of the ball maybe, which areas to pick, which bowlers to pick, just picking up the legends' mind was a key point for me," she said. (PTI)

THE PROTEAS HOST INDIA FOR A FULL SERIES

Bavuma, Rabada rested for white-ball series against India

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 4: South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma and pace ace Kagiso Rabada have been rested for the white-ball leg of this month's home series against India with the duo set to return for the two Tests.

The Proteas host India for a full series, which includes three T20Is, as many ODI's and two Tests, beginning with the shortest format on December 10 in Durban.

"Captain Temba Bavuma and Kagiso Rabada are amongst a group of players that have been omitted for the white-ball leg of the tour in order to play red-ball cricket as emphasis is placed on the Test series for which both will return," Cricket South Africa said on Monday.

Both India and South Africa are gearing up for the new World Test Championships cycle, starting with the Boxing Day Test in Centurion on December 26.

In Bavuma's absence, Aiden Markram will lead South Africa in the white-ball fixtures.

Wicketkeeper batter Tristan Stubbs, who has played 1 ODI and 16 T20Is, has been included in the Test side for the first time while Heinrich Klaasen has been left out of the red ball squad.

Pacers Gerald Coetzee, Marco Jansen and Lungi Ngidi have also

been left out of the ODIs, which is low priority after the conclusion of the 50-over World Cup.

The trio is a part of the squad for the opening two T20Is and subsequently, the two Test matches.

With valuable WTC points at stake and next year's T20 World Cup looming large, South Africa like India have named several new faces in their ODI squads, including uncapped duo of medium pacer Otniel Baartman and all-rounder Mhlangeni Mpongwana.

Batter David Bedingham (Test) and pacer Nandre Burger (all three) -- have also earned maiden national call-ups.

Squads:

South Africa T20I squad: Aiden Markram (captain), Otniel Baartman, Matthew Breetzke, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee (1st and 2nd T20Is), Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen (1st and 2nd T20Is), Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi (1st and 2nd T20Is), Andile Phelukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, and Lizaad Williams

South Africa ODI squad: Aiden Markram (captain), Otniel Baartman, Nandre Burger, Tony de Zorzi, Reeza Hendricks, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Mhlangeni Mpongwana, David Miller,



Wiaan Mulder, Andile Phelukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne and Lizaad Williams

South Africa Test squad: Temba Bavuma (captain), David Bedingham, Nandre

Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Tony de Zorzi, Dean Elgar, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Keegan Petersen, Kagiso Rabada, Tristan Stubbs and Kyle Verreynne. (PTI)

Ravi Bishnoi emerges as India's third spin option ahead of T20 WC

BENGALURU, Dec 4: When Ravi Bishnoi was named in India's T20I squad for the away series against South Africa, it, perhaps, was the clearest indication about his place in the think tank's long-term plans with the next year's T20 World Cup in mind.

With only six T20Is remaining for India ahead of the showpiece, it can be assumed that the 23-year-old leg-spinner has moved ahead of veteran Yuzvendra Chahal in the pecking order, for now at least. Chahal is not a part of India's T20I side to face the Proteas.

Chahal is 33 and Bishnoi is 23, but the latter getting as much or more game time in T20Is is not just about a natural generational transition.

Chahal has played nine T20Is this year, grabbing as many wickets whereas Bishnoi appeared in 11 matches and picked up 18 wickets. The difference is there for everyone to see.

In the just-concluded series against Australia, Bishnoi was India's go-to bowler and he rewarded the faith reposed on him by emerging as the 'Player of the Series', taking nine wickets from five matches.

It was not just about the wickets but the whole attitude shown by him to bowl under any condition or situation was praiseworthy.

In fact, Bishnoi had an eminently forgettable first match at Visakhapatnam, leaking 54 runs in four overs and his fielding too was in a shambles marred by a dropped catch and a few misfields.



But he fought back with gusto and his run-rate never exceeded eight thereafter.

Out of the 20 overs he bowled against the Aussies, seven were in the Power Play segment (1-6 overs). In this phase, he took five wickets at a fine economy rate of 6.45, besides bowling 20 dot balls.

Australian skipper Matthew Wade admitted that facing Bishnoi even on some of the batting-friendly tracks here was not an easy job.

"Their spinners bowled well. They got us tied down and we couldn't really break away in that middle period. So, that was probably the biggest difference in the game. Bishnoi, obviously, has been great throughout the four games. He has been quite hard to get a hold of. Some of our guys with less experience will learn a lot from facing him," said Wade.

But if one watches from outside, Bishnoi's bowling has this pattern

wherein he tries to purchase wickets with a series of googlies.

He is not a huge turner of the ball either, and hardly ever tries to outfox the batters like Chahal does with wide of the off-stump bowling.

But Bishnoi is quick off the surface, making the ball skid to the batters to catch them napping.

Legendary Sri Lankan spinner Muttiah Muralitharan underlined this part of Bishnoi's game.

"Bishnoi is different from any other leg spinner out there. He bowls quicker and he slides the ball a lot, and it is tough to face him on helpful wickets," Muralitharan said on Jio Cinema.

The young Indian spinner showed precisely through the dismissal of Travis Head.

The Australian opener has been nothing less than a thorn in the flesh for India this year, crushing them at the WTC and World Cup finals with hundreds. (PTI)

Even if we go down against India in Tests, it will be in style we want to: England coach McCullum



BENGALURU, Dec 4: 'Bazball' has changed the dynamics of England's batting approach in Test cricket and their Kiwi coach Brendon McCullum is very clear that irrespective of outcome, his team won't deviate from its aggressive tactics against India in the five-Test series, where most tracks will offer substantial turn.

The term 'Bazball', coined after McCullum's nickname 'Baz' and the attacking philosophy that he endorses, has also found its pride of place in 'Collins dictionary'.

