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# of LOGO, ANTHEM, MASCOT, JERSEY & TORCH

by

# Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma

Chief Minister, Assam

In the august presence of

# Shri Nisith Pramanik

Minister of State, Youth Affairs & Sports and Home Affairs Government of India

# **Smt Nandita Gorlosa**

Minister of Sports & Youth Welfare Government of Assam Let the music of our Anthem echo the dreams, aspirations and triumphs of our young athletes.

# MASCOT WITH CHARACTER

Meet the face of the Games, a mascot that embodies the agility and determination of our participants.

# JERSEY THAT UNITES

A uniform that signifies not just a team but a community of athletes bound by passion and camaraderie.

# TORCH THAT IGNITES

A symbolic reveal, signalling the onset of an extraordinary sporting odyssey.

# Thursday, 8 February 2024 6:00 PM

Venue: Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Indoor Stadium Guwahati, Assam

Host University
Co-Host Univ

## BUSINESS

# Govt taking steps to check price rise: Sitharaman

'Bharat Dal', coming at a concessional price is available in all retail markets

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said inflation has come down within the tolerance band as a result of the steps taken by the government to check price rise, especially in perishable commodities. Replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Sitharaman said Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) is working with the government on de-humidification of onions through Gamma Rays to give it a longer shelf life.

"The government is seized of the difficulties, which arise due to shortage of perishable goods, which are not grown in India. The committee sits and reviews periodically, and the efforts have shown on the ground that inflation is now within the tolerable band," she said.

India's retail inflation has declined from an average of 6.8 per cent in April-December 2022 to 5.5 per cent in the corresponding period of 2023. The retail inflation is now stable and within the notified tolerance band of 2 per cent to

6 per cent.

The minister said that in order to was released through retail sales. check the volatility in prices of e-Nam auction and bulk sales. onion, the government has pro-"Currently, steps are being taken gressively increased its buffer size so that the preservation of very highly perishable commodities. from 1 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) in 2020-21 to 7 LMT in 2023-24.

larly for meeting the shortage in supply of perishable goods. Sitharaman said India has im-

ported 8.79 lakh metric tonnes of Tur Dal and 15.14 lakh metric tonnes of Masoor Dal in calendar year 2023. Similarly, the country imported other dals and released them in the market.

India has also brought the branded 'Bharat Dal' through which Chana Dal is made available at ₹ 60/kg for one kg pack and ₹ 55/kg for 30 kg packs. 2.97 lakh metric tonnes of Chana have been sold already as of January 30, 2024. 'Bharat Dal', which is coming at a concessional price, is available in all retail markets.

"Since we don't grow enough pulses in the country and due to a shortfall in supply, prices of pulses normally keep fluctuating, for which, by analysing the crop estimates, we start tying up for imports," Sitharaman added.

Retail inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), in December 2023, stood at 5.69 per cent. (PTI)

### State Bank of India to buy out SBI Caps' stake in SBICAP Ventures

KOLKATA, Feb 6: State Bank of India on Tuesday announced that it has got the approval of the executive committee of its central board to acquire a 100 per cent stake held by SBI Capital Markets in SBICAP Ventures. The lender said the cost of the acquisition is ₹ 708 crore.

central board of the bank has accorded final approval for acquiring 100 per cent stake held by SBI Capital Markets Ltd in SBICAP Ventures Ltd by State Bank of India," the country's largest lender said in a regulatory filing.

The bank said that SBICAP Ventures is engaged in the business of asset and investment management having assets under management (AUM) to the tune of ₹ 33,055 crore as of December 2023.

The stake acquisition from SBI Capital Markets is for better governance, the lender said.

The proposed transaction of acquisition is being done on an arm's length basis. The RBI and SEBI have also accorded their approvals, the lender said. According to the regulatory fil-

ing, the acquisition will be completed by February 25, 2024. In the third quarter of the current SBICA Ventures posted

**SIGNS \$78 BN PACT FOR 20 YRS** India saves \$6 bn on **Qatar LNG deal renewal** 

BETUL (GOA), Feb 6: India on Tuesday signed a USD 78 billion deal to extend LNG imports from Qatar by another 20 years till 2048 at rates lower than current prices.

Petronet LNG Ltd, India's biggest liquefied natural gas (LNG) importer, in a statement said it has signed a pact with QatarEnergy to extend the deal to buy 7.5 million tonne a year of gas for producing electricity, making fertilizers and converting it into CNG.

The deal was signed on the sidelines of India Energy Week (IEW) here.

Sources said the renewal is at a "significantly" lower price than the current deal. At current prices, India will save about USD 0.8 per million British thermal unit at the renewed terms. This translates into savings of USD 6 billion over the contract period.

Petronet imports 8.5 million tonne per annum (MTPA) of LNG from Qatar under two contracts. The first 25-year deal is to expire in 2028 and has now been extended for 20 additional years. The second deal for 1 MTPA entered into in 2015, will be negotiated separately, sources said.

As per the 1999 deal for 7.5 MTPA, the renewal was to be agreed upon five years prior to the end of the supply term. That deadline was in December 2023.

intense negotiations over the last few months. There were heightened tensions when a Oatar court sentenced eight former Indian Navy officials to death in October for allegedly spying for Israel. At December-end, their sentence was reduced.

Qatar's energy minister and top officials of QatarEnergy are attending the IEW here.

India, the world's third biggest energy consumer, sees natural gas as a transition fuel for migrating to net zero carbon emissions by 2070. As part of this, the government is targeting to raise the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030 from 6.3 per cent now.

# **HDFC Bank expands SME Payment Solutions**

### HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 6: HDFC Bank, India's largest private sector bank, on Tuesday announced expansion of its SME Payment Solutions with the launch of Business range of credit cards customised for business owners,

self-employed individuals, SMEs and MSMEs.

Tailored to address both payable and receivable needs of businesses, the Bank has introduced a unified digital platform employed category and the Bank which consolidates all payables will be launching GIGA Business such as vendor payments, utility Credit Card shortly, catering to

employed community including MSMEs, startups, professionals, and freelancers.

Freelancers/GIG workers is a new emerging segment in self-

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: A high-level inter-ministerial

committee will again meet on February 8 to discuss

the way forward on the trade front in the wake of on-

Earlier the panel held its meeting on the issue on

Senior officials from five ministries -- external af-

"In the February 8 meeting, the officers are ex-

fairs, defence, shipping, finance (department of finan-

cial services), and commerce -- are expected to

pected to talk about steps being taken by them to help

the exporting community deal with this crisis," the of-

ficial said. These meetings are convened by the com-

merce ministry. In the last meeting, the commerce

ministry had asked the Department of Financial Serv-

ices (DFS) to monitor and maintain credit flow to ex-

porters, who are facing freight cost troubles due to the

Meanwhile, the finance ministry on Monday asked

banks and insurance companies to expeditiously re-

solve issues of exporters and facilitate overseas trac

going problems in the Red Sea, an official said.

January 17 here

Red Sea crisis.

participate in the deliberations.

militants in December 2023. Because of this, the shipping costs have jumped and the consignments are taking more time to reach Europe and the US as the ships are taking the Cape of

Good Hope route, encircling Africa. Longer routes are resulting in delays of about 14-

and 3.96 LMT of Grade-A onion

20 days and also higher freight and insurance costs. Exporters are apprehensive that the crisis may cause some trade disruption because the cost of moving it

around becomes expensive. The commerce ministry has also asked the ECGC not to increase the export credit interest rates.

State-owned ECGC is an export promotion organisation, seeking to improve the competitiveness of Indian exports by providing them with credit insurance covers

The trade route of Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea is shorter and faster than the Cape of Good Hope route, making it the preferred option for most shipping companies.

The route starts from major Indian ports like Mumbai, JNPT, or Chennai, heads westward through the Arabian Sea, enters the Red Sea, and navigates through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean Sea. From there, ships can reach various European ports, depending on their destinations.

The Cape of Good Hope route is longer and slower, but it avoids the potential for delays or disruptions in the Suez Canal. It is typically used for bulk cargo shipments where time is less critical or when political instability in the Middle East raises concerns about







basis.

importance.

troleum Corporation Limited (10

per cent) after regasification pri-

marily from Dahej terminal of

PLL on substantially back-to-back

"This LNG SPA between PLL

and QatarEnergy will ensure en-

ergy security of India and assure

continued supplies of regasified

LNG to major consuming sectors

like fertilisers, CGD, refineries,

petrochemical, power and other

Akshay Kumar Singh, CEO,

Petronet said, the existing long-

term agreement between Petronet

and QatarEnergy today accounts

for around 35 per cent of India's

LNG imports and is of national

step towards achieving the vision

of Prime Minister of India to

make India a gas-based economy

and increase share of natural gas

in India's primary energy basket

to 15 per cent by year 2030. This

agreement will provide energy se-

curity and ensure stable and reli-

able supply of clean energy and

help India in its stride towards

While 7.5 MTPA of LNG is

greater economic development."

bought by Petronet, IOC, BPCL

and GAIL buy a combined 1

Sources said the new deal will

allow the Indian buyers to decide

which terminal in India will re-

ceive cargoes. Under existing

deals, Qatar delivers LNG at

Dahej in Gujarat. Sources said the

freedom to decide on the arrival

terminal will result in additional

savings in cost for transporting

the fuel through pipelines within

MTPA of LNG.

"Renewal of this agreement is a

industries," the statement said.

ing Brent crude oil price plus a fixed component of USD 0.52 per million British thermal unit.

Under the new contract, the slope would remain more or less the same but the fixed charge of USD 0.52 would be scrapped, they said.

Ålso, India will save an additional USD 0.30 per mmBtu on shipping charges as Qatar has agreed to convert the deal to Delivered Ex Ship (DES) from Free on Board (FOB), thereby undertaking responsibility of shipping.

At USD 80 per barrel Brent crude oil price, the 7.5 MTPA import will cost USD 3.9 billion annually and over a 20-year period it would total to USD 78 billion. "Petronet LNG Limited (PLL)

has successfully concluded and executed a LNG sales and purchase agreement (LNG SPA) for purchase of around 7.5 million tonne per annum of LNG with QatarEnergy on long-term basis

today," the company said in a statement. This, it said, was pursuant to extension of an existing LNG SPA for LNG supply of around 7.5

million tonne on FOB or free on board basis (where the buyer arranges for shipping of the cargo), signed on July 31, 1999. Supplies started in 2023 and were to last till 2028.

"Under the new agreement, LNG supplies will be made on delivered (DES) basis commencing from 2028 till 2048," Petronet said.

Similar to earlier agreement of 1999, the LNG volumes under the new SPA shall also be offtaken by company promoters GAIL (India) (60 per cent), Indian Oil Corpora- the Indian grid.  $(\hat{PTI})$ 

Sources said the current deal is priced at 12.67 per cent of prevail-

# ...executive committee of the

The two sides were engaged in

# Rupee settles 2 paise lower Gold falls ₹ 150; silver tumbles ₹ 600 at 83.05 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Feb 6: The rupee declined 2 paise to close at 83.05 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid a firm American currency against major currencies overseas

However, positive sentiment in the domestic equity markets and lower global crude prices supported the domestic unit, forex analysts said.

