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 ● Israel orders new evacuations in northern Gaza
 ● Ukraine premier in Tokyo says his country needs missiles

8 NATION
 ● Maharashtra passes bill providing 10 pc quota for Marathas in education and jobs
 ● Swami Prasad Maurya quits SP, to announce own party tomorrow

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DGP visits central jail in Dibrugarh to review security

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Feb 20: Assam director general of police (DGP) GP Singh on Tuesday visited the Dibrugarh Central Jail to review the security after spy-camera, smartphone and other essential staffs, were recovered from the NSA cell, where 'Waris Punjab De' chief Amritpal Singh and his nine associates were lodged.

The DGP was accompanied by Dibrugarh deputy commissioner Bikram Kairi and superintendent of police, Shwetank Mishra to Dibrugarh Central jail.

During checking, smartphone with SIM, keypad phone, TV remote with keyboard, spy-cam pen, pen drives, bluetooth headphone and speakers and smart watch, which were lawfully seized by the jail staff on February 17.

On April 23 last year Amritpal Singh was brought to the Dibrugarh Central jail after Punjab police arrested him from Moga district of Punjab.

It may be mentioned here that radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh has been booked under the National Security Act (NSA). The

nine associates of Amritpal Singh, who are also lodged at the Dibrugarh jail have also been booked under the act.

These nine associates of Amritpal Singh are- Daljeet Singh Kalsi, Papalpreet Singh, Kulwant Singh Dhalwal, Varinder Singh Johal, Gurmeet Singh Bukkhalwa, Harjit Singh, Bhagwant Singh, Basant Singh and Gurinderpal Singh Aujla.

Speaking to reporters outside Dibrugarh Central jail, Amritpal Singh's lawyer Rajdev Singh said, "Today I've met Amritpal Singh and spoke to him regarding the recent episode, which took place in Dibrugarh Central Jail. He told me that someone came and installed spy-camera in their barracks and bathroom without the knowledge of jail authorities. Nothing was found from their possession, the whole episode was fabricated."

"All the detainees, including Amritpal Singh are on hunger strike from February 16 after their privacy has been infringed without the knowledge of jail officials," he said.

KAAC to evict encroachers of PGR-VGR land

Notices to be issued from today ● Action in compliance with SC order: Tuliram

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Feb 20: Taking a tough stand, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) has decided to evict all the illegal settlers from Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) land.

Indicating this here on Tuesday, the chief executive member (CEM) of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang informed that notices would be issued to such illegal encroachers from Wednesday.

Ronghang stated that this decision was made in compliance with the Supreme Court's order regarding the eviction of encroachers from PGR-VGR lands.

These developments followed an all-party meeting held at the Arboretum-Cum-Craft Centre conference hall.

The meeting which was chaired by the CEM Ronghang was attended by all former CEMs, MPs, MLAs, social organisations and elected representatives.

"We have taken this decision in adherence with the standing orders of the Supreme Court regarding the eviction of encroachers of PGR-VGR lands. Starting tomorrow, KAAC will issue notices to encroachers on PGR-VGR lands. We are also mandated by the Supreme Court to establish a standard operating procedure (SoP), and the process for this



will commence tomorrow," Ronghang said while addressing the media after the meeting.

He further stated that a special unit would be formed by the KAAC for the eviction of encroachers in Phuloni revenue circle, Silonijan revenue circle, Diphu revenue circle and Dongkamukam revenue circle.

home to many communities and any eviction will strictly adhere to the Supreme Court's orders," he said.

The meet was attended by former MP Jayanta Rongpi, president of the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), Chandra Kanta Terang, former CEM and general secretary of ASDC, Jotson Bey, former MLAs Mansing Rongpi, Dhoromsing Teron and Holiram Terang, vice-president of the Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee, Ashok Teron, president of the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC), JI Kathar and leaders of social organisations.

The recent tensions in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong regions stem from a violent attack on members of the Karbi Students Association (KSA) in Kheroni Sariali of West Karbi Anglong on February 15.

Subsequently, business establishments and shops in West Karbi Anglong remained closed, while Karbi Anglong district experienced a similar shutdown, though government offices remained operational. Public transport services were also halted, although train services continued unaffected.

In Diphu, only a few private vehicles were observed on the roads amidst the subdued atmosphere.

HT BRIEFS

Marijuana seized

BOKAJAN: The police has seized 5 kg marijuana from a passenger bus and arrested one person from Karbi Anglong. The police during a routine checking intercepted a bus on the evening of Feb 19 at around 10 pm on NH-36 under Dilai Police Station. On thoroughly checking the bus, 5 kg marijuana was recovered. In this connection Raju Aley (34), a resident of Imphal in Manipur was arrested.

Heroin seized

BOKAJAN: The police on Tuesday arrested two persons and recovered six packets of heroin weighing 67.58 gm from Karbi Anglong. The police intercepted a car on NH 39 at 10 am on Tuesday and recovered six packets containing heroin weighing 67.58 gms. In this connection Biki Biswakarma (32), resident of Bargaon in Dhemaji district and Rina Biswas, a resident of Nagaon district were arrested.

Road mishap

JORHAT: One person died in a road accident on NH-715 at Padumoni area of Jorhat on Tuesday, when two persons riding pillion on a motorcycle collided head on with a truck. According to a source, the deceased has been identified as Ajoy Hazarika (42) of Baligaon Napamura in Jorhat. The injured has been identified as Satyajit Bora, a resident of Heujipara in Jorhat.

Act East Policy yielding great results: Vice President Dhankha

ITANAGAR, Feb 20: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankha on Tuesday said that implementation of the Act East Policy has been yielding rich dividends in the northeastern region.

Dhankha, who is visiting Arunachal Pradesh on the occasion of its statehood day, said India's composite culture is incomplete without the cultural mosaic of northeastern states. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah also greeted the people of Arunachal Pradesh on their Statehood Day.

"The people of Arunachal Pradesh are making rich contributions to India's development. The culture of the state is also greatly admired, particularly the vibrant tribal traditions and the rich biodiversity. May Arunachal Pradesh keep prospering for years to come," Modi said in a post on X.

Shah expressed hope that the people of Arunachal Pradesh would touch new heights in development under the leadership of Chief Minister Pema Khandu.

"PM Shri @narendramodi Ji's policy of all-inclusive development has contributed immensely to unlocking the economic potential of the state blessed with stun-



ning natural beauty and vibrant cultural diversity," Shah said in his official X handle.

Arunachal Pradesh attained full statehood on February 20, 1987. The vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in implementing the Act East Policy is bearing rich dividends in the region, the Vice President said. "I commend successful efforts, policies and initiatives of the Centre in reaching (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Skyroot launches Kalpana Fellowship for women engineers

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: Skyroot Aerospace on Tuesday announced the launch of the Kalpana Fellowship, India's first-of-its-kind fellowship programme dedicated exclusively to women engineers in the space sector.

The Kalpana Fellowship is designed to inspire, encourage, and empower the next generation of female engineers to soar to new heights in the space industry, the Hyderabad-based start-up said in a statement.

"We need more women in STEM and in the space sector, and women can bring in more innovation, creativity and impact. Therefore, we conceived the Kalpana Fellowship to provide exciting opportunities for women engineers to work on cutting-edge space projects, receive mentorship from top experts, and gain access to world-class infrastructure at Skyroot," said Pawan Chandana, co-founder and CEO of Skyroot.

Inspired by the legacy of astronaut Kalpana Chawla, the fellowship offers an all-encompassing programme featuring monthly stipend, experiential learning, guidance from seasoned professionals, access to world-class infrastructure and innovative technologies at Skyroot Aerospace, the statement said. The programme provides a monthly allowance for a year to successful candidates, with eligibility open to final year students and recent graduates in relevant engineering disciplines to apply. The 2024 fellowship registration (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Leopard caught in Jorhat

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Feb 20: A leopard that was creating havoc among the villagers of Teok Koliapani Adarsha Gaon in Jorhat district has been caged.

Local people said that the leopard along with few others including cubs, which have been spotted roaming in and around the village recently, not only attacked domestic cattle but also a shopkeeper while he had been returning home at night.

They said that the cage was placed in the village earlier on February 18 by officials of the state forest department after villagers approached the department through the local unit of AAS. The animal got trapped in the cage on Monday night.

The people hoped that the forest department would place the cage in the village to trap the other leopards too as they (villagers) were fear-stricken.

It may be mentioned that from time to time leopards stray into human habitation in the villages and in tea garden areas, killing domestic animals. They also come into conflict with humans sometimes. Many time people hit back the wild animal, resulting in its death.

Several leopards have been trapped in cages put up by the forest department in the district in the last year along with incidents of people being attacked by the animal.

Jaishankar justifies India's procurement of Russian crude

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: Following the conflict in Ukraine, India's energy suppliers in the Middle-East gave priority to provide petroleum products to Europe that paid higher prices and New Delhi did not have any option, but to procure Russian crude oil which in turn stabilised the global energy market, Union external affairs minister, S Jaishankar has said.

In an interview to German economic daily Handelsblatt, Jaishankar also suggested that India was open to play the role of a mediator to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict if approached, but at the same time, said New Delhi does not believe that it should initiate anything in this direction on its own.

He asserted that just as India does not expect Europe to have a view of China that is identical to New Delhi's, Europe should

understand that India cannot have a view of Russia that is identical to the European one.

