

WORLD
NATION

- Private US company makes history by landing first commercial spacecraft
- Putin takes a flight in nuclear-capable bomber
- INDIA bloc members incite people in name of caste: PM Modi
- Haryana announces interest waiver on crop loans

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Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Prosperity of farmers ensuring nation's progress

Over 23 crore soil health cards issued to farmers;
Better agricultural production ensured

Hamara Sankalp
Viksit Bharat



cbc 22201/13/02/24

HT BRIEFS

Heroin seized

GUWAHATI: Heroin worth Rs 24 crore was seized in Assam's Cachar district on Friday, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. One person was arrested for possessing the drug. During a search operation, 4.76 kg of heroin was recovered from 30 soap boxes kept in four leather bags inside a vehicle coming from a neighbouring state, Sarma said. "Major Drugs haul in Cachar worth ₹24 crore!! Based on credible intelligence, @cacharpolice conducted an operation in the wee hours today and apprehended a suspect in Dholai. 30 soap boxes and 4 leather bags containing 4.765 kgs of suspected heroin was recovered from his possession which was being transported from a neighbouring State. Well done @assampolice" the chief minister wrote on X.

Passes away

DIPHU: The Langfer Gaonbura Sanstha is in mourning following the sudden demise of its president, Hari Singnar, aged 46. Singnar passed away due to a stroke at his residence, leaving behind his wife, son, and daughter. The news of Singnar's passing has deeply saddened members of the Langfer Gaonbura Sanstha, who are mourning the loss of their respected leader. Members of Langfer Gaonbura Sanstha have mourned the death.

Akhil's resolution: Ayes received 30 votes, nays 39 State Assembly scripts ballot voting history

GUWAHATI, Feb 23: For the first time in its history, the Assam Assembly on Friday witnessed voting with ballot paper while deciding the fate of a private member's resolution brought in by Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi.

The resolution on the irrigation system was rejected by just nine votes.

Out of 77 MLAs in the BJP-led alliance, the government garnered 39 votes. On the other hand, 30 votes were polled in favour of the resolution from 47 opposition MLAs, including five Congress members with allegiance to the government.

Earlier, the resolution was put to voice vote and speaker Biswajit Daimary said the resolution was rejected.

Gogoi and other opposition members, including leader of the opposition Debabrata Saikia, however, claimed that the ruling party did not have the numbers during the voice vote and demanded proper voting.

Daimary then adjourned the House for 10 minutes, saying that



voting would take place and the Assembly Secretariat would require time to prepare for the polling on the resolution.

However, the House resumed after 30 minutes. During this half-an-hour, BJP MLA Diganta Kalita was seen doing a headcount of the ruling side on a piece of paper. Gogoi was also seen going to almost every member with folded hands.

As soon as the House met, the Speaker again conducted a voice vote with a higher number of treas-

ured ballot slips to every member, who ticked in their choices and deposited the same in the ballot box.

Deputy Leader of Congress Legislature Party Rakibul Hussain appealed to the speaker to allow the chief whip of the parties to see the votes of their MLAs according to the Anti-Defection Law.

Immediately after this, Congress MLAs Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha and Basanta Das, who recently announced to "support the government" without leaving the grand old party, silently walked out of the House while the voting was undergoing.

The principal secretary and his colleagues counted the votes on his table inside the House and submitted the result to the speaker.

"As per the result sheet, ayes received 30 votes, nays got 39 and there was zero abstain. As nays received higher votes, the resolution is rejected," Daimary said.

The resolution sought to make Assam a 12-month cultivating state by supplying water to the fields at all times. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Accordingly, the House staff dis-

Himanta unveils projects worth ₹ 196 cr

CM on Sadiya and Doom Dooma tour

GUWAHATI, Feb 23: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday inaugurated and laid foundation stones of projects worth ₹ 116 crore for Sadiya and ₹ 80 crore for Doom Dooma Legislative Assembly Constituencies (LAC).

A day after attending ceremonial distribution of land pattas to beneficiaries of Mission Basundhara 2.0 in Dhemaji district, Sarma on Friday visited Sadiya and Doom Dooma in Tinsukia district and took part in similar exercises for beneficiaries of the two above-mentioned LACs.

There are around 12,000 and 7,000 beneficiaries of Mission Basundhara 2.0 within Sadiya and Doom Dooma LACs respectively.

"These apart, the chief minister also inaugurated and laid foundation stones of projects worth an aggregate of ₹ 116 crore for Sadiya LAC and ₹ 80 crore for Doom Dooma LAC," an official statement said.

As per the statement, among the projects for which foundation stones were laid include the ₹ 35.84 crore improvement and up gradation of Dhola to Bhupen Hazarika Setu via Kesakhati Than Road under Asom Mala 2.0 for the year 2023-24, the improvement of road from Sarudhadum Borpothar to Maithong road under the Mukhya Mantrir Unnoto Pakipath Nirman Achanhi to be completed at a cost of ₹ 9.35 crore, to name a few.

On the hand in Doom Dooma, the chief minister laid the foundation stones of the ₹ 21-crore Jagannath Community Hall & Skill Centre, ₹ 17.58-crore for Doom Dooma Town water supply project, to name a few.

Speaking at a function held at Dholai under Sadiya LAC in Tinsukia district to distribute land pattas to beneficiaries of Mission Basundhara 2.0, Sarma said the state government would create belts and blocks to lend protection to (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



Karnataka bill, Sandeshkhali show opposition's campaign against Sanatan Dharma: BJP

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: The BJP on Friday launched a broadside on opposition parties over the alleged targeting of Hindus in West Bengal, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, claiming this shows that the assertion about the eradication of 'Sanatan Dharma' is not merely a statement but a campaign.

BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi hit out at West Bengal's Trinamool Congress government for not allowing his party's leaders, including a group of women comprising legislators and others, to visit trouble-torn Sandeshkhali and not arresting Shajahan Sheikh, a local TMC strongman.

Sheikh has been accused by some women in Sandeshkhali of running a ring of TMC members involved in land grabs and sexual assault.

Trivedi told reporters that Sheikh is being probed in a corruption case taken up by the Enforcement Direction (ED) and is also an



accused in a violent attack on the agency's officials.

Such a "multi-dimension criminalisation" of politics and protection of the accused is unprecedented in Indian politics, he claimed.

On January 5, a team of ED of-

ficers were assaulted by a mob when they tried to enter the residence of Shajahan at Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. Three officers were injured in the attack.

The district police and Sheikh's family members had lodged a complaint against the ED officers. Shajahan has been absconding since then.

Trivedi told reporters that it was not only about the West Bengal government protecting him but there was a particular mindset which believes in "secular protection" of some people irrespective of the crimes and atrocities they commit.

While "secular parties" are keeping mum because they weigh the complaints of women against their vote-bank politics, even the self-proclaimed champions of

women's rights have maintained silence, he said.

This is not merely an incident but a phenomenon which has destroyed Bengal for over two centuries, the Rajya Sabha member said as he referred to targeting of women and Hindus in the past.

It is not about Hindus and Muslims. Some parties believe in protecting radicals and criminal elements among Muslims to maintain their hold on power and are not concerned about the future, he alleged.

Citing a new law passed in Karnataka which mandates that the state government will collect 10 per cent of the income of temples that have revenues of more than Rs 1 crore and the earlier comments of some DMK leaders in Tamil Nadu criticising 'Sanatan Dharma', he said all (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

NHM Assam, Piramal Swasthya sign MoU for village health outreach programme



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 23: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between National Health Mission, Assam, and Piramal Swasthya

Management and Research Institute for Village Health Outreach Programme was signed on Friday to ensure comprehensive health services to the unreached.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Assam Health Minister Keshab Mahanta by NHMA's mission director MS Lakshmi Priya and Najeib Hazarika, programme director of Piramal Swasthya Management and Research Institute.

"The programme aims in early identification of diseases through health screening, referral and follow up and free medicines for effective management of lifestyle and non-communicable diseases (diabetes, hypertension), chronic diseases (TB, asthma) along with ANC and Minor ailments under the aegis of National Health Programs in the districts of Assam through Mobile Medical Units and dedicated Health Teams at pre-defined locations," an official statement from NHM read.

Two oppn MLAs suspended during discussion on Edu Dept



GUWAHATI, Feb 23: Two opposition MLAs of Assam Assembly were briefly suspended on Friday as they did not listen to the Speaker's ruling and continued to raise issues regarding anomalies in the Education Department.

Congress Baghbor MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed, who was suspended during Calling Attention highlighted "severe irregularities" in the recently held school evaluation system 'Gunotsav'.

Referring to a newspaper report, he slammed the government and said that a chowkidar impersonated as a school teacher at Mandia in Barpeta district.

Education Minister Ranaj Pegu replied to Ahmed's queries, but the opposition member was not happy

with the explanation. After Pegu's reply, Ahmed continued to criticise the Education Department and asked for accountability.

However, speaker Biswajit Daimary repeatedly asked the opposition member to sit down as the minister already replied and there is no provision of supplementary questioning in Calling Attention.

When Ahmed did not obey the ruling and continued to raise objections to the minister's reply, Daimary suspended the member.

AIUDF MLA Ashraf Hussain protested the Speaker's order and asked why Ahmed has been

suspended while he was raising a "very important" issue affecting the education system of the state.

"Who are you to argue with me? You are also suspended," Daimary said.

House Marshals came towards the seats of the two suspended MLAs who were escorted out of the hall.

The Speaker allowed both Ahmed and Hussain to attend the House as soon as the Calling Attention was over within 10 minutes. (PTI)

The conference attracted attendees from the host district, as well as from Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh 32nd Karbi literary conference commences amidst enthusiasm



HT Bureau DIPHU, Feb 23: The 32nd annual general conference of Karbi literary body- Karbi Lammet Amei (KLA) kicked off on Friday with great fervor, marked by the inauguration of the entrance gate by executive member (EM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and president of the reception committee, Surjya Rongphar.

The conference venue, Rongthelu Aklam in Rongthelu, located

approximately 20 km away from the district headquarters, will host the event for four consecutive days, concluding on February 25.

Delegates from 95 Aro Amei (branch committees), 10 Longri Amei (regional committees), and central committee members graced the occasion. The conference also drew participants not only from the host district but also from various districts of Assam, as well as from Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh.

On the second day of the conference, a notable event unfolded with the release of 26 books, including translations by different writers, published by the KLA. Dr Numal Momin, deputy speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly, attended the event as the chief guest, expressing his commitment to the enrichment of the Karbi language and literature.

Dr Momin announced that the Government of Assam has granted special casual leave for its employees to participate in the conference. He also conveyed that upon the request of Karbi Lammet Amei, the chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, approved special leave for employees serving across Assam for the entire duration of the KLA conference.

"Karbi Lammet Amei has requested me to approach chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for granting special leave for employees serving in various parts of Assam. The same has been approved by the CM. We thanked CM for his kindness and love for the Karbi Anglong and KLA," Dr.

Momin added.

In a bid to bolster the Karbi language, Dr Momin urged Karbi Language Teachers (KLT) employed in various government schools by the KAAC to diligently teach the language to students.

He emphasised the importance of every resident of Karbi Anglong being proficient in the Karbi language for its development.

Furthermore, Dr Momin declared his lifetime membership of KLA, expressing his delight in joining the esteemed literary body.

Addressing the need for standardisation in writing the Karbi language, Dr Dharamsing Teron, director of the Centre for Karbi Studies, stressed the importance of uniformity to avoid discrepancies in spelling and usage.

The evening session witnessed a vibrant poets' meet, where poets enthralled the audience with their poetic renditions, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of the Karbi community.

The book release event saw the presence of EM, KAAC Surjya Rongphar, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

ASDCYF criticises Congress leader's remarks on eviction process

HT Bureau DIPHU, Feb 23: The Autonomous State Demand Committee Youth Front (ASDCYF) and Karbi Students Association (KSA-Jemson) have vehemently criticized Congress leader Debabrata Saikia for his purported remarks regarding the eviction procedures on the Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR).

Expressing their discontent, ASDCYF staged a protest in front of their office, symbolically burning an effigy of Saikia, who also holds the position of the leader of the opposition.

Saikia's alleged statement labelling the eviction process on PGR and VGR by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) as unlawful has sparked controversy and drawn sharp criticism from various quarters.

"The Congress in Karbi Anglong must clarify their stance on Debabrata Saikia's statement. An all-party meeting has already been convened to address this matter," remarked KSA Jemson President Timung. Meanwhile, a meeting held in the district saw significant support (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Sensex edges lower by 15 points, Nifty retreats from record highs to settle flat

MUMBAI, Feb 23: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty edged lower in a volatile trade on Friday, reversing early gains due to selling in IT and select banking shares. The 30-share BSE Sensex slipped 15.44 points or 0.02 per cent to close at 73,142.80 points with 17 of its constituents closing in the red and 13 in the green. The index opened higher but later slipped into losses due to profit-taking by investors. The barometer oscillated between a high of 73,413.93 and a low of 73,022 during the day. The broader Nifty of NSE closed lower by 4.75 points or 0.02 per cent at 22,212.70 points as gains in FMCG, pharma and financial shares were offset by losses in IT and private bank shares. The 50-share barometer scaled a record high of 22,297.50 in intra-day trade.

"Nifty opened higher but failed to sustain the morning momentum, leading to a closing at the day's low due to profit booking," Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst, LKP Securities, said.

Among Sensex shares, HCLTech, Asian Paints, Maruti, JSW Steel, TCS, SBI, ITC and Bharti Airtel were the major losers.

On the other hand, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, L&T and Wipro were the major gainers.

"The domestic market paused momentarily today after reaching another record high earlier in the day, driven by positive signals from global markets," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

The capital goods and industrial sectors showed strength, supported by advances in manufacturing and services.

BSE Midcap advanced 0.25 per cent while Smallcap rose by 0.53 per cent. Among sectoral indices, BSE Oil & Gas dropped by 0.81 per cent, BSE Metal by 0.33 per cent, BSE Energy by 0.36 per cent and Bankex 0.29 per cent. On the other hand, BSE Industrials spurred by 1.22 per cent, Telecommunications by 1.52 per cent, Capital Goods by 1.18 per cent, and Consumer Durables 0.76 per cent.

Reliance Industries rose by around 1 per cent to hit a 52-week high intra-day. Its arm Reliance Jio Financial Services soared by more than 14.5 per cent to hit a year's high level, taking its market valuation to more than ₹ 2 lakh crore. Global markets were mostly higher following sharp overnight gains in US markets driven mainly by stunning December quarter results by technology company Nvidia.

The Shanghai Composite index added 0.6 per cent while Hong Kong's Hang Seng was unchanged. Tokyo's markets were closed for a holiday. Germany's DAX, the CAC 40 in Paris and FTSE 100 in London rose up to 0.1 per cent. In the domestic market, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) were net sellers on Thursday as they offloaded securities worth ₹ 1,410.05 crore. (PTI)

Jakson Green inks pact with Rajasthan discom to supply power

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: Energy transition platform Jakson Green on Friday said it has signed a pact with Rajasthan's power distribution company RUVNL to supply electricity from its upcoming 100 MW solar photovoltaic plant in the state.

The project will be commissioned within 18 months from the date of signing the PPA (power purchase agreement), a company statement said.

Jakson Green said the pact with Rajasthan Urja Vikas Nigam Limited (RUVNL) for supply of electricity for 25 years is the first power purchase agreement for the upcoming solar project.

Earlier, RUVNL invited proposals for setting up solar PV projects across Rajasthan in April 2023. Jakson Green emerged victorious in the bidding process offering a tariff of ₹ 2.61 per unit for a project of 100 MW capacity.

"By securing this project, we are poised to make a significant impact on India's renewable energy landscape while reinforcing our position as a key independent power producer," said Kannan Krishnan, Joint Managing Director of Jakson Green Pvt Ltd.

The 100-MW plant is expected to generate clean electricity for over 80,000 households annually and eliminate 1,87,578 MT per year of carbon emissions.

Jakson Green is an energy transition platform backed by infrastructure and renewable major Jakson Group. (PTI)

Reserve Bank asks NPCI to help continue operations of Paytm app

MUMBAI, Feb 23: The Reserve Bank of India on Friday said NPCI has been asked to examine the possibility of it becoming a third party application provider for continued UPI operations of the Paytm app.

The central bank has barred Paytm Payments Bank from accepting further credits into its customer accounts and wallets after March 15, 2024.

With an aim to ensure seamless digital payments by UPI customers using '@paytm' handle operated by the Paytm Payments Bank, RBI said it has asked the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to examine the request to become a Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) for UPI channel for continued UPI operation of the Paytm



app. The request has been made by One97 Communication Ltd (OCL), which owns the Paytm brand, RBI said in a statement.

For seamless migration of '@paytm' handle to other banks, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said NPCI may facilitate certification of 4-5 banks as Payment Service Provider (PSP) Banks with demonstrated capabilities to process high volume UPI transactions. (PTI)

Kalyani Steels signs MoU with Odisha govt for manufacturing unit

BHUBANESWAR, Feb 23: Kalyani Steel Ltd on Friday signed an MoU with the Odisha government to set up a manufacturing facility with an investment of ₹ 11,750 crore. The project for manufacturing titanium metal, aerospace and automotive components and advanced specialty steel at Gajamara in Dhenkanal district will create 10,000 job opportunities, the company said in a statement.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said the collaboration will harness opportunities for the state to emerge as a high-skill job creator.

"By welcoming Kalyani Steels'

project, including a titanium metal and alloy mill, an aerospace components facility, and an integrated automotive component unit, Odisha marks its grand entry into a highly advanced and precision manufacturing sector," he said. Patnaik also said the project is a "perfect match for our aspirations for creating an ecosystem conducive to new-age industries".

The chief minister also said the project would catalyze the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), spurring the development of a vibrant ecosystem of ancillary industries and OEM (original equip-

ment manufacturer) suppliers, providing many more employment opportunities.

Kalyani Steels Ltd Director Amit Kalyani said the project signifies a milestone in the company's long-standing relationship with Odisha and promises mutual growth and prosperity. He also said, "By starting our operations in Odisha's dynamic environment, we strive to establish a mutually beneficial connection, promoting both development and innovation, while creating a wealth of opportunities for high-skill employment." (PTI)



Further, in case the study is not completed within the stipulated time, the approval will be deemed to have been given.

Additionally, it has now been mandated that the distribution system strengthening necessary for rooftop solar PV systems up to 5 kW capacity will be done by the distribution company at its own cost.

Also, the timeline for the distribution licensee to commission

rooftop solar PV systems has been reduced from 30 days to 15 days.

Consumers can now obtain separate electricity connections for charging their electric vehicles (EVs).

This aligns with the country's goal of reducing carbon emissions and reaching net zero by 2070, it stated.

It stated that provisions have been introduced to enhance con-

4 investors filed oppression and mismanagement suit against Byju management seeking appointment of new board, declaring rights issue as void, forensic audit of accounts

Byju's EGM gets underway; investors file suit before NCLT

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of Byju's shareholders got underway on Friday to vote on a resolution brought by some investors to oust founder CEO Byju Raveendran and his family over alleged "mismanagement and failures".

Raveendran and his family stayed away from the EGM, calling it "procedurally invalid."

Ahead of the EGM, a group of four investors of Byju's on Thursday evening filed an oppression and mismanagement suit against the management of the company in the Bengaluru bench of the NCLT, seeking declaring of founders, including CEO Byju Raveendran, as unfit to run the company, appointment of a new board, declaring the just-concluded rights issue as void and a forensic audit of accounts.

Sources with direct knowledge of the matter said the EGM was to start at 0930 hours on Friday morning but was delayed for almost an hour as some 200 people, some of them are Byju's employees, sought to join the virtual meet.

Only after due verification were the investors led in, they said, adding that some 40 people representing the investors were allowed in and would vote on the resolution moved by some investors.

However, the outcome of the vote at the EGM will not be applicable until March 13, when the Karnataka High Court will next hear Raveendran's plea challenging the move by certain investors.

The High Court on Wednesday refused to stay the EGM, called by shareholders collectively holding more than 32 per cent stake in Byju's. Raveendran and family own 26.3 per cent in the company.

The EGM notice calls for the ouster of the

current board of Think & Learn, the firm that operates Byju's, composed of Raveendran, his wife and co-founder Divya Gokulnath, and his brother Riju Raveendran.

Byju Raveendran on his part wrote to shareholders for the second time in a week saying the EGM was "procedurally invalid, contractually in contravention" articles of association and shareholder agreement, "legally on the wrong side of the Companies Act, 2013, and fundamentally designed and timed to create a media circus around it".

Sources said he wrote that the investors seeking his ouster, have assumed the roles of judge, jury, and executioner.

He quoted the Wednesday order by Justice Anant Ramanath Hegde of the Karnataka High Court and said: "The decision, if any, taken by the shareholders of Byju's in the EGM scheduled on February 23 shall not be given effect till the next date of hearing."

He went on to add that he was confident of getting a favourable final verdict. Calling the EGM invalid, he said neither he nor any other board member (the others being his wife and brother) would attend the meeting.

Under the articles of association and shareholders agreement, the attendance of at least one of the founders was necessary to form the quorum for a valid EGM, he claimed, adding that if there is no quorum within half an hour of the scheduled time, the EGM cannot commence.

Investors, who are seeking the ouster of Raveendran and family from the Byju's board at an EGM of shareholders for alleged "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startup, have also sought a forensic audit of the company in the plea filed before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Thursday evening, according to a court filing.



As per the filing, the investors have sought declaring the present management as unfit to run the company and appointing a new CEO and a new board.

The plea also wants a forensic audit and a direction to the management to share information with the investors.

Sources said the plea seeks a declaration of the just-concluded USD 200 million rights offer as void and sought a direction that the company should not take any corporate actions that will prejudice the rights of the investors.

The petition has been signed by four investors -- Prosus, GA, Sofina, and Peak XV -- along with support from other shareholders, including Tiger and Owl Ventures. The plea has been filed to prevent value erosion for all shareholders as well as preserve worth for other stakeholders -- employees and customers.

Concerns raised in the suit included financial mismanagement by the founders leading to losing control of Aakash, Byju's Alpha (TLB loan) default, and prolonged corporate governance issues, including non-hiring of

CFO and independent director.

Other concerns are about "oppressive nature" of the rights offer, alleged regulatory non-compliance, "oppressive, opacity and wilful defaults" in sharing information with stakeholders, and unauthorised corporate actions regarding acquisition of Singaporean edtech company Northwest Education Pte.

The plea has also mentioned about inter-corporate loans on undisclosed terms and multiple insolvency petitions filed by BCCI, TLB lenders, and Surfer Technologies Pvt Ltd.

The edtech firm in the last one year suffered other setbacks, including its auditor resigning, lenders beginning bankruptcy proceedings against a holding company and a US lawsuit disputing the terms and repayment of a loan.

Byju's was valued at USD 22 billion in 2022 and it is now valued at USD 200 million in a rights issue.