Investors were cautious as the Reserve Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC), the six-member rate-setting panel, began the deliberation on Tuesday. The central bank will announce the key interest rate decision on Thursday.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 83.03 against the dollar and touched the intra-day low of 83.06 against the greenback. The local unit finally settled at 83.05 (provisional)

against the US currency, registering a loss of 2 paise from the previous day. The rupee settled 5 paise lower at 83.03 against the dollar on

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent higher at 104.36.

Analysts attributed the higher level of the US currency to the recent macroeconomic data, which showed steady growth in the world's largest economy.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.24 per cent to USD 77.80 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex surged 454.67 points, or 0.63 per cent, to 72,186.09 points. The Nifty soared 157.70 points, or 0.72 per cent, to 21,929.40 points. (PTI)

Monday.

## STUATION VACANT

- Applications are invited for the following post:
- 1. ALT (Assamese Language Teacher) Senior post - 1No.

## **REQUISITE QUALIFICATIONS** —

- (1) BA with Assamese as Major or MIL in Degree Course.
- Preference will be given to the candidate having -(a) B.Ed. Or, MA in Assamese
- (b) fluency in reading and writing in both Bodo and Assamese language

Application must reach to the undersigned on or before 15.02.2024

### Sd/-

Headmaster and Secretary Sonapur Bodo Medium High School, Dhentaghat Karbi Anglong : Assam

net profit of ₹ 42.06 crore. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: Gold prices fell ₹ 150 to ₹ 63,200 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid bearish cues from the overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at ₹ 63,350 per 10 grams in the previous close.

Silver also tumbled ₹ 600 to ₹ 74,900 per kilogram, while it had settled at ₹ 75,500 per kg in the previous trade.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at ₹ 63,200 per 10 grams, down by ₹ 150, taking bearish cues from the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the global markets, gold and silver were trading lower at USD 2,022 per ounce and USD 22.32 per ounce, respectively. (*PTI*)

entrepreneurs, and freelancers. The credit cards will be available in 4 variants – BizFirst, BizGrow, BizPower, and BizBlack. The business credit card range offers a best-in-class interest-free credit cycle of 55 days, savings on core business spends like utility bills, GST, income tax, vendor payments, business travel, and business productivity tools.

This offering makes up a part of the strong suite of SME payments solutions that the Bank offers. HDFC Bank's SME Payment Solution is a designed to meet the diverse payment needs of

bills, and statutory payments etc. On the receivable side of payments, the platform is designed to manage and optimize end to end supply-chain arrangements and reconciliation. The platform provides a detailed dashboard with one view of payments made and accepted, for better cash-flow management. The Bank leads the commercial spends market with a significant 45% market share as of Decem-

ber 2023. The new range of business credit cards is envisioned to cater to the requirements of the selfspecific needs of this segment.

Speaking at the launch, Parag Rao, country head - payments, liabilities products, consumer finance & marketing HDFC Bank said, "At HDFC Bank, we are committed to addressing the diverse payment needs of the selfemployed as well as the business sector, ranging from MSMEs to large corporates. Understanding the specific requirements of the self-employed community, our business range of credit cards, is designed to be a practical gamechanger in supporting their everyday business needs.'

### **ELECTRICAL WORKS**

E-Tender Notice No. EL-CON-NFF OHE-D-K-01; Dated: 31-01-2024. Ope tender through e-Tendering system i invited from experienced and repute Contractor (s)/firm(s) for the following wor Tender No.: <u>EL-CON-NFR-OHE</u> <u>D-K-01</u>. Name of works: Engineering Procurement, Construction and commissioning of 25 kV, 50 Hz, Single Phase, AC, Electrification work including FOCS and ROCS" in Dhansiri - Ferim New single line Section in connection with New Line Project of Dimapur - Kohima Project of N. F. Railway, including works of Supply, erection, modification, testing and commissioning of TSS, SCADA for the section and electrical general work of CLS (44 RKM/57 TKM). Tender Value ₹68,54,94,951.32; Earnest Money ₹35,77,500.00; Date and Time o Submission of tender: upto 15-03-2024 a 15:00 hrs. ; Date and Time of Opening o nder: 22-03-2024 at 15.00 hrs. Th complete information and tende document of e-Tender will b vailable at <u>www.ireps.gov.in</u> Chief Electrical Engineer/Cor

Maligaon, Guwahati-1 Northeast Frontier Railwa  $\odot$ 

### CARRYING OUT PERIODICAL MAINTENANCE AND ATTENDING FAILURES

E-Tender Notice No.: SNT-26 LMG-2023-24-RT Dated: 02-02 2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work Name of work & Place: Carrying out periodical Maintenance an attending failures of 79 Nos. Kirloska make Environment friendly DG Set (15 KVA 60 Nos & 7.5/5 KVA 1 Nos) for a period of 01 (one) year Jamguri-Thekeraguri section including Chaparmukh branch of Lumdir Division. Tender Value: ₹30,31,630.61 Bid Security: ₹60,600/-. Date & Time of Closing Tender: 15.00 hrs. 26-02-2024 & opening at 15.30 hr of 26-02-2024. For details please vis ww.ireps.gov.in

DSTE, Lumdir NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

India to see investment of USD 67 billion in next 5-6 years in energy sector: PM

India is investing unprecedented money in the energy sector

GOA, Feb 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that India will see an investment of USD 67 billion in the energy sector in next 5 to 6 years as he invited global investors to participate in India's growth story.

Inaugurating the second edition of the India Energy Week here, Modi said the Indian economy is growing at the rate of more than 7.5 per cent and the country will soon become the world's third-largest economy.

He invited global players to participate in India's energy sector growth, saying that the country is expected to increase its refining capacity from 254 MMTPA (million metric tonne per annum) to 450 MMTPA by 2030. He said, "In next 5-6 years, the investment of USD 67 billion is going to be done in energy sector in India."

The prime minister further said that India is investing unprecedented money in the energy sector that has never happened before. He also said that the country's primary en-

ergy demand will be doubled by 2045. India, Modi said, is the third-largest consumer of crude oil and LPG and the fourthlargest importer of LNG.

Petrol and diesel prices reduced in India in last two years, said the prime minister recounting the country's energy management strategy in face of global problems.

He said all experts are of the opinion that India is the fastest growing major economy and will soon become the world's thirdlargest economy. India's GDP growth is now



more than 7.5 per cent, he said, adding that this is more than estimated by global bodies

Government reforms are helping boost domestic natural gas production and India is targeting to raise the share of gas in its energy mix to 15 pc by 2030, he added. About the blending of ethanol in petrol, he noted that it has increased from 1.5 pc to 12 pc in last 10

years Ethanol blending in petrol will reach 20 pc by 2025, he added.

India accounts for just 4 pc of global emissions and is targeting net zero by 2070, the prime minister said, adding that surplus electricity generated from just-announced scheme of installing solar rooftop on one crore homes will be connected to grid. (PTI)



1.6 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs ki Guarantee providing healthcare facilities close to home

# Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

# CM not availed air travel on govt expenditure, House told

House witnesses verbal duels, two adjournments

GUWAHATI, Feb 6: The Assam government has spent more than ₹ 5,823 lakh towards expenditure on air travel for the chief minister and other dignitaries since May 2021, the assembly was informed on Tuesday.

General administration department minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, replying to a written question by Independent legislator Akhil Gogoi, said chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had not availed air travel facility for personal or partyrelated activities on government expenditure.

Dass said a total of ₹ 5,823.07 lakh has been spent on charges for air travel of the chief minister, other ministers and dignitaries from May 10, 2021, till January 30, 2024. The CM has not availed air travel on government expenditure for personal work, work not related to his official duty or the political party he represents, the minister added.

Earlier, the Assembly was adjourned twice on Tuesday by speaker Biswajit Daimary as opposition and treasury bench members engaged in verbal duels and refused to be pacified even when the chair intervened several times.

The first adjournment was for 10 minutes during the Question Hour when MLAs of the ruling, as well as opposition parties, were locked in debates, ignoring appeals by Daimary

NTPC, IOC ink pact for disaster

response at Bongaigaon plants

GUWAHATI, Feb 6: State-owned power major

NTPC on Tuesday said it has joined hands with the

Bongaigaon unit of Indian Oil Corporation to ad-

dress industrial emergencies and natural calamities.

In a statement, NTPC said its Bongaigaon plant

to maintain decorum.

The MLAs of the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress were seen exchanging words during a question on the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) in the state.

Public Health Engineering Department minister Jayanta Mallabaruah, giving a reply, said that Rs 6,500 was paid per month to Jal Mitras,

employed under the JJM. Akhil Gogoi demanded to know what the min-

# Over ₹ 1.15 lakh crore outstanding liabilities of Assam govt: Minister

GUWAHATI, Feb 6: The total outstanding liabilities of the Assam government currently is over ₹ 1.15 lakh crore, finance minister Ajanta Neog informed the state Assembly on Tuesday, while affirming that the debt to GSDP ratio of the state is within prescribed limits. She also maintained that the government has been repaying debts as per schedule while it has become self-reliant in paying for its salary, pension and loan interest from its own resources. Replying to a question by Independent legislator Akhil Gogoi, Neog said the total outstanding liabilities of the state as on March 31, 2023, is ₹ 1,15,751.32 crore. ₹ The amount was 82,741.09 crore as on the same day in 2021, she added. She maintained that the debt to GSDP ratio was at 23.47 per cent till 2022-23. which was within the permitted limit of 32 per cent as

### Ås Congress MLAs and Independent MLA imum wage in the state was and whether the state government deemed the amount paid to the Jal Mitras to be adequate, they engaged in an altercation with the treasury bench. The speaker urged both sides (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

claimed that he suffered a

# India decides to fence entire border with Myanmar: Shah

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: India has decided to fence the entire 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border, Union home minister Amit Shah announced on Tuesday.

The move could virtually put an end to the Free Movement Regime (FMR) prevalent along the porous border. The FMR allows people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any document.

The 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border, which passes through Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, currently has FMR. It was introduced in 2018 as part of India's Act East policy.

Fencing along the border has been a persistent demand of the Imphal Valley-based Meitei groups which have been alleging that tribal militants often enter into India through the porous border.

The Meitei groups also allege that narcotics are being smuggled into India taking advantage of the unfenced international border. In a post on X, Shah said the Narendra Modi government is committed to building impenetrable borders.

'It has decided to construct a fence along the entire 1643-kilometer-long Indo-Myanmar border. To facil-

# ASSAM ASSEMBLY **Cong MLA suspended for** disrupting proceedings

MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed was suspended for the day during the ongoing budget session of the Assam Assembly on Tuesday by speaker Biswajit Daimary for disrupting proceedings.

minor injury in the

The MLA rose to

Rupak

Claiming that wrong infor-

mation was provided by Sarmah,

his feet and started

speaking immedi-

ately after BJP leg-

Sarmah completed

nor's address.

his speech while

moving the motion of

thanks on the Gover-

process.

islator

these projects," Ahmed said.