The external affairs minister said India has had a "stable" and "very friendly" relationship with Russia, and that Moscow never hurt New Delhi's interests.

"We, on the other hand, had a politically and militarily much more difficult relationship with China, for example," he said.

Jaishankar also strongly justified India's procurement of Russian crude oil.

"When the fighting started in Ukraine, Europe shifted a large part of its energy procurement to the Middle East -- until then the main supplier for India and other countries," he said.

"What should we have done? In many cases, our Middle-

East suppliers gave priority to Europe because Europe paid higher prices. Either we would have had no energy because everything would have gone to them. Or we would have ended up paying a lot more because you were paying more," he said.

In a certain way, we stabilised the energy market that way, he added. Jaishankar's response came when asked about criticism in Europe against India that its procurement of Russian crude oil is detrimental to the effectiveness of the Western sanctions imposed on Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

He argued that if no one had bought the crude oil from Russia and everyone had procured it from the other countries, prices on the energy market would have shot up even further. "Global inflation would have been (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

These transformative projects to promote connectivity, prosperity for NE, furthering the 'Act East' policy

Sarba launches projects worth ₹ 308 crores for NE

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Feb 20: The Union minister of ports, shipping and waterways and Ayush, Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday launched several projects worth ₹308 crores for development of waterways of the northeastern region.

The event was simultaneously held at Bogibeel in Dibrugarh, Badarpur in Karimganj, IWAI port in Dhubri as well as Sonamura in Tripura.

State transport minister Parimal Suklabaidya, state health minister Keshab Mahanta and Lok Sabha MP Queen Oja were present on the occasion in Guwahati. Union petroleum and natural gas minister Rameshwar Teli joined in the programme from Dibrugarh. In Sonamura the event was attended by the Tripura tourism minister Sushanta Chowdhury among other



dignitaries. At Pandu, the event was graced by Guwahati East MLA, Siddhartha Bhattachayya, Guwahati Municipal Corporation mayor Mrigen Sarania, deputy mayor Smita Roy, IWAI chairman Vijay Kumar, vice-chairman Sunil Kumar Singh and social worker Tapan Das.

Sarbananda Sonowal virtually

inaugurated Passenger-cum-Cargo terminal at Bogibeel near Dibrugarh, Inland Water Transport Terminal at Sonamura in Tripura and upgraded terminals at Karimganj and Badarpur in the state today. This terminal will play a pivotal role in rejuvenating IWT in the region for both cargo and passenger movement, paving the way for growth of trade and commerce.

The Union minister also laid foundation stones for construction of a custom immigration office in Dhubri and construction of the compound wall for IWAI Joghigopa terminal. The newly inaugurated Bogibeel terminal is being constructed with an investment of nearly ₹50 crores. This project includes cargo and passenger berths, approach and other internal roads, transit shed, open storage area, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

PM inaugurates 3 IIMs, lays foundation of 3 IITs

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the campuses of three Indian Institutes of Management in Jammu, Bodh Gaya and Visakhapatnam on Tuesday and laid the foundation stone of several projects worth ₹ 13,375 crore, including permanent campuses for three IITs, 20 Kendriya Vidyalayas and 13 Navodaya schools.

The Prime Minister dedicated, inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of the campuses and buildings at a public function at the Maulana Azad Stadium in Jammu.

"The advancement of education and skill development sectors on such a scale was a distant reality 10 years ago. But this is the new India... The government of the day indulges in maximum expenditure for modern education of the present and future generations," he said on



the occasion. "In the last 10 years, the country has witnessed a record number of schools, colleges and universities, including 50 new degree colleges in Jammu and Kashmir. As many as 45,000 children, who did not attend schools, have now been admitted to schools and girl students need not travel far for education. There was a time when schools were run while today, schools are enhanced," Modi added.

The projects that were dedicated to the nation include permanent campuses for the Indian Institute of Technology-Bhilai, IIT-Tirupati, IIT-Jammu, IIITDM-Kancheepuram, Indian (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Proposed 'fast unto death' protest to depend on outcome of talks with govt: Sonam Wangchuk

PM inaugurates various rail projects; J&K get its first electric train

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated, and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over ₹ 32,000 crores in Jammu on Tuesday.

The projects relate to several sectors including health, education, rail, road, aviation, petroleum, and civic infrastructure among others. The Prime Minister dedicated to the nation, inaugurated various rail projects in Jammu & Kashmir including the new railway line between Banihal - Khari - Sumer - Sangaldan (48 Km) and the newly electrified Baramulla - Srinagar - Banihal - Sangaldan section (185.66 Km).

The Prime Minister also flagged off the first Electric Train in the valley and also train service between Sangaldan station & Baramulla station.

Speaking on the occasion the Prime Minister said that the day is not far when people will be able to travel across the country by taking a train from Kashmir.

Speaking about the huge campaign of electrification of railways underway in the country, the Prime Minister congratulated the people of Jammu and Kashmir on getting the first electric train on Tuesday.

"Two Vande Bharat trains are running in Jammu and Kashmir and access to Mata Vaishno Devi has improved," he said, referring to modern trains like Vande Bharat.

The commissioning of the Banihal - Khari - Sumer - Sangaldan section is significant as it features the usage of Ballast Less Track (BLT) all along the route providing a better riding experience to the passengers, a statement said. India's longest transportation tunnel T-50 (12.77 Km) lies in this portion between Khari - Sumer.

The rail projects will improve connectivity, ensure environmental sustainability and boost the overall economic development of the region.

LEH, Feb 20: Sonam Wangchuk, a key campaigner for constitutional safeguards for Ladakh, on Tuesday said the proposed "fast unto death" protest will be reviewed next week, depending on the outcome of talks with the Centre over their various demands, including statehood to the Union Territory.

"We will call a very big public gathering in Leh city on February 26 to either thank the government for accepting the demands of the people of Ladakh or go for a fast unto death in case the talks fail," Wangchuk, who was set to begin a hunger strike till death from Tuesday in support of the demands, told PTI.

The Ladakh leadership, which is presently camping in the national capital, temporarily dropped the "fast unto death" programme after a fresh round of talks with the central government on Monday, terming the development as significant.

It said the Centre had agreed to discuss threadbare the demands for Ladakh's statehood, inclusion of the Union Territory in the Sixth Schedule



of the Constitution and the setting up of an exclusive public service commission for the high-altitude region.

The agreement was agreed during a meeting between the High Powered Committee (HPC) for Ladakh, headed by Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, and a 14-member delegation of the Apex Body of Leh (ABL)

and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), representing various organisations of the Union Territory.

The meeting also resolved to constitute a joint sub-committee for carrying forward the exercise to look into the details of the demands. "We will wait till the February 24 meeting of the sub-committee and the return of our leaders

to Leh on February 25. We will call a very big public gathering the next day in Leh city to either thank the government for meeting our demands or start our fast unto death in case the talks fail," Wangchuk, a winner of the Ramon Magsaysay Award, said. Among the demands of the delegation are two Lok Sabha seats - one for Kargil and one for Leh - and job opportunities for residents of the Union Territory. Ladakh currently has one Lok Sabha seat. Ladakh, which no longer has any assembly constituency, was earlier part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, were abrogated on August 5, 2019, and the erstwhile state was bifurcated into the Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. According to provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, Jammu and Kashmir has been made a Union Territory with a legislative assembly and Ladakh a Union Territory without an assembly. There were

four representatives from Ladakh in the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. The BJP-led Centre assured the delegation from Ladakh in December that it was committed to fast-tracking the development of the Union Territory and meeting the aspirations of the people in the region. The assurance was given at a meeting held with the HPC for Ladakh. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) formed the HPC for Ladakh under Rai's chairmanship with a mandate to discuss the measures needed to be taken to protect the region's unique culture and language, taking into consideration its geographical location and strategic importance.

The HPC has also been formed for the protection of land and employment, measures for inclusive development and employment generation in the region, steps related to the empowerment of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDCs) of Leh and Kargil and the constitutional safeguards that could be provided to ensure the measures and protection as mentioned above. (PTI)

Congress hails SC's forest definition order, says INDIA bloc govt will protect environment

Tamil Nadu to develop 'climate smart villages'

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: The Congress on Tuesday hailed the Supreme Court's interim order asking the states and Union Territories to act as per the definition of "forest" laid down by the top court in a 1996 judgment and said it is committed to protecting forests and environment when an INDIA bloc government is formed. Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said that after the "electoral bonds scam", the Supreme Court has stopped another set of "blatantly illegal and disastrous" Modi government schemes. Former environment minister Ramesh also tagged a media report on the Supreme Court directing that the dictionary meaning of "forest" be applied.

He also shared another media report on the

amnesty window opened for just six months in March 2017 to clear projects in a novel "violation category" that became routine through a Union Environment Ministry notification in July 2021, and provided ex-post facto approval to over 100 projects till the Supreme Court stayed the notification in January this year.

"The prime minister wanted to make it easier to hand over India's forests and pollute the environment, to benefit his corporate cronies. So first, he changed the rules in 2017 so that projects that had violated their forest clearance could be legalised," Ramesh alleged.