To mollify investors, Raveendran earlier this week wrote to them saying he is taking more steps to ensure transparency on how the funds will be utilised and committed to restructuring the board.

Detailing the reasons for seeking the ouster, the notice listed alleged financial mismanagement, erosion of value due to management's failure to enforce the company's legal rights, and concealment of material information.

The investors who have called for the EGM vote include South Africa's Prosus (9.10 per cent holding in Byju's), Peak XV Partners (formerly Sequoia Capital) (7 per cent), General Atlantic (6 per cent), Sofina (5.70 per cent), The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (2.40 per cent), Owl Ventures (1.30 per cent), and Sand Capital. It is the first instance of shareholders banding together to seek a change of guard in the company. (PTI)

Gold slips ₹ 80; silver plummets ₹ 700

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: Gold prices slipped ₹ 80 to ₹ 62,720 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid weak cues in the overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at ₹ 62,800 per 10 grams. Silver also plummeted ₹ 700 to ₹ 74,500 per kilogram, while it had closed at ₹ 75,200 per kg in the previous close.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at ₹ 62,720 per 10 grams, down by ₹ 80, taking bearish cues from overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading lower at USD 2,019 per ounce, down by USD 8 from the previous close. (PTI)

Rupee falls 8 paise to close at 82.93 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Feb 23: The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and depreciated by 8 paise to close at 82.93 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking a strong American currency and muted trend in domestic equities.

Forex traders said the Indian currency depreciated as foreign fund outflows weighed on the rupee.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.87 and finally settled at 82.93 (provisional) against the dollar, down by 8 paise from its previous close.

During the day, the rupee witnessed a range-bound movement. It saw an intra-day high of 82.84

and a low of 82.96 against the American currency.

On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 82.85 against the US dollar.

The Indian rupee depreciated on Friday on dollar demand from importers. Elevated crude oil prices also weighed on the rupee, said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on positive global equities and soft US dollar. However, any bounce back in crude oil prices may cap sharp upside. Geopolitical tension in the Middle East may put pressure on rupee at higher levels," Choudhary said, adding that USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a

range of ₹ 82.60 to ₹ 83.10.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was 0.05 per cent up at 104.00.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, was trading 1.33 per cent lower to USD 82.56 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 15.44 points, or 0.02 per cent, to settle at 73,142.80 points. The Nifty fell 4.75 points, or 0.02 per cent, to 22,212.70 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday as they sold shares worth ₹ 1,410.05 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

IFFCO Retains Top Spot as World's Leading Cooperative

GUWAHATI, Feb 23: The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) continues to solidify its position as the premier cooperative globally, retaining its Number 1 rank among the top 300 cooperatives worldwide for the second consecutive year. This prestigious recognition, as outlined in the 2023 edition of the 12th Annual World Cooperative Monitor (WCM) report by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), underscores IFFCO's substantial contribution to the national GDP and economic prosperity. The ranking, which is determined by the turnover-to-GDP per capita ratio, highlights IFFCO's significant role in bolstering India's economic growth. Notably, IFFCO has ascended to the 72nd position in the overall turnover ranking, a commendable advancement from its previous standing at 97th place. With a network comprising 35,500 member cooperative societies, 25,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), and 52,400 PMKSK centers, IFFCO is steadfastly advancing towards

the goals of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-reliant India) and 'Atmanirbhar Krishi' (Self-reliant Agriculture), serving as a beacon of prosperity through cooperative efforts.

Dr. Uday Shankar Awasthi, Managing Director of IFFCO, expressed pride in the organization's continued success, stating, "It is a moment of immense pride for IFFCO and the Indian Cooperative Movement alike. Our unwavering commitment to augmenting farmers' incomes, fostering nationwide agricultural growth, and fortifying the cooperative sector has been the cornerstone of our journey. Embracing innovation, we have introduced Nanotechnology-based solutions, starting with IFFCO Nano Urea Liquid, which has garnered widespread acclaim among Indian farmers. Our recent launch of IFFCO Nano DAP, recognized in the Annual Budget of the Government of India, further underscores our dedication to driving agricultural excellence. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the entire IFFCO team and the cooperative fraternity for this remarkable achievement."

Govt tweaks rules for speedy installation of electricity connection

People can now access new electricity connection in 3 days in metropolitan areas, 7 days in municipal areas, 15 days in rural areas

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: Now getting new electricity connections will be as fast as three days in metropolitan areas, seven days in municipal areas and 15 days in rural areas, according to the latest amendments in the existing norms.

The government has approved amendments to the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020, the power ministry said in a statement on Friday.

The amendments also simplified the process of rooftop solar installations and empower consumers living in multistoried flats to choose connection type and ensure separate billing for common areas and back-up generators in residential societies, thus enhancing transparency, the ministry said.

The revised rule provides for checking meters installed by distribution companies in case of consumer complaints to verify electricity consumption.

According to the statement, the time period for obtaining a new electricity connection under the rules has been reduced from

seven days to three days in metropolitan areas, from fifteen days to seven days in other municipal areas, and from thirty days to fifteen days in rural areas.

However, in rural areas with hilly terrain, the time period for new connections or for modifications in existing connections will remain 30 days, it stated.

The amendments have also made installing rooftop solar systems easier and faster.

The statement also said that the revised rules will facilitate faster installation and enhance the ease of setting up rooftop solar PV systems at the premises of "prosumers" (referring to consumers who would also produce electricity through rooftop solar system).

An exemption has been provided for the requirement of technical feasibility study for systems up to a capacity of 10 kW, it stated.

For systems of capacity higher than 10 kW, the timeline for completing the feasibility study has been reduced from 20 days to 15 days.

NAME CORRECTION

My actual name and correct name is Saraswati Dutraj (53) but is wrongly recorded in my husband's Pension Payment Order (PPO) vide no. 2349801853 as Saraswati Devi. My actual and correct date of birth is 25.01.1971 but wrongly recorded as 19.03.1997 in my husband's Pension Payment Order (PPO) vide no. 2349801853.

Therefore, Saraswati Dutraj and Saraswati Devi are the name of the same and one person, i.e., my actual name and my correct date of birth is 25.01.1971. Saraswati Dutraj, W/o- Sri Prem Bahadur Dutraj, R/o- Dewan Basti, PO & PS- Diphu, Dist.- Karbi Anglong, Assam, 782460

MoU signed to establish space labs across BTR districts BTR govt partners with Vyomika Space Academy

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Feb 23: Emphasising the need for elevating scientific acumen in the Bodoland region, the Government of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) has signed a transformative Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Vyomika Space Academy, a certified space tutor of ISRO - the Indian Space Research Organisation, in the presence of the chief executive member (CEM) of BTR, Pramod Boro, at a program held at Bodofa Cultural Complex, Chandamari in Kokrajhar - The City of Peace.

During the event, T K Sundarmurthy, former mission director, ISRO; Govind Yadav, CEO, Vyomika Space Private Limited; and Brajesh Mittal, chief innovation officer, Vyomika Space Pvt. Ltd were present, which marked a significant signing ceremony amidst the student fraternities and citizens.

Remarkably, the event has been initiated under the historic initiative and stepping out, and the space labs will be established across BTR districts with the aim of cultivating space education, sparking curiosity, and enhancing skill development among government school students in BTR, adding a significant leaf to the scientific journey of the region.

The MoU emphasises igniting curiosity about space exploration, promoting learning about space



sciences, and inspiring the next generation of space enthusiasts among the bright, young students of BTR's government schools across the region.

CEM Boro stated that the Government of BTR has been rendering services since its inception to bring a healthy welfare and educational environment among the young generations of the region. He hailed the signing of the MoU between the Government of BTR and Vyomika Space Academy, a certified space tutor of ISRO - Indian Space Research Organisation, to ignite an educational environ-

ment, calling it an impressive program to lead the space education arena.

"It filled me with joy and immense excitement to witness the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of BTR and Vyomika Space Academy, recognised as a certified space tutor by ISRO - the Indian Space Research Organisation. With this landmark MoU, the establishment of space labs across the BTR districts aims to spark curiosity about space exploration, foster learning in space sciences, and cultivate the

next generation of space enthusiasts among the talented students attending BTR's government schools," Boro expressed enthusiastically.

Govind Yadav, CEO, Vyomika Space Pvt Ltd, mentioned that the MoU will highlight skill development and the exploration of the educational environment in the days to come.

Among others, BTR executive members Wilson Hasda, Dr Nilut Swargiary, Arup Kumar Dey, along with the principal secretary and government officials, were present at the event.

Guv chairs development and law & order review meeting in Hailakandi

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 23: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria chaired a meeting with the heads of departments to assess the development works and prevailing law and order situation in Hailakandi district at the conference hall of the District Commissioner's Office on Friday.

In his second review meeting with the district administration of Hailakandi district, the Governor emphasised the importance of Aadhaar seeding, noting that the district lags behind even though the state average is higher. He also underscored the need to provide MGNREGA facilities to those in need, ensuring the guarantee of 100 days of work and integrating workers into agricultural activities to help them generate livelihoods.

Addressing the Public Health Engineering Department, the Governor urged to expedite the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission while commending the progress in the Swachh Bharat Mission. He also emphasised the



importance of focusing on effective waste management systems.

On the education front, the Governor said that the vacant teaching positions in high schools will be filled up very soon. He reiterated the need to improve the student-teacher ratio.

Regarding the Irrigation Department, the Governor stressed the importance of implementing the Solar Power MDTW scheme. He inquired about the procedures the officials follow to address any

issues farmers may encounter with the solar plants, emphasising the importance of effective communication to address the issue.

Additionally, the Governor encouraged officials to conduct self-reviews to identify areas for improvement and ensure effective outcomes in their respective sectors.

Besides, the Governor reviewed many other schemes such as PMJDY, PMSBY, APY under Social Security Schemes.

ATTSA urges BJP to field new candidate



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Feb 23: Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the influential Assam Tea Tribe Students' Association (ATTSA), Dibrugarh district unit, has urged the BJP leadership not to field incumbent Dibrugarh MP Rameswar Teli as the BJP candidate from the Dibrugarh constituency.

Speaking to media persons at Dibrugarh Sahitya Sabha Bhawan on Friday, Bimal Bagh, president of ATTSA, Dibrugarh, said, "We don't want Rameswar Teli to contest from the Dibrugarh seat in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections because he failed to address the issues of the tea tribe during his last 10-year term. He was a complete failure as a Dibrugarh MP. We don't want him again from Dibrugarh. We urge the BJP leadership to introduce a new face this time who will address our burning issues."

"If the BJP leadership again fields Rameswar Teli from the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha seat, then we will stop BJP leaders from entering tea garden areas. We are

very dissatisfied with him because he failed to address the burning issues of the tea tribe in the parliament. We have never seen him voicing our issues in the parliament," Bagh stated.

He added, "Instead of Rameswar Teli, the BJP leadership should field a new face from the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha seat. He didn't raise his voice for the tea tribe people. We are fighting for ST status, land patta, and many other burning issues, but despite knowing everything, Rameswar Teli remained a 'mute spectator' and didn't support these genuine demands."

Tea tribe people play a significant role during elections, particularly in Upper Assam, as they constitute a large portion of the population. The Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency is one of the major constituencies in Assam where tea garden candidates were given first priority.

"Rameswar Teli didn't think for the welfare of our people because in the last 10 years, he did nothing for us. Many tea gardens' lands were sold, but the Dibrugarh MP didn't raise his voice. To date, many tea garden workers haven't received their PF from the company, and despite many deaths among the workers, justice has not been served to the families," said Lakhindra Kurmi, secretary, Dibrugarh district.

He continued, "Land brokers and tea garden owners are selling garden land, but the Dibrugarh MP, despite being aware of everything, didn't speak up about the issue. 500 bighas of Bokel Tea Garden land and 64 bighas of Suraj Tea Estate land were sold. There are many tea estates in Dibrugarh where tea garden lands were sold."

Demise of renowned AASU leader Upendra Nath Sharma

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Feb 23: Upendra Nath Sharma, founder president of All Assam Students' Union (AASU), Morigaon district committee, and a pioneer leader of the language movement, educationist, and outspoken leader inspired by nationalist thought, passed away on Friday at his residence in Kahibari, Morigaon. Upendra Nath Sharma, the visionary of modern Morigaon, passed away at the age of 77 after a long illness. Sharma, known as a strong voice of nationalism, passed away in Kahibari, leaving the entire district mourning his loss.



Born in 1947 in Kahibari near Morigaon town, Sharma was the first graduate student of the Kahibari area. He was inspired by nationalist thought since his student days and served as the founder of the Barangbari Cooperative Society and contributed to the construction of dams in the district. He began his career as a graduate teacher at Baidyabari Higher Secondary School with the noble objective of enlightening students with the light of knowledge and retired from the same school. Sharma also served as the president and secretary of Morigaon District Brahmin Samaj and was the founder president of Kahibari Primary Brahmin Samaj for several terms. He was a member of the Morigaon District Karmachari Parishad, Secretary Khagen Mahanta, Assam Sena chief organiser, and former Morigaon District AASU president Himanshu Mahanta, former Morigaon District Students' Union president Mun Thakuria, and former general secretary Ghanendra Nath paid their last respects to the body. He was a true social activist, and his contributions in the field of education and society will always be remembered.

Awareness meet organised

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 23: The Magic Bus India Foundation, a non-government organisation, organised an awareness meet on 'Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management' on Thursday in a befitting manner. The event was held in the auditorium of Bartari Anchalik High School in Kamrup district.

Inaugurating the program, Hiranya Bairagi, cluster manager of the NGO, said that menstruation is a natural process and girls should be aware of the hygiene they need to maintain during menstruation.

Attending the event, state project officer Nazifa Hazarika Ahmed explained in detail about 'Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management'.

The event was attended by the head teacher of Bartari Anchalik High School, NGO staff Sumi Kalita, Upal Das, students, and all the guardians.

Assam Women's University hosts career fair to bridge industry-academia gap

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Feb 23: The Training and Placement Cell of Assam Women's University, in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), conducted a Career Fair 2024 on Friday, at Assam Women's University, Jorhat.

The Career Fair 2024 aimed to provide a platform for aspiring young women to interact with industry leaders, explore career opportunities, and bridge the gap between academia and industry requirements. With a focus on empowering women in the workforce, the event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, faculty, and representatives from various industries.

The event commenced with a registration process, ensuring that students had the opportunity to showcase their skills and qualifi-

cations to potential employers. Following the registration, a series of short training sessions were conducted to equip students with essential skills such as resume writing, interview techniques, and professional etiquette.

One of the highlights of the Career Fair 2024 was the psychometric test, designed to assess students' aptitude, personality traits, and career preferences. The test helped students gain insights into their strengths and areas for development, enabling them to make informed career decisions.

Throughout the day, students had the opportunity to interact with recruiters from leading companies across various sectors, including IT, healthcare, finance, and manufacturing. The Career Fair 2024 facilitated meaningful conversations between students

and industry professionals, providing valuable networking opportunities and potential job placements.

Kaushik Handique, chairperson, Training and Placement Cell, Assam Women's University, said, "We are committed to empowering our students and preparing them for successful careers in their chosen fields. The collaboration with CII has been instrumental in creating this platform for our students to connect with industry leaders and explore diverse career opportunities."

Jatin Hazarika, representative from CII, commented, "CII is proud to partner with Assam Women's University in organising the Career Fair 2024. We believe in the potential of young talent, and events like these play a crucial role in nurturing and harnessing that potential."

3659 new voters in Sivasagar Electoral District

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Feb 23: There has been an increase of 3659 voters in the Sivasagar Electoral District in the final electoral roll published recently after deleting the names of 8850 voters who died during the intervening period. Out of a total of 3,83,922 voters in the electoral district, the number of male voters is 1,90,098, and female voters are 1,93,824, while 1 is a transgender voter.



In the newly constituted 95 No Demow LAC, the total number of voters is 1,74,364, out of which male voters are 86,968 and female voters are 87,396. In 96 No Sivasagar LAC, the total number of voters is 2,07,604, out of which 1,02,772 are males while 1,04,832 are females.

Following the delimitation notification of the Election Commission (No 282/AS, 2023 Del), the erstwhile 104 Anguri LAC was merged with Sivasagar and the neighbouring Nazira LAC. The 103 Thowra LAC was reconstituted as Demow LAC. The number of polling stations in the new Sivasagar Electoral district has decreased to 481 from earlier 512.

APDCL worker electrocuted

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Feb 23: An APDCL employee was reportedly electrocuted while working on an LT power line at Kasojan, Titabar Ali area of Titabar sub-division in Jorhat district on Thursday.

According to a source, Rajib Dutta was electrocuted when his hand came in contact with a live 11KV power line that was above the LT line he was working on. Investigation is ongoing in the case.

Train services affected due to infrastructure developmental works

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 23: In view of pre-non-interlocking and non-interlocking works at Chaygaon, Non-Interlocking works at Bamunigaon and CRS inspection for commissioning of double line between Bamunigaon & Chaygaon under Rangiya division few trains will remain cancelled and diverted.

Train no 05020 (Guwahati - Mendipathar Passenger) Special, Train no 15602 (Guwahati - Dhubri) Express, Train no 15753/15754 (Alipurduar Jn. - Guwahati - Alipurduar Jn.) Siftung Express commencing journey from February 24 to 29, 2024 will remain cancelled. Train no 05803/05804 (New Bongaigaon - Guwahati - New Bongaigaon) Passenger Special commencing journey from February 25 to 29, 2024 will remain cancelled. Train no 05019 (Mendipathar - Guwahati) Passenger Special and Train no 15601 (Dhubri - Guwahati) Express commencing journey from February 25



to March 1, 2024 will remain cancelled. Train no 05922 (New Tinsukia - Dhubri) Special commencing journey on February 25 & 27, 2024 will remain cancelled. Train no 05608 (Guwahati - Mendipathar) Passenger and

Train no 05921 (Dhubri - New Tinsukia) Special commencing journey on February 26 & 28, 2024 will remain cancelled. Train no 05607 (Mendipathar - Guwahati) Passenger commencing journey on February 27 & 29, 2024 will remain cancelled.

main cancelled.

Trains diverted via Kamakhya - Rangiya - New Bongaigaon are as follows: Train no 12346 (Guwahati - Howrah) Saraighat Express commencing journey from February 25 to 29, 2024; Train no 15668 (Kamakhya - Gandhidham) Express commencing journey on February 28, 2024; Train no 15655 (Kamakhya - Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra) Express commencing journey on February 25, 2024.

Trains diverted via New Bongaigaon - Rangiya - Kamakhya: Train no 12345 (Howrah - Guwahati) Saraighat Express commencing journey from February 25 to 29, 2024; Train no 12503 (SMVT Bengaluru - Agartala) Express commencing journey on February 23, 2024; Train no 15619 (Gaya - Kamakhya) Express commencing journey on February 27, 2024; Train no 15078 (Gomti Nagar - Kamakhya) Express and Train no 07030 (Secunderabad - Agartala) Special commencing journey on February 26, 2024.

Integrated Health Campaign launched in Cachar

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 23: A significant milestone in public healthcare was achieved with the inauguration of the Integrated Health Campaign in Cachar district. This marks a collaborative effort between the Assam State AIDS Control Society (ASACS) and the district administration. The ceremony, held at the New Life Foundation in Saidpur, Sonabarighat, Silchar, was graced by esteemed dignitaries including Dr Indranoshee Das, ACS, joint secretary, Health & FW cum project director, ASACS, and Rohan Jha, IAS, district commissioner, Cachar.

The event witnessed the presence of ADC (Health), joint director of Health Services, district AIDS control officer (DACO), ASACS officials, DISHA representatives, medical officers, and other officials from the Health Department.

This collaborative initiative aims to conduct a series of health camps across various locations in

Cachar district, totaling 100. The camps will provide comprehensive health screenings covering a wide array of parameters, including HIV, Syphilis, Hepatitis B & C, TB, Blood Sugar, Blood Pressure, Sickle Cell, Malaria, Leprosy, among others.

Speaking at the inauguration, Dr Indranoshee Das highlighted the importance of such campaigns in promoting community health and well-being. She emphasised the significance of early detection and intervention in preventing and managing various health conditions. Rohan Kumar Jha reiterated the importance of collaborative efforts between government agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations in achieving comprehensive healthcare coverage.

The Integrated Health Campaign represents a proactive approach towards addressing healthcare needs at the grassroots level, fostering a healthier and more resilient community.

Assam Rifles conducts lecture

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Feb 23: Assam Rifles organised an interaction and motivational lecture for students at Karambir Navinchandra Vidyalaya in Charduar on Thursday, as stated in a press release. The event featured sessions covering the rich history, responsibilities, and challenges faced by Assam Rifles. Representatives from the force provided insights into their multifaceted operations and the critical role they play in safeguarding national security. The informative session highlighted the force's commitment to duty, discipline, and its relentless efforts in serving the nation with utmost dedication. A total of 9 teachers and 254 students witnessed the event, and the positive role played by the Army/Assam Rifles in ensuring support and motivation to the youth was widely appreciated by the school.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Trust dies but mistrust blossoms.
-Sophocles

Fight for farmers' rights

The recent resurgence of demands for a law guaranteeing Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for crops reflects the ongoing struggle of farmers against corporate encroachment in Indian agriculture. Central to these demands is the need to address the distress faced by farmers and ensure their livelihood security. While some economists argue against the feasibility of implementing guaranteed MSPs, it's crucial to delve deeper into the economic implications and the broader context of agricultural policies. Critics, including economists like Dr. Ashok Gulati and Dr. Ramesh Chand, raise concerns about the financial burden on the government, suggesting that procuring all crops at MSPs would strain the budget. However, empirical data reveals a more nuanced picture. The total value of major crops entering the market constitutes a fraction of the overall agricultural produce, and government intervention need not entail purchasing every grain. With a legal guarantee in place, even a modest procurement can set a price benchmark, stabilizing markets and compelling private traders to adhere to MSPs. Contrary to exaggerated claims of bankruptcy, the additional expenditure for ensuring MSPs is manageable. By reallocating resources, such as revising corporate and wealth taxes and adjusting public sector bank liquidity ratios, the government can effectively meet the financial requirements without jeopardizing other crucial sectors.

Moreover, portraying MSPs as a "reserve price" is misleading. The proposed law aims to regulate prices in the market, not mandate government procurement of every grain. Historical precedents, such as interventions by the RBI in other sectors, underscore the feasibility of market stabilization measures. Critics also overlook the economic ripple effects of MSPs on rural communities. Unlike corporate investments, which often prioritize speculative gains, income generated from crop sales immediately circulates within local economies, driving demand and fostering sustainable growth. Furthermore, guaranteed prices incentivize diversification in crop cultivation, promoting ecological resilience and reducing dependence on monoculture. This aligns with recommendations from the Swaminathan Commission for comprehensive socio-economic reforms to enhance rural livelihoods and ensure food security. However, addressing farmers' grievances extends beyond MSPs. The broader issue of corporate encroachment in agriculture, exemplified by the contentious farm laws of 2020, underscores the need for comprehensive policy reforms. Proposed contract-based purchasing schemes, devoid of MSP considerations, risk repeating past injustices faced by farmers and serve corporate interests rather than safeguarding farmers' rights.