MLA's contention that the state's Ahmed, who was escorted out of the House by marshals, later

Daimary asked

state's money that is being spent on He also disputed the ruling party

perennial flood problem has been solved, claiming that large tracts of land of his Baghbor constituency continue to be inundated annually.

speech,

suspension.

The marshals

him out of the House.

Wednesday. (PTI)

him out.

Speaker illegal drug trade.

Ahmed to place the Karimgani Police based on spe his points durcific intelligence inputs. ing his oppor-The authorities intercepted a vetunity to speak hicle entering Assam from a neighbut as the Conboring state, uncovering a gress MLA perconcealed stash of heroin weighing sisted with his 612 grams hidden in secret comthe partments within the vehicle. Speaker ordered his Sarma took to the micro-blogging site X to acknowledge the immediatelv successful operation, stating, rushed to Ahmed's seat and forced "Based on a specific input, @karimganjpolice launched an Ahmed, talking to reporters anti-narcotics operation and interlater, claimed that he has hurt his cepted a vehicle coming from a finger when the marshals pulled neighbouring State. 612 grams of heroin were seized from secret While the Speaker did not specchambers of the vehicle & two ify the period for which Ahmed has people have been apprehended in been suspended, Ahmed said he this regard. Well done @assampowill be back in the House on lice!" The two individuals apprehended (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Pradesh and Manipur. Additionally, fence works covering approx 20 km in Manipur (CONTD. ON PAGE-9) 612 grams of heroin seized in Karimganj

itate better surveillance, a patrol track along the border

der in Moreh in Manipur has already been fenced.

The home minister said a 10-km stretch of the bor-

Furthermore, two pilot projects of fencing through

a hybrid surveillance system are under execution.

'They will fence a stretch of 1 km each in Arunachal

will also be paved," he said.

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 6: In a significant breakthrough, Assam Police successfully seized 612 grams of heroin in Karimganj district during an anti-narcotics operation on

Monday State chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma commended the efforts of the law enforcement agencies in intercepting a vehicle from a neighboring state and apprehending two individuals involved in the

The operation was carried out by

GUWAHATI, Feb 6: Congress "As such, it would be wrong to thank the prime minister as it is the

and IOC's Bongaigaon Refinery have formalised a Mutual Aid Agreement (MAA) for Emergency Response Plan (ERP), aimed at bolstering emergency readiness and response capabilities between the two organisations

"The mutual aid initiative, codified in a comprehensive agreement, seeks to enhance collaboration and resource sharing between the two entities to effectively address industrial emergencies and natural calamities," it said.

By pooling resources and expertise, the two units aim to minimise the impact of disasters and ensure swift coordinated responses in times of crisis, NTPC said. "The partnership with IOC Bongaigaon Refinery signifies our dedication to ensuring the safety and well-being of our employees, stakeholders and the surrounding areas," NTPC Bongaigaon business unit head Karunakar Das said.

IOC executive director and Bongaigaon Refinery head Navan Kumar Barua said the agreement outlines key objectives, including establishing and developing mutual aid assistance for industrial emergency situations, providing timely and organised assistance beyond the capacity of individual organisations. Under the agreement, both energy majors commit to providing personnel, equipment, facilities and services to assist each other during emergencies, besides sensitising members and public on disaster (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

SHS SHE



per the Assam Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act.

Claiming robust financial health of the state, Neog said, "While the previous governments used loan amounts to pay salaries, we are using it for infrastructure building and precisely that is why we dream of being in the top five states of the

country soon." She said capital expenditure in the state has gone up from ₹ 4,543 crore in 2014-15 to ₹ 16,338 crore in 2022-23. while (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

As data laid by the minister, total debt taken by the state government in 2016-17 was ₹ 5649.45 crore, followed by ₹ 10476.2 crore in 2017-18, ₹ 14003.88 crore in 2018-19, ₹ 16634.53 in 2019-20, ₹ 19256.59 in 2020-21 ₹ 17148 41 in 2021-22 and ₹ 25902.16 in 2022-23. The minister said total outstanding liabilities on March 31, 2016, was ₹ 35,690.22 crore. The state government availed loans amounting to ₹ 35.433 crore from 2001-02 to 2013014,

Ahmed urged that these be corrected. He maintained that though Sarmah had thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for projects worth ₹ 11.600 crore, foundation stones for which were laid two days ago here, the Centre's investment was only ₹ 250 crore in these

by the state.

Lok Sabha passes bill to tackle exam malpractices NEW DELHI, Feb 6: A bill,

projects and the latter will be borne

which seeks to deal sternly with malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations with provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine up to ₹ 1 crore, was passed in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

Piloting The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, Union minister Jitendra Singh said its provisions are meant to safeguard the interest of meritorious students and candidates.

The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha after rejecting amendments proposed by the opposition members. Singh said the government "will not allow meritorious (candidates) to be sacrificed at the alter of organised crimes"

He added that the students and candidates do not fall in the purview of this bill and there will ne no harm to job aspirants.

The move comes against the backdrop of cancellation of a series of competitive tests such as the teacher recruitment exam in Rajasthan, Common Eligibility Test (CET) for Group-D posts in Haryana, recruitment exam for junior clerks in Gujarat and constable recruitment examination in Bihar (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Cold wave grips Diphu town, residents bundle up against chilly weather

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Feb 6:** A spell of drizzle and overcast skies has enveloped Diphu town in a shroud of cold, sending residents scurrying for warmth indoors. With temperatures plummeting, locals are layering up in sweaters, heavy jackets, and multiple layers of clothing to fend off the biting chill.

The chilly conditions have prompted many to gather around bonfires dotting the town, seeking respite from the bone-chilling weather. The dreary weather has significantly impacted foot traffic in Diphu market, with sparse crowds reported by local vendors.

Commenting on the weather forecast, Taposhree Das, Scientist (GKMS) at the Assam Agriculture University's Zonal Research Station in Dillaji, highlighted the influence of westerly winds originating from Jammu and Kash-

mir and Himachal Pradesh. He said that these winds, descending upon the region, are causing a drop in air density, leading to the prevailing cold spell.

"As per the latest forecast from the Regional Met Centre, Guwahati, the district can expect a fur-

ther dip in temperatures over the next five days. Maximum temperatures are projected to range between 21 to 24 degrees Celsius. while minimum temperatures are forecasted to hover between 11 to 13 degrees Celsius," informed Das. Additionally, the forecast predicts the likelihood of dense fog

and light rainfall at isolated places across the district, with the sky expected to remain partially cloudy in the coming days. Reflecting on the impact of the inclement weather on business activities, local vendors expressed their struggles amidst the gloomy conditions.

"Due to the cold weather, footfall in the market has decreased significantly. It's challenging to carry out business as usual," remarked a mobile phone recharge shop owner. Echoing similar sentiments, a vegetable vendor emphasized the discomfort posed by the unusual cold snap.

"Today's cold is particularly harsh. I can't bear to stay out in the open for long. Once I sell the remaining bundles of local spinach, I'm heading home," shared the vendor, highlighting the urgency to seek shelter from the biting cold.

### <u>HT Correspondent</u>

With a capacity of approximately 100 kg per batch, the dryer holds immense promise for stakeholders

JORHAT, Feb 6: The Department of Agricultural Engineering at Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, has made a groundbreaking stride in tea processing technology by recently securing a patent for a cutting-edge tea dryer tailored specifically for the benefit of small tea growers.

Led by senior scientist Abhijit Bora and supported by junior scientist Kaushik Hazarika, the team unveiled a cost-effective natural draft gas-fired tea dryer. Designed to cater to the needs of small tea growers in Upper Assam, where piped gas resources are abundant, the dryer marks a significant departure from traditional electricity-dependent drving methods.

"The hallmark of our dryer lies in its independence from electricity, offering a viable solution to the most critical aspect of tea processing for small growers - drying," remarked Bora, emphasising the dryer's po-

tential to elevate tea quality and streamline production processes.

With a capacity of approximately 100 kg per batch, the dryer holds immense promise for stakeholders in the region, particularly in light of Assam's burgeoning community of small tea growers, estimated at around 68,465. These growers collectively contribute a substantial portion, nearly 100 million kg, to the state's annual tea production, which accounts for 55 per cent of India's total output

Strategically concentrated in the five Upper Assam districts, where piped gas infrastructure is prevalent, the dryer's utilisation of this resource as a heat source is poised to gain swift traction. Moreover, given the unreliable electricity supply in the region, the dryer's self-sufficiency presents a compelling economic proposition for growers, unlocking newfound market potential. The dryer's (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

# Innovative Tea Dryer to revolutionise small growers' operations



## THE HILLS TIMES VOL. XXV, ISSUE 28, DIPHU, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Something good comes out of every crisis - Dave Pelzer

# **Red Sea crisis**

he Red Sea crisis, also known as the United States-Iran proxy war, has emerged as a significant bottleneck affecting India's maritime trade, particularly its exports of marine products and high-quality rice to key markets like the United States, Middle East, and Europe. Originating from Yemen's Houthi attacks targeting southern Israel and ships in the Red Sea, this conflict has compelled ships to avoid the traditional Suez Canal route, opting instead for the longer journey around the Cape of Good Hope. As a result, Indian shipments face delays of up to a month, with approximately 25% of outbound shipments being held back. India's heavy dependence on the Red Sea route for trade with regions like the Middle East, Europe, North America, and North Africa is evident. These regions collectively contribute to about 50% of India's exports and 30% of its imports. However, with ships now diverting to the longer Africa route due to safety concerns, trade has been severely impacted. The repercussions extend to India's status as the world's largest rice exporter, responsible for 40% of global rice shipments. While a ban on white rice and broken varieties imposed in July 2023 affected 30% of India's shipments, recent escalations in the Red Sea have exacerbated challenges, particularly for basmati rice exports. The increased cost of transportation amidst the Israel-Gaza conflict and attacks on commercial ships by Houthi militants have driven up freight rates, resulting in a significant drop in exports compared to the previous year.

Traders are grappling with skyrocketing freight costs, container shortages, and longer transit times, leading to disputes over contracts and cancellations of orders. Consequently, prices for Indian basmati rice have fluctuated, with the market experiencing an 8% decline due to stockpiling and limited availability. The situation is compounded by the state-run Food Corporation of India's increased purchases from rice farmers, depleting stocks for private traders. While tensions in the Middle East persist, there is no immediate resolution in sight for the Red Sea crisis. The ongoing conflict between Houthi forces and their attacks on global shipping routes continues to disrupt trade, prompting a cautious approach from exporters. Moreover, with India's upcoming Lok Sabha elections and the impending monsoon season affecting agricultural production, the outlook for rice exports remains uncertain. In light of these challenges, the World Bank suggests that India easing its export restrictions could help stabilize rice prices amidst global uncertainties. However, industry executives anticipate that any policy changes will likely be postponed until after the elections. Despite logistical hurdles and geopolitical tensions, OPEC producers' gradual reduction in output has helped maintain stable oil prices, offering some respite amid the crisis.