More than 100 projects of big corporates, including coal mines, factories and cement plants, were

allowed to brazenly start work in violation of environmental clearances, he claimed. Next, in 2023, the Modi government brought the Forest Conservation Amendment, which stripped protection from 2 lakh square kilometres of forests, he said. "This was in complete violation of a 1996 Supreme Court judgment. This amendment would have made it easy to divert 'deemed forests', as well as forests in the North East," he claimed.

"Thankfully, the Supreme Court has stayed both of these illegal moves. It has stayed the illegal permissions given to projects violating their environmental clearance, and has ordered that the dictionary definition of a forest must be followed, as per its 1996 decision," Ramesh said. (PTI)

CHENNAI, Feb 20: Tamil Nadu Minister for Agriculture MRK Panneerselvam on Tuesday announced that the government would develop special 'climate smart villages', which would demonstrate climate change mitigation technologies to farmers and other stakeholders. Research on soil microbiome engineering will also be undertaken to enhance soil health and productivity, he said. Presenting the farm budget in the assembly, Panneerselvam said that climate change is likely to present significant challenges to biodiversity, crop yields, and food security in the coming two decades. Hence, the use of appropriate technologies is crucial to mitigate the effects of climate change and safeguard against crop loss. "To achieve this, special climate smart villages will be developed, demonstrating climate change mitigation technologies to farmers and stakeholders, besides spreading awareness. A budget allocation of ₹ 1.48 crore will be made for this initiative," he said. In agriculture, high productivity can be sustained only if soil fertility and standard productivity levels are continuously monitored. Soil quality depends on the amount of organic carbon and beneficial microbial growth in it, which are essential for maintaining it as a "critical living system", he said. To enhance soil health and productivity, research on soil microbiome engineering will be undertaken to not only evaluate but develop microbial consortia (group of diverse microorganisms that have the ability to act together in a community) for the decomposition of organic matter, including crop residues. This will increase soil carbon and convert unavailable nutrients into available forms. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Act East Policy yielding

out to this region to make the north-east an active partner in our vision for Viksit Bharat by 2047," he said. Terming the eight states of the region as 'Ashta Laxmis' (eight forms of the goddess of wealth), the vice president wished that the Northeast always shines in the glory of the rising sun and lead the country on the path of peace and progress. Arunachal Pradesh is known as the 'Land of the Rising Sun' in India as a village in the state's easternmost part meets the sunrise before any other place in the country. The Vice President added that the northeast is reaping peace dividend, with a firm government focusing on harmony among all stakeholders. The political climate is peaceful and stable, developmental policies are predictable. This is crucial for the future of this region, and for the well-being of the people, he said. "In the last 10 years, we have seen great synergy between the Union and the state governments that has delivered massive growth multipliers. The aspirations of this region are now fructifying," the Vice President said. Recalling the recent visit of a delegation of young students from Menchuka Valley in Arunachal Pradesh to his official residence during a national integration tour, Dhanekar said that the young boys and girls left a deep impression with expose of their talent and veracity.

"As the chairman of Rajya Sabha, I have taken initiatives to start an internship programme in the House for young students with social sciences background. The idea is to familiarise them with the functioning of Parliament. As many as twenty students from five universities of Arunachal Pradesh participated in the programme and I look forward to more such interactions," he said. Dhanekar, who could not witness the dance performance of the Tagin and Wancho communities of the state due to inclement weather, assured them to invite them to his official residence and Parliament and also promised to make a documentary on them.

He said that over the past decade, appreciable strides have been made to overcome geographical distance by strengthening connectivity. Apart from improved road connectivity, Arunachal Pradesh featured prominently on the country's air-connectivity map.

It is not surprising that the villages are witnessing unprecedented levels of growth in terms of road connectivity, electrification and infrastructure, he added. "With better connectivity and more efficient logistics, the exquisite agriculture produce of Arunachal Pradesh will be able to reach larger and more remunerative national and international markets," he pointed out.

The Vice President added that in the last seven years, there has been a 64 per cent increase in the road length traversing Arunachal Pradesh and almost 20,000 km of roads have been constructed. "Apart from the recently inaugurated Donyi Polo Airport at Hollongi, the state has three operational airports and seven advanced landing grounds. There are 25 operational helipads that can enhance air connectivity and remove logistical constraints in even remotest regions of the state," Dhanekar said. With the Centre's new National Drone Policy, the remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh can be linked and supplies of essential commodities and services can be ensured. The Vice President said that the Northeast witnessed large-scale international events for the first time during India's year-long G20 presidency which would have a tremendous positive impact on the future of the region. Stating that India's stature has grown internationally with the world looking up at the country today, he added that leading international agencies like IMF and World Bank find India to be the brightest spot of investment and opportunity in the world. "Today India is a global destination of investment, innovation and business. As India grows, so does every state and vice versa. It has been an inclusive growth, and Arunachal Pradesh bears testament to it," Dhanekar added. (PTI)

Skyroot launches Kalpana

window is presently open. "With exciting missions on the horizon and our relentless pursuit of disruptive technologies, the Kalpana Fellowship offers opportunities for talented space engineers to contribute to transformative advancements," Bharath Daka, co-founder and COO of Skyroot, said. Skyroot has launched a dedicated website through which potential candidates can register for the fellowship, and its teams will reach out to various educational institutions across India to build awareness and provide opportunity for a wider base of candidates to avail the opportunity. Exceptional candidates who complete the one-year fellowship will have the opportunity to transition into full-time roles at Skyroot Aerospace, the statement said. (PTI)

Jaishankar justifies India's

much higher -- and that would have been a huge political issue in lower-income countries," he said. "If Europe had wanted to maximize the damage at the time, it would have had to stop all economic relations with Russia completely. But it didn't," he said.

Jaishankar said if Europe was so convinced and the principles were so important, why did it allow relations to end "gently"? "Why were there exceptions for pipeline gas, for individual countries and so on? That's what governments do, they manage politics with an eye on the consequences for their people," he said. Asked if India would you have liked support from Europe in the border conflict with China in 2020, he said "My point is: just as I do not expect Europe to have a view of China that is identical to mine, Europe should understand that I cannot have a view of Russia that is identical to the European one." "Let us accept that there are natural differences in relationships," he said. On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Jaishankar said India is "deeply convinced, and are publicly committed to bringing the conflict to an end." "Everyone is suffering from this conflict. I don't know exactly how it will end, we're not deep enough into the process to know," he said. Asked if that was a reason why India could be a mediator, Jaishankar said: "Theoretically, yes. We have already helped with very specific issues." "When Turkey negotiated the corridor through the Black

Sea, for example. And we were very supportive of the inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant," he said. "Wherever we can help, we are happy to do so. We are open when we are approached. However, we do not believe that we should initiate anything in this direction on our own," he added. To a question on whether the Indo-Russian engagement is a burden on the India-Europe ties, Jaishankar said everyone conducts a relationship based on their past experiences. "If I look at the history of India post-independence, Russia has never hurt our interests. The relations of powers like Europe, the US, China or Japan with Russia, they have all seen ups and downs," he said.

"We have had a stable and always very friendly relationship with Russia. And our relationship with Russia today is based on this experience. For others, things were different, and conflicts may have shaped the relationship," he said. (PTI)

Sarba launches projects

truck parking area, passenger waiting area. It will also lead to increase in ecotourism as well as improve the economies of scale for existing major trade like tea, polymer, coal, fertiliser among others. The length of this terminal will be extended to 100 metres and the construction will start immediately. An integrated office for immigration, customs and IWAI at Bogibee is also being constructed at a cost of ₹ 18 Crores. A project for bank protection and extension of jetty at the terminal at a cost of ₹ 12 Cr would also be initiated immediately. The IWT terminal at Sonamura is developed with an investment of ₹ 6.91 crores. The upgraded terminals at Karimganj and Badarpur was completed with an investment of ₹ 6.40 crores. The IWT terminal at Sonamura has the potential to attract trans-boundary trade including commodities like bagged cement, horticulture, consumer products and other local goods transported via roadbetween India and Bangladesh. This jetty is also being developed as a multi-purpose jetty to support movement of passengers on ferries between the two countries. The renovated and upgraded terminals at Karimganj and Badarpur will further ease and increase the export activities and commodities. The projects have major influence in districts of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi and adjoining states of Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya due to the presence of cement industry, stone crushers, coal deposits, food processing units, tea estates, etc.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarbananda Sonowal said, "Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister shri Narendra Modi, our rich and complex web of waterways are being developed with major projects launched here today. Modi Ki Guarantee is powering the waterways of the Northeast towards Viksit Bharat. The terminals at Bogibee will act as a catalyst of economic development for the region, further amplifying trade opportunities for upper Assam as well as Arunachal Pradesh. The Sonamura terminal in Tripura will further trans-boundary trade between India and Bangladesh. The Karimganj and Badarpur terminals will also power trade opportunities. All these projects will go a long way towards realising the vision of Narendra Modi ji towards the North east acting as the powerhouse of India's growth towards becoming Viksit Bharat." The Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal also laid foundation stones for construction of customs and immigration office in Dhubri with an investment of ₹ 7.5 crores. The construction of boundary wall will also start at Jogighopa terminal in Goalpara, Assam. The wall for IWAI Jogighopa terminal, which is being built at a cost of 18 Crore, will secure the terminal. 6 Tourist jetties in NER at a cost of ₹ 8.45 Cr. at Jogighopa, Tejpur, Bishwanathghat, Neamati, Sadiya, Bindakota would also be constructed. Three of these has already been provided and rest of the three will be provided soon. This project is introduced to upgrade the existing infrastructure along NW-2 and recognising the huge potential for cargo, passenger transportation, riverine tourism.