While demands for guaranteed MSPs represent a critical step towards alleviating farmer distress, the ultimate goal must be to challenge corporate dominance and advocate for public ownership of agricultural resources. This necessitates sustained collective action by farmers and workers to resist exploitation and advance towards a more equitable and sustainable agricultural system. The renewed calls for guaranteed MSPs highlight the urgency of addressing farmer grievances and ensuring agricultural sustainability. By implementing comprehensive policy reforms and resisting corporate encroachment, India can safeguard farmers' rights and realize the vision of inclusive and equitable rural development.

Waging a war on children means to waging a war on future



were killed in Sudan, more than a million got displaced. Another report says that more than 3 million children and adolescents were victims in Columbia

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: M.R.Lalu

Efforts to strike a truce between Israel and Hamas have failed multiple times. Death toll has been mounting ever since Israel began its offensive. There has been complete disregard for human sentiments. Civilian lives and safety have been seriously impacted and thousands of children were forced to look up for help and hope with the world becoming a mute spectator. Undoubtedly, wars are disastrous. That's how it can be defined.

The quantum of bloodshed and disaster get them a place in the pages of history. And nobody can ultimately say for what wars are fought and who gains out of the bloodshed. But the calamitous impact of all conflicts stays for a long period until people who suffered roll back to normalcy. From Ukraine to Gaza and from Sudan to Myanmar and elsewhere on the globe, wars are equally vigorous as millions have so far been buried under the rubbles of mansions and many more turning orphans and thrown into perils. Why do wars bring long term horror to those who survive its grave violations? This is because most of the human right violations target innocent children and women. And they are the segment of society that carries the collective memory of ruthless invasions and bloodshed for generations. Their susceptibility is that they are non-combatants and easily targetable. This is the case with all wars that began to shake up the human conscience recently.

Organizations that are

enforcing the need of protecting human rights, especially that of the children, cry against the 'grave violations' of wars. The UN has come out with startling revelations on the drastic horror being carried out on children in its latest report. Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general calls it shocking and unforgivable. The number of children affected by the horrible impact of the Gaza war is alarming. He calls them the disproportionately affected and the most vulnerable.

Warning the world for its far-reaching effects he says that the atrocities include rape, sexual violence, recruitment of child soldiers and abductions.

The Secretary General's report also says that out of 27800 violations against 18890 children in 2022, about 8630 were either killed or mutilated and 7622 children got illicitly recruited to militant establishments and approximately 3985 children were abducted. The global scenario is so precarious that instead of receiving protection, children are made victims and punished for the reason they occupy less space of authority in a world of inhuman conflicts. Children were treated heartlessly as they belonged to any side of the parties in conflict.

A United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report points out that the number of grave violations inflicted on children are increasing daily in troubled areas of Congo, Palestine, Israel, Sudan and Somalia. While hundreds of children

reveals statistics of brutality that breaks all conventional understanding of violence. Impartially verifying the statistics, it puts a discomfiting picture of barbarity.

Staggeringly, another report brings a horrible account of human ruthlessness about the Israel-Palestine conflict. It says that more than 11500 Palestinians under 18 years have been killed by the Israeli aggression and about 24000 children have lost one or both parents. Many children have also been reported as recruited to military and militant groups with the purpose of using them in wars. They are directly used in combat operations and as support forces.

Islamic radicalism has been flourishing all over the world through a large number of child recruits being well trained and employed in armed combat operations. International Human right laws proclaim 18 as the minimum legal age for recruitment and use of children in hostilities. But laws have often been disregarded and abysmally disabled by groups that are engaged in conflicts. Use of children under the age of 15 is not only prohibited but the International law defines it as a war crime.

So what happens in regions that are engaged in armed conflicts amounts to be seen as war crimes. But their brutal enforcement of horror remains merely labeled as war crimes and the international community totally mute and emasculated.

UNICEF says the war crimes on children severely impact their mental health. The alarming reality of it is that more than a million children suffered in the Israel - Palestine conflict needs support. They have been forced to suffer perennial symptoms of persistent anxiety, loss of appetite and sleeplessness. Their outbursts of panic as they hear the bombings increase their predicament, it says.

It is not necessary that there should be wars to the magnitude of Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine for the children to get abducted and raped and used for violent acts. Children are frequently abducted and weaponized by armed groups and terrorists and gangs.

Another UN data says more than 105,000 children, both boys and girls, were used in violent conflicts between 2005 and 2022. As wars emerge afresh, a disturbing paradox potentially troubles the literal civility among societies and countries. Between conflicting groups and countries, wars are not always fought for a sudden political outcome, but with an indubitable purpose of altering the geopolitical alignments and dismantling the cultural framework. This is mainly due to the annihilation of a large segment of population or its permanent displacement.

placement.

The worst authoritarian regimes across the globe that found solutions for every single conflict through wars and bloodshed had this fundamentalist view of finding joy in destroying the cultural threads that ran through the younger generations. Wiping out an aspirational generation of their greater goals and seamless possibilities, the impact of wars would adversely affect the trajectory of life forever. Disabled, orphaned or displaced in wars, children would drastically find themselves marginalized everywhere.

Sadly, there could be an endless list of adversities that wars can bring on children. Death, injury, disability, illness, psychological suffering, rape and prostitution and many more such obvious situations would cripple their lives. Endless sea of sufferings would turn them into a colossal representation of brutality.

Humanitarian responses need to emerge as inhuman atrocities on children keep mounting in every conflict. Human minds need to evolve from conflicts to compassion and there should be clear alternatives to wars. It is so shocking to count the death toll of innocent children in wars that are fought between adults and nations. Wars have to stop, if not, at least, the children should be allowed to capture the glimpse of their future without any calamitous outrage of war befalling on them. Waging a war on children means to wage a war on our future. (The author is a freelance journalist who can be reached at mrlalu30@gmail.com)

Bir Chilarai: Architect of Koch glory and cultural renaissance

By: Dipak Kurmi

In the annals of history, certain figures emerge as unsung heroes, their contributions overshadowed by the grandeur of their contemporaries. One such luminary is Bir Chilarai, officially known as Shukladhwaja, a pivotal figure in the 16th-century Kamrupa-Kamata kingdom. Born on an auspicious full-moon day in the month of Magh (January-February) in 1510 A.D., Chilarai was the third son of King Biswa Singha and Queen Padmavati, and brother to the reigning monarch, Naranarayan.

Chilarai, often referred to by alternative names such as Sangram Singha, Samar Singha, Chota Raja, and 'Param Rashik Guru Raja Shukladhwaja', was renowned for his valor and humanity. His early years were marked by exposure to Brahmanical teachings under the guidance of 'Brahmananda Swami', a disciple of 'Vishnu Puri Sanyasi'.

Upon the demise of King Biswa Singha in 1533, Malladev assumed the throne as 'Naranarayana', while Chilarai undertook the crucial role of Naranarayana's Commander-in-Chief. The strategic organization and modernization of the Koch military machine became Chilarai's forte. His visionary approach toward soldier welfare included the allocation of freehold land based on ranks, ensuring the maintenance of soldiers' families wouldn't demotivate them during war.

The military prowess of the Koch dynasty, under Chilarai's leadership, extended to a formidable force of 52,25,000 during the reigns of Biswa Singha and Naranarayan. Chilarai not only fortified the military but also constructed well-designed forts, embankments, and ramparts for protection. His tactical brilliance, including the use of poisoned pools, guerrilla warfare, and the prioritization of Elephantry forces, earned admiration even from contemporaries like Ralph Fitch.

In 1547, before the conflict with the Ahoms, Gohain Kamal Ali, the youngest brother of Naranarayana and Chilarai, engineered a groundbreaking six-hundred-kilometer road connecting Coochbehar with North Lakhimpur. This engineering marvel, parts of which are considered the 52 No. National Highway today, exemplified the Koch dynasty's prowess.

The diplomatic and military sagacity of Chilarai became evident

in the conflicts with neighboring regions. The clash with the Ahoms in 1562, following Biswa Singha's failure in a previous campaign, reflected the determination to recover Ahom vassalage. The conquests extended beyond Ahom, including Kachar, Manipur, Jayantia, and Tripura. Each victory was marked by strategic planning, alliances, and tributes.

Chilarai's engagement with Hidimba, the kingdom of Kacharis, showcased his unique approach to warfare, employing guerrilla tactics and securing allegiance without conventional frontal warfare. The conquests continued with Manipur, Jayantia, and Tripura, each marked by diplomatic overtures, tribute agreements, and strategic construction.

Chilarai's patronage extended beyond the battlefield. A distinguished scholar, he translated Poet Jayadeva's Gita Govinda, earning respect among the era's greatest scholars. The cultural renaissance under Chilarai included Varanasi-educated scholars like Purusottam Bhattacharyya and Pitambar Sidhantavagisa, who contributed significantly to Sanskrit learning and Hinduism in the Koch dominion.

One notable episode involves Chilarai's support for Sankaradeva, a Vaisnava reformer. Despite initial reports of dissent from the old priestly class, Chilarai not only facilitated Sankaradeva's escape from potential arrest but also contributed to the spread of neo-Vaisnavism in the Koch Kingdom.

Chilarai's legacy extends beyond military conquests; he played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural and religious landscape of the Koch Kingdom. His instrumental support for scholars, protection of cultural icons, and patronage of the neo-Vaisnava movement mark him as a multifaceted leader whose contributions deserve recognition.

In contemporary times, the legacy of Bir Chilarai lives on through Bir Chilarai Divas, an annual celebration recognizing his birthday. The Bir Chilarai Award, the highest honor for bravery, serves as a testament to his indelible impact on the history and heritage of the region. As we reflect on the overlooked chapters of history, Bir Chilarai emerges as a towering figure, leaving an enduring legacy of military acumen, cultural revival, and unwavering leadership. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewsline@gmail.com)

Sant Ravidas – The guru of Rana Sangha and Mirabai

By: Er. Rajesh Pathak

In his book 'Sanskriti Ke Char Adhyay' Rashtrakavi Ramdhari Singh Dinkar writes – 'Disenchanted with ritualism, when the worshipper felt that the self-contentment and peace which ritualists fail to get from yagya and intellectual from higher meditation, that peace illiterate common man get easily just from dedicating himself upon any one of deities, then even the intellectuals began to turn towards the way of bhakti or devotion.' (P-374)

The 'bhakti' mentioned above first became popular in south India, behind which was great progressive saint Ramanujacharya. And in the northern part of the country it was Ramanand Swami that spread it among the people. Later when the devotees of the cult grew to a sizeable numbers, they formed their own separate sect known as 'Rasik-Sampradaya'.

Born in 1399 A.D. near Mughalsarai, Ravidas, a cobbler by caste, was one of the great saints belonging to the Rasik-Sampradaya; others

were Kabir, Dhanna, Sain, Pipa, Padmavati.

These all were those who initially had no knowledge of Sanskrit and were belonging to low class families for whom the source of income was sheer physical labor backed by ancestral skill. Dinkar again says that for the social-equality as far as a contemporary Brahmin



could go that far Ramanand went. His cult embraced lakhs of socially-economic-cally deprived people to its fold, groomed them with Vaishnava faith; and improved their behavior in accordance to Dharma.

Ravidas's parents were said to be in close proximity of Ramanand Swami and held him on high esteem. Influence of Ramanand Swami on the family manifested in child Ravidas most of all, who began to in-

cline more and more toward Bhakti. Later, he even initiated the reading of Vedas, Upanishads and so on in the divine proximity of Ramanand, doing the ancestral profession of footwear with that either. Whenever he would get the chance he accompanied Swamiji in participating religious polemics then held place to place.

And a time came when even the greatest of contemporaries began to surrender himself before Ravidas in the polemics. The tales of Ravidas's spirituality soon spread all around, and reached to the ears of the king of Kashi as well, and he invited him to his palace.

Under the spell of Bhakti of Ravidas the king grew ecstatic, and he soon bestowed upon him the highest honor of royal priest, one privileged with per-

forming of ceremonial worship of Lord Rama of royal-temple. Ravidas by now had attained that divine state that the people of all the hues began to throng from far flung places to hear his religious discourses.

Rejecting the exclusivist approach to Dharma, he preached that Moksha could be attained through either of the paths – 'Sakara' or 'Nirakara' [worshipping personal or impersonal God]. Being spiritual he was though above the worldly bondage, yet he was not detached to the national exigencies of his time. He was deeply hurt to see the plight of the common man, and was critical of Muslim sultans for treating Hindus as Kafirs.

When the ruler of Delhi, Sikander Lodhi, tried to pressurize him to embrace Islam, his brave reply was – 'Ved-vaakyautam dharma, nirmalwa ka gyan; yeh sachha mat chhod kar kyun padhun Quran' (Compositions in Vedas are enough for Dharma, and sacred being its wisdom; leaving such a true faith, why should I read Quran).

Thereafter, when Sikander Lodhi sent Sadnapir [Muslim

saint] to spiritually charm him into Islam, it worked otherwise. So captivated grew Sadna in divine proximity of Ravidas that he himself adopted Hinduism and became his disciple, changing his name as Ramdas!

Once Rana Sangha, the king of Chittorgarh, came to Kashi to have holy dip in Ganga with his wife, Ratna kuwari Jhali. When knew about Ravidas from the folk there, they came to join the satsang [religious congregation] held by him. Divine bliss they underwent here inspired them to accept Ravidas as their Guru, and they invited him to Chittorgarh as a royal-guest.

And, later on, there came many occasions when Ravidas kept visiting there. It is said that Ravidas was the first to lay the seed of devotion in Mirabai – the daughter-in-law of Rani Jhali. Lastly, Ravidas made Chittorgarh his permanent home on the request of Rani Jhali. And there one day this great soul departed to heavenly abode. It is in his memory that Shyam temple and a pool was built there. And here his chhatra (shrine) stood with the mark of his feet still lying there.

Supreme Court scrapping electoral bonds scheme is a boon for democracy

By: Krishna Jha

The Supreme Court has taken a step to restrain the limitless corporate funding to allow free and fair elections. It was the issue of Electoral Bonds that had a secret system and brought to light the grim fact that corporate houses had a stronger influence over political process than a common citizen who votes. It was not only 'arbitrary', but also 'unconstitutional'. Also these bonds remained anonymous which was in violation of the citizen's right. Voters need to know if there has been any reciprocal agreement among the receiving political parties and the donors.

The SC step also scraps amendments to I-T Act, Companies Act, allowing anonymous, limitless non-disclosed company contributions, as all these are in violation of Fundamental Rights.

All these factors led to one fact that Electoral Bonds function as political funding, which is not only illegal but also unconstitutional. And yet such funding continued. Till 2022-23, for the BJP, it was the highest at ₹ 6,566 crores. The cap on corporate funding is back. The contribution can go up to ₹ 20,000 only and no more. The Bench also asserted that Electoral Bond scheme is not exclusively to reign in the black money, and

when it is from companies, the contributions are simply business transactions.

On the other hand, individual contributions are usually to boost the financial strength of the particular political party. It also turns into a pressure which is violation of democracy, since it may influence the policy making itself. The Bench also described the Electoral Bonds as means to permit unlimited corporate contributions that is an authorization to unlimited unrestricted influence over the political process.

For our democratic set up visualized by our Constitution, the apex court has taken the step to scrap a six-year-old election funding system amounting to unveiling an unholy and "unconstitutional" secret system that allowed individuals and companies to donate money to political parties anonymously and without any limits.

The largest beneficiary of the system of donations by Electoral Bonds, introduced in 2017, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has come to realise the failure of the entire initiative that had benefited them since 2018.

Electoral Bonds have been challenged since their inception by the opposition on grounds that it was systematically kept as a secret from public view and thus vi-

olated their right to know about the source of it. Under the system, a person or company can buy bonds from the state-run State Bank of India and donate them to a political party.

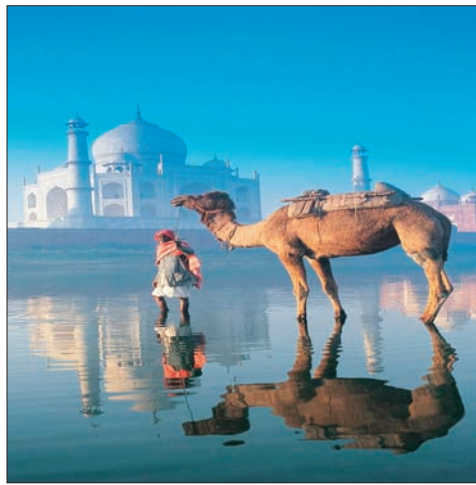
Individuals can donate any amount of cash. Companies had been restricted based on their revenue and profits, but the bond system removed those limits. The Supreme Court brought reinstated corporate donation limits, saying that treating companies and individuals alike for this was "manifestly arbitrary".

"The ability of a company to influence the electoral process through political contributions is much higher when compared to that of an individual... contributions made by companies are purely business transactions made with the intent of securing benefits in return," the court wrote.

The court directed SBI not to issue any more such bonds, to furnish identity details of those who bought them, and to provide information about bonds redeemed by each political party. Despite the Supreme Court making no bones about the electoral bonds being unconstitutional, Modi's government had defended the policy earlier, rationalizing their supportive stand saying it helps in rooting out the "black money" in political funding, allowing donors a confident-

tial channel to contribute to any party's funds. Under the system, a person or company can buy bonds from the state-run State Bank of India and donate them to a political party. Undeclared individuals and companies bought 165.18 billion rupees (1.99 billion dollars) of such bonds up to November 2023, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms, a non-government civil society group working on election funding in India. The group was a petitioner challenging the system. A five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said: "Political contributions give a seat at the table to the contributor... this access also translates into influence over policy making." "Because of the close nexus between money and politics it is possible that financial contributions "would lead to quid pro quo arrangements", the court said.

Finally the verdict came from five judge bench unanimously annulling the scheme, saying it violates Constitutional Rights to freedom of speech and expression and Right to information. It has been since demanded long by the progressive, democratic sections of the populace that elections must be manned by state funding and expenses never should go beyond that. It should be binding for all political parties. (IPA Service)



By: Ranjan K Baruah

One of the areas where many of us may be engaged professionally is the tourism sector. We should know that tourism supports millions of direct and indirect jobs all

Resilient tourism for vibrant career

over the world, in particular for women and young people. For some small island states and developing countries, tourism accounts for over 20 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The economic contribution of tourism (tourism direct GDP) was estimated at \$1.9 trillion in 2021, higher than the \$1.6 trillion recorded for 2020, but still well below the pre-pandemic value of \$3.5 trillion.

For many developing countries, including the least developed countries, Small Island developing states, countries in Africa and middle-income countries, tourism is a major source of income, foreign currency earnings, tax revenue and employment. Because tourism connects people with nature, sustainable tourism has the unique ability to spur environmental responsibility and conservation. In India, there are many places which are contributing through tourism. Region like north east is one of the examples how tourism can also help in livelihoods and job opportunities if planned strategically.

Sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, is a cross-cutting activity that can contribute to the three dimensions of sustainable development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by fostering economic growth, alleviating poverty, creating full and productive employment and decent work for all. 17th February is proclaimed as Global Tourism Resilience Day by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution A/RES/77/269 and it aims to emphasize the need to foster resilient tourism development to deal with shocks, taking into account the vulnerability of the tourism sector to emergencies.

The use of sustainable and resilient tourism as a tool to foster sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and financial inclusion, enables the formalization of the informal sector, the promotion of domestic resource mobilization and environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger, including the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity

and natural resources and the promotion of investment and entrepreneurship in sustainable tourism.

There are different career avenues when it comes to tourism. Apart from jobs in the government department there are many other jobs in the private sector. More and more people are becoming tourism entrepreneurs as it needs less investment in comparison with any other entrepreneurial activities. There are courses offered by different colleges and universities related to tourism. Popular courses included Bachelor of Tourism Studies or Bachelor of Tourism Management or Masters in Tourism Studies or Masters of Tourism Administration, etc. There are other diploma and post graduate diploma programmes related to tourism.

Mere academic qualification is not enough if one wants to excel in the field of tourism. There are people from other academic backgrounds or not much educated but doing excellent work in the fields of tourism which is possible through

their knowledge and skills. All those who are seriously planning or dreaming to do something related to tourism must love travel and initially they can travel to places to get practical ideas.

One of the best career opportunities in the field of tourism is none other than becoming tour entrepreneurs. Tour entrepreneurs mean not only guiding but handling other services too. We need to be skilled and our personality must be positive if we want to be a successful tour entrepreneur. There are many training offered by the government related to tour guiding which can be availed by our young people and start their enterprises related to tourism. Resilient tourism means more business opportunities and let's take advantages out of it and contributes positively to our communities and towards sustainability. *(The author is the Advisor of Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship Department of BTR, Kokrajhar and can be reached at 8473943734 or bkrjanjan@gmail.com for any career related queries)*

Anganwadi Recruitment 2024 – 10 Anganwadi Worker & Helper Posts

Last Date: 29/02/2024

Office of the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), Itakhuli, Tinsukia has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 10 Anganwadi Worker and Anganwadi Helper (Sahayika) vacancy in various Anganwadi centres. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Anganwadi Worker

No of posts: 1 post

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

Remuneration: ₹ 4,500 per month

2. Anganwadi Helper

No of posts: 9 posts

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

Remuneration: ₹ 2,250 per month

Other Criteria of Anganwadi Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidates age should be between 18 years to 44 years as on 1st January 2024.

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

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

How to Apply for Anganwadi Recruitment?

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

The filled up application will be received in the office of the Child Development Project Officer, Itakhuli, Tinsukia in all working days till 29th February 2024.

Documents to Submit With Application Form

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

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

Important Dates of Anganwadi Worker Recruitment 2024

Starting date of submission of application: N/A
Last date of submission of application: 29th February 2024

Assam Tea Employees Welfare Board Recruitment – Account Manager Post

Last Date: 29/02/2024.

Assam Tea Employees Welfare Board has released an employment notification for the recruitment of Account Manager post purely on Contractual engagement for a period of 11 (Eleven) months. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

Name of post: Account Manager

No of posts: 1

Age Limit: Minimum age is 18 years and maximum age is 40 years as on 01/01/2023

Monthly Fixed Remuneration: ₹ 30,000 inclusive of all other allowances.

Educational Qualification: Graduate in Commerce Stream with 45% marks aggregate with Accountancy and finance or M.B.A. (Finance) preferably with Computer application.

Experience: 2 (Two) years working experience in the field of accounts and Finance/ Office work either in the Govt./ Semi-Govt./ Undertakings in private Organization of good track record.

How to Apply for Assam Tea Employees Welfare Board Recruitment ?

Applications in Standard Form complete in all respect should reach the following address along with self attested copies of documents on or before 29th February, 2024.