The meaning of 'Bazball' is "a style of test cricket in which the batting side attempts to gain the initiative by playing in a highly aggressive manner." England will face India in five Tests at Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Rajkot, Ranchi and Dharamsala, starting January 25.

"We have got a huge challenge against a very good Indian team in five Tests in India," McCullum said at the Royal Challengers Bangalore

Innovation Lab's Leaders Meet India.

"I am excited about it because you want to test yourself against the best side and I genuinely believe that India is the best in their own condition. It is going to be a good challenge for us. If we have success then fabulous, if we don't, then I know we will go down in the style that we want to go down," McCullum used the platform, signal his and his team's clear attacking intent for the marquee series.

In his address, McCullum also expressed his thoughts on the essence of 'Bazball' and what it stands for.

"We are playing the game, because we love cricket and we want to try and be as good at cricket as we possibly can. During the time that you are in the chair, you want to make sure you enjoy it and you shouldn't wait till the end of your career to do so. We are very lucky that we have had some immediate success but I don't think it is the ceiling for us." (PTI)

Scheffler saunters to maiden Hero World Challenge title

NASSAU (BAHAMAS), Dec 4: World number one golfer Scottie Scheffler's measured approach on the final day helped him win his maiden Hero World Challenge title as tournament host Tiger Woods completed his spirited comeback. Scheffler, who led by three-shots going into the final day, was able to maintain that advantage with a 4-under 68 for a total of 268. His putting was solid through the week and in the end, he sauntered to a comfortable victory on Sunday.

The 27-year-old from Dallas had finished runner-up to Viktor Hovland in the previous two seasons. Scheffler pocketed USD 1 million for his effort. As Matt Fitzpatrick, who was second overnight, slipped down in the field with a 2-under 70, Scheffler was chased by Austria's Sepp Straka, who climbed

five places to finish second with a sublime 8-under 64 in the final round.

Justin Thomas was third after shooting 5-under 67 for an aggregate of 272. Hovland shot the best round of the day, a 9-under 63, gaining six places to finish 10th in the 20-man field. All eyes were on Tiger Woods heading into the week and he had plenty of positives to gain from in his first event since April.

He was especially pleased with his drives but admitted that his putting needed to improve going forward.

He carded a 72 to finish 18th, following scores of 75, 70, 71 on the first three days.

"I think the best part of the week is the way I drove it. I drove it on pretty much a string all week. Granted, these fairways are big. I felt like I had my

ball speed up, which was nice, and I was hitting the middle of the face the entire week, which is nice.

"So it's not like I have to go and try and find something the next few weeks or something going into next year; what I've been working on is right there and maybe just tighten up a little bit," said Woods.

What are the areas he would like to improve on as he targets to play one event a month in the new season?

"I would say short game, but every time you come here everybody says the same thing around this place, it's one of the most difficult golf courses we come to with grain and having to chip the ball up with the holes running away from you. It's tough," said Woods, who was critical of his play on the Par-5s. (PTI)

Confident India start favourites against Korea in men's Junior Hockey WC opener

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 4: Two-time champions India will look to make a winning start against Asian rivals Korea in their pursuit of another podium finish in the FIH men's Junior World Cup hockey tournament starting here on Tuesday.

India have won the tournament twice, in 2001 in Hobart and 2016 in Lucknow, besides finishing runners-up once in Milton Keynes, England in 1997.

In the last edition of the event in Bhubaneswar two years back, the Indians finished fourth and they would be hoping to clinch their fourth podium at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil here.

India are placed in a relatively easy Pool comprising Canada and Spain besides Korea.

After Korea, India will play Spain on Thursday and Canada on Saturday.

Pool A consists of defending



champions Argentina, Australia, Chile, and Malaysia, while Pool B has Egypt, France, Germany and South Africa. Pool D is the toughest of the lot as Belgium,

Netherlands, New Zealand and Pakistan will be vying for a quarter-final berth.

The top two teams from each pool will qualify for the quarter-

finals. The quarterfinals, semifinals and final are scheduled for December 12, 14 and 16 respectively.

Under forward Uttam Singh's captaincy, the Indians would be brimming with confidence as they have a better head-to-head record against Korea. Out of the six matches played between the two teams, India have won three, Korea two and one match ended in a draw.

The last time both the teams faced each other was during the semifinal of the men's Junior Asia Cup earlier this year, where India registered a massive 9-1 win over Korea.

India skipper Uttam too sounded confident ahead of their campaign opener.

"The wait is finally over for the World Cup, and we are very much confident of a good start. We recently played against Korea, so

we are aware of the challenge but the focus will be on us, on executing our plans and playing good hockey," he said.

Uttam has the experience of the big stage as he was part of the Indian team that finished fourth in the last edition of the tournament in Bhubaneswar.

"As always, our focus has been to go match by match, and our priority is to get a winning start and then focus on the following matches to proceed to the next stage of the tournament," he said.

India coach C R Kumar said they are fully prepared but won't take things for granted.

"The players have worked hard, and are fully prepared for the tournament. Korea are a quality side, you can't take them lightly."

"We have to respect every opponent, it is a bigger stage, so we will have to be cautious and back our strengths to get a good start in the tournament," he said. (PTI)



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Hon’ble Prime Minister **Shri Narendra Modi** and the able leadership of Hon’ble Chief Minister **Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma**.

I offer my sincere gratitude to

Hon’ble Prime Minister **Shri Narendra Modi** and Hon’ble Chief Minister **Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma** and take this opportunity to congratulate the beneficiaries. I also thank all the officers and officials of the Department who have been working relentlessly towards the accelerated implementation of the scheme.

Ranjeet Kumar Dass
Minister, Panchayat &
Rural Development Department, Assam