Two electric catamarans will be deployed in the city by August this year. The catamarans, developed by Cochin Shipyard Limited at a cost of ₹36 Crores, will enhance communication facilities for the public. The 50 pax electric hybrid catamaran will be used for cross river ferry and pilgrim tourism in the city. It will improve the economies of scale for existing major trade like coal, stone chips, polymer, fertiliser etc through IBP route and from Bhutan through waterways and also encourage employment and economic growth. 19 passenger vessels for NW-2 & NW-16 would be provided and two Pontoon Terminals on NW-2 would be constructed at a cost of ₹ 25 crores.

Announcing new major initiatives for the development of waterways in the region, the Union Minister said, "It gives me immense pleasure to share with all of you that we have decided to deploy 6 tourist jetties on the national waterways. We have also decided to deploy 2 electric hybrid catamaran at Guwahati which will ease passenger to commute between the two banks along Brahmaputra. Towards achieving Modiji's vision of a powerful Northeast, I am happy to share that Dredging Corporation of India will commence dredging operations in the region. These initiatives will power our waterways towards transforming Northeast to become the powerhouse of India's growth story towards becoming a Viksit Bharat, a vision of Narendra Modiji. These transformative projects will mark a new era of connectivity and prosperity for the region, furthering the 'Act East' policy. These initiatives reflect Modiji's unwavering commitment to drive inclusive growth and development in the region, delivering on the vision of Modi ji 'Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas'."

The tourist jetties will enhance the existing infrastructure along Brahmaputra (NW2) further bolstering the promising tourism industry of the state. These jetties are being built an investment of ₹ 8.45 Crores. The electric hybrid catamarans, which are being deployed in Guwahati with an investment of 36 crores, will introduce green energy in inland waterways. The Dredging Corporation of India (DCI), India's premier institution dedicated towards dredging operations, will commence operations on rivers Brahmaputra (NW 2) and Barak (NW 16). The dredging operations in NER in the Dhubri-Jogighopa stretch of NW-2, Dhubri/Hatsingimari, North Guwahati-South Guwahati, Neamatikamlabari and Lakhipur-Bhanga on NW-16 will be done at a cost of ₹124 crores. This project will help maintain constant andadequate draft and help seamless movement of cargo and passengers in the national waterways of Northeast.

Elaborating the scope of work proposed to be done for furthering the strength of waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal said, "Our cabinet under the visionary leadership of

the Prime Minister recently approved the signing of the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation. This Agreement in the spirit of our Neighborhood First Policy will herald seamless movement of waterborne cargo amongst the seven BIMSTEC countries. This Agreement will result in enhanced trade and commerce, reduced logistic cost as a result of removal of administrative and procedural delays increase in manufacturing and enhanced employment opportunities. We have also adopted a roadmap for river cruise tourism for developing multiple other routes for cruise tourism on other national waterways. ₹ 45,000 Crores would be spent for development of river cruise tourism in the coming years. This shows the immense potential that rests in the 20,000 kilometers long and vibrant inland waterways of our country. IWT sector is also witnessing environment friendly green initiatives viz. development of electric catamarans, Hydrogen Powered Catamaran Pax Vessel etc. The initial target is to support transition of 1,000 Vessels, ferrie and boats over the next 10 years and eventually achieving the target of all Green Vessels by 2047. This stands as a resounding testament to the critical role of these waterways in propelling economic growth and prosperity. There has been a 700 per cent increase in operational national waterways, from only 3 in 2014 to 24 Operational National Waterways today, a phenomenal rise of 56 per cent in multimodal terminals and a 200 per cent increase in investments in national waterways. The IWT sector is experiencing an unprecedented surge in terms of trade and transport since 2014.

The strategic significance is underscored by a substantial investment of over ₹ 1,000 crore in the past couple of years dedicated to advancement of these waterways in the Northeast. Projects such as comprehensive development of NW-2, whip repair facility at Pandu (₹ 208 Cr.), Jogighopa IWT terminal (₹ 64 Cr.), last mile connectivity to Pandu port through alternative road from Pandu Port to NH-27 (₹ 180 Cr.) are some of the projects that are already underway. IWAI has unveiled under develop NW-1, passing through the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, as a reliable cargo logistics route under 5,000 crores under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP). From 2013-14 onwards, the cargo movement has increased in the last decade from a mere 6.89 million ton in 2014 to 126.15 million tonnes in 2022-23, showing a mammoth growth of 1,700 per cent.

Under the Sagarmala program, aimed at the development of the northeastern states, projects exceeding ₹ 1,000 crores have been initiated, with a particular focus on enhancing inland waterways in the state, where projects exceeding 760 crores are underway. The Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 of the Union of ministry of ports, shipping and waterways (MoPSW) prioritizes the expansion of port infrastructure, including the development of six mega ports with capacities exceeding 300 and 500 million tonnes per annum (MTPA). Additionally, MoPSW aims to boost the share of IWT to 5 per cent by 2030 as part of the Maritime India Vision (MIV), signalling a comprehensive effort towards fostering maritime sector growth and connectivity enhancement.

PM inaugurates 3 IIMs

Institute of Skills (IIS), a pioneering skill-training institute on advanced technologies in Kanpur and two campuses for the Central Sanskrit University in Uttarakhand's De-vprayag and Agartala, Tripura.

Modi also inaugurated 20 new buildings for Kendriya Vidyalyayas (KV) and 13 new Navodaya Vidyalaya (NV) buildings across the country. The prime minister will also lay the foundation stone of five KV campuses, one NV campus and five multi-purpose halls for NVs across the country. Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan attended the event virtually from the PM-SHRI Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya at Goshala in Odisha's Sambalpur.

For Bihar, the Prime Minister inaugurated 24 new academic and residential buildings of the IIT-Patna, constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 466 crore. The facilities include a central library, an auditorium, a central lecture hall and academic buildings, a students' activity centre, hostels and residential quarters for teachers and employees. The IIT-Patna campus was inaugurated by Modi on July 25, 2015. Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, deputy chief ministers Samrat Chaudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, besides several other ministers, virtually attended the function from the Bihar Assembly. Modi also inaugurated the newly-constructed permanent campus of the IIM-Bodh Gaya. Established in 2015, the institute was functioning from a makeshift campus. The full-fledged new campus has been developed in an area spanning more than 60,000 square metres at an estimated cost of over Rs 400 crore.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated the IIT-Bhilai and two newly-constructed KV buildings in Chhattisgarh. At present, the IIT-Bhilai has a strength of 1,250 students and in the next three-four years, its capacity will be increased to accommodate nearly 2,500 students, an official said, after Modi dedicated the institute and two KVs to the nation via video-conferencing from Jammu. Chhattisgarh chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai, Durg MP Vijay Baghel, chairman of the IIT-Bhilai's board of governors K Venkatraman and the institute's director, Rajiv Prakash, were present at the inaugural ceremony on the campus.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated the Academic Complex East and Academic Complex West at IIT-Delhi. Union minister of state for external affairs Meenakshi Lekhi attended the event in the national capital. The two multi-storey complexes have been developed at a cost of ₹ 260 crore, with a plinth area of more than 60,000 square metres, and have come up as an addition to the existing academic area on the campus.

"The establishment of premier educational institutions, such as the IIM-Jammu, exemplifies a transformative approach, bringing quality education closer to home and empowering the youngsters of Jammu and Kashmir on a national scale," Modi said. (PTI)



Linda Hamilton says she won't watch 'Stranger Things' season 5 after starring in it

LOS ANGELES, Feb 20: "The Terminator" star Linda Hamilton, who is a self-confessed fan of Netflix series "Stranger Things", says she won't be watching the fifth season of the period sci-fi drama after playing a role in it. The series, created by Matt Duffer and Ross Duffer, became something of a cultural phenomenon when its first season released on Netflix in 2016.

Hamilton, 67, said now that she is part of the show, the

story is kind of ruined for her. "When you really buy into something, you don't see yourself in it. So I think, in a way, it kind of ruined the show for me. I never watch once I'm in something," she told Us Weekly. "It would just completely take me out of the reality of it to see myself in there. So, I won't be watching," the actor said, adding that she has watched every other season of the show "with relish".

"I just love it," she added. "Stranger Things" revolves

around a group of young friends in the Indiana of 1980. They unwittingly become a part of strange happenings in their town of Hawkins.

The series stars Millie Bobby Brown, Noah Schnapp, Finn Wolfhard, Gaten Matarazzo, Caleb McLaughlin and Sadie Sink in key roles.

Duffer Brothers have already announced that the fifth season of the show will conclude the story. The fifth season is yet to have a confirmed release date. (PTI)

ACTOR RITURAJ SINGH OF 'BANEGI APNI BAAT', 'ANUPAMAA' FAME DIES AT 59

MUMBAI, Feb 20: Noted actor Rituraj Singh, who first rose to fame in the 1993 TV show "Banegi Apni Baat" and went on to appear in a range of serial, films and OTT shows over the next three decades, passed away at his home early Tuesday following a cardiac arrest. He was 59.

"He had been hospitalised due to some stomach issues and was discharged a few days ago. He passed away around 12.30 am at his home due to a cardiac arrest," close friend Amit Behl told PTI.