The Welfare Commissioner,
Assam Tea Employees Welfare Board,
Amritpur Path,
Ganeshguri Chariali, Dispur,
Guwahati-781006.

Only the Shortlisted Candidates will be called for Walk-in-interview.

Documents to be produced at the time of Interview (In Original):

- # Age proof certificate, HSLC or CBSE Admit Card/ Birth Certificate issued by concerned District Health Authorities will be accepted.
- # Graduate Certificate or equivalent Certificate for proof of educational qualification.
- # Proficiency

Permanent/ Temporary Address Proof .
E-mail if any.

Place of Interview: Office of the Welfare Commissioner, Assam Tea Employees Welfare Board, Ganeshguri, Amritpur Path, Guwahati-6.

Hayat Hospital Guwahati Recruitment 2024 – 6 Posts

Last Date: 29/02/2024

Hayat Superspecialty Hospital, Guwahati has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 6 Manager, Educator and other posts. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. Manager / Assistant Manager - IT

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification: BCA/ MCA

Experience: 2-5 years

2. Nursing Educator

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification: M.Sc Nursing

Experience: 2-3 years.

3. Plumber

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification: ITI in Plumber Trade

Experience: 2 years

4. AC Operator

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification: ITI in R&AC, Electrical

Experience: 2 years

How to Apply for Hayat Hospital Guwahati Recruitment?

Interested and eligible candidates can mail their CV to the following email id - recruitment.hayathospital@gmail.com.

Last date of application: 29/02/2024.

Textbook Corporation Recruitment 2024 – 2 Vacancy

Last Date: 04/03/2024.

Assam State Textbook Production and Publication Corporation Limited (ASTPPC Ltd.) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 2 Junior Assistant Manager Commercial Vacancy. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Junior Assistant Manager Commercial

No of posts: 2 [SC-1, UR-1]

Educational Qualification:

- a. Graduate in Commerce stream from a recognized University.
- b. Minimum 1 year Diploma in Computer Application with operational knowledge of office automation.
- c. Diploma in Inventory Management.

Experience: Minimum 3 years experience in-

- a. Store Keeping
- b. Book Keeping from a reputed ware house/ godown.

Pay Scale: PB- ₹ 14000- ₹ 49000 GP- ₹ 6200

Other Criteria of Textbook Corporation Recruitment

Age Limit: The candidate should be less than 21 years and not above 40 years as on 01-01-2024.

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC/ ST: 5 years
OBC: 3 years

Important Dates of ASTPPC Ltd Recruitment 2024

Starting date of submission of online application: 23rd February 2024
Last date of submission of online application: 04th March 2024

Gauhati High Court Recruitment 2024 – 10 Systems Assistant Posts

Last Date: 07/03/2024.

Gauhati High Court has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 10 Systems Assistant Posts in the Principal Seat of the Gauhati High Court and District Courts of Assam. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Systems Assistant

No of posts: 10 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

UR: 7

STP: 2
STH: 1

Pay: PB-2, ₹ 14000-70000.

Grade Pay- ₹ 7600 (Principal Seat)
Grade Pay- ₹ 6200 (District Courts)

Educational Qualification:

a) B.C.A. with 60 % marks in aggregate or equivalent grade from a recognized institution with at least 1 (one) year working experience from a reputed institution/ organization. OR,

b) B.Sc. with 60 % marks in aggregate and 1 year Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Science / Application with 60% marks in aggregate or equivalent grade from a recognized institution with at least 1 (one) year working experience from a reputed institution/ organization. OR,

c) Diploma holders from Polytechnic in Computer Science/ Engineering or Electronics & Telecommunications with 60% marks in aggregate or equivalent grade from a recognized institution with at least 2(two) years working experience from a reputed institution/ organization.

Note: Required experience must be gathered only after attaining the qualifying educational qualification as mentioned above.

Other Criteria of Gauhati High Court Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidate's age should not be less than 21 years and not more than 40 years as on 1st January 2024.

Age Relaxation: Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

OBC/MOBC: 3 years
SC: 5 years
STP/STH: 5 years
PwBD: 10 years

Local Language Proficiency: The candidate should have knowledge of the Official Language of the State of Assam (Assamese).

Employment Exchange Certificate: The candidate must have a valid Employment Exchange Registration Number for the State of Assam.

Application Fee of Gauhati High Court Recruitment

Candidates have to pay the application as mentioned below according to their caste:

Category	Application Fee
SC/ ST	₹ 250
PWD	Nil
Others	₹ 500

Important Dates of Gauhati High Court Recruitment 2024

Starting date for submission of online application: 21st February 2024
Last date for submission of online application: 7th March 2024, till 4.30 pm
Last date for payment of fees: 13th March 2024, Till bank transaction hours

Prayas Adhyayan Chakra Recruitment – 7 Teacher Posts

Last Date: 15/03/2024.

Prayas Adhyayan Chakra, Bokakhat has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 7 PGT and Graduate Teacher vacancy for Jatiya Bidyalay under Prayas Adhyayan Chakra, Bokakhat. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. PGT

No of posts: 5

Subjects: Botany, Zoology, Economics, Physics and Chemistry

Pay: Negotiable

Educational Qualification: Master Degree (B.Ed Preferable)

2. Graduate Teacher

No of posts: 2

Subjects: Tabla Bissarad and Violin

Pay: Negotiable

Educational Qualification: Bachelor Degree (B.Ed Preferable)

Age Limit: Upto 40 years

Application Fee: Nil.

How to Apply for Prayas Adhyayan Chakra Recruitment?

Interested and eligible candidates may send their Bio-data to pacbk04@gmail.com within 15th March 2024.

About Prayas Adhyayan Chakra, Bokakhat

Prayas Adhyayan Chakra (Regd No. : Trust 350/60GLT), a organization dedicated to work in the field of empowerment of economically and educationally weaker section of the society.

Under this organization there are four schools namely - Bokakhat Jatiya Bidyalay (Senior Secondary School of Arts, Science and Commerce from class Nursery to class XII under SEBA & AHSEC comprising of both English and Assamese medium), Mohuramukh Jatiya Bidyalay, Brahmaputra Jatiya Bidyalay, Disoiporiya Jatiya Bidyalay.

Address: Prayas Adhyayan Chakra
Timou Bil Par, 1 No Ward,
Bokakhat, PIN – 785612, Golaghat, Assam



Built by Intuitive Machines, the lander - named Odysseus - touches down on the moon at around 6.23 pm ET on Thursday

Private US company makes history by landing first commercial spacecraft on Moon

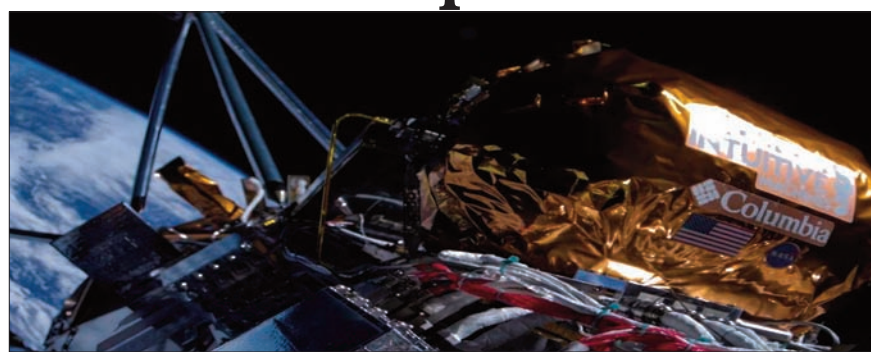
WASHINGTON, Feb 23: A private American company has scripted history by landing the first commercial spacecraft on the Moon as well as the first US vehicle on the Earth's only natural satellite in more than 50 years, joining earlier feats by India, Russia, the US and China.

Built by Intuitive Machines, the lander - named Odysseus - touched down on the Moon at around 6:23 p.m. ET on Thursday, making it the first American spacecraft on the Moon since the Apollo 17 mission in 1972.

"Today, for the first time in half a century, America has returned to the Moon," Bill Nelson, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator said after Intuitive Machines, a Houston-based company, landed its Odysseus robot near the lunar south pole.

The lander carries a bounty of NASA scientific instruments, "and bearing the dream of a new adventure in science, innovation and American leadership in space, well, all of that added the landing of the lifetime," Nelson said.

"What we can confirm, without a doubt, is our equipment is on the surface of the Moon, and we are transmitting," Flight Director and Chief Technology Officer Tim Crain announced amidst cheers among his colleagues and others across the country as there were some tense moments before the landing on the Moon.



As the spacecraft made its final descent, mission controllers lost contact with it, as was expected to occur, NBC News reported.

"After troubleshooting communications, flight controllers have confirmed Odysseus is upright and starting to send data. Right now, we are working to downlink the first images from the lunar surface," Intuitive Machines said, announcing the historic feat.

"I know this was a nail-biter, but we are on the surface, and we are transmitting. Welcome to the Moon," Intuitive Machines Chief Executive Officer Stephen Altemus said during the livestream.

The lander will have seven days before darkness descends on the landing site, preventing the spacecraft's solar panels from gathering energy from sunlight and bringing freezing temperatures, ABC News re-

ported.

In August last year, India made history as its moon mission Chandrayaan-3 became the first to land in the uncharted south pole of the Earth's only natural satellite and became the fourth country to master the technology of soft-landing on the Moon, propelling it into an elite group of nations.

"What a feat for IM, SpaceX and NASA. What a triumph for humanity. Odysseus has taken the Moon," Nelson said.

"Today, for the first time in the history of humanity, a commercial company, an American company, launched and led the voyage up there. And today is a day that shows the power and promise of NASA's Commercial partnerships," Nelson said.

Intuitive Machines was one of several companies approved by NASA under Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS)

programme contracts to build private lunar landers that the federal space agency, among others, would use to send instruments into space, the report said.

"Congratulations to everyone involved in this great and daring quest at Intuitive Machines, SpaceX and right here at NASA. What a triumph. Odysseus is taking the Moon. This feat is a giant leap forward for all of humanity," Nelson said.

Intuitive Machines CEO Steve Altemus said that the company's employees' names are engraved into the footer to stamp their names permanently on the lunar surface.

"I had everyone's name etched on the bottom of the landing gear so that their names will be indelibly printed on the moon when we touch down softly," he told ABC News.

NASA said the lander brings NASA science to the Moon's surface. "These instruments will prepare us for future human exploration of the Moon under #Artemis," it said. The Wall Street Journal said the lander is carrying NASA research devices under a USD 118 million contract, which is part of its CLPS, as well as commercial cargo, including a sculpture project from artist Jeff Koons.

"The company and its customers are expected to have about a week to run devices before lunar night sets over the site where Odysseus landed, rendering it inoperable," the daily reported. (PTT)

Putin takes a flight in nuclear-capable bomber in a tough message to the West ahead of election

MOSCOW, Feb 23: Russia's President Vladimir Putin on Thursday took a co-pilot's seat in a nuclear-capable strategic bomber on a flight that appeared aimed at bolstering his image ahead of next month's election he's all but certain to win.

Putin's 30-minute flight in a Tu-160M supersonic strategic bomber also seemed intended to send a reminder of Russia's nuclear might amid soaring tensions with the West over the fighting in Ukraine.

Putin, 71, who is running as an independent candidate, relies on a tight control over Russia's political system that he has established during 24 years in power.

Friday's death of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny sent a chilling reminder of the Kremlin's ruthless crackdown on dissent and dealt a heavy blow to the beleaguered Russian opposition.

On Thursday, Putin, clad in a flight suit, boarded the warplane at a snow-covered airfield of an aircraft-making plant in the Volga River city of Kazan that has built the heavy bombers since the Soviet times.

The plant has received state orders to produce a modernized version of the Tu-160 bomber that first flew in the 1980s and was code-named Blackjack by NATO.

The aircraft Putin flew was one

of the first such revamped bombers built, equipped with new engines and avionics and designated Tu-160M.

Speaking to reporters after the flight, Putin praised the new aircraft as "excellent," noting that it has big improvements compared to the initial version.

Thursday's flight marked at least the third time he got in a cockpit of a warplane.

In 2000, he took a co-pilot's seat in a Su-27 fighter to fly to Chechnya during separatist fighting there and in 2005 he co-piloted a Tu-160 during military drills.

As part of the Kremlin efforts to project an image of an action-loving and physically strong leader, Putin also took a co-pilot's seat in an amphibious plane, flew a paraglider and drove a racing car and heavy trucks.

He also drove a heavy truck to a meeting in Kazan on Thursday, one of a series of campaign trips ahead of the March 15-17 presidential election.

With prominent critics who could challenge him either jailed or living abroad and most independent media banned, Putin's reelection is all but assured. He faces a token opposition from three other candidates nominated by Kremlin-friendly parties represented in parliament. (AP)

UK and EU agree to cooperate on tackling illegal immigration as post-Brexit relations thaw further

LONDON, Feb 23: Britain and its former partners in the European Union have struck a deal to cooperate more on tackling illegal migration, in the latest sign of a thawing in relations between the two sides following Brexit.

The British government said in a statement Friday that UK border agencies and Frontex, the European Union's border and coast guard agency, will be able to access each other's intelligence to secure borders and tackle organised immigration crime.

There will also be joint training, deployments of staff from one side to the other, and collaboration on research and development on new technologies.

The agreement, which will be signed later in London, doesn't include any bilateral returns agreement, which means neither side will be obliged to take any asylum-seekers under burden-sharing arrangements agreed on between the EU's 27 member states.

"Organised immigration crime and people smuggling are global challenges that require shared solutions and ambitions," UK Home Secretary James Cleverly said.

"Our landmark working arrangement between the UK and Frontex is another crucial step in tackling illegal migration, securing our borders and stopping the boats," he added.

Relations between the two sides on an array of issues has been improving in the past few months, having been severely tested during the drawn-out divorce negotiations that followed Britain's 2016 vote to leave the EU.

The split became final in early 2021 with the agreement of a barebones trade and cooperation deal, but relations grew even more testy under strongly pro-Brexit UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Rishi Sunak, the current prime minister who took the helm in October 2022, has quietly worked to improve the United Kingdom's relationship with its European neighbours, though trade friction and deep-rooted mistrust still linger.

Last year, for example, he agreed that Britain would rejoin the EU's USD 100 billion science-sharing programme Horizon Europe.

Sunak has made cutting illegal immigration one of the main pillars of his leadership. (AP)

US is imposing more than 500 new sanctions on Russia's war machine, indicts Russian businessmen

WASHINGTON, Feb 23: The Treasury Department plans to impose more than 500 new sanctions on Russia and its war machine on Friday as the US vows to keep up its financial pressure on Moscow with the war entering its third grueling year.

The sanctions represent the largest single tranche of penalties since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. They come on the heels of a series of new arrests and indictments announced by the Justice Department on Thursday that target Russian businessmen, including the head of Russia's second-largest bank, and their middlemen in five separate federal cases.

The Biden administration is seeking to demonstrate its unwavering support for Ukraine, even though Republican lawmakers allied with former President Donald Trump are blocking vital additional IUS military aid.

The White House had promised major sanctions in response to the death last week of Russian President Vladimir Putin's most prominent critic, opposition leader Alexei Navalny, in an Arctic penal colony. Biden said Thursday after meeting with Navalny's wife and daughter that the sanctions would be "against Putin, who is responsible for his death."

The planned sanctions were previewed by two administration officials who spoke on condition of anonymity



before their release on Friday. Additional sanctions are expected from the State Department as well.

Thousands of sanctions have already been imposed on Russian officials, businessmen, banks, companies and entire industries since the start of the war.

Out of the Justice Department, the cases announced on Thursday include charges unsealed in New York against sanctioned Russian banker Andrei Kostin and "two of his US-based facilitators." The facilitators, Vadim Wolfson and Gannon Bond, were arrested Thursday.

Kostin, the longtime president of state-owned VTB Bank, is charged with engaging in a scheme to evade sanctions and launder money to support two superyachts. He, along with the two others, is also accused of trying to evade sanctions by concealing his ownership of a home in Aspen, Colorado. The indictment says Wolfson and Bond

arranged to sell the house and provide Kostin with about USD 12 million from the sale. Michael Khoo, a co-director of the department's Task Force KleptoCapture, said on a call with reporters that the announcement was meant to send a message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that "we're not going away" and "we can play the long game as well" so long as the war continues.

The KleptoCapture task force enforces the economic restrictions within the US imposed on Russia and its billionaires.

The Justice Department says over the past two years it has secured court orders for the restraint, seizure, and forfeiture of nearly USD 700 million in assets and has charged more than 70 people with violating sanctions and export controls. The United States has been able to transfer more than USD 5 million of seized Russian assets to Europe in support of Ukraine's defense, US officials said Thursday. But the process of justifying each confiscation of alleged illicit assets in court is a painstaking one by law, playing out over years.

"The Justice Department is more committed than ever to cutting off the flow of illegal funds that are fueling Putin's war and to holding accountable those who continue to enable it," Attorney General Merrick B. Garland said in a statement. (AP)

Hamas leader leaves Egypt after cease-fire talks with officials there

BEIRUT, Feb 23: Hamas says its political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, has left Egypt after holding talks with Egyptian officials about a possible cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and an exchange of hostages held by the militants for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel.

The statement released early on Friday by Hamas did not say whether Haniyeh's talks with Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel about ways of ending the war, a hostage deal and the flow of aid to Gaza were successful or led to a breakthrough. The talks in Cairo came ahead of a high-level meeting expected over the weekend in Paris, where international mediators will present a new proposal.

The United States, Egypt and Qatar have been struggling for weeks to find a formula that could halt Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza, but now face an unofficial deadline as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches.

Israel seeks a phased deal, including a temporary pause in fighting in exchange for the release of some of the roughly 100 hostages still held by militants since the brutal October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel. Israel has vowed to keep fighting until Hamas is crushed.

Hamas initially demanded to end the war, now in its fifth month, before hostages can be released. Hamas has said that it would release the Israeli hostages in return for the all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Israel rejected that demand, and mediators have been working on a new deal.

During Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel, militants killed about 1,200 people and took some 250 hostages. Roughly half of the hostages were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November. About 100 hostages remain in captivity, in addition to the bodies of 30 others who were killed on October 7 or died in captivity.

Israel's subsequent offensive in Gaza has killed more than 29,000 Palestinians and driven some 80 per cent of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes. (AP)

Pakistan blocks X for the sixth day as activists criticize the social media platform's shutdown

ISLAMABAD, Feb 23: Pakistan's media regulators have blocked the social media platform X, formerly Twitter, with users across the country on Thursday enduring the sixth day of sweeping disruptions, partial and complete shutdowns.

There was no comment on the outage by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and government officials have not responded to repeated queries from The Associated Press for comment.

Human rights activists have demanded a full restoration of internet services and access to social media. Washington has also urged Pakistan to lift restrictions on X.

The outage was first observed over the weekend when the political party of Pak-



istan's imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan announced protests against what it says were rigged Feb. 8 parliamentary elections.

In the vote, candidates backed by Khan, who was barred from running, won most seats but short of a simple majority needed to form a government.

Social media platforms are often used by protest organizers to call followers out to the streets and spread the word about planned demonstrations.

Pakistan has witnessed an increase in political instability since the balloting. The country's elections oversight body denies charges by Khan's party that the vote was stolen. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party or TPI said on Thursday that the restrictions on X have been placed by the authorities to suppress its voice on social media.

On Wednesday, U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller expressed concerns in a statement to reporters over the outage and restrictions on the freedom of expression and association in Pakistan. (AP)

Fire engulfs 2 buildings in Spanish city of Valencia, killing 4 people

VALENCIA, Feb 23: A fire engulfed two residential buildings in the eastern Spanish city of Valencia on Thursday, killing four people and leaving 19 others missing hours after the blaze started, authorities said.

The fire sent fleeing residents onto balconies where some were rescued by firefighters, officials said.

Firefighters rushed to the scene on the outskirts of the city center as flames burst from windows of the 14-story residential building where the blaze apparently started.

Residents could be seen waiting for rescue on bal-

conies, and firefighters used a crane to lift two residents from one of the balconies.

Valencia's assistant emergency services director, Jorge Suarez told reporters that four people were confirmed dead and that some six hours hours after the blaze started firefighters were trying to cool down the outside of the building before attempting to go inside.

Soldiers from Spain's Military Emergency Unit also were deployed and medics set up a large tent to tend to the injured on the scene.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known, but

news reports said it might have spread rapidly owing to materials used in the building's structure.

The fire sent clouds of black smoke billowing skyward that could be seen from afar. Spain's weather agency, Aemet, reported winds of up to 60 kph (40 mph) at the time.

The fire began in the early evening and spread to an adjacent building, state news agency

Efe reported. Emergency service reports said that besides the four people killed, at least 13 were injured, most with fractures, burns and

smoke inhalation. The 13 included six firefighters.

It was not immediately clear how many people were in the buildings or how many were rescued.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez posted a tweet on the X platform saying he was "shocked by the terrible fire in a building in Valencia," adding that he had offered the city "all the help that is necessary."

"I want to convey my solidarity to all the people affected and recognition to all the emergency personnel already deployed at the scene," Sanchez said. (AP)

A team of 71 personnel of the IAF Sarang Helicopter Display Team will participate in the mega event

IAF's Sarang helicopter display team working hard for aerobatics display at Singapore Airshow 2024

SINGAPORE, Feb 23: Indian Air Force's Sarang helicopter aerobatics team is working hard to put up a good show with their daring manoeuvres over the weekend at the Singapore Airshow to showcase a spectacular display of flying skills and aerobatics, a senior official said on Friday.

The five-day Singapore Airshow is being held from February 20-25 at the Changi Exhibition Centre and has over 1,000 participating companies from more than 50 countries and regions, according to organisers.

Singapore's people can expect a spectacular display of flying skills and aerobatics from the Sarang team of the Indian Air Force (IAF) over the weekend at the mega gathering.

A team of 71 personnel of the Indian Air Force's (IAF) Sarang Helicopter Display Team will

participate in the mega event with five Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH), also known as 'Dhruv'.

"The 71-strong team is working hard to put up a good show for the people of Singapore," Group Capt Ashish Moghe, Public Relations Officer (PRO), Sarang, told PTI on Friday.

The Sarang team is honoured to be in Singapore to represent the Indian Air Force in one of the world's biggest airshows, he added.

The team arrived in Singapore on February 12 and performed two shows on Tuesday and Wednesday at the airshow. Its first international display also took place in the city-state for the Asian Aerospace Airshow in 2004. Underlining the deep cultural and defence ties between India and Singapore, Capt Moghe said, "We endeavour to further strengthen these ties and to win the hearts of the kind and generous cit-

izens of this prosperous city-state."

He explained that the Sarang's challenging manoeuvres are Dolphin's Leap, Cross Over Break, Double Arrow Cross, Mesh, Level Cross, Sarang Heart and Sarang Split.

He said that while it is natural to expect daring manoeuvres and precise formation by fixed-wing aircraft, it is notably challenging to do the same in helicopters owing to the unstable nature of rotary wings.