As India navigates the complexities of global trade disruptions, its role as a key rice supplier is under scrutiny, highlighting the interconnectedness of regional conflicts and international commerce. Amidst the challenges posed by the Red Sea crisis, India faces a delicate balancing act between domestic priorities and international obligations. With the spectre of food inflation looming and the need to ensure food security for its citizens, policymakers must navigate a complex landscape of trade-offs and strategic decisions. Furthermore, the Red Sea crisis underscores the urgent need for diplomatic intervention to de-escalate tensions and restore stability to crucial maritime trade routes, safeguarding global economic interests and regional stability

# Breaking the chains of begging: Modi government's **bold** initiative

n the kaleidoscope of India's opportunity, ensuring that the socio-economic mosaic, spectre of begging is banished Prime Minister Narendra from the collective conscience of the nation.Indeed, the campaign for a Beggar-Free India transcends mere policy prescriptions; it is a testament to the indomitable spirit of a nation that refuses to be defined by its disparities. As the sun sets on the old order, a new dawn beckons one where every citizen, regardless of their circumstances, can walk tall with pride and purpose.

# Path to progress: India's visionary interim budget

The interim Budget reflects the government's unwavering dedication to embarking on the transformative "Amrit Kaal" journey, poised to fulfill the ambitious vision of a "New India." Geared for a triumphant leap towards achieving developed status by 2047, the Budget places emphasis on inclusive growth. Seeking to inject fresh vitality into the economy, it aims to fortify India's remarkably robust ecosystem, positioning the nation as a dynamic global growth catalyst. The emphasis on tackling so-

cioeconomic challenges and enhancing the well-being of every citizen, with particular attention to youth, women, the underprivileged, and farmers, is highly commendable. It aligns seamlessly with the overarching vision of a progressive New India.

At the heart of the Budget lies a pivotal focus on empowering women, a cornerstone that promises to elevate their role in the workforce. Extending the umbrella of the Ayushman Bharat scheme to encompass ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, and helpers, along with expediting Poshan 2.0 for enhanced nutritional outreach, and advocating for the vaccination of girls aged nine to 14 against cervical cancer - these initiatives collectively strive to boost women's active participation in the country's workforce.

Raising the bar for the "Lakhpati Didi" initiative from two crores to three crores is a significant step toward fostering women's entrepreneurship. Indeed, self-help groups (SHGs), where some have transformed into "lakhpati didis," stand out as powerful instruments for women's empowerment. These groups play a crucial role in bringing together marginalized and economically disadvantaged women, enabling them to collaboratively strive for economic selfsufficiency.

Presenting a well-articulated Budget, the government showcases a resolute commitment to realizing its vision of building robust infrastructure assets and directing resources towards capital expenditure. This exemplary approach is poised to ignite a positive growth cycle, fostering job creation. Notably, the substantial 11.1 percent increase in the capex outlay to ₹11.11 lakh crores is a significant highlight

The extension of the 50-year interest-free loan to states for capital expenditure further underscores the government's forwardthinking

approach. The DEGREE OF THOUGHT introduction of PM Gatishakti By: Dipak Kurmi rail corridors targeting energy,

minerals, cement, port connectivity, and high-traffic routes is not only encouraging but promises to enhance logistics efficiency and reduce associated costs. The interim Budget strategi-

rural economy. cally places a spotlight on agriculture, demonstrating a strong dedication to uplifting rural communities and boosting consumption demand. This initiative aims areas of emphasis include health to address the challenges posed by erratic monsoons, alleviating and education. The drive to emrural distress.

Recognizing that the realization of the "Viksit Bharat" dream hinges on transforming the rural economy, the government has taken the initial step by committing to foster essential investagricultural ments in infrastructure. This involves encouraging both public and private investments in post-harvest activities

Additionally, there is a conenhancing employability and propelling the growth engines of the certed effort to enhance value ad-

dition under the existing PM-SAMPADA and PM-FME programs, which is expected to benefit farmers significantly and contribute to inclusive growth.

Moreover, the introduction of an electronic agri mandi network and a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation will play a pivotal role in leveraging technology solutions to enhance the climate resilience of agriculture. The establishment of a dedicated department for fisheries, aimed at promoting aquaculture production and exports, coupled with initiatives like the promotion of the dairy sector and the "atma nirbhar" oilseed mission, signals a push towards diversification beyond traditional agriculture.

lives and livelihoods. The key

power the youth unfolds through

the implementation of the New

Education Policy 2020, the estab-

skill development.

With a substantial contribution of 29 percent to the GDP, the MSME sector stands to reap substantial benefits from the government's proactive measures. These include ensuring the timely and ample availability of credit, fostering the development of pertinent technologies, creating a conducive regulatory environment, and providing essential training for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Such comprehensive support is poised to incentivize these units to expand their scale of opera-

competitiveness. Likewise, the government's forward-looking vision is evident Additionally, in its support for technology, research and development (R&D), the Rural Awas Yojana (Gramin) and a strong push towards adis poised to give vancing the green economy. The creation of a substantial corpus of significant boost to the rural ₹1 lakh crore, coupled with a 50housing sector, acting as a catayear interest-free loan, designed lyst for rural asset creation, transto offer long-term financing at formative growth, increased minimal or zero interest rates, consumption, and the revitalizaserves as a compelling incentive tion of demand drivers in the for the private sector to increase investments in R&D. This move In tandem with agriculture, the is set to fortify India's competi-Budget places a paramount focus tiveness on the global stage. on the social sector, underscoring

tions and enhance their global

Additionally, the introduction of a new scheme dedicated to enthe commitment to safeguarding hancing deep-tech technologies for defense purposes is poised to significantly foster "atma nirbharta" (self-reliance) in high-tech manufacturing and emerging industries Simultaneously, the commend-

lishment of new higher learning able emphasis on green energy is institutions, and the promotion of noteworthy. Initiatives such as Initiatives such as the formaproviding viability gap funding tion of a committee for expandfor tapping into offshore wind ening medical colleges and the ergy, bolstering the ecosystem for facilitation of loans to fuel the enelectric vehicles and charging infrastructure, coal gasification, trepreneurial aspirations of the youth are pivotal steps aimed at and promoting rooftop solarization, collectively contribute to fostering sustainability and propelling green growth

Acknowledging that the realization of many announced initiatives hinges on collaboration with the states, the Budget outlines a strategic approach to foster consensus with state governments for the effective implementation of reforms. This pivotal step is poised to unlock the untapped potential of the economy. Additionally, the government's decision to retract specific outstanding direct tax demands is anticipated to diminish tax litigation and enhance the overall ease of tax payment.

The finance minister deserves commendation for exhibiting astute financial management and avoiding populism, steadfastly adhering to the fiscal deficit target at a better-than-expected 5.8 percent of GDP for the current fiscal year. This achievement is noteworthy, especially with the challenging external circumstances and their potential impact on India.

Furthermore, the fiscal arithmetic appears to be robust. The government's prudence is evident in its commitment to constrain the fiscal deficit to 5.1 percent of GDP for the fiscal year 2024-25, aligning with the glide path aimed at achieving a fiscal deficit below 4.5 percent of GDP by 2025-26.

In essence, the Budget delineates a comprehensive roadmap for the economy, adeptly balancing the resolution of short-term challenges with the overarching goal of nurturing long-term capabilities. It is evident that the budget is replete with a plethora of measures poised to stimulate inclusive growth, all the while staying true to the vision of preparing the Indian economy for the future in our "Amrit Kaal" journey. (The writer can be reached

dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

### **Cultural genocide of Palestinians** Champai Soren's convincing win in Jharkhand

### By: Asad Mirza

he war in Palestine, which was seen once as a human tragedy, has also exposed another side of stretch of coast. the Zionist program, that of a 'cultural genocide' - the continuous shelling and firing has destroyed more than 100 Gaza heritages belonging to both the Muslims and Christians, in the Gaza City and West Bank and

around Palestine. from Heliopolis in ancient This could be described as Egypt, cutting across Gaza's only an attempt to get rid of western coastline and then the civilisational treasures of crossing into Syrian lands the Palestinian land, so that one could lay claim to it in the future and the Zionist lobby could proclaim it as the Prom-

Romans –each leaving relics in Gaza have been destroyed of their own cultural heritage behind. For centuries Greeks. Jews, Persians and Nabateans have also lived along this Gaza is strategically located on the Mediterranean's eastern shores, and was always at the centre of the trade routes from

Eurasia to Africa. Historically, from 1300 BC onwards, the Gaza in 2021 Via Maris - a route running

by Israeli strikes in earlier rounds of fighting. Dozens of sites, including the now-obliterated Great Omari Mosque, suffered damage in 2014. A report by UNESCO, the United Nations body that designates and protects World Heritage sites, cites further destruction to cultural and historic sites in

"UNESCO is deeply concerned about the adverse impact of the on-going fighting on cultural heritage in Palestine and Israel," said a UN-ESCO spokesperson in

Assembly test is a victory for India Bloc

### By Kalyani Shankar

he convincing victory of the JMM-Congress coalition in Jharkhand assembly on February 5 amidst allegations about BJP's poaching reports, is a big boost to the INDIA bloc in the present political atmosphere in the country. Chief Minister Champai Soren has now the tough task to run a government for the welfare of the people, especially tribals while doing away with corruption in administration.

Jharkhand has been going through political unrest since its establishment in 2000. Therefore, it is no surprise that it is faced another crisis and political turmoil in the past few days. The State had a tumultuous political history. It has witnessed eleven chief ministers in the last two decades, with the twelfth appointment being Champai Soren; on Friday, Hemant Soren, the previous chief minister, was interrogated for seven hours at his official residence and was

Modi's government is weaving threads of hope and empowerment for the downtrodden With a clarion call for inclusivity, the government has embarked on a noble journey to integrate the impoverished and marginalized into the vibrant fabric of mainstream society.

In its steadfast pursuit of social justice, the Modi administration has unfurled a grand scheme, emblematic of its commitment to ameliorate the plight of the destitute. At the heart of this visionary endeavour lies a resolve to shatter the shackles of begging that have ensnared countless

lives in a vicious cycle of poverty and despair. With unwaver-

EPIC AFFAIRS SHASHANKA DAS

ing determination, the government has set its sights on transforming 30 cities into bastions of dignity, free from the scourge of begging, by the year 2026. These cities, ranging from the sacred alleys of Ayodhya to the bustling streets of Guwahati, bear witness to a solemn vow to restore the dignity and agency of every citizen, irrespective of their station in life.

The journey towards beggarfree cities is arduous yet imbued with hope. Through meticulous surveys and tireless efforts, the contours of destitution are being delineated, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive rehabilitation program. Men, women, and children who once languished on the fringes of society are being offered a lifeline, a chance to reclaim their rightful place in the sun.