Singh, who started his career as a theatre actor in Delhi, is survived by his wife and two children. Amongst his last appearances is the OTT show "Indian Police Force", which released just last month.

Singh, recently seen portraying the character of Yashpal in the TV serial 'Anupamaa', had a distinguished career spanning both television and film. He gained prominence through his roles in popular TV series like 'Banegi Apni Baat', 'Yeh Rishita Kya Kehlata Hai', and 'Diya Aur Baati Hum', alongside appearances in films like 'Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania'.

Fellow actors and industry colleagues mourned Singh's sudden demise, with Arshad Warsi expressing his sadness over the loss of a friend and talented actor. Warsi wrote on X,



"I am so saddened to know that Ritu Raj passed away. We lived in the same building, he was a part of my first film as a producer. Lost a friend and a great actor... will miss you brother..."

Singh's contribution to the entertainment industry extended beyond television and films; he also left his mark in web series such as 'Bandish Bandits' and 'Made in Heaven'.

Rituraj Singh's untimely death has left a void in the hearts of many, as fans and well-wishers remember him for his remarkable performances and his warm personality. He is survived by his wife and children, as the industry mourns the loss of a beloved talent. (PTI)

Bafta issues statement after prankster crashes 'Oppenheimer' team's speech



LONDON, Feb 20: A Bafta official said they are taking the security breach "very seriously" which saw a prankster crash the award stage while the "Oppenheimer" team was accepting their award.

On Sunday, a prankster walked up to the stage and stood behind filmmaker Christopher Nolan and other "Oppenheimer" team members as they delivered their acceptance speech for winning the best film at the British awards gala.

"A social media prankster was removed by security last night after joining the winners of the final award on stage - we are taking this very seriously, and don't wish to grant him any publicity by commenting further," an official from the Baftas said in a statement published by Deadline.

Presented by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), the 77th edition of the awards saw Nolan's film winning in top categories including best director, actor and supporting actor.

The gatecrash moment shows an individual, who had no connection with the film, climb along and stand behind the film's team.

The identity of the individual is not known but media reports say he was an Youtuber who got on the stage at the Royal Festival Hall, London, as part of a prank. (PTI)

Matt Damon hopes to return to another 'Jason Bourne' movie

LOS ANGELES, Feb 20: Matt Damon is keen to reprise one of his most famous roles as Jason Bourne in a future movie.

The Hollywood star, who is garnering praise for his role in "Oppenheimer", has done four movies in the Robert Ludlum-written espionage series and last appeared in 2016's "Jason Bourne". In an appearance on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert", Damon, 53, confirmed that director Edward Berger, best known for "All Quiet on the Western Front", is working on a new story.

"There is a great director named Edward Berger," Damon said. "(All Quiet on the Western Front) is a fantastic film, and he's wonderful and he said he had an idea. I would love to work with him, so he's working on it. Look, I'm as anxious as you are to see if this thing (happens) — I hope it's great and that we can do it."

The actor, however, is open to handing over the baton to a different actor in the near future. "At a certain point somebody is going to need to take it over," he said. "I'm not getting any younger," he said.

Damon next stars in Netflix thriller "Animals", which will be directed by friend and collaborator Ben Affleck. They will produce it through their production company, Artists Equity.

The actor first played the titular character of a CIA assassin in 2002 film "The Bourne Identity" and followed it up with "The Bourne Supremacy" in 2004, "The Bourne Ultimatum" in 2007 and "Jason Bourne" in 2016. (PTI)



'All India Rank' explores middle class mentality of chasing bigger dreams: Varun Grover

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: Is it worth it to make children go through the pressure of competitive exams? That is the question writer-comedian Varun Grover, who himself went through a coaching school to prep for the IITs, explores in his debut film "All India Rank".

Mirroring the many stresses of students in the coaching hub of Kota, frequently in the headlines for aspirants taking their own lives, Grover says his 1990s-set film explores the Indian middle class fascination with "constantly chasing bigger dreams".

Two decades later, the narrative of crushing pressure from parents and society stays pretty much the same.

"This story has been brewing in my mind for two decades. I have always wondered whether it is worth it to make children go through the pressure of competitive exams. They are somehow made to feel that if they don't ace it, their life is over," Grover told PTI in an interview.

"It was a very stressful period of my life," Grover, who studied civil engineering in IIT-BHU before deciding to follow his heart in the creative field of cinema, said. Rooted in 90s nostalgia and distilled from his own experiences as a teenager, the film went through several drafts before Grover could finally gather courage to finally take the plunge as director.



According to the first time director, the film was also an opportunity to revisit a simpler, pre-internet era that was just beginning to change.

"It is difficult to get rid of the nostalgia of those years whether it's Kumar Sanu, Alisha Chinai's songs or old Doordarshan serials. I really like the simplicity of the era where you could ride a cycle to the park, meet your friends and gossip for hours instead of trawling the internet for doomsday stories or social media likes," Grover, who is in his 40s, recalled. The idea of getting into the middle class psyche, which had started to abandon the security and permanence of government jobs in search of

bigger dreams of IIT, IIMs and foreign jobs in a post liberalised India, was interesting, he said.

"The film tries to dive into the layers of the middle class mentality of constantly chasing bigger dreams," he said, adding that the mushrooming of the coaching centres began in the 1990s. "That's what the film is about and that's what was very fascinating for me to explore," he added.

"We keep reading something or the other about how a child ends up self harming or go through such stress... We should understand that at the age of 16-17, you should not let your child go through such pressure... Our entire education system is unfair and ex-

tremely stressful for children." "All India Rank", starring mostly new faces and slated to release in theatres on February 23, revolves around 17-year-old Vivek Singh, who is packed off by his family to a coaching centre in Kota in the late 1990s to prepare for the IIT entrance exams.

Grover broke out as a lyricist with 2012's "Gangs of Wasseypur" and then wrote the critically-acclaimed script of "Masaan", directed by Neeraj Ghaywan.

He said he wrote the initial draft in 2014 and the script was selected in NFDC Script Lab, which came as a "big confidence boost" that he was on the right path. (PTI)

Hundreds are set to descend on Tahiti for Olympic surfing. Can locals protect their way of life?

TEAHUPO'O (FRENCH POLYNESIA), Feb 20: Peva Levy said he felt a powerful, natural energy known as "mana" when he surfed Teahupo'o's waves on a piece of plywood for the first time, rushing down a crumbling white surf in front of an untouched volcanic beach several years before the steady streams of surfers started arriving when the village got its first asphalt road over fifty years ago.

"It was a secret spot," the surfer and Tahitian native remembered, as he stood on the pristine beaches of Teahupo'o on the island's south

side, waves crashing off in the distance. "But it was not a secret spot for a long time."

Teahupo'o has since achieved world renown among surfers — the roaring wave garnered a reputation for its ferocious power — and will be home to the 2024 Paris Olympics surfing competition, scheduled from July 27 to Aug. 4.

The island in French Polynesia is an overseas territory of the European nation. The decision to host part of the Games here has thrust unprecedented challenges onto a small community that has long cherished and strives to protect a

way of life more closely connected to wild lands and crystal-clear ocean than the fame promised by an Olympic stage. And while organizers are trying to adjust their plans to conserve the local environment, ensuring that the village of Teahupo'o stays a village is proving to be a struggle for locals.

The original proposed scale of the Olympic site — which called for new roads, housing units and even an aluminum judging tower that required drilling into the reef — caused a significant local backlash. Environmental and surf communities banded together to protect

Teahupo'o's culture, its corals and its marine life.

"It was too much for us, a big change. And it was just for, like, one week" of competition, Levy said, who's also a member of the local environmental organization Vai Ara O Teahupo'o.

Though it's known throughout the surfing world, there is not one surf shop in Teahupo'o, with the town forgoing most of the development that's usually a staple at popular surf destinations. At the end of the village's road lies its sole snack bar which is only open for lunch and serves fish caught that morn-

ing. Kids spend the afternoon surfing as families watch from the black sand beaches. At night, the distant roar of waves barreling down onto the reef lulls the town to sleep. "We loved this place because it was still wild, there were not many people over here. There was a lot of fish all around, and that good mana," Levy said.

In response to criticism, now 98% of Olympic housing will be within the homes of locals, with athletes accommodated on a cruise ship anchored nearby. The size of the judging tower has been scaled back and new infrastructure plans

are being drawn up to minimize the need for new construction.

But concerns remain: Environmentalists and local fishers fear that drilling into the coral reef could attract ciguatera, a microscopic algae that infects fish and makes people sick if eaten, and many sustain themselves by what they catch in the ocean.

Mormon Maitei, 22, makes a living from spearfishing in the lagoons, feeding his family and selling what he has left over. "The lagoon is our refrigerator, it's where we get our dinner from," he said.

The sought-after shape of the waves could be affected, too, islanders say, if the reef were to fissure and lose the shape that the waves rely on to form.

"If it does crack and break off, there will be no more wave over here, it will be finished for us," said Levy. In December, local fears were confirmed when a barge razed sections of coral on its way to the construction site on the reef. A video of the damage spread on social media, provoking an outcry. Cindy Otcenasek, the president of Via Ara o Teahupo'o, called the destruction deeply hurtful. (AP)

Girona lose to Athletic Bilbao, misses chance to cut into Real Madrid's lead



MADRID, Feb 20: Second-placed Girona missed a chance to cut into Real Madrid's lead of the Spanish league when it lost to Athletic Bilbao 3-2 on Monday.