"One would find only a handful of helicopter display teams across the globe, and this makes the Sarang Helicopter Display Team

unique," said Capt Moghe.

"The team is performing a four-helicopter display designed to highlight the Advanced Light Helicopter agility and manoeuvrability, as well as the high degree of skills

of the IAF pilots flying these machines."

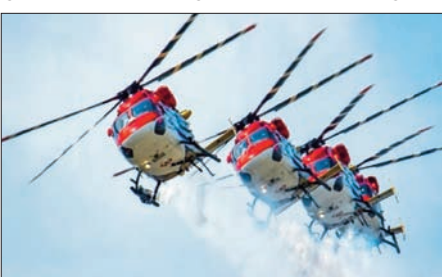
The Sarang Helicopter Display Team has evolved from the ALH Evaluation Flight, which was formed in Bengaluru in 2003, to evaluate the indigenous helicopter 'Dhruv' before its induction into operational service. "True to its name, the ALH has been a guiding beacon, standing out like the Pole star in the In-

dian Aviation sector," said the Group Captain.

Manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Dhruv is featured in the five-day Singapore show for the very first time. All the military services of India operate the indigenously manufactured ALH and its advanced variants. The successful induction and operational utilisation of this platform is one of the glowing success stories of self-reliance (Atma Nirbharta) in the defence sector, said Capt Moghe.

In June 2004, the Flight was converted into 151 Helicopter Unit and the fledgling team was rechristened 'Sarang', which in Sanskrit means Peacock, the National bird of India.

"The synchronised aerial ballet of four brightly painted metal birds draws comparisons with the graceful Peacock," elaborated Capt Moghe. (PTT)



Taliban holds public execution for 2 men, who are killed by gunfire in a stadium as thousands watch

GHAZNI, Feb 23: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban carried out a double public execution on Thursday at a stadium in the country's southeast, where relatives of the victims of stabbing deaths fired guns at two convicted men while thousands of people watched.

The Taliban's Supreme Court ruled that the two men were responsible for the stabbing deaths of two victims in separate attacks, according to a court statement. It identified the two as Syed Jamal from central Wardak province and Gul Khan from Ghazni — though it was unclear who carried out the stabbings, the two convicted men or others.

The statement also said that three lower courts and the Taliban's supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, had ordered the executions in retribution for their purported crimes. On Thursday, people crowded outside the stadium in the Ali Lala area of the city of Ghazni,

clambering to get in. Religious scholars pleaded with relatives of the victims to forgive the convicts, but they refused. Abu Abu Khalid Sarhadi, a spokesman for Ghazni police, said that relatives of the victims executed the two men. He did not say what type of guns they used.

The executions started shortly before 1 p.m. There were 15 bullets fired, eight at one of the men and seven at the other. Supreme Court spokesman Abdul Rahim Rashid said the men were shot from behind. Ambulances then took their bodies away.

The killings were the third and fourth public executions since the Taliban seized power in 2021 amid the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces from Afghanistan.

The United Nations has strongly criticized the Taliban for carrying out public executions, lashings and stonings since seizing power, and called on the country's rulers to halt such practices. (AP)

Justdial signs MoU with Nagaland govt for digitisation of businesses

Justdial to play critical role in digitising operations, improving web presence of enterprises registered with Nagaland directorate of industries and commerce

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Feb 23: Justdial, India's leading local search engine, signed a memorandum of understanding, with Nagaland's directorate of industries and commerce for digitisation of businesses registered with the industries and commerce department.

The MoU, signed recently, reaffirmed Justdial's commitment to encouraging digital growth in Nagaland, an official release said on Friday.

As per the MoU, Justdial will play a critical role in digitising operations and improving the web presence of enterprises registered with the directorate of industries and commerce. In turn, the department will actively cooperate with these enterprises, encouraging the sharing of critical information to increase their digital presence.

"We are thrilled about this



collaboration with the directorate of industries and commerce in Nagaland. Justdial is committed to leveraging its digital prowess to empower local businesses, drive digital adoption and contribute to the economic progress of the state. Our mission is to connect businesses with customers and drive growth through innovative digital solutions," said Shwetank Dixit, chief growth officer of Justdial.

The three-year partnership programme emphasises a long-term commitment to the growth and development of businesses in Nagaland.

The release said Justdial and the directorate of industries and commerce will work together to support the department's objectives and contribute to the overall economic development of the state.

"This partnership represents a shared commitment to augment economic development

by harnessing the power of information, technology and strategic alliances. By facilitating greater access to resources, enhanced visibility, and fostering a supportive ecosystem, Justdial and the directorate of industries and commerce, aim to create an impact on the economic landscape and propelling local industries to new heights of success," said Tokugha Achumi, additional director of the state industries and commerce department, said.

The Nagaland directorate of industries and commerce plays a crucial role in providing policy guidance for industrial development in the state.

It formulates viable industrial projects, provides training to entrepreneurs and offers financial incentives to promote the growth of small-scale, tiny and cottage industries.

Heavy snowfall in higher areas of Arunachal, 70 tourists rescued

GUWAHATI, Feb 23: Around 70 people, including tourists and locals, have been rescued from Sela Pass following heavy snowfall in the higher reaches of Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh, a defence spokesperson said here on Friday.

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) went beyond its mandate of keeping the roads open for traffic and carried out the operation to evacuate approximately 70 tourists and locals stranded at the Sela Pass, he said.

The incident took place when some vehicles got stranded at the Pass on the night of February 22/23 and the BRO mobilised its men and equipment to rescue them.

The team braved out the chilling cold with temperatures going below -10 degree celsius to save precious lives throughout the night and were able to move them to safety by Friday morning, the spokesperson said.

BRO's Project Vartak has deployed men and personnel round-the-clock at not only Sela Pass, but other important roads in the region as well to keep it accessible for traffic at all times, the spokesperson said. (PTI)

Manipur HC decision to revoke inclusion of Meiteis in ST list evokes contrasting reactions

IMPHAL/CHURACHANDPUR, Feb 23: The Manipur High Court's decision to delete a paragraph from its March 2023 order, which urged the state to consider including the Meitei community in the scheduled tribe list, has evoked contrasting reactions from the two warring communities in the northeastern state.

While Meitei organisations said it will continue the movement for ST status for the community claiming it is not just a matter of the judiciary, a Kuki bodies welcomed the verdict asserting that it is the right decision.

Keithelakpam Bhogen, the general secretary of the Scheduled Tribe Demand Committee Manipur (STDCM), expressed determination to continue the movement for ST status for the Meitei community despite the court's decision.

He said the issue is not solely a judicial matter and vowed to persist in their efforts, including engaging with legislators.

World Meitei Council president Heigrujam Nabashyam downplayed the significance of the directive, stating that their demand for ST status would persist, unaffected by the court's decision.

The March 27, 2023 directive, believed to be a catalyst for ethnic unrest that claimed over 200 lives, was rescinded by a single judge bench of Justice Golmei Gaiphulshilli during a review petition hearing on February 21. The contentious paragraph from last year's verdict, instructing the state to expedite consideration of Meitei community inclusion, was deemed for deletion.

On the other hand, the Zomi Council Steering Committee convener welcomed the high court's decision, considering it the right course of action.

ITLF media spokesperson Ginza Vualzong criticised the Meitei community's demand for ST status, characterising it as absurd and driven by ulterior motives such as land acquisition of tribals.

Vualzong argued that the Meiteis, being an advanced group with their language recognised in the Constitution, should not seek ST status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, who include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts. (PTI)

Nagaland felicitates NCC brass band girl cadets

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Feb 23: The Nagaland government felicitated the 31 NCC girl cadets of Nagaland, who were part of the NCC Girls Brass band in the Republic Day parade 2024, during a programme held at the Raj Bhavan in Kohima on Friday.

The felicitation programme was organised by the state youth resource and sports department and NCC GP Kohima.

Speaking as the special guest at the programme, Governor La Ganesan congratulated the 31 cadets from Nagaland who demonstrated their skills and achieved their goal of participating in the R-Day parade.

He said it takes sheer determination and resilience to represent the state at a platform as grand and as prestigious as the Republic Day parade in New Delhi.

Saying that it is the dream of every NCC cadet to be a part of this event, Ganesan said they are among the few who have realised this ambition.

He also extended his congratulations to the parents for their vital support in their children's realization of this dream.

Ganesan lauded the Nagaland government, the youth resources and sports department and the North East Region Directorate of the NCC for their role and support in grooming the young cadets.

"Such support will undoubtedly encourage these young cadets to strive for excellence in the future and become conscientious citizens of our country," he added.

The Governor also handed out certificates of appreciation to all the cadets.

Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio, who was also pres-

ent on the occasion, said it is a moment of joy to see the NCC cadets of Nagaland creating history by being a part of the first-ever NCC Girls Brass band who had marched on Kartavya path during the Republic Day parade 2024.

He said the NCC, which solemnly pledges to always uphold the unity of India to take up a secular outlook and immerse into the selfless service of the nation, has been playing a pivotal role in molding and shaping our youth to become responsible citizens of the nation.

He also said it was a joyous moment for the state to witness a Naga girl, Ruyanguo Kense, leading the Delhi police during the Republic Day parade in New Delhi. Maj Gen Gagan Deep, ADG, NCC NE Region, also spoke on the occasion.

Meghalaya to sustain 100 hectares for organic farming: Minister

SHILLONG, Feb 23: Minister in-charge Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Ampareen Lyngdoh, said on Friday that Meghalaya aimed to convert over 100,000 hectares of land for organic cultivation under the Meghalaya State Organic Mission 2024-2028.

Replying in the Assembly, Ampareen said, "The Meghalaya State Organic Mission 2024-28 has been formulated and launched on February 15, 2024, with the ambitious aim of converting and sustaining 100,000 hectares of land under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)-certified organic cultivation."

She said six service providers have been empaneled to facilitate certification processes and implement the mission.

The minister also said that an



organic society has been formed, named Meghalaya's Natural and Organic Society for Livelihood and Innovation in Agriculture (MEGNOLIA), to implement the organic and natural farming initiatives in the state.

The state government introduced the Meghalaya State Organic and Natural Farming Policy 2023 last year.

Leader of opposition, Ronnie

continued the use of chemical fertiliser, but in 2022, farmers have expressed their inability to shift from inorganic farming to organic farming. "(However), we have looked at the entire map of cultivable land, and we are now slowly increasing and placing it under the map of organic farming," she added.

Former chief minister Mukul Sangma, while participating in the discussion, said there is a need to exercise caution on duplication of schemes, meaning areas already taken up under the state plan are also taken up from the funds of the Government of India.

VPP leader Ardent M Basaiawmoit also suggested the need to have a data entry system for farmers to ensure the state has an accurate statistic on the number of farmers in the state. (NNN)

Border crimes need comprehensive collaboration, diplomatic efforts: Tynsong

SHILLONG, Feb 23: Meghalaya deputy chief minister in-charge home (police), Prestone Tynsong on Friday said international border issues pertaining to the state, particularly concerning crimes committed by Bangladeshi nationals, require comprehensive collaboration and diplomatic efforts in accordance with international conventions.

Replying to a calling attention notice moved by NPP legislator from Sutnga-Saipung Santa Mary Shylla in the Meghalaya legislative assembly in regards to the murder of a man by suspected Bangladeshi nationals at Loomsoki village under Narpuh elaka, Tynsong said, "Even though, various measures have been initiated to provide security to the people of the border areas, due to the porous nature of the border, especially in areas which are yet to be fenced, crimes perpetrated by Bangladeshi nationals have been reported from time to time."

On January 6, one Chiang Dhar (55) was brutally attacked and killed allegedly by Bangladeshi nationals while guarding betel nut gardens at Balisara, Loomsoki village.

"Despite the issues that persist due to international protocols, the police department is leaving no stone unturned in its endeavour to deliver justice to the victim and the family members," Tynsong assured.

He further added that the district police is not only expediting the investigation of the case, but also maintaining strict vigilance along the international boundary in collaboration with the Border Security Force to ensure peace and security of the people residing along the border.

Further, the deputy CM informed that the state police have also adopted various measures to enhance the safety and security of the people living along the international border with Bangladesh. These include the strategic setting up of 13 police stations namely Mahendraganj, Ampati, Dalu, Baghmara, Rongara, Dawki,

Pynursla, Shella, Mawsynram, Ranikor, Lumshnong, Gasupara and Nonghyllam near the Indo-Bangladesh border and the setting up of 19 anti-infiltration units along the international border.

Police officials have been consistently conducting mobile and foot patrolling, long range patrolling at regular intervals along the Indo-Bangladesh border so as to instill confidence and a sense of safety among the residents of these areas.

He said the district police stationed along the Indo-Bangladesh border are also maintaining close relations with the border security force, wherein joint patrolling and operations are being carried out regularly to thwart/curb trans-border crime and illegal infiltration.

Tynsong said that the coordination meetings with the BSF at different levels are being held from time to time to address several issues including crimes committed by Bangladeshi nationals along the Indo-Bangladesh border.

Community Liaison Groups (CLG) have also been formed by the officers-in-charge of police stations and in-charges of police outpost comprising of BSF officials, police, headmen and village elders.

Meetings are also being conducted from time to time to sort out issues of the people residing in the border areas and the support of the border residents are also being solicited in sharing of real time intelligence with the police/BSF on movement and activities of suspected anti-social elements in their respective villages so that swift and effective measures can be taken to counter/neutralize any impending threat.

Village defence parties (VDP) have also been constituted in the border areas under the supervision of respective SDPOs, OCs' and ICs for the purpose of carrying out preventive patrolling, promoting crime reduction measures and assisting the police in their official discharge of duties, he added further. (NNN)

Dalai Lama's escape trail being developed as spiritual tourism spot in Arunachal

Project to be implemented by state public works department

ITANAGAR, Feb 23: The Arunachal Pradesh government is developing the escape trail of the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, from where he entered India, into a spiritual and religious tourism circuit.

Little-known Lumla in western Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district would soon be on the national tourism map. The young Dalai Lama had passed through even stayed, in this area during his escape from Lhasa to India in 1959. The project is being executed by the state public works department.

"We are developing the escape trail of His Holiness into a religious and spiritual tourism circuit which is going on. As many as five monoliths will be constructed in each place where the Dalai Lama spent the night during his journey to India from Tibet," Tsering Lhamu the Lumla MLA told PTI. In 1959, when the Chinese crackdown on Tibet seemed inevitable and the Tibet uprising had reached the palace of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama at Lhasa, he along with family members and a few aides escaped to India. The escape trail was through the business route Tibet (Tsona) to Khen-Dze-mani under the Zemithang circle in Tawang district.

On March 31, 1959, the Dalai Lama and a group of eight people along with another group of eighty people were received officially at Khen-Dze-Mani by the political officer of Tawang, the 5 Assam Rifles and the people of Zemithang.

A small gate known as 'Lhasa Dwar', the point where the Dalai Lama entered India, is

marked by the 'Holy Tree', which is said to have grown from a staff dug by the Dalai Lama. It is now worshipped as a relic marking the historic event.

Another notable point of interest in this area is a hanging bridge on the Indian side, followed by the Lhasa Dwar.

Gorsam Chorten, a little far from Lhasa Dwar, is one of the largest stupas of Buddhism, located 90 km from Tawang. It was founded by a Monpa monk Lama Pradhar in the 12th century and is the largest Buddhist stupa in the region. Monpa is a major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

People say after he entered Zemithang, the Dalai Lama stayed in the Gorsam Chorten for a day. Zemithang is now being developed as a vibrant village in Tawang district under the Centre's vibrant village programme.

Lhamu informed that two gompas at Thonglek and Lumla areas were completed as part of the project and one museum is also coming up at Lumla which will display various artefacts related to the Dalai Lama.

District tourism officer of Tawang, Tsering Dickey said that early last year a team from the department accompanied by the then tourism secretary Sadhna Deori visited the trail site from where the Dalai Lama entered India to explore the feasibility of developing it into a tourist circuit.

To add impetus to the tourism sector, a 113 feet Maitreya Buddha (Future Buddha) statue, is coming up at Buri along the Indo-Bhutan bor-

der under the NE scheme of Swadesh Darshan of the Union tourism ministry for the development of Bhalukpong-Bomdila-Tawang tourism circuit.

Swadesh Darshan scheme is one of the flagship schemes of the ministry for the development of thematic circuits in the country in a planned and prioritised manner. Under the scheme, the government is focussing on the development of quality infrastructure with the objective of providing better experience and facilities to visitors on one hand and on other hand fostering economic growth.

The ministry during 2014-15 sanctioned the circuit under the scheme with an allocation of Rs 49.77 crore. Under the project, the ministry has developed facilities like accommodation, cafeteria, wayside amenities, last mile connectivity, pathways, toilets, multipurpose hall at Jang, Sorang Monastery, Lumpo, Zemithang, Bumla Pass, Gritsang TSO lake, PTSO Lake, Thingbu and Grenkha Hot Spring, Lumla, Sela Lake.

In 2015-16, the tourism ministry sanctioned another circuit under the scheme for the state for development of Nafra-Seppa-Pappu, Pasa, Pakke Valleys- Sangdupota- New Sagalee-Ziro- Yomcha, with an allocation of Rs 97.14 crore.

"The Maitreya Buddha statue has already been completed and work on the surroundings is going on," the MLA disclosed and added that she is planning to organise an annual event to woo more tourists. (PTI)

No. DPRD/BTC/(15th FC)/UT(V/UdI-02/2024/9 Dated Kokrajhar, the 22nd Feb., 2024

PRESS NOTICE
(e-Procurement)

The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for implementation of work "Const. of road with E/F and S/G from Barmukuli Pucca road to Mwidarbari via Sagalijhar alongwith Hume Pipe" for an amount not exceeding of Rs. 39,00,000.00 (Rupees thirty nine lakhs) only under 15th Finance Commission to BTC for the year 2022-23 (Grant No.66) under Untied Grant during 2023-24 from the registered contractors of Class-I & Class-II (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building) , BTC.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/- Director,
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1463

No. DPRD/BTC/(15th FC)/UT(V/UdI-03/2024/9 Dated Kokrajhar, the 22nd Feb., 2024

PRESS NOTICE
(e-Procurement)

The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for implementation of work "Const. of road with EF and SG from Jitu Boro house to (Bhutiachang) Mainaopuri turning at Salbari with 1 slab culvert" for an amount not exceeding of Rs. 36,00,000.00 (Rupees thirty six lakhs) only under 15th Finance Commission to BTC for the year 2022-23 (Grant No.66) under Untied Grant during 2023-24 from the registered contractors of Class-I & Class-II (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building) , BTC.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/- Director,
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1462

No.DPRD/BTC/(15th FC)/UT(IV)/UdI-46/2023/02 Dated Kokrajhar the 20th Feb., 2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders with a validity period of 90 (Ninety) days from the date of receipt in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamps of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed F-2 form are hereby invited from the Govt. registered PWD (Roads/ Building), Irrigation, Water Resources, PHE others Govt. Contractor's under Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II and Class-III category from approved firm/ suppliers of 2020-21/2021-22 according to tender limit of eligibility for the following works and will be received in the office of the undersigned up to 2.00 pm on 14-03-2024 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.15 pm in the presence of willing contractors or their authorized agents.

Sl. No.	Name of Dev. Block	Name of Scheme	A/A Amount (in Rs. lakh)	Tender Amount (in Rs. lakh)	Earnest Money (ST, SC, OBC-1% & Gen-2%)	Cost of Tender	Time for completion in days
01	Rowta	Const. of road with E/F and S/G from Hazirapara village from Subiram Basumatary house to the connecting CC block road via Prabin Hajong house	19.90	19.70297	(ST, SC, OBC-1% & Gen-2%)	@ 600/-	3 months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent up to 12.00 Noon on all working days from 21-02-2024 to 14-03-2024 in the office of the undersigned on payment of in the form of Banker cheque/ Demand draft of any nationalized Bank (Preferable SBI) duly pledged to the Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar. The Cost of tender (Non-Refundable) must be in the form of Demand Draft/ Banker Cheque of a Nationalized Bank drawn in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar and payable at SBI, Kokrajhar to be deposited 0.03% . The Contractor should submit valid Registration certificate, GSTIN, PAN Card, Voter Card, Aadhar Card, Caste Certificate and Labour License along with the tender. In case the office remain closed in tender receiving/ opening day the same will be received/ opened on the next working day.

Note :-

- The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar does not bind himself to accept the lowest tender and also reserves the right to reject all tenders without assigning any reason.
- Payment will be made subject to availability of fund under appropriate Head of Account No claim what so ever in this regard will be entertained.
- Taxes will be deducted as per relevant provision of Act.
- Contractors will have to submit their tender with upto date registration certificate and item of annexure should be enclosed with the tender otherwise tender will be treated as cancelled.
- The tenderer should submit their tender with up to date GSTIN certificate and PAN Card failing which the tender may be treated as cancelled.

Sd/- Director,
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1456

INDIA bloc members incite people in name of caste: PM Modi

VARANASI, Feb 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched a scathing attack on INDIA bloc, saying members of the opposition alliance believe in instigating people in the name of caste and making them fight.

He also said the opposition leaders cannot "tolerate" Dalits and tribal people occupying high posts. He cited the presidential election which was contested by Droupadi Murmu.

Varanasi is Modi's parliamentary constituency. The prime minister also remarked that Ravidas ji has been calling him repeatedly to his birthplace of the ancient temple town.

Speaking at a function here to commemorate the 647th birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas, Modi said, "In every era, the sermons of the saints show us the path and also alert us. In our country, whenever anybody indulges in discrimination in the name of caste, it damages humanity."

"If someone instigates (others) in the name of caste, it also damages humanity. Hence, brothers and sisters, today every Dalit and backward of the country has to



keep in mind that 'INDI gathbandhan', which believes in instigating and making people fight in the name of caste, opposes the schemes meant for the welfare of the Dalits and 'vanchit' (deprived)," he said.

The prime minister further said the truth is that these people indulge in politics of vested interest of the family in the name of welfare of castes.

"You must be remembering that when construction of toilets was started, they ridiculed it. They also

mocked the Jan Dhan accounts and also opposed Digital India.

"Not only this, these 'parivar vaadi' (dynastic) parties have another identity - they do not want any Dalit or tribal person outside their families to move ahead. They cannot tolerate Dalits and tribal persons occupying high posts," Modi said.

"You must be knowing that when Droupadi Murmu, the first woman tribal president, was contesting elections, then who all opposed her and which parties came

together to defeat her.

"It was all the 'parivar vaadi' parties, who see the Dalits, tribal people and backwards as their vote bank during the elections. We have to remain alert from these people and from such a mindset. We have to follow the positive education of Ravidas ji, while avoiding the negative mentality of casteism," he said.

Showering praises on Sant Ravidas, Modi said, "Ravidas ji belongs to all and everybody belongs to Ravidas ji. He cannot be confined within the boundaries of caste, religion, sect and ideology."