As the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment spearheads this noble crusade, the contours of change are palpable. Hotspots of begging activity are being identified, not merely as blots on the urban landscape, but as crucibles of transformation. In these crucibles, the alchemy of skill development schemes is poised to transmute despair into

Yet, amidst the symphony of progress, discordant notes linger. Cities like Kangra, Cuttack, Udaipur, and Kushinagar stand as bastions of resistance, hesitant to embrace change. In the corridors of power, echoes of denial reverber-

> ate. challenging the very essence of our collective re-

But let us not be deterred by the cacophony of dissent, for the road to transformation is fraught with obstacles. In the crucible of adversity, the true mettle of a nation is tested, and it is in overcoming these trials that the soul of India finds its resonance.

As we march towards a future untethered by the chains of destitution. let us remember that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. With every survey conducted, every rehabilitation program initiated, we inch closer to the realization of a dream - a dream where the shadows of poverty give way to the radiance of hope, and where the echo of a beggar's plea is drowned out by the chorus of empowerment.

In the annals of history, let it be recorded that in the crucible of adversity, a nation found its resolve, and in the face of despair, it chose hope. For in the tapestry of humanity, it is the threads of compassion and solidarity that bind us all, transcending the boundaries of caste, creed, and circumstance. And in that spirit, let us march onward, towards a brighter, more inclusive tomorrow.

ised Land to its followers and sympathisers Besides killing more than 15,000 Palestinians and destroying thousands of homes in the territory, according to Gaza's health ministry, there have also been tremendous losses to the region's ancient and globally significant cultural heritage.

The region was a hub for commerce and culture under Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine rule. It remained influential for centuries thereafter.

Gaza is home to some of the oldest churches and mosques in the world, but many have not escaped the widespread destruction of Israel's military offensive.Of 117 religious sites, which were reportedly damaged or destroyed by 31st December, the BBC has verified 74 cases. Seventy-two are mosques and two are churches. In his report for Al Jazeera, Indlieb Farazi Saber reported that an ancient harbour dating back to 800 BC, a mosque that was home to rare manuscripts and one of the world's oldest Christian monasteries are just a few of at least 195 heritage sites that have been destroyed or damaged since Israel's war on Gaza began, according to an NGO documenting war damage on cultural sites.

Wiping out the cultural heritage of a people is one of the many war crimes South Africa alleges against Israel in a lawsuit that was heard the past week at the International Court of Justice. It states: "Israel has damaged and destroyed numerous centres of Palestinian

learning and culture", including libraries, religious sites and places of ancient historical importance. This land of the Canaanites

– ancestors of Palestinians has seen many Empires ruling over this region - from the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians and

vas the main route that trav ellers would take on their journeys to Damascus.

**Damage Done** 

Heritage for Peace, a group surveying the damage done in Gaza, documents damage done to so far more than 100 of these landmarks in Gaza since the start of the present conflict. Both the BBC and Al Jazeera report that the casualties include the Great Omari Mosque, one of the most important and ancient mosques in historical Palestine: the Church of Saint Porphyrius, thought to be the third oldest church in the entire world; a 2,000-year-old Roman cemeterv in northern Gaza excavated only last year; and the Rafah Museum, a space in southern Gaza which was dedicated to teaching about the

territory's long and multi-layered heritage - until it was hammered by airstrikes early on in the conflict. Rafah Museum's director Suhaila Shaheen, in a video in-

terview posted on the museum's Facebook page, standing amidst the rubble of the destroyed space said, "There were priceless items from coins, precious stones, copper plates, clothes, all of which is under rubble now. poses. The Museum of Rafah is in God's care now.

Isber Sabrine, president of Heritage for Peace, in an interview with US-based NPR said, "If this heritage be no more in Gaza, it will be a big loss of the identity of the people in Gaza."

Sabrine said his organisation plans to continue the work of surveying and monitoring the status of cultural landmarks in Gaza over the coming months, both on the ground in collaboration with locals, as well as using satellite imagery.

Gaza's casualties of war include its historic mosques

The 1954 Hague Convention, agreed to by Palestinians and Israelis, is supposed to safeguard landmarks from the ravages of war. But landmarks

statement sent to the NPR. "Our organisation calls on all parties involved to strictly adhere to international law. Cultural property should not be targeted or used for military purposes, as it is considered to be civilian infrastructure."

In its investigation carried out by Reha Kansara and Ahmed Nour, the BBC used satellite imagery and users generated content to examine evidence from both before and after buildings were hit.

Hamas, in a statement, has said 378 mosques and three churches had been hit up to 9 January, though this figure has not been independently verified. On its part, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) says Hamas fighters are using places of worship for cover and as places from which to launch attacks – something that Hamas denies.

According to international humanitarian law, intentionally targeting religious buildings during conflict is a war crime. There is an exception. however, if such sites are being used for military purposes. In its defence Israel claims that they were allegedly being used for military pur-

It would not be wrong to say that this destruction seems to be a planned offensive, because if everything is wiped out completely, then Israel could claim that the land belongs to Jews only, thus negating the claims of both the Islamic and Christian leaders to proclaim this as a Holy Land of all the Abrahamic Religions, and Palestine as a state existed before the birth of Israel deceitfully.

Further, no proof would be left for he future generations to assert this reality. Indeed, 'Israel has gone too far' a sentiment shared by a majority of Americans, is endorsed by other nations too. (The author is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commentator)

subsequently forced to resign, resulting in a crisis.

Corruption and defection have led to instability in the State. In the past, several former Chief Ministers resigned due to corruption. It was not surprising when Hemant Soren was arrested, as he knew it was coming sooner or later.

Unfortunately, the crisis occurred at a crucial time, raising several issues. These include the uncertainty surrounding the newly formed Opposition Forum I.N.D.I.A. It could hurt adversely the outcome of the 2024 elections, which are scheduled for April-May. Additionally, why small states are experiencing political instability should also be investigated.

Jharkhand has had political instability and Maoist violence since it was formed. In contrast, Chattisgarh, created simultaneously, has been relatively politically stable. Jharkhand is blessed with plenty of natural resources. Still, its people have been struggling with poverty and underdevelopment due to frequent changes in government. This has caused problems for the State's development over time. Jharkhand has had 11 Chief Ministers since 2000, with most having brief tenures. Only Raghubir Das, a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P.), completed a full five-year term from 2014 to 2019.

After Hemant Soren resigned, Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan delayed Champai Soren's swearing-in ceremony, causing tensions in Jharkhand. The State was left without a Chief Minister for more than 48 hours. However, Champai Soren, a committed Jharkhand Mukti Morcha party member and the former State Transport Minister, was finally sworn in as the new Chief Minister on Friday. Champai Soren is one of the founding members of the party, along with Hemant Soren's father, Shibu Soren. Hemant chose Champai Soren as his successor not only for his loyalty but also for his competence and dedication to the party. Just forming smaller states is no guarantee for better lives, as evidenced by Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand, all created in 2000.

The Jharkhand Assembly has 81 members. A government can form with 41 members. The JMM-Congress-RJD alliance has 47 members, B.J.P. has 25, and A.J.S.U. has three members. The remaining seats are shared by the NCP, a Left party, and three independent members.

The JMM-led alliance was concerned about the Bharatiya Janata Party destabilizing their government by luring their members away. As a precaution, the M.L.A.s were taken to a safe place until the new chief minister took the oath. Defection problems have plagued the political system; resort politics is another issue that needs attention.

The opposition coalition I.N.D.I.A has faced a setback after instability in Jharkhand. The cracks in the alliance have become more evident due to a lack of unity within the I.N.D.I.A. group. Nitish Kumar's departure from the party, followed by Mamata Banerjee's announcement that her T.M.C. party will contest in all seats in West Bengal, and A.A.P.'s decision to run independently in Punjab, has posed a severe threat to the unity of the group. The strained relationship between the Congress and Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh has further worsened the situation.

The Opposition accuses the Modi government of investigating several leaders from the Opposition. These include Delhi's CM Arvind Kejriwal, Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan, NCP's Sharad Pawar, Hemant Soren, D.M.K.'s Stalin and the Congress. Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee established three smaller states by dividing larger ones: Chhattisgarh from Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand from Bihar, and Uttarakhand from Uttar Pradesh. The main goal was to promote development in these regions. However, two decades later, these states are still experiencing instability and a lack of development. The mere creation of a smaller state is no guarantee for better lives.

The time has come to assess whether smaller states have achieved their intended purpose. There may be better options for the people. Smaller assemblies can cause instability as M.L.A.s switch sides. In smaller states, elections often prioritize local issues, dividing representation among smaller parties and regional leaders who act independently. It can have unintended consequences that negatively affect people's lives.

The stability of smaller states depends on various factors. In Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, direct contests occur between B.J.P. and Congress. But, in Jharkhand, the multi-party system with national parties relying on regional parties can lead to instability and defections. (IPA Service)



## WOMEN

# Menopause and other reproductive factors Magical tips for healthy hair may play a role in lung cancer risk

By: Deep Shukla

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024

Thile smoking is a risk factor for lung cancer, women are at a higher risk of lung cancer incidence than men after accounting for smoking status.

Scientists say that hormones may contribute to these sex differences in susceptibility to lung cancer. However, evidence supporting a role for factors associated with reproductive health, especially those involving changes in sex hormone levels, in the causation of lung cancer has been inconsistent in the past.

Now, researchers who conducted a large study published in the journal Chest report that reproductive factors, such as early age at menopause and first childbirth, are associated with an increased risk of lung cancer.

Dr. Wael Harb, a hematologist and medical oncologist at MemorialCare Cancer Institute at Orange Coast and Saddleback Medical Centers in California who was not involved in the study, told Medical News Today that these findings could help improve lung cancer screening

"Identifying reproductive factors that may contribute to lung cancer risk in women could lead to early interventions or screening strategies tailored to this population," Harb said. "This has the potential to reduce the burden of lung cancer among women.

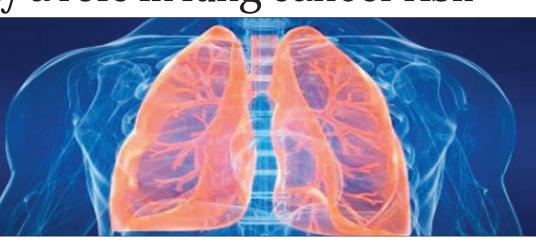
"This research adds to the existing body of knowledge by providing insights into the complex relationship between reproductive factors and lung cancer, potentially paving the way for further investigations and advancements in the field," he added.

### Sex differences in lung cancer incidence

Smoking is a risk factor for all lung cancers, but women show an increased susceptibility to lung cancer even after adjusting the data for smoke exposure.

Numerous studies in the past have examined the association between sex-specific reproductive factors and lung cancer risk to understand the basis of the higher incidence of lung cancer in women.

Specifically, these studies have examined the potential role of reproductive factors, such as age at the onset of menstruation (menarche), age at menopause, and the use of hormone replacement ther-



apy and oral contraceptives, in influencing lung cancer risk. These reproductive factors influence the length and duration of exposure to sex hormones, such as estrogen and progesterone.

Experts note that one of the shortcomings of past studies is their small sample size. Moreover, these studies have involved different study populations or deployed different study designs, precluding the possibility of drawing meaningful conclusions.