The Catalan side could have reduced the gap to three points but was sunk by an Alex Berenguer double and an Iñaki Williams goal and remained six adrift of Madrid.

It was another stumble for a side that matched Madrid blow for blow in the first half of La Liga. After going more than three months without defeat Girona has taken just one point from its last nine.

The poor run included a 4-0 defeat to Madrid on Feb. 10.

Alex Berenguer put Athletic ahead in the second minute when he skillfully turned the home defense and fired home a left-foot shot from outside the box.

Viktor Tsygankov equalized four minutes into the second half for Girona, but Berenguer finished superbly seven minutes later to give Athletic the lead again.

Williams made it 3-1 when he took advantage of poor defending and scored with a low shot in off the post.

Eric Garcia got the second for Girona with 15 minutes remaining when he stooped to head in a wicked cross from Alex Garcia.

But although they pushed hard in the final minutes, the visitors could not equalize again.

The result opened up a nine-point gap between Athletic in fifth and Real Sociedad in sixth.

Athletic was only two points behind fourth-placed Atletico Madrid and an automatic spot in the Champions League.

"Of course we're going to dream about the Champions League," Williams said. "We're taking it step by step, as we've been quietly saying. We're working and pushing ourselves to the max so that the success makes the noise." (AP)

Hodgson, 76, leaves Crystal Palace days after falling ill; Glasner hired as replacement

LONDON, Feb 20: Roy Hodgson, the oldest ever manager in the English Premier League at age 76, left Crystal Palace on Monday just days after falling ill during a training session amid widespread reports he was about to be replaced.

The former England coach said he made the decision to step aside so Palace could bring forward its plans to appoint a new manager.

Hours later, the club hired Austrian coach Oliver Glasner as Hodgson's replacement on a deal until the end of the 2025-26 season. Glasner led Eintracht Frankfurt to the Europa League title in 2022 before leaving last year.

"I understand, given recent circumstances," Hodgson said, "it may be prudent at this time for the club to plan ahead." Palace said Hodgson has left the hospital following the training-ground incident on Friday and was "doing well."

Two members of his coaching staff — Paddy McCarthy and Ray Lewington — were due to take charge of the team for its league match at Everton late Monday. Palace was five points clear of the relegation zone with 14 games remaining. Hodgson was in his second spell in charge of Palace, having returned last March to comfortably steer the team to safety in the league after a poor run of form under predecessor Patrick Vieira.

He was also the Palace manager from September 2017 to May 2021,

keeping the London club in the top-flight the entire time.

"This club is very special and means so much to me and has played a big part in my footballing life. I have fully enjoyed my time here across six seasons, as it has given me the chance to work with top class players and staff doing what I love every day," Hodgson said. Hodgson didn't say whether he would be retiring from soccer management. When he left after his first spell as Palace, he said he would not be coming back to the sport — only to be hired by Watford eight months later. He recently said changes to the game, such as handball interpretations and VAR, had made him fall out of love with soccer after nearly 50 years coaching.

"Games like today," Hodgson said after a 2-1 loss to Liverpool in December, "make me realize that when the day comes to leave it behind, I won't be missing anything."

Palace chairman Steve Parish said Hodgson "has a special place" in the club's history.

"After four years in which he led the club to maintaining Premier League status season after season, he once again joined us nearly a year ago to steady the ship, and worked wonders," Parish said. "That he then agreed to continue in the summer speaks volumes about his commitment to our club. Quite simply, we owe our continued Premier League status to Roy." (AP)

8-year-old Indian-origin boy from Singapore beats Polish grandmaster, breaks record



SINGAPORE, Feb 20: An eight-year-old Indian-origin boy defeated Polish chess grandmaster Jacek Stopa at the Burgdorfer Stadthaus Open in Switzerland on Sunday, becoming the youngest player to defeat a GM in classical chess.

Ashwath Kaushik, who represented Singapore, defeated Stopa, who at 37 is nearly five times older than him, according to a Channel News Asia report.

The previous record was set only a few weeks earlier when Serbia's Leonid Ivanovic, who is several months older than Ashwath, beat 60-year-old Bulgarian grandmaster Milko Popchev at the Belgrade Open.

Currently ranked world No. 37,338 on FIDE, the international chess federation, the Indian citizen, who moved to Singapore in 2017, said, "I felt proud of my game and how I played, especially since I was worse at one point but managed to come back from that."

Singaporean grandmaster and CEO of the Singapore Chess Federation Kevin Goh lauded Ashwath's feat on "X", saying, "Dad is super supportive, boy is dedicated, school allows flexibility and of course he has natural talent."

"Remains to be seen how far he can go as interests can change as the boy gets older. Still, we

are hopeful."

Goh also joked that as he is only eight years old, Ashwath still "needs a booster cushion to reach the other side of the board". He also attributed Ashwath's success to the "many other coaches and supporters" on his journey.

Goh also hopes that Ashwath's success can inspire more children to pursue chess at a competitive level. "I think his achievement shows that with the right amount of talent and support, a young player has every chance of achieving success in chess," Goh said. Ashwath made waves in 2022 after emerging as a triple champion in the chess variations — classic, rapid and blitz — at the under-8 Eastern Asia Youth Championship.

Sriram Kaushik said in a post on "X" that his son's upset win over Stopa was "one of the proudest moments of my life".

"Special thanks to Ashwath's true pillars and his long-term, and often long-suffering coaches who have put up with him for many years through thick and thin," he was quoted as saying.

"Puzzle solving certainly is at the core of his board success as well," he added.

According to Goh, Ashwath's next goal is to improve his ratings and earn the title of candidate master in chess. (PTT)

New coach watches Crystal Palace denied win by late Everton equaliser

LIVERPOOL, Feb 20: New Crystal Palace coach Oliver Glasner watched from the sidelines as his side was denied a win at Everton by a late equalizer in the English Premier League on Monday.

Glasner was appointed just hours before the 1-1 draw after Roy Hodgson resigned due to health issues earlier in the day.

The former Eintracht Frankfurt coach signed a deal to June 2026 but Hodgson's assistants Paddy McCarthy and Ray Lewington led the team at Goodison Park.

Glasner watched a scrappy encounter that was brightened by Jordan Ayew's sizzling strike from just outside the box 20 minutes into the second half.

However, just when it looked like Palace would win for the first time since January, Amadou Onana equalized for Everton. With six minutes remaining, he got up highest in a crowded



penalty box to head home Dwight McNeil's corner.

The result was welcomed by both sides, who are struggling near the foot of the league table.

Everton has not won in eight games but the draw lifted it out the relegation zone on goal differ-

ence. It has 20 points, the same as Luton, which fell to 18th.

Palace has won only two of its last 14 matches, one of which was against bottom club Sheffield United. It has not kept a clean sheet since Nov. 4.

Hodgson, 76, was blamed by some fans for the poor run but as speculation over his future mounted last week he became ill at a training session and was hospitalized. He has since been released but his poor health prompted the former England coach to resign on Monday.

"I understand, given recent circumstances, it may be prudent at this time for the club to plan ahead," Hodgson said.

His replacement, an Austrian who led Eintracht to the Europa League title in 2022, is expected to be in the dugout for Palace's next match, against second-to-last Burnley on Saturday. (AP)

Morata, Paulista added to Atletico Madrid squad for Champions League game at Inter Milan

MADRID, Feb 20: Striker Álvaro Morata and defender Gabriel Paulista have been included in Atletico Madrid's squad for the Champions League game against Inter Milan after recovering from injuries.

They were named on Monday, a day before the match in Italy in the first leg of the round of 16.

Morata had been nursing a knee injury that kept him from playing on Saturday in the 5-0 rout of Las Palmas in the Spanish league.

Paulista was dealing with abdominal problems and also didn't play in the match at Metropolitan Stadium.

Still unavailable for coach Diego Simeone because of injuries were midfielder Thomas

Lemar and defender César Azpilicueta.

Simeone and Inter coach Simone Inzaghi were teammates at Lazio when the Italian club won the 1999 UEFA Super Cup.

"It will be a great pleasure to see Diego Simeone again tomorrow as an opponent," Inzaghi said on Monday.

"He was a fantastic teammate, and I always knew he would make a great coach. We have always stayed in touch."

Simeone played for Inter before joining Lazio, helping Inter win the 1998 UEFA Cup.

The Argentine coach called Inter "one of the four of five best teams in Europe" at the moment.

The return Champions League match against Inter is on March 13. (AP)

Napoli fire coach Mazzarri and hire Calzona just 2 days before facing Barca

NAPLES (ITALY), Feb 20: Still struggling in Serie A, defending champion Napoli made its second coaching change of the season just two days before facing Barcelona in the Champions League.

Napoli fired Walter Mazzarri after training on Monday and appointed Slovakia coach Francesco Calzona, who was the former assistant at the Serie A team but has never managed at club level.

Mazzarri replaced Rudi Garcia only in November and Napoli, which is emerging as one of the worst defending champions in the history of the Italian league, became the first Serie A team to change coaches twice in the season after winning the league.

"Mazzarri is a family friend and it is always painful to fire a friend," Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis told Italian television channel Sky Sport.

"I thanked him also for his readiness to come help us in a



difficult moment for us.