"Ravidas ji has been calling me repeatedly to his birthplace. I got an opportunity to take forward his pledge. I get an opportunity to serve his lakhs of followers. Serving the followers at the birthplace of the Guru is nothing less than a privilege for me," he said.

Born in Varanasi, Ravidas was a mystic poet-saint of the Bhakti movement in the 15th and 16th centuries. Venerated as a spiritual teacher in several regions of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, he was a

poet, social reformer and spiritual figure.

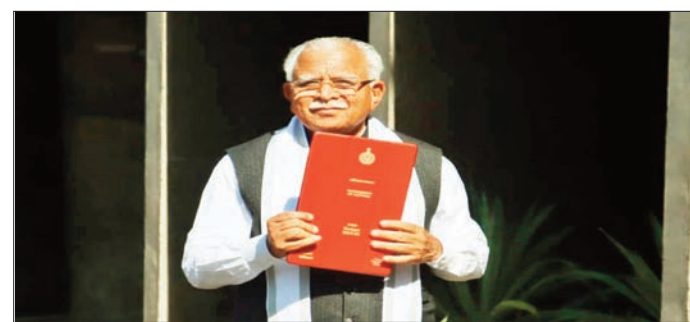
Modi also said India is moving rapidly on the path of development by adopting the messages of Sant Ravidas.

"On the pious occasion of the birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas, I welcome you all to his birthplace. You have come from far-off places on this occasion, especially my brothers and sisters from Punjab... Varanasi seems to have become a mini-Punjab," he said.

At the Sant Guru Ravidas Janmasthan temple at Seer Goverdhanpur near BHU, the prime minister inaugurated the newly installed statue of Sant Ravidas in adjoining Ravidas Park. He also inaugurated various development works around Sant Ravidas Janam Sthal worth about Rs 32 crore and laid the foundation stone for the Sant Ravidas Museum and beautification of the park worth about Rs 62 crore.

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath and Chairman of Sant Guru Ravidass Janam Sthan Temple Trust Sant Niranjana Dass among others were present on the occasion. (PTI)

Haryana announces interest waiver on crop loans in budget amid farmer protests



CHANDIGARH, Feb 23: Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday announced waiver of interest and penalty on certain crop loans and did not hike taxes as he presented a ₹ 1.89 lakh crore budget for 2024-25 financial year.

While announcing the budget proposals at a time when farmers have intensified their protests at Punjab-Haryana borders, Khattar asserted that his government has taken many steps for the welfare of the farmers and that Minimum Support Price (MSP) is being given for 14 crops.

The government has also decided to double the financial compensation to ₹ 1 crore for families of soldiers who die in the line of duty.

"For 2024-25, I propose a budget of ₹ 1,89,876.61 crore which is 11.37 per cent more than ₹ 1,70,490.84 crore (revised estimates) of 2023-24," Khattar said while presenting the budget in the Haryana Assembly.

In a major announcement, Khattar, who also holds the finance portfolio, said that interest and penalty will be waived on crop loans taken by farmers from Primary Agriculture Credit Societies (PACS).

"I announce to waive interest and penalty on the crop loan in case crop loan was availed till September 30, 2023 and the principal amount is paid by May 31, 2024, provided the farmer is registered with MFMB (Meri Fasal Mera Byora)," he said.

He said that such loans should have been taken by farmers registered on MFMB portal and thereafter, the farmers will be eligible for crop loan from PACS during Kharif season. As the chief minister made the announcement, Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda asked him, "you talk of farmers, then why you slap NSA (National Security Act) on farmers. Farmers are protesting on Haryana's borders."

In response, Khattar said that "as much farmers are dear to you, they are to us also".

"I am the son of a farmer, I know the pain of farmers. When I have announced a scheme in favour of farmers, either you are not able to digest it or not liking it," he said.

On Friday, Haryana Police said it was withdrawing the earlier decision to invoke provisions of the NSA against some farmer leaders

who are part of the ongoing farmers' agitation.

This comes a day after Ambala police issued a statement saying that it was implementing the process of detaining office bearers of the protesting farmer outfits under section 2(3) of the National Security Act, 1980, to maintain law and order and prevent criminal activities.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) are spearheading a 'Delhi Chalo' march to press the government into accepting their demands, including a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price for crops and a farm loan waiver.

While presenting the budget in the state assembly, Khattar also announced an increase in the financial compensation from ₹ 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore for families of soldiers who die in line of duty.

He also announced that his government would provide 1,000 km of free travel in Haryana Roadways to nearly 22.89 lakh families having an annual income of ₹ 1 lakh, benefitting 84 lakh people. It will incur an estimated expenditure of ₹ 600 crore, he said.

A ₹ 10 crore startup fund will be set for encouraging drone manufacturing in Haryana, said Khattar.

The government will also train women to operate drones for agricultural purposes and these women will be called 'drone didis', he said.

"The state will also make provisions to provide drones, which may be given on rent for agricultural purposes. For details, a notification will be issued later," the chief minister said. He also announced that freedom fighters' monthly allowance will be raised from ₹ 25,000 to ₹ 40,000.

Khattar also proposed setting up of 400 new sports nurseries in the state. Besides, two high performance centres for boxing and wrestling will come up in Panipat, Sonapat in 2024-25, he added.

A sum of ₹ 578 cr for the sports sector has been proposed in 2024-25 as against ₹ 432 crore in 2023-24, said the CM.

Khattar said 21 vegetables and fruit crops have been included in the "Bhavantar Bharpai Yojana to reduce farmers' risk."

In the last two years, stubble burning incidents dropped by 67 per cent in Haryana, he added. (PTI)

Shubhkaran's cremation won't happen till Punjab govt registers FIR: Farmer leaders

CHANDIGARH, Feb 23: Farmer leaders participating in the 'Delhi Chalo' agitation on Friday said the cremation of Shubhkaran Singh, who died amid clashes between Haryana Police and Punjab farmers, will not take place till the Punjab government registers a case against those responsible for it.

The development came hours after Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced a compensation of Rs 1 crore and a government job for Shubhkaran's sister.

Shubhkaran Singh, 21, a native of Bathinda, died on Wednesday at Khanauri border point on the Punjab-Haryana border amid clashes between Haryana Police and Punjab farmers. The incident took place when the farmers rushed to the barricades, several layers of which had been erected by Haryana authorities to prevent farmers from proceeding with their march, and clashed with police.

According to the medical superintendent of Patiala-based Rajindra Hospital, Shubhkaran had an injury to his head. The post-mortem was delayed as the farmers pressed for acceptance of their demands.

Speaking to reporters in Patiala, farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher said the Punjab chief minister had asserted that stringent action would be taken against those responsible for Shubhkaran's death. But now the officials are saying that it was not possible, the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha leader said.

"We have told the (Shubhkaran) family that it may take two days or 10 days. For us money is not important. We are demanding that an FIR be lodged and then cremation will take place," he said and accused Punjab government officials of "pressuring" Shubhkaran's family into agreeing to the cremation.

Replying to a question, Jagjit Singh Dallewal, leader of SKM (Non-Political) that is spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march along with the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, claimed the senior superintendent of police of Bathinda has said that police could not register a case against Haryana security personnel.

"If you cannot register a case, then how can you call yourself 'Punjab de rakhe' (Punjab's protector)," Dallewal posed, adding the police officer told them that if they registered a case, then Haryana security personnel would also do so.

Replying to another question, Dallewal said, "A youth died during our agitation. Our priority is to ensure justice for him. We are concentrating on it. It is up to the Punjab government how soon it will give justice to us."

Asked about the next course of action on the call for the march to the national capital, Pandher said, "We will hold a meeting and make our stand clear."

Punjab CM Mann on Friday announced compensation and a job for Shubhkaran's sister.

"The family of Shubhkaran Singh, who got martyred during the farmer's movement at Khanauri border, will be given financial assistance of Rs 1 crore by the Punjab government and a government job to his younger sister. Due legal action will be taken against culprits," he said in a post on 'X' in Punjabi.

Farmers leaders were also demanding "martyr" status for Shubhkaran Singh.

Mann on Wednesday said he was saddened by the death of the young farmer and asserted that stringent action would be taken against those responsible for it. "After post-mortem, a case will be registered. Those officials responsible for his death will have to face stringent action," he had said.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, which spearheaded the 2020-21 farmers' stir, has announced that farmers would observe a 'black day' on Friday to mourn the death and will burn effigies of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, and state home minister Anil Vij.

It said farmers will take out tractor marches on highways on February 26 and hold an All India All Kisan Mazdoor Mahapanchayat at Ramlila Maidan in Delhi on March 14. The SKM is not part of the Delhi Chalo agitation but has extended support to it.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) are spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' march to press the government to accept their demands, including a legal guarantee of MSP for crops and a farm loan waiver.

Farmer leaders on Wednesday put the 'Delhi Chalo' march on hold for two days after a protester was killed and about 12 police personnel injured in clashes at Khanauri and had also said that they would decide their next course of action on Friday evening.

Thousands of farmers remain camped at Khanauri and Shambhu with their tractor-trolleys and trucks agitating for their demands, including a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP) for crops and farm debt waiver. (PTI)

Transgender community seeks bigger share of LS tickets; recognition of 'Trans Shakti'

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: Members of the transgender community are demanding a bigger share of tickets for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls and the recognition of 'Trans Shakti' in hopes of getting their voices heard.

Belonging to one of the country's most marginalised communities, a majority of transgender people are hesitant to join politics. However, politicians like Meera Parida, Bobbi Kinnar and Chandramukhi Muvvala among others are bucking the trend to fight for the rights of the community.

The community members said the narrative of 'Nari Shakti' (women empowerment) must be transcended so that 'Trans Shakti' can also get due recognition and representation and hoped that more political parties will give tickets to transgender candidates for the general elections.

Parida, Vice President of Biju Mahila Janata Dal, who was born as Mayadhar Parida, lamented how despite 75 years since Independence, the trans community members are shunned during the day and exploited at night.

"I am ready to contest Vidhan Sabha or Lok Sabha polls if the party decides to entrust me with the responsibility," Parida, who left home at the age of 12 after facing years of ridicule from her family members, said.

She recalled how her early years were marked by a profound sense of difference, a feeling that set her apart from her peers. Parida said she refused to stay silent and was determined to

challenge the status quo. So, she immersed herself in social work and eventually found her voice in politics.

Aam Aadmi Party leader Kinnar, the first transgender councillor of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, emphasised the urgent need for representation and inclusion of transgender people in the country's politics.

"A few years ago, people used to think that transgender individuals couldn't do anything; however, this is not true. Whatever men and women can do, we can do it too," she told PTI.

Kinnar said politicians of the country like to wear their struggles as badges of honour, but they pale in comparison to the harrowing experiences faced by several transgender individuals. Corroborating Kinnar's views, Muvvala, who contested as an independent candidate in the 2018 Telangana Assembly elections said there was an urgent need for the enhanced inclusion of the community in the country's politics.

"The trans community needs to talk more about the problems that we face. We know what our sufferings are like. I am a beggar on the street, a sex worker, I have been thrown out by my family, I am being extorted, molested and raped by my classmates... a lot of things happen to us. Those who claim to represent us in Parliament don't know the pain that we know," Muvvala, who contested from the Goshamahal Assembly constituency, said.

"If there is a reservation for the likes of us, nominated positions for

transwomen, it will be better because financially we are not fit and we don't have any support," she added.

She said the current situation is such that most of the bigger parties do not even think about choosing a transgender candidate and it is only the smaller parties that consider them.

In Karnataka, Akkai Padmashali, a transgender activist and Congress member, emphasised the need for systemic change.

"We should learn from the world on how to uplift sexual minorities," Padmashali suggested, advocating for increased representation in parliament and state legislative councils.

"Our voting ratio is very low and there is a need for political structure now for trans population. On the women's reservation bill in Parliament, they have not even mentioned the transgender so raising your voice within the 33 per cent is very difficult," she said.

There were 48,044 third-gender voters registered with the Election Commission of India in 2024. The number has grown from 39,683 in 2019.

The total number of electors in the 17th General Elections in 2019 was 91.2 crore. Of them, 47.34 crore were males, 43.85 crore were females and 39.075 belonged to the third gender.

The total contestants were 8,054 out of which 7,322 were males and 726 were females whereas 35 belonged to the third gender. (PTI)

ED raids residences of associates of absconding TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh

KOLKATA, Feb 23: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday conducted raids at residences of businessmen allegedly associated with absconding Trinamool Congress leader Shajahan Sheikh in connection with an old case of fraudulent land grab, a senior officer said. Raids and search operations were started by the ED early Friday morning at five different places in and around the city including Howrah, Bijoygarh and Birati, he said.

"These raids are in connection with an old case of fraudulent land grab against Shajahan Sheikh and his associates. These people were involved in fish businesses with Shajahan. We are looking for a few specific documents," the officer said. The ECIR is generally filed by the ED as the case information report. It is similar to a first information report (FIR) in criminal cases, he explained.

ED officials accompanied by a huge number of central forces started searches at an address in Howrah's Haldarpara at the residence of fish trader named Parthapratim Sengupta, the officer said. Raids are underway at four places including the house of local businessman Arun Sengupta at

Birati in North 24 Parganas district and at the residence of Arun Shome in the southern part of the city's Bijoygarh area.

"These traders also are involved in export and import businesses with Shajahan. We are talking to them to find out the nature of their trading and how Shajahan was involved in it," the officer said. Meanwhile, the central probe agency on Friday issued fresh summons to Shajahan in connection with his alleged involvement in the multi-crore ration scam asking him to appear before its officers on February 29, an officer said. (PTI)

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Polls announced for 11 seats of Bihar Legislative Council, including the one held by Nitish

PATNA, Feb 23: The Election Commission on Friday announced biennial polls for 11 seats of Bihar legislative council, including the one held by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the terms of which would have expired in two months.

Besides Kumar, those whose current tenure ends on May 6 include former chief minister Rabri Devi (BJD) and her party colleague Ram Chandra Purve.

Notifications for elections to the 11 seats will be issued on March 4 and nomination papers will have to be filed by March 11. The last date for withdrawal of nomination papers is March 14. Members of the state legislative assembly will elect candidates for these 11 seats on March 21 when counting of votes will take

place in the evening and shall have to be completed by March 23.

BJP holds three of these seats, its representatives being former Union ministers Sanjay Paswan and Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain and former state minister Mangal Pandey.

Only one seat, represented by Prem Chandra Mishra, is held by the Congress, which is an RJD ally. The JD(U), headed by the chief minister, held a lion's share. Besides Kumar, other party leaders whose tenure is about to end include Sanjay Kumar Jha, who recently got elected to the Rajya Sabha.

Besides, terms of JD(U) MLCs Khalid Anwar and Rameshwar Mahto is coming to a close. (PTI)

NHRC team in Sandeshkhali to hold on-spot inquiry

KOLKATA, Feb 23: A six-member NHRC team on Wednesday went to the restive Sandeshkhali in West Bengal and spoke to villagers to ascertain facts over allegations of sexual atrocities on women there.

Several villagers at Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district have accused Trinamool Congress leader Shajahan Sheikh and his supporters of land-grab and sexual assault.

The team of the National Human Rights Commission, India went around some localities in Sandeshkhali and noted statements of the villagers after speaking to them.

The NHRC had earlier said in a statement that the team would be led by a member of the commission and assisted by officers of the rights panel.

The team reached Sandeshkhali via Dhamakhali ferry ghat in the morning, after crossing the Kalgachi river by boat.

The commission has taken suo motu cognisance of print and electronic media reports that in Sandeshkhali, innocent and impoverished women have been harassed and sexually assaulted.

The NHRC said it has issued notices to the chief secretary and the director general of police of West Bengal seeking reports within four weeks with regard to violence that took place, as reported in the media, in Sandeshkhali. (PTI)



Payload aboard Aditya-L1 mission detects solar wind impact of Coronal Mass Ejections

BENGALURU, Feb 23: Advanced sensors of a payload on board India's maiden solar mission Aditya-L1 have successfully detected the impact of coronal mass ejections (CMEs), according to ISRO.

The payload -- Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA) -- is an energy and mass analyser designed for in-situ measurements of solar wind electrons and ions in the low energy range, the space agency noted.

It has two sensors: the Solar Wind Electron Energy Probe (SWEPP, measuring electrons in the energy range of 10 eV to 3 keV) and the Solar Wind Ion Composition Analyser (SWICAR, measuring ions in the energy range of 10 eV to 25 keV and mass range of 1-60 amu).

The sensors are also equipped to measure the direction of arrival of solar wind particles.

The data collected by PAPA, developed by the Space Physics Laboratory and Avionics Entity of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, revealed the occurrence of CME events, notably on December 15, 2023, and during February 10-11, 2024.

"The CME on December 15, 2023, was a single event. PAPA observations during this period showed an abrupt increase in total electron and ion counts and the time variations align with the solar wind parameters and magnetic field measurements obtained from the Deep Space Climate Observatory and Advanced Composition Explorer satellites at the L1 point," an ISRO statement said.

In contrast, the observed variations in electron and ion counts during February 10-11, 2024, are the result of multiple minor events, with differences in the time variations of electrons and ions, it was noted.

The SWEPP and SWICAR sen-

sors on PAPA-Aditya-L1, ISRO said, are currently making continuous observations of solar wind electrons and ions in the default mode, demonstrating that they are performing as per the design in all modes of operations.

The observations made by PAPA emphasise its effectiveness in monitoring space weather conditions and its capability to detect and analyse solar phenomena, it said.

Aditya-L1 spacecraft carried seven payloads to study the Sun -- four to observe the light from the Sun and the remaining three to measure in-situ parameters of the plasma and magnetic fields.

Aditya-L1 was placed in a halo orbit around the Lagrangian Point 1 (L1), which is 1.5 million km from the Earth in the direction of the Sun. It revolves around the Sun with the same relative position and hence can see the Sun continuously, ISRO officials said. (PTI)

India and Oman agree to cooperate in field of archives

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: India and Oman have "agreed to cooperate" in the field of archives during a visit by a delegation of the National Archives of India to the Gulf country on February 21-22, the Culture Ministry said on Friday.

In a statement, the ministry said a draft on cooperation was "discussed and agreed upon". It said the members of the Indian delegation, led by NAI Director General Arun Singhal, was shown around various sections and divisions of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of Oman.

The purpose of the visit was to explore the areas of bilateral cooperation in the archival field, it said.

In bilateral discussions with NRAA chairman Hamad Mohammed Al-Dhawani, Singhal dwelt upon the historical ties between India and Oman and informed him about the existence of a large number of records pertaining to Oman in the NAI as well as in other repositories of India, NAI officials said.

As a gesture of goodwill, Singhal handed over "a list of 70 select documents pertaining to Oman" that are available in the NAI in Delhi. These documents cover a period from 1793 to 1953 and deal with a wide range of subjects, they said.

Also, 523 pages of copies of records were handed over to the NRAA chairman, covering several important sub-



jects such as "change of Omani Flag from red to white (1868); succession of Sayyid Faisal bin Turki as ruler of Oman after the death of Sultan Sayyid Turki (1888); official visit of the Sultan of Muscat and Oman to the Viceroy in India (1937); and the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the Republic of India and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman signed on the 15th March 1953 at Muscat (English, Hindi and Arabic versions)", the statement said.

In addition, facsimile prints of three important treaties between the two countries were gifted to the NRAA.

These are the treaty between the British India government and the Sultan of Muscat (in Arabic and English), dated April 5, 1865; and two treaties concluded with the Imam of Muscat: one by Mehdi Ali Khan, dated October 12, 1798 and another by Sir John Malcolm, in his capacity as Envoy of the Governor General of India to the

Court of Persia, dated January 18, 1800, the officials said.

During the visit, presentations were given to the delegation by the in-charges of various divisions of the NRAA, including the Electronic Records and Document Management Systems (EDRMS) section, microfilm department, private record section, access to record department, electronic storage, and the conservation section. The delegation also visited the permanent exhibition of records, and the document destruction lab, the ministry said.

"Both the DG of the NAI and the chairman of the NRAA underscored the need for formalising the institution-to-institution cooperation between both the countries. After the discussions, the draft of an Executive Programme of Cooperation (EPC) was finalised, which would now be submitted for approval by the competent authorities of both parties and formally signed in the near future," the statement

said.

Some of the activities agreed upon and included in the proposed EPC include organising a joint exhibition based on curated archival materials from both the archives, together with a conference highlighting the historical relations between India and Oman; and exchanging digital copies of documents that hold mutual interest to enrich both collections.

Also, it included facilitating a framework for exchange programme involving experts in the fields of digitisation and preservation to share knowledge on best practices of both institutions; and bringing out a joint publication based on curated archival materials from both the archives, the statement said.

The delegation also interacted with the representatives of the Indian diaspora who have been living in various parts of Oman for several generations, and many of whom have rich private archives, it added.

The director general of the NAI encouraged the members of the Indian diaspora to take care of the physical preservation of archival wealth in their possession as it serves as an authentic source of shared history between the two nations. He also offered NAI's technical help in conservation of their documents as well as in its digitisation so that the valuable information is preserved for posterity, the statement said. (PTI)

Bullet train project slowed down under Thackeray govt, we'll try to make up for it: Vaishnav

MUMBAI, Feb 23: The country's first bullet train project would have seen much progress by now had the then Uddhav Thackeray government in Maharashtra expedited permissions, said railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Friday, asserting that the high-speed line will usher in economic growth.

Speaking to media persons while inspecting the work on the project here, Vaishnav announced that the Surat-Bilimora section on the 508-km-long corridor between Mumbai and Ahmedabad could be operational by July-August 2026. The other sections will be opened one after the other thereafter, he said.

The bullet train corridor will have 'limited stop' and 'all stop' services. While the limited-stop trains will cover the distance between Mumbai and Ahmedabad in just two hours, the other service will take about 2 hours 45 minutes, the minister said.

A total of 12 stations have been planned for the project, which is being implemented by the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL).

"Had the (then) Uddhav Thackeray government given all the permissions faster, this project might have progressed much ahead by now," Vaishnav said.

He said as soon as the Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis (Shiv Sena-BJP) government came to power in the state, permissions were given in 10 days.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi government under Thackeray fell in 2022 after Shinde split the Shiv Sena with his rebellion. Shinde then aligned with the BJP to form the government and became the chief minister, with Fadnavis taking the deputy CM's post.

The railway minister said that the 284-km-long bullet train corridor viaduct is ready in Gujarat, where work has progressed speedily. It is now happening at the same speed in Maharashtra as well, he said.

The Thackeray government, unfortunately, delayed the project much but they will try to "make up for it now", he said.

High-speed rail projects should be seen from an economical standpoint and not as transport initiatives.

With high-speed connectivity, areas like Mumbai, Thane, Vapi, Surat, Vadodra, Anand and Ahmedabad will turn into a

single economic zone and it will give them a "big economic boost", the railway minister asserted.

To speed up tunnel construction, Vaishnav said, innovations have been made and work was started from four points at a time. Of the four points two are shafts, one ADIT (additionally driven intermediate tunnel) and one final point at BKC (Bandra-Kurla Complex) station.