### **Impact of reproductive factors** on lung cancer risk

In the present study, researchers from China used data from the UK Biobank, a large database containing medical, genetic, and lifestyle information from more than half a million United Kingdom residents. Using the database, the researchers analyzed health and genetic data obtained from 273,190 women between 2006 and 2010. The researchers obtained self-reported data from these participants

on reproductive factors, including age at menarche (first menstrual period) and menopause, use of hormone replacement therapy and oral contraceptive pills, age at first live birth, and surgical removal of ovaries or the uterus.

The researchers also calculated reproductive lifespan by subtracting the age at menarche from that at menopause.

Menarche before 12 years of age was categorized as early menarche, whereas menopause before 47 years was classified as early menopause.

The researchers tracked the incidence of lung cancer in this group of women over an average followup period of 12 years. Upon analyzing the data, the researchers reported that participants who were older and were smoking at

the end of the follow-up period were more likely to have lung cancer.

Women who had an earlier onset of menarche or menopause were also at increased risk of lung cancer. Women with a reproductive lifespan shorter than 36 years had a higher likelihood of lung cancer incidence than those with a normal reproductive lifespan of 36 to 39

Surgical removal of the ovaries that produce the sex hormones estrogen and progesterone was also associated with elevated lung cancer incidence. Such an association was absent in women who had undergone a surgical removal of the uterus.

In addition, use of hormonal replacement therapy was associated with a greater likelihood of lung cancer. However, this association disappeared after adjusting for factors such as age, race, body-mass index, and smoking status.

Lastly, the risk of lung cancer was higher in women who had their first live birth before 26 years of age than those who had a firstborn between 26 and 30 years of age. Together, experts say these results suggest a role for the disruption of sex hormone levels in mediating lung cancer.

In a follow-up analysis, the researchers examined whether these reproductive factors were associated with specific subtypes of lung cancer

Partially consistent with previous studies, the present research found that early age of menopause onset, shorter reproductive lifespan, and younger age at first childbirth was associated with the risk of non-small cell lung cancer, including adenocarcinomas. This association was more pronounced in women who were currently smoking or had a history of smoking. Strengths and limitations of the lung cancer study

The strengths of the study included the large sample size and a long follow-up period of 12 years. Harb also noted that the study adjusted their analysis for variables, such as smoking and environmental exposures, while

examining the association between reproductive factors and lung cancer risk. A shortcoming of the study included the use of self-reported data

on reproductive factors, making it susceptible to bias. The study involved primarily women of European descent and the findings may not be generalizable to other populations

Implications of the lung cancer research

Dr. Michael Gieske, the director of Lung Cancer Screening at St. Elizabeth Healthcare in Kentucky who wasn't involved in the study, told Medical News Today that the findings could play an important role in risk assessment for lung cancer.

"We know that lung cancer is due to more than age and smoking history with many other risk factors in consideration," Gieske said. "Accordingly, we are looking at genetic markers and other causes and predilections for lung cancer so that we will ultimately be able to save many more lives from lung cancer through expanded evidence-based screening."

"AI algorithms incorporating risk factors... will be a growing part of the overall risk assessment for all types of cancer in the near future," he added. "This science, along with improving biomarker capabilities will transform the way we approach cancer screening. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

### **By: Shahnaz Husain**

any people want supple, shiny, strong, and healthy hair, especially young women. But healthy hair doesn't happen by magic. Achieving and maintaining healthy hair can be harder than you think.

While our genetics play the biggest role, many factors including age, overall health, environmental exposure, medications, and diet are all critical to getting healthy hair and keeping it.

There are a lot of reasons you should care about your hair - and want to keep it healthy - in addition to looking good.

If your hair and scalp are unhealthy, it can lead to itching, inflammation, and untreated chronic skin conditions like eczema, seborrheic dermatitis, and alopecia.

While there isn't a secret shortcut to healthier hair, taking time to keep strands strong is worth the commitment. With small tweaks to your routine, maintaining great hair can be effortless.

Incorporate natural oils into your hair care routine to provide an extra layer of protection and hydration.

Sesame oil, argan oil, coconut oil, and jojoba oil are excellent choices. Have hot oil therapy once a week. Heat oil and apply on the hair. If the hair is dry and damaged, pure coconut oil or pure almond oil may be applied.

Using your fingertips massage the scalp gently, actually moving the scalp in circular motions. This helps to improve blood circulation to the follicles. Then do the hot towel wrap

### Apply Hair Mask

Curry leaves are said to contain nutritive elements, including antioxidants, which bring back health to the roots and promote hair growth. Curry leaves contain betacarotene, which is converted into vitamin

A. This vitamin helps in the production of sebum, the natural oil that keeps the scalp and hair roots moisturized. A wellmoisturized scalp is conducive to hair growth

Make a paste of curry leaves, one tablespoon of honey, and coconut oil and apply to the hair. Wash off after half an hour. **Rinse with Milk** 

After your shampoo, rinse the hair with milk and leave it on for 5 minutes. Then rinse off with plain water. It would help to add body and shine to the hair. For extremely dry hair, add a little milk to egg yolk and apply on the hair half an hour before shampoo. This is a wonderful nourishing treatment for dry hair. The hair looks soft, smooth, and shiny

### Egg Hair Mask for Damaged Hair

The B vitamins in eggs, including Biotin (B7) and Niacin (B3), play a significant role in promoting hair growth. The natural oils present in eggs help moisturize the hair, providing a natural shine and luster. The proteins in eggs can help repair damaged hair by filling in gaps and cracks along the hair shaft. Eggs can act as a natural conditioner, providing moisture to dry and damaged hair.

Apply egg white on the hair for 15 minutes. If you have dry or brittle hair, use egg whites to moisturize your hair. Use 1/2 cup of any egg mixture (egg white, entire egg) and apply to clean, damp hair. Leave it for 20 minutes and with cool water. Try this one of the most effective beauty tips for hair and notice the change.

### Apply Apple Cider Vinegar

The natural PH of the scalp is slightly acidic, and commercial shampoos can sometimes disrupt this balance. Apple cider vinegar, with its acidic nature, helps to restore the PH level of the scalp. A balanced PH contributes to a healthier scalp and can enhance the overall condition of your hair. Apple cider vinegar has natural antibacterial and antifungal properties, making it effective in combating dandruff and alleviating an itchy scalp. Regular use of ACV can help maintain a healthy scalp environment and reduce the occurrence of dandruff.

The shampoo helps to reduce oiliness and add body to the hair.

Shampooing your hair removes dirt and oils, but over-shampooing can strip natural oils from your hair and scalp. Plus, shampoo that isn't rinsed out fully can build up on your hair, leaving it looking dull and lifeless.

When washing your hair, concentrate on cleaning primarily the scalp, rather than washing the entire length of hair. Washing only your hair can create flyaway hair that is dull and coarse.

### Balance of your hair and add shine

Try to avoid shampoos with harsh ingredients, such as ammonium lauryl sulfate or sodium lauryl sulfate. And remember, cost doesn't necessarily indicate the quality of a product.

Try to get a trim at least every 8 weeks, but push it to 10 or 12 if you don't want to be in the salon so often.

Regular haircuts help avoid damage from the ends up - split ends run up the shaft and weaken the hair, exposing it to moisture loss and tangles. Always opt for a cut every six to eight weeks to prevent damage. If you have bangs, you might need to get them trimmed every 3 weeks so they don't cover your eyes

The same goes for people who are trying to grow out their hair. If you're looking to grow your hair, you might be considering skipping a trim - but reshaping and trimming your hair regularly keeps it looking strong and healthy, as opposed to brittle and thin, while you move through the growing process. (*The author is an inter*national fame beauty expert and is popu-larly called the herbal queen of India)

Jharkhand HC ruling sets back women's Taylor Swift deepfakes: New technologies rights in the name of tradition have long been weaponised against women

### **By: Megna Rajagopal**

The gavel's sound in the Court resonated not only within the courtroom but also in wider conversations about social standards and the changing face of equality in modern India.

**Obligatory For Woman** To Serve Elderly Mother-In-Law, It Is A Part Of Indian Culture; Demand To Live Separately Is Unreasonable': Jharkhand HC

The latest news reports state that the Jharkhand High Court in India has noted that serving elderly people (i.e., mothersin-law or grandmothers-inlaw) is both a cultural custom and a duty for Indian women. In its ruling, the court cited Article 51A of the Indian Constitution, which addresses citizens' basic obligations. among which is "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture." It further cited passages from the ancient Hindu text called Manusmriti that describe the obligations and responsibilities of each member of society. It described taking care of one's elderly in-laws as a customary practice in Indian culture.

### What happened?

A husband's appeal against a family court order directing him to give his wife Rs 30,000 and his son Rs 15,000 a month was being heard by the court. The woman declined to live with her husband without a valid reason, so the High Court determined that she was not liable for maintenance.

In 2018, the wife had moved out of her married house. The husband then claimed that the wife had forced him to leave the family home and had refused to care for his mother and maternal grandmother in his filing for judicial separation under the Hindu Marriage Act'.

Conversely, the woman

claimed that she was tortured and subjected to cruelty by her husband and in-laws in exchange for a dowry. She did not, the court ruled, have a "legitimate reason" to live apart from her family.

### Are we heading backward serving as the primary careby mandating a patriarchal givers. Furthermore, 54% are mindset?

married households?

guards.

chores.

ner of the family.

situations when these respon-

sibilities could be used as an

in favor of both sexes having The news has highlighted incomes. The study revealed the delicate and complicated that Indian men tend to hold nature of gender dynamics slightly more conservative within the judicial system. A opinions than women. woman has her own life to

search Center (2022) included

29,999 Indian adults from 26

states and three union territo-

ries. The results concluded

that although 62% support

shared childcare duties, 34%

continue to support women

Society and its expectations live. She has her parents, her of women need to change. professional goals, and her These norms can be problemhealth to take care of. These atic because they perpetuate kinds of "obligations" totally inequality within the familial ignore the commitments a framework by placing an woman may have. Doesn't the undue burden on women. Remandate contradict laws progrettably, we run the risk of tecting women, like the Dosustaining an atmosphere that mestic Violence Act, which normalizes abuse and exworks to safeguard daughtersploitation by forcing adherin-law's rights and welfare in ence to conventional gender roles It's especially difficult in

What does this mean for the future of women's rights?

excuse for disrespect. They The Manusmriti and culcould lead to a daughter-intural norms are invoked in the court's ruling affecting spelaw tolerating exploitation, harassment, and physical or cific instances while underemotional abuse. Women can scoring broader problems find it extremely difficult to with gender inequality. A exercise their legal rights precedent of this nature can when cultural expectations lead to an unequal power reconflict with these legal safelation in families and society. The ruling strengthens dis-What is expected from socriminatory behaviours. It ciety as an Indian woman? feels like the initiatives to ad-Society's guidelines are vance women's rights are hit shaped by the long-standing by a bulldozer.

traditional gender roles in We as a society must ac-India. A woman is responsible knowledge and preserve sofor taking care of the children cial norms. But we should also prioritize upholding the and handling household values of human rights, gen-A man is expected to proder equality, and individual vide the majority of the famautonomy. It is 2024 and ily's income. There is the idea women need to have the freethat girls should be caring and dom to choose their educaobedient, while boys should tion, career, personal be courageous and assertive. well-being, or whatever they Without a doubt, a majority of wish. The HC decision has the population supports the sparked a wider conversation idea that women should priabout the consequences of marily be caregivers and that such rulings for women's men should be the breadwinrights. What is your take on the matter? (Courtesy: Youth A survey by the Pew Re-Ki Awaaz)

**By: Nicola Henry and Alice** Witt

exually graphic "deepfake" images of Taylor Swift went viral on social media last week, fuelling widespread condemnation from Swifties, the general public and even the White House.