"You need to manage to give something extra to Napoli and its fans, however."

The 55-year-old Calzona has

been given a contract until the end of the season and will be allowed to continue with his duties as Slovakia coach in the meantime, having helped the

team qualify for the upcoming European Championship.

Calzona was assistant coach to Maurizio Sarri at Napoli from 2015-18, when the team was much lauded for its style of play despite not winning anything. He was also part of Luciano Spalletti's staff before leaving in 2022 for the Slovakia post, his first role as a head coach.

"Now we have to give space and support to Francesco Calzona, who has worked with us before both in Sarri's time and with Spalletti and know 80% of this group," De Laurentiis said. "Time ... will tell us if this was the right choice."

Napoli is set to face Barcelona on Wednesday in the round of 16 of the Champions League.

Mazzarri replaced Garcia in November and collected only 15 points in 12 Serie A matches — worse than his predecessor.

Garcia was fired after

amassing 21 points from 12 matches and with Napoli in fourth place in Serie A, 10 points behind league leader Inter Milan.

Saturday's draw at home to Genoa left Napoli 27 points behind Inter, in ninth place and out of the European qualifying places.

Since the end of World War II, only five times has a defending champion finished 20 points or more behind the Serie A champion. Juventus has the worst record, finishing 24 points behind champion AC Milan in 1962, a year after winning the title.

Napoli looks a far cry from the team that won Serie A last season, thrilling at home and in Europe.

Garcia took over last off-season from title-winning coach Spalletti, who left to take a year-long sabbatical and then was named coach of Italy following Roberto Mancini's resignation. (AP)

India look to continue recent domination over Netherlands in Pro League



ROURKELA, Feb 20: The Indian men's hockey team would look to continue its recent domination over the Netherlands with an outright win when the two sides meet in the return leg match of the FIH Pro League here on Wednesday. India had a good run in the Pro League so far with the team led by drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh winning two out of their five games in regulation time. India's resilience saw them defeat the Dutch and Spain in shootouts, earning valuable bonus points. Their solitary defeat came at the

hands of Australia but that too from a winning position. India are currently placed fourth in the Pro League standings with 10 points from five matches. The Netherlands are leading the chart with 18 points from nine games ahead of Argentina (13 points from 8 matches) and Australia (12 points from 4 games). But having said that the Indians, ranked third in the world, have had to face a tough time in their last two matches against world No.12 Ireland and world No.8 Spain. India were made to toil to regis-

ter a 1-0 win over Ireland through a last-minute goal from Gurjant Singh and then overcame a resilient Spain 8-7 in a marathon shootout after both sides were locked 2-2 at the end of the regulation 60 minutes. And come tomorrow, the Indians will need to raise their game a few notches to finish off the match in regulation time and secure full three points from the encounter. The last three matches might not have gone the way they would have wanted, but vice-captain Hardik Singh said the confidence

in the camp is high on the eve of the meeting against the world No.1 side. Reflecting on the home team's performance against the Dutch in the previous outing in Bhubaneswar on February 11, Hardik felt India could have given a far better account of itself. India rallied to level the scores at 2-2 in regulation time before winning 4-2 in shootout. "Our performance in the first half fell short of expectations, but we made a strong comeback in the second half, pushing the game to a shootout. We were confident about our chances from that point onwards, especially given that we have really good goalkeepers in our ranks," said the midfielder. India had started their Pro League campaign in Bhubaneswar with a crushing 4-1 win against Spain, followed by a thrilling 2-2 (4-2) shootout win against the mighty Dutch, where Hardik scored the opening goal. India suffered a setback, losing to Australia 4-6 but bounced back to conclude the Bhubaneswar leg on a high with win over Ireland. "The confidence in the camp is quite high with the way we have been performing in back-to-back events and I am sure we will carry this momentum forward in the tournament," he added. (PTI)

Stokes contemplates bowling against India

RAJKOT, Feb 20: Back-to-back heavy defeats against India have compelled England captain Ben Stokes to consider an early return to bowling with head coach Brendon McCullum admitting that although it's a good sign, they don't want the all-rounder to push himself unnecessarily. Stokes, who is still recovering from a knee surgery, hasn't bowled since the second Ashes Test in June last year. "Well, it's good that he's actually getting into a state where he thinks he might bowl," McCullum was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo on Monday. "But Ben is clever; he's really clever as well. He won't bowl unless he thinks he's legitimately able to bowl. The problem would be if he starts getting into a spell and then he can't get out of the spell. So we'll see what unfolds. "If he does get that bit between his teeth, then let's see where the danger lies there and try and pull him away from it. But it's a good sign," McCullum added. Ahead of the Rajkot Test, Stokes had said he 'pinky promised' his physiotherapist he won't be bowling in the ongoing series. But when asked if he will be reprising his all-rounder's role after the 434-run defeat in the third Test on Sunday, Stokes said, "I'm not saying yes, I'm not saying no." "Me being me, I'm always very optimistic about most things. That will be a more detailed chat with the medical team about what workload I have done to pass me off as not being a massive risk." During the Rajkot Test, Stokes had even trained at 100 per cent intensity and conceded that he felt pretty good. "I managed to bowl at 100 per cent in one of the warm-up days here which made me feel pretty good. I felt like I could have bowled in the game but that would have been stupid." After winning the series opener by 28 runs, England



fell to a 106-run defeat followed by one of their worst losses in Rajkot to go 2-1 down in the series with matches left in Ranchi and Dharamsala. The England team would benefit immensely if the pace all-rounder started bowling again. The visitors opted to field just one seamer in the first two Tests. They dropped Shoaib Bashir to pick both James Anderson and Mark Wood in the third game. England's 'Bazball' approach has also backfired big time in the third Test which they lost by a massive 434 runs, their largest defeat in terms of runs since 1934. But McCullum said while the defeat is definitely hurting the visitors, they will continue with their attacking 'Bazball' approach in the remainder of the five-match series. McCullum said he has "no regrets" about their approach. "We'll turn the page and go quids in again trying to put India under pressure," McCullum was quoted as saying by BBC Sport. "Hopefully, in seven or eight days we'll be talking about how exciting it is to be heading into a decider." (PTI)

Indian men, women progress to knock-out phase of World TT C'ships

BUSAN, Feb 20: The Indian men's and women's sides registered contrasting wins in their final group games to progress to the knock-out phase of the World Table Tennis Team Championships here on Tuesday. While the Indian women's team pulled off a thrilling come-from-behind 3-2 victory over Spain, the men's side brushed aside New Zealand 3-0. The Indian women's team, the stronger side on paper, were pushed against the wall but found a way to scrape past the Spaniards after Sreeja Akula and Manika Batra lost the first two singles of the tie. After Ayhika Mukherjee kept India in the contest with a win in the third singles, Manika and Sreeja returned to get the job done in the fourth and fifth singles. Sreeja lost the opening singles to Maria Xiao 9-11, 11-9, 11-13, 4-11. Sofia-Xuan Zhang made it 2-0 for Spain with a 13-11, 6-11, 8-11, 11-9, 11-7 win over India's top ranked player Manika. Ayhika kept India alive in the contest by getting past Elvira Rad 11-8, 11-13, 11-8, 9-11, 11-4 in the third singles. Manika then returned to blank Maria in the fourth singles 11-9, 11-2, 11-4 to make it 2-2. Sreeja sealed the tie with an 11-6, 11-13, 11-6, 11-3 win over Sofia-Xuan. The Indian women finished second behind China in Group 1 with three wins from four games. Their only loss, albeit a narrow one, came against the mighty Chinese after Ayhika and Sreeja stunned world number one and two, Sun Yingsha and Wang Yidi, respectively. In the men's competition, reigning national cham-

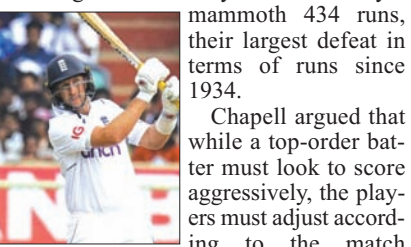


pion Harmeet Desai and G Sathyan registered facile wins against Choi Timothy and Alfred Pena Dela respectively in the opening two singles. While Harmeet won 11-5, 11-1, 11-6, Sathyan defeated Dela 11-3, 11-7, 11-6. Manush Shah then rallied from two games down to pull off a 10-12, 6-11, 11-4, 11-8, 11-6 win over Maxwell Henderson to help India finish third in Group 3 behind South Korea and Poland. Out of the 40 teams taking part in the competition, both the Indian men and women were among the 24 sides to qualify for the knock-out phase. A quarterfinal finish in the event will assure India of a place in the team event of Paris Olympics. India will need to win their round of 32 and subsequent round of 16 rubbers to reach the last-eight round and qualify for the Olympics. (PTI)

Chappell urges Root to play his natural game and drop Bazball philosophy

MELBOURNE, Feb 20: Former Australia captain Ian Chappell has urged out-of-form England batter Joe Root to shun the 'Bazball' approach and get back to playing his natural game. Senior batter Root has struggled for