He said that there are complexities and difficulties tied to the corridor as trains will run at 320 kmph on it. "But our biggest aim in this project is to understand this complete technology," he said.

The bullet train corridor has a 21-km-long tunnel, including a 7-km undersea stretch, he said, calling the work challenging.

The deepest point of the tunnel is 56 metres and it will also be very wide with a width of 40 feet. Inside the tunnel too, the trains will run at the speed of 300-320 kmph, Vaishnav said.

"We have many cities having a population of over 1 crore. To give them low-cost and less time (consuming) transport systems, our country needs to achieve 'maharath' (expertise) in such technology," he said.

According to NHSRCL, the 21-km shaft, which will have India's first undersea tunnel, is coming up between BKC in Mumbai and Shilphata in neighbouring Thane district. It will be a single tube tunnel having Up and Down tracks.

Work on the tunnel is underway at BKC, Vikhroli and Ghanoli. NHSRCL said they are facing multiple challenges at these shaft construction sites, which have high population density and several utilities like pipelines, electrical installation and infrastructure projects, including the Metro and highways.

"Three Tunnel Boring Machines will be used to make about 16 km of the tunnel portion and the remaining 5 km will be through New Austrian Tunneling Method (NATM)," NHSRCL said.

The cost of the project is pegged at ₹ 1.08 lakh crore and as per its shareholding pattern, the Government of India is to pay ₹ 10,000 crore to the NHSRCL, while the two states involved, Gujarat and Maharashtra, are to pay ₹ 5,000 crore each.

The rest is to be funded by Japan through a loan carrying 0.1 per cent interest. (PTI)

Under 1 case per 10,000 population: India takes step towards kala azar elimination

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: India has reported less than one case of Visceral Leishmaniasis (VL), commonly known as kala azar, per 10,000 population, a major step towards eliminating the often fatal, parasitic disease, say official sources.

The data from 2023, the first time it has reached the less than one figure across all blocks, has been recently communicated to the World Health Organization (WHO), the officials said.

A disease is considered eliminated when the number of reported cases is below 1 per 10,000 people in each of the country's blocks for at least three consecutive years.

According to the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), 520 cases and four deaths of kala azar were reported last year compared to 818 cases and three deaths in 2022. Around 595 people had HIV-VL co-infection in 2023 compared to 891 the previous year.

"India has reported less than one case per 10,000 population across all blocks in 2023. It is a major step towards

eliminating kala azar. We have intimated the WHO regarding the development," an official told PTI.

Visceral leishmaniasis (VL) is caused by protozoan parasites transmitted by the bite of an infected female phlebotomine sand fly. It is characterised by irregular bouts of fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia. In over 95 per cent of cases, the disease is fatal if left untreated.

The initial target year for the elimination of the disease in India was 2010. This was

later extended to 2015, then 2017, and 2020.

In October 2023, Bangladesh became the first country in the world to be officially validated by the WHO for eliminating kala azar as a public health problem.

Till now, kala azar was endemic in India in over 630 blocks mainly in four states — Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. A few of these blocks reported over one case per 10,000 in the last decade resulting in India missing the elimination deadlines. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

State Assembly scripts ballot

When contacted, three retired principal secretaries of the Assam Assembly told PTI that neither government nor private resolutions have gone to the extent of ballot voting while deciding their acceptance or rejection.

"In most of the cases, it is decided by a simple voice vote. On some rare occasions, some resolutions have seen raising of hands by the members while deciding their fates. However, ballot voting never took place in case of rejection of a resolution," a former principal secretary said.

Officially, the BJP's strength in the 126-member Assam Assembly is 61, while its allies UPPL has seven MLAs and AGP has nine. In the opposition camp, the Congress' strength is 27, AIUDF has 15 members, BPF has three and CPI(M) has one MLA. There is one Independent legislator also. (PTI)

Himanta unveils projects worth

satras (Vaishnavite monasteries) and other cultural and spiritual institutions from the menace of encroachment.

Sarma also said the Assam government is committed to protect the land rights of all sections of the people across the state.

"Government shall provide land pattas to all deserving beneficiaries by 2026 to ensure no genuine citizen entitled to enjoy land rights is deprived of legal rights over his or her landholdings," he added.

He said all the difficulties the people had to endure during Mission Basundhara 2.0 shall be addressed and resolved in Mission Basundhara 3.0 and that the government shall start in this direction right after the Lok Sabha elections.

"Mission Basundhara 3.0 will be made simpler to allow indigenous landless people to gain land rights. Along with individual land rights, government is taking adequate steps to allot land pattas to socio-cultural institutions," he avowed.

Commenting on the advantages of the digital land pattas, the Sarma stated pattas in digital format shall help the patta owners gain access to their pattas through the dig locker medium in the event of misplacing them.

He said ever since the present government took over the state administration, it has been working relentlessly to bring about socio-economic-academic empowerment narrative.

Schemes such as Orunodoi, waiver of microfinance loans, ration cards, health insurance, transparency in government jobs, to name a few, are the testament to the government's commitment to transforming Assam into a state developed on all parameters, he said. The chief minister further said that the government has been taking steps to see that all the Orunodoi beneficiaries are entitled to Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Aushman Bharat and Mukhya Mantri Aushman Asom, to name a few. Tea Tribes Welfare Minister Sanjoy Kishan, member of parliament Pradan Barua, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Bolin Chetia also spoke on the occasion.

MLA Suren Phukan, chief executive of Deuri Autonomous Council Bhairav Deuri and host of other dignitaries were also present on the occasion. At a function held at the playground of Rupai High School in Doom Dooma, Sarma said despite the country achieving Independence more than seven decades back, a great number of indigenous population of the state lacked patta certificates of the land under their possession. The current government in the state had launched Mission Basundhara with the aim of mitigating the land documentation woes of such indigenous families, the chief minister added.

He also added that in the upcoming Mission Basundhara 3.0, land pattas shall be provided to religious institutions, educational institutions, anganawadi kendras, etc.

During his speech, the Sarma spoke about the various initiatives the current regime in the state has been taking for the socio-economic uplift of the members of the tea tribe communities in the state.

"Steps such as increase in wages of tea garden labourers, reservations for youths from tea tribe communities in recruitment to government services, among others, are manifestations of the current government's commitments towards the welfare of the members of the tea tribe communities," he said.

Karnataka bill, Sandeshkhali show

these developments, including the Sandeshkhali incident, show that the "eradication of Sanatan Dharma is not merely a statement but a campaign". These parties gave Haj subsidy, now scrapped, and imposed taxes on temples, he said.

Leaders of the DMK, the Congress' biggest ally in south India, have compared Sanatan Dharma to dengue and HIV, and spoke of eradicating it, Trivedi said.

He said the Congress and its allies have a history as he noted that the government led by Jawaharlal Nehru had brought a law to override court judgments on regulating Hindu temples. Targeting Rahul Gandhi, the BJP leader said he has not spoken a word about these developments.

While West Bengal Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, who is also his party's leader in the Lok Sabha, says there is no democracy in the state, its national leadership calls for allying with chief minister Mamata Banerjee to "save" democracy in the country, Trivedi said. The Congress finds nothing wrong in climbing over the dead bodies of its workers to get closer to power, he alleged, adding that members of the main opposition party have been the victims of political violence in the state as well. Referring to the alleged targeting of Hindus and political protection for criminals, he said the subject is extremely important and is bigger than party politics and elections.

This attitude since the last century has greatly harmed the Indian society and divided the country, Trivedi said, asserting that people will punish the Congress and its INDIA bloc allies. (PTI)

ASDCYF criticises Congress

from various organisations including the All Bodo Students Union, Karbi Anglong District Committee, and other Bodo organisations for the actions taken by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) regarding the PGR and VGR.

The KAAC's decision to initiate eviction procedures follows an unfortunate attack on members of the Karbi Students Association (KSA-Jemson Timung) in Kheroni Sariali, West Karbi Anglong on February 15.

Presided over by the president of ABSU, Karbi Anglong, Kalyan Rabha Brahma, the meeting held by Bodo organisations in Langhin, Karbi Anglong, saw unanimous support for the KAAC's measures against encroachers on PGR and VGR land.

Emphasising the importance of safeguarding the rights of legitimate residents, Bodo organisations have appealed for peace and harmony to prevail in the district amidst the ongoing developments.

32nd Karbi literary conference

Mukut Mahanta, Principal Incharge of Diphu Government College Bernard Rongphar, and writer Pabitra Bora, among others, with Karon Hansepi, the vice president of KLA, presiding over the program.

Over 6,500 'loud noise' calls to UP 112 since Dec, Noida 2nd on list

NOIDA, Feb 23: There have been 6,558 complaints to emergency service UP 112 about 'loud music' in over two months, with maximum calls being received from Lucknow followed by Noida, Ghaziabad, Kanpur and Varanasi, official data showed.

While sharing the data, UP 112 appealed to citizens to inform it about noise pollution considering that lakhs of students are writing their board exams in February and March. In December, 1,558 complaints of loud music were logged by UP 112. The figure was recorded at 1,415 in January and 3,585 in February (till February 15), the data showed.

Official statistics showed more complaints were received from big cities. State capital

Lucknow topped the chart with 739 events in 75 days.

Second on the list was Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida) with 734 complaints followed by Ghaziabad (590), Kanpur (376) and Varanasi (331) during the period.

The smaller towns remained much quieter than big cities. For instance, UP 112 received just three such calls from Shravasti, 10 from Auraiya and 12 each from Etah and Kaushambi districts during the period, according to the data.

"If there is noise beyond permissible limits and it is disturbing citizens or disrupting studies of students, one may call UP 112 and police response vehicles would be sent immediately to bring the noise under control. We are striving to pro-

vide the best environment to citizens, particularly students taking their board exams." Additional Director General (ADG) of Police Neera Rawat told PTI.

UP Police's dedicated facility 112 was launched to subsume the roles of helpline numbers 100 (police), 101 (fire) and 102 (ambulance) during emergencies, providing citizens with one-stop solution round-the-clock.

In 2023, the 112 helpline received 68.71 lakh calls while the figures stood at 70.60 lakh in 2022 and 66.87 lakh in 2021, showed the data accessed by PTI.

The state-wide emergency service has a total of 4,800 Police Response Vehicles (PRVs), of which 3,200 are four-wheelers and 1,600 are two-wheelers. (PTI)

Couples with medical condition can use donor gametes

NEW DELHI, Feb 23: The Centre has amended the surrogacy rules 2022 allowing married couples to use an egg or sperm of a donor in case one of the partners is suffering from a medical condition.

The District Medical Board has to certify that either the husband or wife is suffering from a medical condition necessitating the use of donor gamete.

"In case when the District Medical Board certifies that either husband or wife constituting the intending couple suffers from a medical condition necessitating use of donor gamete, then surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed," the notification issued on Wednesday said. The surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending couple, it stated. This means if both the partners have medical problems or are unable to have their own gametes they cannot opt for surrogacy.

"Single women (widow or divorcee) undergoing surrogacy must use self-eggs and donor sperm to avail surrogacy procedures," the notification read. (PTI)

No.JDF/BTC/08/2023-24/0498 Dated Kokrajhar the 23rd Feb, 2024

Tender No. FSHRY/BTC/2023-24/008/8

PRESS NOTICE
(e-Procurement)

The Joint Director cum CHD, Fishery Deptt., BTC, Kokrajhar, Invites bids through e-tendering process for the "BODOLAND FISHERIES SUMMIT" for 3 days under "Council Fund" from the eligible Vendor/Firms/Contractor duly registered under Fishery Deptt., BTC.

Details particulars may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

NB:-

1. Payment is subject to availability of fund under appropriate Head of Account. No claim whatsoever in this regards will be entertained.
2. The chairman purchase committee reserves the right to accept/reject any tender in part or all without assigning any reason, whatsoever.

Sd/-
Joint-Director cum CHD,
Fishery Department, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1453

No.JDF/BTC/08/2023-24/0497 Dated Kokrajhar the 21st February, 2024

NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION/TENDER

Separate sealed quotations / tenders affixing non-refundable Court fee of **Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paise)** only are invited from the interested Vendor / Contractors etc. for "Exposure visit of progressive farmers in potential / development areas within the state of Assam for the financial year 2023-24" under the Fishery Deptt., BTC, Kokrajhar.

Group No.	Name of District	Place of Exposure Visit	No. of trips	No. of Beneficiary	Estimated Amount (in Rs.)
A	Kokrajhar	Amraanga-Golpara	2	40 Nos. of farmers for each district along with 3 Nos. of officers i.e. 43 Nos. 2 trips	4,80,000.00
B	Baksa	Nalbari-Sonapur-Guwahati	2	per district.	4,80,000.00
	Tamulpur		2		4,80,000.00
	Udalguri		2		4,80,000.00

THE BIDDERS SHOULD ENCLOSED THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS WITH THEIR BID

- (a) Bid Cost of Rs. 1,000.00 (Rupees One Thousand) only in the form of Demand Draft duly pledge in favour of "The Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar" with quotation/tender.
- (b) Bid Earnest Money @ 1% in case of ST/SC/OBC and 2% for General/Firm of quotation/tender amount in the form of Call Deposit/NSC/Demand Draft duly pledged in favour of "The Joint-Director cum CHD, Fishery Deptt. BTC, Kokrajhar".

The quotations / tenders will be received at the Office of the undersigned up to 1.00 P.M. of 01-03-2024 and will be opened at 1.30 P.M. of the same day. In case, last date of receipt is happened to be a non-working day for any reason, the next working day will be considered as the date for submission of quotations / tenders and opening thereof. The bidders or their representatives may remain present at the time of opening of the quotations / tenders.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

01. Self-attested copies of Registration under Fishery Deptt. BTC, Trade Licence, GST Registration Certificate, Income Tax Clearance, PAN Card & etc. along with the quotations.
02. The work should be completed within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of issue of work order.
03. Details terms and conditions of the work may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hour up-to 12 noon of 01-03-2024.
04. The Joint-Director CUM CHD, Fishery Deptt., BTC, Kokrajhar/the BTC Secretariat reserves the right to accept / reject any of quotation without assigning any reason thereof.
05. Payment will be made subject to availability of fund.

Sd/-
Joint-Director cum CHD,
Fishery Department, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1452

MUMBAI, Feb 23:

Actor Jyotika on Thursday said she is thrilled to have made a comeback to Hindi cinema after over two decades with "Shaitaan".

The South star made her acting debut with 1998 Hindi film, "Doli Saja Ke Rakhna", and went on to become one of the most loved female actors in Tamil cinema.

Some of her notable performances include "Chandramukhi", "Raatchashi", "Kushi", "36 Vayathinile", and "Kaathal - The Core" among others.

"Shaitaan", is a supernatural thriller, which is directed by Vikas Bahl and also stars Ajay Devgn and R Madhavan. The film is described as a gripping tale that will take viewers into a sinister journey with elements of black magic.

The actor said she was waiting for a "special" opportunity to do a movie in Hindi-language.

"I am doing this film after 25 years. I got very busy in South.... (I) was waiting for something very special. I think at this stage of your career, you want to do different work. This was very challenging," she said.

Jyotika praised co-star Devgn as someone who is "very giving".

"The biggest surprise for me was Ajay Devgn and the way he conducted himself all throughout the shoot. I have worked with many actors in my career, almost all the actors down south. My last film was with Mammootty ('Kaathal') and now Ajay. 'When I do my film in South, no one gives space in the poster. It's been a pleasure to watch Mammootty sir and Ajay. These are the real stalwarts of cinema," the actor told reporters here at the trailer launch of "Shaitaan".

The film features R Madhavan as the antagonist and Jyotika as Devgn's wife. Actor Janki Bodiwala, who starred in the Gujarati film, "Vash", also features in the remake.

To come back to Bollywood with 'Shaitaan' is very special, says Jyotika



Jyotika, who worked with Madhavan in films such as "Dumm Dumm Dumm", "Magalir Mattum", and "Priyamaana Thozhi", is happy to collaborate with the actor in an unconventional project.

"There was no competition, we were so into the role that it actually felt like a family. We finished the shoot in 25-30 days, we were all just flowing with it.

I thank Kumarji (Kumar Mangat Pathak, producer) for casting me and I have already thanked everyone so many times. For me to come back to Bollywood and get this (kind) of a film, it is very special," Jyotika added.

"Shaitaan", is an adaptation of the 2023 Gujarati horror film "Vash", which was written and directed by Krishnadev Yagnik.

Jyotika said she resonated with her character of a mother.

"I think when it comes to a daughter, there is no bigger warrior than a mother. My kids are of same age... So, I didn't have to put any efforts in it. I used to cry after watching her enact a scene. It is really a vision of a mother." The film is set to release on March 8 in theatres. (PTI)



Tom Cruise in talks to star in Alejandro G Inarritu's new film

LOS ANGELES, Feb 23: Hollywood superstar Tom Cruise is reportedly in talks to feature in "The Revenant" filmmaker Alejandro G Inarritu's new movie.

Warner Bros. and Legendary Entertainment are in talks to acquire the project, which marks Inarritu's first English-language film since the Leonardo DiCaprio starrer in 2015.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, plot details are still under wraps for the feature project that was written by Inarritu, Sabina Berman, Alexander Dinclaris and Nicolas Giacobone. This will be Cruise's first film since signing a deal to develop

and produce theatrical films with Warner Bros. Discovery in January. His last project with the studio was "Edge of Tomorrow" a decade ago.

Most recently, Cruise appeared in "Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning" and "Top Gun: Maverick." Cruise's other upcoming films include the eighth "Mission: Impossible" film for Paramount, as well as an upcoming Universal action movie from Doug Liman that will make him "the first civilian to do a space-walk" outside the International Space Station.

Inarritu won back-to-back Academy Awards for his direc-

tion of "Birdman" in 2015 and "The Revenant" in 2016. He followed up those projects with 2017's "Flesh and Sand" ("Carne y Arena"), a virtual-reality short giving viewers the perspective of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border with a coyote. The project debuted at the Cannes Film Festival in 2017 and earned a special achievement Oscar in 2018. In 2022, he co-wrote, co-scored, edited, produced and directed "Bardo," which earned an Oscar nomination for best cinematography. Cruise and Inarritu are both represented by CAA. Deadline was first to report the news. (AGENCIES)

Kareena Kapoor Khan and Tabu's 'Crew' to release on March 29

MUMBAI, Feb 23: Actors Kareena Kapoor Khan and Tabu-starrer Crew is set to arrive in theatres on March 29, the makers announced on Friday.

The upcoming comedy movie is directed by Rajesh Krishnan of Lootcase fame and produced by Rhea Kapoor and Ektaa R Kapoor. Also starring Kriti Sanon and Diljit Dosanjh, Crew is set in the world of commercial aviation and promises to take viewers on a thrilling journey.

Ektaa R Kapoor's production house Balaji Motion Pictures announced the release date of the movie on their official Instagram account. The same post was shared by Kareena, Tabu, and Sanon.

"Time to Risk it. Meet our #Crew! #TheCrewInCinemas-March29," the post read.

The makers also unveiled the first look posters of Kareena, Tabu and Sanon as air hostesses, and revealed that comedian-actor Kapil Sharma will be seen in a special appearance in the movie. Crew marks the third collaboration between Ektaa and Rhea post the 2018 female buddy comedy Veere Di Wedding and last year's female comedy film Thank You for Coming. (PTI)



Manoj Bajpayee's 30 years in cinema celebrated at Tagore Centre in Berlin



NEW DELHI, Feb 23: Actor Manoj Bajpayee, whose new film "The Fable" was screened at the Berlin International Film Festival, celebrated 30 years in cinema at a special event organised by the Indian Embassy's Tagore Centre in Berlin. The event, hosted by Trisha Sakhlecha, Director of the Tagore Centre, coincided with Bajpayee's presence in Berlin for the premiere of his latest

film, directed by Raam Reddy, in the competitive Encounters section at the 74th edition of the festival. In a conversation, Bajpayee, 54, traced his journey from dreaming about becoming an actor in a small village in Bihar through his persistent struggle of over 15 years to his rise as a celebrated actor in Indian cinema. The discussion, also attended by Parvathaneni Harish, Ambassador of India to Germany, highlighted Bajpayee's upcoming projects and his venture into production.

"This journey of 30 years has been nothing short of extraordinary. It's a reflection of the love and support I've received from my audience and the film fraternity. Being recognized in Berlin, alongside the premiere of The Fable, fills me with gratitude. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Ms. Trisha Sakhlecha, the Director of the Tagore Centre, Berlin, and H.E. Mr. Parvathaneni Harish, Ambassador of India to Germany, for this honor," Bajpayee said in a statement. (PTI)



There is skewed negative perception of Bollywood due to social media: Emraan Hashmi

MUMBAI, Feb 23: Bollywood may have become a victim of negative perception due to some devious sharks but there are good people in the industry as well, says actor Emraan Hashmi. Hashmi is all set to play the role of a producer and a studio head in the upcoming Dinsey+Hotstar series, "Showtime", which, the actor said, does not stick to a cookie-cutter template about the industry.

The story is the fulcrum of these characters and then seeing this crazy world of Bollywood or the film industry. But the outside perception could be tainted for a few people. It has skewed negative perceptions about the industry because of the trends that have come out of social media in the last few years, Hashmi told PTI in an

interview.

According to Hashmi, known for movies such as "Footpath", "Murder", "Once Upon a Time in... Mumbai", "The Dirty Picture" and "Shanghai", like any other industry, Bollywood has "good and bad aspects".

"It's like any industry where a few bad apples might make the industry seem like it's bad, but you have these kinds of devious sharks in the industry, and you also have good people, but everyone is struggling with their problems in life, Hashmi added.

The show will let the audiences in on what goes behind the multi-million-dollar industry, the nepotism debate, and the power struggles at the top, he said.

"We are not trying to show the

world what we are not. It's not a cookie cutter thing that we are just trying to show a particular facet of the industry, he said.

The 44-year-old actor, who has been in the film business for more than two decades, said when he started out, he also had the perception that the industry would be "very cutthroat and unfair". "When I started, I was all of 20, so I just had this perception. At that time, there was no social media so there was not much in the public domain. There were a few magazines in which interviews of stars would be published so while growing up, there was no such perception about the industry. Whatever I've learned about the industry was along the way.

Hashmi, nephew of filmmaker Ma-

hash Bhatt said his family asked him not to take the career for granted and to be on his toes. The reason I knew it was cutthroat is because my family told me that don't take it for granted, don't take it easy either, and that I have to be on my toes. You have to constantly push yourself and work hard, then there is an audience that has to take to you (acceptance) and there is also a matter of luck, he said.