This problem isn't new. Swift is one of many celebrities and public figures, mainly women, who have fallen victim to deepfake pornography in recent years. High-profile examples garner significant media attention, but the increasingly sophisticated nature of AI means anyone can now be targeted.

While there are grave concerns bout the broader implications of deepfakes, it's important to remember the technology isn't the cause of abuse. It's just another tool used to enact it. Deepfakes and other digitally

manipulated media The sexually explicit deepfakes of Swift appeared on multiple social media platforms last week, including X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Facebook and Reddit. Most major platforms have That bans on sharing synthetic and digsaid.

itally manipulated media that deepcause harm, confusion or decepfakes tion, including deepfake porn. This includes images created through simpler means such as photo-editing software. Nonetheless, one deepfake depicting Swift was viewed 47 million times over a 17-hour period before it was removed from X.

There's a long history of digital technologies, apps and services being used to facilitate genderbased violence, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic or family violence, dating abuse, stalking and monitoring, and hate speech.

As such, our focus should also be on addressing the problematic gender norms and beliefs that often underpin these types of abuse.

The emergence of deep-

fakes

The origins of deepfakes

sexual abuse can be traced to November 2017 when a Reddit user called "deepfakes" created a forum and videoediting software that allowed users to train their computers to swap the faces of porn actors with the faces of celebrities.

Since then, there's been a massive expansion of dedicated deepfake websites and threads, as well as apps that can create customised deepfakes for free or for a fee.

In the past, creating a convincing deepfake often required extensive time and expertise, a powerful computer and access to multiple images of the person being targeted. Today, almost anyone can make a deepfake sometimes in a matter of seconds.

The harms of deepfake porn Not all applications of Al-generated imagery are harmful. You might have seen funny viral deepfakes such as the images of Pope Francis in a puffer jacket. Or if you watch the latest Indi-

often

created

for mali-

cious purposes,

including disinfor-

mation, cyberbully-

ing, child sexual abuse,

sexual extortion and

other forms of image-based

ana Jones film, you'll see Harrison Ford "deaged" by 40 years thanks to AI.

A report published by startup Home Security Heroes estimated there were 95,820 deepfake videos online in 2023, a 550% increase since 2019.

When it comes to deepfake porn, women in particular are disproportionately targeted. According to DeepTrace, 96% of all deepfakes online are non-consensual fake videos of women. These are mostly (but not exclusively) well-known actors and musicians.

This is concerning but not surprising. Research shows online abuse disproportionately affects women and girls, particularly indigenous women, women from migrant backgrounds and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.

Public figures in particular face higher rates of online abuse, especially women and gender-diverse people. One study found celebrities are attributed more blame than non-celebrities for the abuse they receive online, and this abuse is often viewed as less serious

Research shows imagebased abuse can result in significant harms for victims. including anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, social isolation

a n d

repu tational damage For public figures, deepfakes and other forms of online abuse can similarly result in diminished career prospects, withdrawal from public life and negative mental health outcomes. In 2016, Australian activist and law reform Noelle campaigner

Martin's photos were taken from social media and superimposed onto pornographic images. Martin reported feeling "physically sick, disgusted, angry, degraded, dehumanised" as a result. Digitally altered and deepfake images of Martin continue to circulate online without her consent

Responding to deepfake porn Anyone can be targeted through deepfakes. All that's needed is an image of someone's face. Even professional work images can be used.

Although law reform alone won't solve this socio-legal problem, it can signal the issue is being taken seriously. We need laws specifically targeting nonconsensual deepfake porn.

In Australia, there are imagebased sexual abuse offences in every Australian state and territory except Tasmania, as well as at the federal level. However, only some laws specifically mention digitally altered images (including deepfakes).

Technology companies could also do a lot more to proactively detect and moderate deepfake porn. They need to prioritise embedding "safety by design" approaches into their services from the outset. This could mean:

• designing and testing AI with potential misuses in mind

• using watermarks and other indicators to label content as synthetic

• "nudging" users to refrain from certain behaviours (such as using pop-ups to remind them about the importance of consent).

Research shows there are gaps in public understanding of deepfakes and how to detect them. This further highlights a need for digital literacy and education on the difference between consensual and non-consensual uses of intimate images, and the harms of non-consensual deepfake porn.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need to address the underlying systemic inequalities that contribute to technology-facilitated abuse against women and gender-diverse people. This includes recognising deepfake porn for the often-gendered problem it is - for celebrities and noncelebrities alike. (Courtesy: The Wire)

## World

# 6 THE HILLS TIMES

# King Charles III diagnosed with cancer: Buckingham Palace

LONDON, Feb 6: Britain's King Charles III has started a schedule of regular treatments after being diagnosed with cancer following his recent hospital procedure for benign prostate enlargement and will be postponing his public duties, Buckingham Palace has said.

While the palace has not specified the form of cancer, it said the 75-year-old monarch has started treatment and remains "wholly positive"

He will be postponing his public duties on medical advice but will continue with his duties as a Head of State such as essential paperwork and private meetings.

"During The King's recent hospital procedure for benign prostate enlargement, a separate issue of concern was noted. Subsequent diagnostic tests have identified a form of cancer," reads the Buckingham Palace statement on Monday. "His Majesty has today commenced a schedule of regular treatments, during which time he has been advised by doctors to postpone public-facing duties. Throughout this period, His Majesty will continue to undertake state business and official paperwork as usual," it said.

The statement noted that the King is grateful to his medical team for their swift intervention, which was made possible thanks to his recent hospital procedure.

"He remains wholly positive about his treatment and looks forward to returning to full public duty

as soon as possible "His Majesty has chosen to share his diagnosis to prevent speculation and in the hope it may assist public understanding for all those around the world who are affected by can-

cer," it added. The Palace released a new unseen portrait of the King to accompany the announcement, showing him in a formal pose in a suit and tie with his hands behind his back during his state visit to France in September. Over the weekend, King Charles was photographed waving after he and Queen Camilla attended a church service in Sandringham, Norfolk, marking his first public appearance since being discharged from the London Clinic

last Monday.He has since travelled

from Sandringham to London to begin treatment as an outpatient and is now at his palace in London.

"Wishing His Majesty a full and speedy recovery. I have no doubt he'll be back to full strength in no time and I know the whole country will be wishing him well." British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on X. Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle also wished him a speedy recovery

US President Joe Biden expressed his concern and said he would speak to the King.

In a post on X, he later said: "Navigating a cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship takes hope and absolute courage. Jill and I join the people of the United

Kingdom in praying that His Majesty experiences a swift and full recovery." Biden's son, Beau, died of brain cancer aged 46.

The King is said to have informed both his sons, William and Harry, personally about his diagnosis and Prince William is in regular contact with his father. Meanwhile, sources said that Prince Harry, who lives in the US, has spoken to his father and plans to travel to the UK to see him in the coming days.

Charles became King in September 2022 when his mother Oueen Elizabeth II died at the age of 96. News of the king's diagnosis comes as his daughter-in-law Kate, Princess of Wales, recovers from abdominal surgery that saw her

hospitalised for about two weeks.

Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge and live in increasingly miserable conditions

Blinken seeks progress on Gaza cease-fire-for-hostages

The King chose to go public about his cancer treatment as he had been a patron of several cancer-related charities when he was

Prince of Wales, a spokesman said. "In this capacity, His Majesty has often spoken publicly in support of cancer patients, their loved ones and the wonderful health professionals who help care for them." He had also gone public about

his prostate treatment, to encourage more men to get prostate checks.

US officials said Blinken is hoping to get an

As on his previous four trips to the Mideast

goal is to prevent the conflict from spreading, a

task made exponentially more difficult by

stepped up attacks by Iran-backed militias in the

region and increasingly severe US military re-

sponses in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and the Red Sea

Blinken met with Crown Prince Mohammed

bin Salman on Monday evening, shortly after

arriving in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. Saudi of-

ficials have said the kingdom is still interested

in normalising relations with Israel in a poten-

tially historic deal, but only if there is a credible

Blinken "underscored the importance of ad-

dressing humanitarian needs in Gaza and pre-

venting further spread of the conflict," and he

and the crown prince discussed "the importance

of building a more integrated and prosperous re-

gion," the State Department said in a statement.

But any such grand bargain appears a long

that have intensified since last week.

plan to create a Palestinian state.

The Royal Society of Medicine thanked the King for highlighting "how cancer is indiscriminate" and urged members of the public eligible for cancer screenings to make an appointment.

"Please don't be shy - the more information we have the better to

help - hopefully - rule out cancer or, if not, put you on the most suitable treatment pathway," its president, Dr Jay Verma, said.

There are more than 200 types of cancer - the most common ones in the UK are breast, lung, prostate and bowel, according to the National Health Service website. For many types of cancer, the chance of getting it increases with age.

The King and Queen are scheduled to visit Canada in May, and Australia, New Zealand and Samoa for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October.

The Palace has yet to confirm whether the tours will go ahead, with no date suggested for the King's return to full public duties.

# Another ship in the Red Sea has been attacked by a suspected Yemen Houthi rebel drone

TEL AVIV, Feb 6: A ship traveling through the southern Red Sea was attacked by a suspected Yemen Houthi rebel drone early on Tuesday, authorities said, the latest assault in their campaign targeting vessels over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip

The attack happened west of the Yemeni port of Hodeida, and the projectile caused "slight damage" to the vessel's windows on the bridge, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said. A small vessel had been nearby the ship before the attack, it added.

The private security firm Ambrey identified the vessel Barbados-flagged, as a Kingdom-owned United cargo ship. No one was hurt onboard the vessel, which suffered "minor damage," the firm said. Later, a military spokesman of the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree, claimed in a statement that the rebel forces attacked two separate vessels, one American and one British, in the Red Sea. He provided no evidence to support the claim. One of the ships the Houthis claimed attacking, the Morning Tide, matched details provided by Ambrey. Tracking data showed it to be in the Red Sea near the reported attack. The Morning

Tide's owner, British firm **CAIRO, Feb 6:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Cairo on Tuesday for a meeting Furadino Shipping, told The Associated Press no one was with Egyptian leaders that US officials said hurt in the attack and the ship was continuing onward to Singapore.Since November, the rebels have repeatedly targeted ships in the Red Sea over Israel's offensive in Gaza against Hamas. But they have frequently targeted vessels with tenuous or no

militants. clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route

for trade among Asia, the Mideast and Europe. In recent weeks, the United States and the United Kingdom, backed by other allies. have launched airstrikes targeting Houthi missile arsenals and launch

The U.S. and Britain

struck 36 Houthi targets in

Yemen on Saturday. An air

assault Friday in Iraq and

Syria targeted other Iranian-

backed militias and the Iran-

ian Revolutionary Guard in

retaliation for a drone strike

that killed three U.S. troops

in Jordan. The U.S. military's

Central Command sepa-

rately acknowledged an at-

tack Monday on the Houthis,

in which they attacked what

they described as two Houthi

drone boats loaded with ex-

plosives. American forces

'determined they presented

an imminent threat to U.S.