His dismissal led to a batting collapse. England were 224/2 when Root got out. The tourists then lost eight wickets for 95 runs to be bowled out for 319, handing India a 126-run first-innings lead. England eventually lost the Test by a mammoth 434 runs, their largest defeat in terms of runs since 1934. Chappell argued that while a top-order batter must look to score aggressively, the players must adjust according to the match



situation. "You can't always do it -- it's got to be according to the conditions and also who's bowling," he said. Bumrah has dismissed Root on nine occasions in Test cricket now. "Some bowlers you can score off a lot quicker than others, but when a really good bowler is bowling a good spell, you've got to be prepared to try and battle it out and think to yourself 'Well, when he goes off, it'll get a bit easier'. "You're always trying to score runs -- that's got to be your prime aim. But, you've also got to realise in some conditions, against some bowlers you can score quicker than others." (PTI)

IPL set for March 22 start, says league chairman Arun Dhimal



NEW DELHI, Feb 20: The much-anticipated Indian Premier League is set to begin on March 22 and will be held entirely in the country despite the coinciding general elections, league chairman Arun Dhimal told PTI on Tuesday. The elections are expected to be held in April and May and that is the main reason why the schedule for the IPL's 17th edition has not been unveiled yet. Speaking to PTI, Dhimal said to begin with, only the schedule of the first 15 days will be announced and the roster for the remaining games will be decided after the announcement of the general election dates. The dates of the Lok Sabha polls are expected to be announced early next month. "We are looking at a March 22 start for the tournament. We are working closely with the government agencies and we will first release the initial schedule. The entire tournament will be held in India," said Dhimal. Only in 2009, the IPL, in its entirety, was held overseas (South Africa) while the 2014 edition was partially held in the UAE due to the general elections. However, in 2019, the tournament was held in India despite the elections. Considering the T20 World Cup begins within days of the cash-rich league's conclusion, the final is likely to be held on May 26. India will play their opening World Cup fixture against Ireland in New York on June 5 while the ICC showpiece begins with the USA and Canada clash on June 1. As is the norm, the IPL opener will be played between the last year's finalists, the winners Chennai Super Kings in this case and runners-up Gujarat Titans. The players' auction for the 2024 season was held in December last year and Australian pacer Mitchell Starc became the most expensive player in the history of the league after being bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for ₹ 24.75 crore. (PTI)

IT officer Siddharth Nandal wins national racketlon title for third time

MUMBAI, Feb 20: An Income Tax officer by profession and a racket sport aficionado in his time away from the high-pressure job, Siddharth Nandal has clinched the singles as well as the doubles title of the All India Open Championship of Racketlon, a combination sport which requires mastery of four disciplines. The Mumbai-based officer defeated Vikramaditya Chauhan from Udaipur in the singles final to emerge winner with a scoreline of 20-22, 21-16, 21-8, 7-2 in the event held here from February 16-18. This was his third national title.

In the doubles' final, the 33-year-old partnered with Nikhil Mansukhani from Mumbai to win 21-6, 21-7, 2-21, 12-3 against the pair of Kunal Singh and Vaibhav Chauhan. The competition was organised by the Wellington Catholic Gymkhana and featured more than 150 participants. Racketlon is a combination sport in which players have to compete for one set of 21 points in all four racket games -- table tennis, badminton, squash and tennis. Nandal, who practises for about 3-4 hours at the National Sports Club of India (NSCI) in

Worli, had won two gold and one silver medals in the Racketlon World Championships in 2019 and 2022 in Germany and Austria respectively. "I was a national level player in badminton. I was a state champion in badminton from Haryana. I was representing my state when I was not working," Nandal told PTI. "I was (also) playing table tennis also at state level at some point of time during my childhood days. When I learnt about racketlon, I started training for squash and a lot of other things," he added. "During the initial phase, I used to play

around six hours a day -- morning, evening, like 2-3 hours in the morning, 2-3 hours in the evening. But, as and when my responsibility in the department grew, as I got promoted to the rank of ITO, so, now I am devoting, like, four hours of my day to practice," he added. Racketlon in India is managed by a Racketlon India Sports Association (RISA), with KK Cheema as its president. A National Racketlon Centre is being constructed around an area of eight acres of land in Lonavala and is expected to be ready by the end of this year. (PTI)

Pant on course for comeback in IPL

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: Rishabh Pant remains on course for a much-anticipated comeback in the IPL after taking part in a practice game organised by his franchise Delhi Capitals in Alur, Karnataka. Pant, who met with a horrific car accident in December 2022, has been undergoing rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy and is working hard to regain match fitness before the start of the IPL in the second half of March. The southpaw had also featured in an exhibition game last year. "The match was part of assessing his mobility basically. He has been batting at nets for a while and playing in a practice game was more like an extension of it," said a NCA source referring to the intra-squad game in Alur near Bengaluru. Earlier this month, Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting had given a major update on Pant, saying the game changing cricketer was confident about his return in the IPL. However, Pant may not be ready for wicketkeeping duties in the competition, as suggested by

Ponting at an event in Melbourne. "Rishabh is very confident that he's going to be right to play. In what capacity we're not quite sure yet," Ponting had said. "You would have seen all the social-media stuff, he's up and about and running well. But in saying that we're only six weeks away from the first game as well. So we're not sure if we'll get wicket-keeping out of him this year. "But I'll guarantee if I asked him now he'll say, 'I'm playing every game, I'm keeping every game and I'm batting at No.4.' That's just what he's like, but we'll keep our fingers crossed," he added. Pant is also expected to lead Delhi Capitals. David Warner had captained in his absence last year. "He's such a dynamic player. We missed him incredibly last year," Ponting said. "If you understand the journey he's been on the last 12-13 months, it was a horrific incident. One that I know he feels very lucky to have even survived, let alone have the chance to play cricket again. (PTI)

BERLIN, Feb 20: Andreas Brehme, who fired West Germany to the 1990 World Cup title with the only goal in the final against Diego Maradona's Argentina, has died. He was 63. Brehme's partner Susanne Schaefer confirmed his death in a statement to Germany's dpa news agency on Tuesday. Schaefer said Brehme died "suddenly and unexpectedly" in the night from a cardiac arrest. Former teammates and others paid tribute to the player who was known affectionately as "Andi" Brehme, a star of German soccer in the 1980s and 1990s. "I can't believe it at all. The news of Andreas' sudden death makes me incredibly sad," national teammate Rudi Voller said. "Andi was our World Cup hero, but for me he was much more. He was my close friend and companion to this day. I will miss his wonderful love of life." Kaiserslautern, which won its last Bundesliga title in Brehme's final season before his retirement in 1998, said it was "deeply saddened" by his unexpected death. Brehme played for the Red Devils for 10 seasons over two stints. The Bundesliga win came after promotion as second-division champion and Brehme also won the German Cup with Kaiserslautern in 1996. The Hamburg-born Brehme, who played mostly as an attacking left back, will always

be associated with West Germany's 1990 World Cup triumph. He scored in the semifinal against England, which West Germany eventually won on penalties, and his late penalty decided the final against Argentina. Winning the title brought a wave of national celebrations across Germany, which was in the process of reunification after the fall of the Berlin Wall the year before. Brehme's title-winning goal in Rome was celebrated a short distance away at Inter Milan, the Italian club he was playing for at the time as part of a formidable German trinity including national teammates Jürgen Klinsmann and Lothar Matthäus. As captain, Matthäus would normally have taken West Germany's penalty in the final, but the No. 10 broke his boots in the first half and didn't feel confident even though he'd changed them. He sent Brehme forward instead. "Someone has to step up. And for us, it was a case of whoever was feeling confident," Brehme said in a FIFA interview in 2017. "The main thing is that the penalty goes in and we become world champions." Brehme acknowledged the penalty decision was "dubious" though that didn't stop him from tucking away the spot kick against the previously unbeatable Argentina goalkeeper Sergio Goycochea in the 85th



minute. West Germany had dominated the game but found Goycochea in inspired form. "That night at the Olimpico, facing up against Sergio Goycochea, a fearsome goalkeeper who had already kept out Donadoni and Aldo Serena at the San Paolo, Brehme opted to take with his right (boot). A placed effort, almost caressed towards goal: he zipped it along the floor, right into the bottom left, unstoppable," Inter wrote on the club website. Brehme, who wheeled and jumped in celebration, had already helped Inter to the Serie A title in 1989. He would go to win the UEFA Cup with the club two years later.

"A magnificent player, a true Interista. Ciao Andy, forever a legend," said Inter, which announced that it would wear black armbands during its Champions League match against Atlético Madrid later Tuesday. Brehme also won the Bundesliga with Bayern Munich in 1987. "I am incredibly sad about this shocking news," Bayern honorary president Uli Hoenes said. "None of us will ever forget Andreas Brehme, because he was more than a goal in the World Cup final in Rome. We've lost a great person and a loyal friend." Brehme played 86 international games for West Germany and unified Germany. Brehme went into coaching after winning the Bundesliga with Kaiserslautern, first with the same club and then second-division Unterhaching. He didn't enjoy the same success he had as a player. His last coaching role was at Stuttgart as assistant to coach Giovanni Trapattoni in the 2005-06 season. Brehme's death comes the month after that of his friend Franz Beckenbauer, who coached the World Cup-winning team in 1990. "As a young boy I had, like probably every boy in Germany had, a Franz Beckenbauer poster hanging above my bed," Brehme told dpa last month. "Later, he became my boss and I could work with him. And in the end we became close friends. So I have a lot to thank Franz for." (AP)

'We wanted to hit the podium but we are disappointed we could not win but we are still hungry'