I completed 20 years, I think it's not unfair and ultimately it all comes down to just the function of work and the effort you put in and finally you will reap the benefits. Sometimes you achieve success initially, sometimes it would be delayed but if you keep pushing yourself you will eventually be successful, he added. (PTI)

RCB FINISHED FOURTH IN THE LEAGUE LAST SEASON

Smriti in confident space with her cricket, leadership: RCB coach Luke Williams

BENGALURU, Feb 23: Smriti Mandhana finding a seamless sync with her twin duty of being the captain and premier batter of the side is intertwined with the fortunes of Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Women's Premier League Season 2, reckoned their head coach Luke Williams.

In the first WPL season, Mandhana struggled under the weight of this two-fold role, and her batting suffered a considerable dip.

The elegant left-hander could only manage 149 runs from eight matches, averaging a feeble 18 and at a strike-rate of 119.

"She's practising really well. She's in a really confident and happy space with her cricket and the leadership. Obviously, there's responsibility with captaining and opening the batting."

"But she's got plenty of support from the team with lots of experienced seniors to help her and trying to really separate the two roles," said Williams on Friday, a day ahead of RCB's opening WPL 2024 match against UP Warriorz.

The RCB had finished fourth in the five-team league last season, and Williams said under the leadership of Mandhana the team looked much more settled this time.

I've been fortunate to have spent a fair bit of time with Smriti through my involvement at the Southern Brave (the Hundred team) as an assistant coach and we've had lots of conversations



around the learnings and experiences from last (WPL) season both as a team and individual. I

"think we've really taken on board some of those learnings (from previous year)," he said.

Williams said Mandhana and other senior players in the side have been working with young cricketers in the RCB fold to create a confident atmosphere.

"This time Smriti and others have invested time with our play-

ers, and our senior players have been fantastic working with our young players and getting to know them and everyone is really starting to feel really comfortable and confident in the environment. We're looking forward to taking those learnings into this year," said Williams.

Williams, an experienced T20 coach who has a Women's Big Bash title under his belt with Adelaide Strikers, said this time the

RCB has good options in pace and spin departments.

"That was a large part of our auction strategy and around retention. We were trying to get some real variety across all different aspects of the game but bowling certainly was a large part of that. So, we feel like we've got more variety with our pace and spin."

"Hopefully, we will ask some questions to the batters and we have given ourselves some great

opportunities with our bowling this tournament," he said.

In that context, the Australian coach said combining pacers Renuka Singh and Kate Cross from England in Power Play could give RCB an edge against their rivals.

"We're really excited to have two bowlers who swing the ball in different directions. But they're both world class swing bowlers. They're going to prove a real handful for the opposition with that swing."

"If you can get an early wicket, we can put pressure on the opposition and it is so important. So, we're certainly looking at different options with how we go about our powerplay bowling. We were really keen to keep working on it and to make a real impact," he added.

RCB had a 10-day camp here in the run-up to the WPL, and Williams said the team managed to tick some boxes during the confab.

"It was about investing a lot of time in particular scenarios that we think they are going to play individually, but also what they may face in the tournament with different game situations — whether it's run rates or whether we think someone's going to bat against spin bowling or their ability to bowl against left-hand batters, we've been quite specific with our targets," said Williams.(PTI)

India women eye victory against Hong Kong in Turkish Cup



ALANYA (TURKEY), Feb 23: Having played determined football to get the better of Estonia in their opening match, India would be looking forward to another successful outing when they face Hong Kong in the Turkish Women's Cup here on Saturday.

The 4-3 victory against Estonia was the first-ever for a senior Indian women's national team against an European side, and it would have raised the morale of the Chaoba Devi-coached side in the four-team round-robin tournament. This will be India's fifth encounter against Hong Kong, ranked 79th in the FIFA rankings, and India would be buoyed by the fact that they have won all four previous games, netting 11 goals, while the opponents have managed just two.

In their most recent clash, a friendly in 2019, India won by a solitary goal courtesy Pyari Xaxa, who also found the net in India's victory against Estonia in the ongoing tournament.

India currently lead the table with three points and a goal difference of plus one, while Hong Kong are at the bottom having yet to open their account and a goal difference of -1 after losing 0-1 to Kosovo.

Coach Chaoba Devi said Hong Kong had made a marked improvement since they last played in 2019 and her team would not underestimate the opponents.

"We played against Hong Kong a while ago, but they have shown significant improvement since then. We watched their recent match against Kosovo, where they put up a good fight despite losing by only one goal," said Chaoba Devi on the eve of the match. "So, we can't underestimate them. We need to focus on our finishing, as we could have scored more goals in our first match against Estonia

if our finishing was better. Today, we will do some finishing drills in our training to prepare for the Hong Kong match and ensure the girls are ready to perform well. It's our time to win this tournament," added Chaoba Devi.

Xaxa, who was a junior when the two teams met in 2019, recollected that she had come off the bench in the second half to score the all-important goal against Hong Kong.

"I was a junior player back then. I came off the bench in the second half and playing with experienced senior players on an international tour was a big thing for me. Despite facing tough opponents, I assisted my team and scored a goal."

"We played as a unit against Estonia and had a never-give-up attitude. If we continue this way, we can win against Hong Kong as well. We just need to press hard and believe in our ball control," she said.

Midfielder Anju Tamang said the win against Estonia was the result of cohesiveness in the side.

"After the Olympic Qualifiers Round 2, we are together and playing as a team. Winning against Estonia was an ample testimony of our cohesiveness. We need to keep ourselves motivated and play as a team, whatever happens. We will not take Hong Kong as an easy team and try to push our limits and win tomorrow also." Chaoba Devi added that the fine blend of young and experienced players was behind India's early success in the tournament.

"Our team's combination is really coming together nicely, and I feel fortunate to have some experienced players supporting me. Ashalata, our captain, plays a crucial role in defence and midfield. In midfield, Indumathi takes charge and controls the game. (PTI)

Diksha, Pranavi in top five after first round in Morocco

RABAT (MOROCCO), Feb 23: Diksha Dagar and Pranavi Urs got off to a great start, carding a fine two-under 71 each to tie tied fifth after the opening round of Lalla Meryem Cup on the Ladies European Tour here. The two Indian golfers, who had Top-25 finishes in the Magical Kenya Ladies Open, suffered a double bogey each, but did well to birdie three of the five Par-5s that this course has.

Starting from the 10th, Diksha birdied the 12th and the 16th, but also dropped shots on the 13th and 18th for an even par stretch. On the second nine, the front side of Royal Golf Dar es Salam, Diksha was in full flow with birdies on the second, third, fifth and eighth, before a double bogey set her back on the closing ninth. Pranavi was off to a flier with four birdies in first six holes but a bogey on 17th and a double on 18th meant she was just 1-under after her first nine. She had one bogey on first and two birdies on the fifth and the eighth for a 71.

Mexico's Maria Fassi showed off her explosive power and fine form during the opening round, firing a flawless eight-under 65 to lead by three shots on the Par-73 golf course. The 25-year-old, who represented Mexico at the Tokyo Olympics, started on the 10th and picked up three birdies within the first five holes. At the turn, the LPGA player fired up her flatstick to roll in three consecutive birdies before rolling in another two on holes five and eight.

There is a nine-way tie for fifth place and that includes the two Indians — Diksha and Pranavi, and the 2023 LET Order of Merit winner Trichat Cheenglab. (PTI)

My dad wanted me to become something in life: Akash Deep

RANCHI, Feb 23: India pace bowler Akash Deep dedicated his splendid three-wicket burst on Test debut to his father who died in 2015, and said he is happy that he has achieved his dad's dream of "becoming something in life".

Akash Deep's father Ramji Singh succumbed to paralysis and within six months, the cricketer lost his elder brother while being taken to a hospital in Varanasi.

"I thought I have to do something after I lost my dad and brother in one year, then I stepped out to play cricket. I had nothing to lose and everything to win," Akash Deep told reporters after day one of the fourth Test against England. The 27-year-old bowled a dream opening spell on Test debut, blowing away the England top-three en route his 3/70.

England went on to lose half their side for 112 at lunch on Friday. "I dedicate this to my father



because it was his dream that his son does something in life. I couldn't do anything in his life (when he was alive), so this performance is for my father."

"Every cricketer has one dream, to play for India in Tests. That was also my dream," said the Bengal pacer who hails from

Baddi village in Rohtas district of Bihar, about 300km from Ranchi.

"We didn't know about cricket while growing up; cricket was not there where I come from. I played tennis cricket after 2007 and got to know about cricket after 2016. Since then, I have been following (Mohammed) Shami bhai and

(South Africa's Kagiso) Rabada. "I got my Test cap at a place which is near to my village (in Bihar) as well as Bengal from where I play. Bengal supported me well. In my journey, my family played a big role."

"My family is also here. No doubt, it's an emotional feeling but there was just one thing going on in my mind — how to contribute to the team." On getting his Test cap from India coach Rahul Dravid, Akash Deep said, "He (Dravid) heard my story and I was very emotional (at the moment). I was just told to keep it simple, do whatever I have been doing (so far). It was a big help as, at this level, you sometimes get confused." Akash Deep also said that ace India pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who was rested for the fourth Test, too gave him advice on how to bowl in international cricket. (PTI)

England spinner Rehan Ahmed to return home for personal reasons

RANCHI, Feb 23: Young England leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed will not take any further part in the five-Test series against India as he is returning home to address some urgent family matters.

The 19-year-old picked up 11 wickets at an average of 44 in the first three Tests of the series, including a six-wicket match haul in the second match in Visakhapatnam. "Rehan Ahmed will return home for personal reasons with immediate effect from England Men's Test tour of India. He will not be returning to India,"

England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement on Friday.

"England will not be replacing Ahmed for the rest of the tour."

England on Friday replaced Ahmed with Shoaib Bashir in their playing XI for the fourth Test.

There is just one game remaining in the five-Test series and England have another spinner in their squad in left-arm twalker Tom Hartley, who is their highest wicket-taker so far in the tour with 16 scalps. (PTI)



Rohtas to Ranchi via Kolkata: Akash Deep's sensational journey from adversity to triumph

RANCHI, Feb 23: Laduma Devi was busy overseeing the construction of their family house in Baddi village of Bihar's Rohtas district when she received a call from Akash Deep on Thursday. "Ma, I'm making my Test debut for India tomorrow, you have to come".

Hours later, after a gruelling 300km road journey, she was at Ranchi's JSCA stadium, watching with pride and tears in her eyes as head coach Rahul Dravid handed the coveted cap to the pacer, who made an immediate impression with three top-order England wickets in the ongoing fourth Test.

The shy but stoic woman was soaking it all in with Akash Deep's two nieces and his cousin Baibhaw Kumar providing her support in the emotionally overwhelming moment. She and the family had been through hell and back but

Akash Deep was finally making it all count.

"His father always wished for him to become a government officer, but cricket was his true passion, and I was his partner in crime. I would secretly send him to play cricket and help him pursue his dream," the proud mother told PTI as she watched her son make a sensational debut.

"During that time, if someone heard that your son was playing cricket, they would say 'yeh toh awara mawwali hi banega (he is spoilt and will become a rogue). But we had the faith in him and didn't let him give up despite losing my malik (husband) and beta (son) in six months," she said, pain still apparent in her shaky voice as she grappled with a surge of emotions. Akash Deep's father Ramji Singh, a physical education teacher in a Government High

School, never wanted him to become a cricketer. He was paralysed after retirement and was bed-ridden for five years before breathing his last in February 2015.

In the October of the same year, Akash Deep's elder brother Dhiraj died on his way to a hospital in Varanasi following brief illness, leaving behind two daughters and wife. "If his father and brother were alive today, they would be brimming with joy. This is the life's most memorable day and only few are lucky to see it. I'm the proudest mom on this earth," Laduma Devi said, tears rolling down her eyes.

"Sab bolte hain, padhoge likhoge banoge nawab; kheloge, kudoge banoge kharab. Yeh toh ulta ho gaya. (They say those who study become kings, and those who play end up spoilt. But it's the

opposite in our case)."

The 27-year-old was as self-assured as a seasoned pro as he blew away the English top order in the first hour's play to leave the visitors reeling at 112/5 at lunch.

There were no nerves to be seen, and why would there be, Akash Deep had known and handled bigger challenges than England's 'Bazball' much earlier in life.

With the family reliant on his father's monthly pension, he had thought of giving up his passion for cricket and focus on finding a stable income.

The youngest among six siblings with three elder sisters, Akash Deep briefly dabbled in sand selling business by renting dumpers near Sone river at the Bihar-Jharkhand border after Dhiraj's death. He would also play tennis ball cricket at that time and needed a helping hand to keep his

cricketing dream alive.

His cousin Baibhaw, whose father works at Durgapur Steel Plant allowing him access to coaching in leather ball cricket, proved to be just the man.

"I always felt he was god-gifted and I took him to Durgapur where we got his passport made and he went on to play a tournament in Dubai," Baibhaw recalled.

The duo landed in Kolkata in search of better opportunities and stayed in a rented flat in Kestopur.

But life didn't become easy with the shift as Akash Deep was rejected by three clubs — United CC, YMCA and the famous Kalighat.

"They said to wait for one more year as their team was out. I thought he would go back. But UCC called him one day saying they would play him without any pay," Baibhaw said. (PTI)

UP Warriorz looking to do one better in WPL's second season, says Alyssa Healy

MUMBAI, Feb 23: Sri Lankan superstar Chamari Athapaththu's addition is a massive shot in the arm for UP Warriorz and offers a happy selection headache for the team, which has a lot of quality overseas options, said skipper Alyssa Healy on Friday.

Apart from Healy, the Warriorz have international stars such as Grace Harris, Sophie Ecclestone, Tahlia McGrath, Danielle Wyatt and Athapaththu, who was a last minute replacement for England pacer Lauren Bell.

"It's a great signing for us. Obviously, having depth in our side with both bat and ball was really important. To add Chamari to that list of names that we've already got was a really great opportunity for us," Healy said during a virtual media interaction on Friday.

"It's going to be a really difficult conversation for management and myself as well as to who's playing in the eleven and what opportunities everyone's going to get. They're really good problems to have and she's in great form."

UP Warriorz finished third in the inaugural edition last year in March in a competition which was dominated by eventual winners Mumbai Indians and to a large extent by Delhi Capitals, with their aggressive approaches. "We're happy with the underdog tag in particular and go out there and knock off some of these big franchises and show them

what we can do," Healy said.

"We learnt last year that we can compete. A lot of people, a lot of chatter around the competition probably wrote us off early and thought the big teams were going to run away with the competition."

"But the fact that our group probably underperformed at times but still managed to come away with wins and to finish third was a huge effort for us."

The Alyssa Healy-led UP Warriorz will take on Royal Challengers Bangalore in their season-opener at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Saturday.

"This season, especially at the auction, we've picked up some of the local players, which is really great signs heading into this season. Hopefully we can continue to improve and obviously, hopefully go one or two better this season and hopefully get our hands on a trophy," she said.

Healy said it will be vital for the Indian players in the UP Warriorz camp to express themselves. "For us, the learnings was all around just being able to compete, especially for some of the local players who have never played in a competition like this before (Or have) never played against some of the international players that they have."

"I think some confidence on their end to be able to know that they can match it with the best, I think is in good stead," she said. (PTI)

How old-fashioned Joe Root shunned 'Bazball' to save the day for England

RANCHI, Feb 23: Joe Root did not bring out the sweep shot until he faced his 115th ball on a clement Friday at Ranchi and unleashed only a solitary reverse sweep while constructing a slow-burning hundred to save the day for England.

Root's unbeaten 106 off 226 balls, which was made at a strike rate of 46.90, was, perhaps, the most anti-Bazball innings that might have been played in the Brendon McCullum era.

But then Root needed to rediscover that dogged Yorkshire inside him – for himself and the team.

He entered the fourth Test against India on the back of 29, 2, 5, 16, 18, 7 in his last Test innings and that 18 in the first innings at Rajkot might have hurt him deeply.

England were at a dominant 224 for two, well in sight of India's first innings total of 445. But Root decided to reverse

lap Jasprit Bumrah for Yashasvi Jaiswal to pull off a smart catch at slip.

His dismissal sparked an England collapse as the tourists were bundled out for 319, and India converted that lead into a record victory and a 2-1 series lead.

It sparked the discussion about the careless side of Bazball, and Root's 50-plus average during the McCullum reign was not good enough to slow down the wagging fingers at him.

The 33-year-old needed an innings of substance for that, and he had to return to his original batting ways. Ian Chappell, a cricketing master-brain, offered a similar thought.

"Root had a bloody fine record playing normally, and he was a quick scorer playing normally. I don't see why he's trying to change things drastically, and I've never believed you should play premeditated shots," Chappell told World Wide Sports.



Root did precisely that, curbing his desire for fancy. However, it is not that the former England captain cannot pull off the extraordinary.

A quick look at a YouTube clip of

Root reverse scooping Pat Cummins during the Ashes last year will offer validation for his skill level.

But that was at Edgbaston and the pitch there had a lot more carry than the

ones in the sub-continent, and playing those shots might have been a tad easier for him.

So, Root had to be cautious and judicious here. But it was not all catnip for Root as he had to ward off a few uncomfortable moments during his innings.

In the very first ball he faced, debutant pacer Akash Deep brought one back into Root to ping his pads but in DRS, taken by Rohit Sharma, it was evident that the ball was missing the leg-stump.

Later, Mohammed Siraj too hit his pads with an in-swing as Root almost paid for his delayed front foot movement but for a feather of an inside edge. He was 82 then.

When Root was on 97, Akash Deep's reverse swinging in-dipper came in and slammed into his pads, but umpire Rod Tucker deemed that the ball was doing too much.

But, as any other great batter, he

showed braveness to move on from those momentary discomforts to build an old-fashioned Test innings.

He struck just nine boundaries, including a flowing drive through covers off Akash Deep to reach his 31st Test hundred, but lack of big hits never bothered him.

Root was content in taking those singles and twos to put his and the team's score on an upwardly mobile curve.

His approach was more sanguine than flashy, but received its appreciation from the high priests Ben Stokes and McCullum when they signalled thumbs up from the dressing room to celebrate his century.

The more cynical among us would point to the absence of the rested Bumrah for Root's success.

But Test cricket is all about a match-up between possibilities, and none knows that better than Root. (PTI)

Joe focusses on root cause for resolute ton; India discovers new pace option in Akash Deep

RANCHI, Feb 23: India unearthed a fresh pace talent in debutant Akash Deep but veteran Joe Root single-handedly kept England afloat with a tenacious hundred that shunned 'Bazball' for a more conservative approach as the visitors hobbled to 302 for 7 on the opening day of the fourth Test here on Friday.

At stumps, the 33-year-old Root was unbeaten on 106 and had used up 226 deliveries during his classical Test knock. Giving him company at the other end was Ollie Robinson (26) as England staged a decent recovery from the early jolts given by Akash Deep.

The 27-year-old Bengal pacer, who hails from Bihar, picked up three wickets in his 17 overs, marking yet another confident debut for the home side in the ongoing series.

He made life miserable for England's top-order with the new ball, grabbing the top-three in 10 balls as the visitors lost half of their side in the first session.

But Root decided to drop anchor after that, reverting to his natural style of playing the waiting game. The move got him and England the desired results as he struck his first century in 15 innings.

With the sun playing hide and seek during the fog end of the day, the Yorkshire man hit the three-figure mark for the 31st time in his Test career, striking a classy cover-drive off Akash Deep.

It took him 219 balls to get there and the former skipper did not show much emotion, fully aware that his job was not yet done. A record 10



of his 31 Test centuries are against India and the latest one came at just the right juncture.

England are reeling from back-to-back losses in Visakhapatnam and Rajkot to trail the five-match series 1-2.

He hit nine fours in his innings and was a picture of determination, noticeably avoiding the sweep shot due to the variable bounce of the pitch.

The absence of rested pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who had dismissed Root thrice in this series, also gave the Englishman some breathing space. He was happy to play the spinners on the back-foot and slice the field.

His biggest ally in England's splendid recovery was wicketkeeper-batter Ben Foakes (47 off 126 balls). The visiting side went through the second session without losing a wicket for the first time in the series.

The duo took their time and frustrated India by adding 86 runs in the post-lunch session when the wicket flattened out.

Post tea, Mohammed Siraj (2/60) gave the much-needed breakthrough dismissing Foakes three runs short of his half-century, caught by Ravindra Jadeja at short mid-wicket. The dismissal ended a 113-run sixth wicket partnership.

Siraj also dismissed Tom Hartley (13 off 26 balls) with a brilliant delivery that exhibited late movement off the pitch, crashing into the off stump.

Hartley had earlier narrowly avoided a catch by the second slip following an edge that didn't carry. Instead, it went past Yashasvi Jaiswal and reached the boundary rope.

He departed after scoring 13, which included a powerful six off Ravichandran Ashwin over long-on. Ashwin got the scalp of Jonny Bairstow, who made a quick-fire 38 off 35 balls.

Earlier, India's good run with debutants continued as pacer Akash Deep, the fourth newcomer for the hosts in this series, showed promise for this level.

Bowling one of the finest maiden spells in a Test debut -- 7-0-24-3 -- Akash Deep dismissed Ben Duckett (11), Ollie Pope (0) and Zak Crawley (42) in 10 deliveries while bowling from the dressing room end.

The pacer, who came through the ranks playing domestic cricket in Bengal, hit the deck hard in a sensational display during the first hour's play after Ben Stokes opted to bat. (PTI)

India eye revenge against Australia in FIH Pro League

ROURKELA, Feb 23: The Indian men's hockey team would look to leave behind last match's disappointment and lift its game to the next level to stop the mighty Australians' unbeaten run in a FIH Pro League match here on Saturday.

The Indians played some exciting hockey against world No.1 Netherlands in their last match but lost 2-4 in shoot-out after the game ended in a 1-1 stalemate.

India are currently placed fourth in the standings with 11 points from six matches, while Australia are unbeaten so far, registering six outright wins from as many games.

Besides hoping to end their home campaign on a high, revenge will also be high on India's mind as they squandered a two-goal lead to lose 4-6 to the Kookaburras earlier this month in Bhubaneswar.

But for that, the Harmanpreet Singh-led side will need to perform in unison in all departments of the game.

In their last match, the Indians didn't have a very good day from penalty corners with the likes of Harmanpreet, Jugraj Singh and Amit Rohidas finding it difficult to get past Netherlands' first rusher.



Come Saturday, Harmanpreet and his drag-flick colleagues need to have a perfect day to prevail over Australia.

The Indian defence had a fantastic outing against the Dutch and their man-to-man marking was a treat to watch, denying the opponents any space.

The co-ordination between the midfield and forward-line was near perfect.

The Indians used aerial ball to perfection to switch play from one side to the other. The long balls were also used to create scoring opportunities and the hosts will continue to do so to surprise their

opponents in the coming two matches.

The focus would surely be on Indian defence, which needs to be on its toes to deny the Australians inroads.

The Indian forwards, on the other hand, need to capitalise of circle penetrations and convert the chances into goals.

India and Australia play similar style of hockey and mostly rely on attacking game. Saturday's match promises to be an end-to-end contest.

India will round off their home Pro League campaign against Ireland on Sunday. (PTI)



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