Navy ships and merchant

sites for its attacks.

would concentrate mainly on the task of negotiating a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war in exchange for the release of hostages held by the Blinken's visit also comes amid growing concerns in Egypt about Israel's stated intentions to expand the combat in Gaza to areas on the Egyptian border that are crammed with displaced Palestinians. Israel's defence minister has said Israel's offensive will eventually reach the town of Rafah,

on the Egyptian border, where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge and live in increasingly miserable conditions. UN humanitarian monitors said on Tuesday that Israeli evacuation orders now cover twothirds of Gaza's territory, driving thousands more people every day toward the border areas.

Egypt has warned that an Israeli deployment along the border would threaten the peace treaty the two countries signed over four decades ago. Egypt fears an expansion of combat to the Rafah area could push terrified Palestinian civilians across the border, a scenario Egypt has said it is determined to prevent.

Blinken, who was meeting on Tuesday with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, has said repeatedly that Palestinians must not be forced out of Gaza.

# Protests erupt across Haiti as demonstrators demand that the Prime Minister resign

PORT-AU-PRINCE tected Areas, have come under (HAITI), Feb 6: Protests shut down major cities in Haiti on Monday as demonstrators clashed with police and demanded the resignation of Prime place in the capital of Port-au-Prince, where dozens of protest-

Banks, schools and government agencies closed in Haiti's northern and southern regions



During his latest trip, Blinken is seeking progress on a cease-fire deal, on potential normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and on preventing an escalation of regional fighting.

On all three fronts, Blinken faces major challenges. Hamas and Israel are publicly at odds over key elements of a potential truce. Israel has dismissed the United States' calls for a path to a Palestinian state, and Iran's militant allies in the region have shown little sign of being deterred by US strikes.

Egypt — along with Qatar, where Blinken will be later Tuesday - have been trying to mediate an agreement between Israel and Hamas that would lead to the release of more hostages in return for a several-week-long pause in Israeli military operations.

The outlines of such a deal were worked out by intelligence chiefs from the US, Egypt, Qatar and Israel late last month and have been pre-

Last

# MQ9-B drones will provide India with enhanced maritime security, domain awareness capability: US

way off as the war still rages in Gaza.

### WASHINGTON, Feb 6:

The US has said the sale of 31 armed drones to India at an estimated cost of nearly USD 4 billion would proand vide it with an enhanced maritime security and domain awareness capability and give the country outright ownership of these airnews conference.

visit to the US in June 2023. "This sale, we believe, Under the deal, India will will provide India with an get 31 High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) UAVs, enhanced maritime security maritime domain of which the Navy will get awareness capability," State Department Deputy 15 SeaGuardian drones, while the Army and the In-Spokesperson Vedant Patel dian Air Force will get eight told reporters at his daily each of the land version -SkyGuardian.

deal in meetings with Egyptian mediators The Palestinian death toll from nearly four months of war has reached 27,478, according to the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says most of the dead have been women and children.

The war has levelled vast swaths of the tiny enclave and pushed a quarter of residents to starvation.

UN humanitarian monitors said Tuesday that Israel's evacuation orders in the Gaza Strip now cover two-thirds of the territory, or 246 square kilometers (95 square miles). The affected area was home to 1.78 million Palestinians, or 77% of Gaza's population, before Hamas' Oct 7 cross-border raid that ignited the war.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA, said in its daily report that the newly displaced only have about 1.5-2 liters (50-67 ounces) of water per day to drink, cook and wash. It also reported a significant increase in chronic diarrhea among children.

Parents of babies face a particularly difficult challenge because of the high cost or lack of diapers, baby formula and milk

Zainab Al-Zein, who is sheltering in the central town of Deir al-Balah, said she had to feed her 2.5-month-old daughter solid food, such as biscuits and ground rice, well ahead of the typical 6-month mark because milk and formula were not available. (AP)

> 6 wounded, 2 assailants shot dead during an attempt to attack a Turkish courthouse

ISTANBUL, Feb 6: Two people were shot dead while trying to attack a courthouse in Istanbul on Tuesday, Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said.

The man and woman were killed during an "attempt to attack" a security checkpoint at the Caglayan

vessels in the region," the military said. (AP)Minister Ariel Henry. SL reserves money to hold major elections

government scrutiny following recent clashes with police in northern Haiti. Smaller demonstrations took

COLOMBO, Feb 6: The cash-strapped Sri Lankan govern ment has reserved ₹ 10 billion to hold the two major elections, including the presidential election this year.

A Cabinet note on the two major elections - the Presidential and parliamentary polls - came as no action has been taken to hold the local council elections postponed since March of last year. The Cabinet note released after Monday's meeting said: "The Cabinet of Ministers considered that an allocation of rupees 10 billion has been made by the budget estimated for the year 2024, within the financial stamina of the government and those provisions have to be managed for covering the expenditure of the Presidential election and general election".

The local election to appoint over 300 local councils was postponed as the government did not release the funds citing the economic crisis mitigation measures taken at the time.

At least four court cases remain pending on the issue as the government reported to the court that it was unable to provide funds due to the economic crisis. The Opposition however accused President Ranil Wickremesinghe of postponing it for fear of losing. (PTI)

while protesters blocked main routes with blazing tires and paralysed public transportation, according to local media reports. In Hinche, a city in Haiti's central region, protesters celebrated the arrival of heavily armed state environmental

agents and their commander, Joseph Jean Baptiste, who demanded that Henry resign.

"I want Ariel to stand in front of my bullets, so they go through him," the commander said as someone filmed him while the crowd cheered.

"We're the ones who have the support of the population," he said. The agents, who belong to the Security Brigade for Pro-(AP)

gas, dispersing the crowd. Among the protesters was presicraft. dential candidate and former Prime Minister Claude Joseph, week, the US apwho was seen in a video wiping his face as supporters yelled, proved "We are not stopping!" the sale of 31 MQ-

ers gathered in front of Henry's

office before police fired tear

At least three days of protests culminating on Wednesday are 9B armed expected across Haiti, with Feb drones to considered the supposed dead-India at line for Henry to resign. an esti-

The date is significant in m a t e d Haiti: Feb 7, 1986 marked the cost of day that former dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier fled for France, and Feb. 7, 1991 marked the day that Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democraticallyelected president, was sworn in.

'It offers India outright

USD 3.99 billion, an acquipartners on," Patel said. sition that will bolster The mega deal to acquire India's capability to meet the drones from US defence current and future threats by major General Atomics enabling unmanned surveil-(GA) was announced durlance and reconnaissance ing Prime Minister Narenpatrols in sea lanes of operdra Modi's historic state

While announcing the ownership approval of the deal, Deof these fense Security Cooperation aircraft, Agency (DSCA) on Thursday said the proposed sale and this is will support the foreign polsomething icy and national security that we'll continue objectives of the United to deepen States by helping to strengthen the US-Indian our coopstrategic relationship. eration with our Indian

It will improve the security of a major defence partner, which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region, the Agency said. (PTI)

courthouse at 11.46 a.m. local time (0846GMT), Yerlikaya posted on social media.

Six people were injured in the incident, including three police officers. "I congratulate our heroic police officers. I wish a speedy recovery to our injured," the minister added. Caglayan, which is also known as the Istanbul Justice Palace, is a huge court complex in the Kagithane district on the city's European side. Yerlikaya later identified the attackers as members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, or DHKP/C, a farleft group that is considered a terrorist organization in Turkey, the United States and the European Union. (AP)

## About 13 children die each day at a camp in Sudan for Imran Khan's PTI-backed candidate contesting against Sharif indicted in terrorism case

LAHORE, Feb 6: A Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed woman candidate contesting against PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif here was indicted in a terrorism case on Tuesday, as authorities in Pakistan's Punjab province intensified crackdown on jailed former premier Imran Khan's party leaders and supporters ahead of elections.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidates are contesting the February 8 polls independently after the Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan to deprive Khan's party of its iconic election symbol 'bat'.

Since the PTI is facing the wrath of the military establishment, its independent candidates are not being allowed to campaign in their constituencies, thus paving the way for the PMLN, which is currently the blue-eyed of the military, to win the election.

In Lahore, Sharif, 74, a three-time former premier, is contesting on NA-130 against PTI-backed strong candidate Dr Yasmin Rashid.

However, Rashid was indicted by an Anti-Terrorism Court on Tuesday in a case related to attacking a police station in Lahore on May 9 violence that had erupted after the arrest of Khan by paramilitary Rangers.

Dozens of military and state



buildings, including the Army headquarters in Rawalpindi and the ISI building in Faisalabad, were torched and vandalised by many PTI activists during the unprecedented violence that broke out after Khan's arrest

Rashid has been in jail since May last and her party supporters are doing door-to-door campaigning. PTI leaders see her indictment as

a fear of Sharif fearing his defeat. The PTI on Tuesday also alleged that the houses of the party leaders and supporters are being raided across the province by the police.

Police are also harassing women workers, it said. In Lahore, police sealed the main

election office of its incarcerated candidate Aaliya Hamza who is contesting against former premier Shehbaz Sharif's son Hamza Shehbaz in Lahore's NA-118.

Similarly, police raided the resi-

dence of PTI President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi in the Gujrat district of Punjab and harassed his wife and sister who are contesting polls.

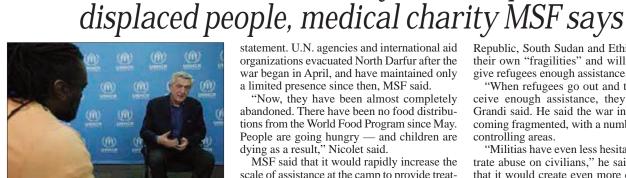
The police team asked them to give the list of polling agents. Similar incidents were reported at the residence of different leaders and candidates of PTI in Multan, Sar-

godha, Toba Tek Singh, Sahiwal, Khanewal and Sheikhupura. The PTI fears that the police will not allow its polling agents across the province on election day.

Will the ECP take notice of this fascism? They are applying every fascist tactic to keep the PTI from the polls. And on the election day they will try to create an environment of terror so that the PTI voters don't turn up," a PTI spokesperson said and added the nation will take revenge and defeat the "mafia people" with the power of their vote on February 8.

Meanwhile, the authorities allegedly blocked the voter's assistant helpline number introduced by the PTL

"Helpline blocked by the authorities. PTI shall not be demoralised by these tactics employed to keep the party's massive support out of the equation. We shall keep innovating ways to educate our voters, come what may," the party said. (PTI)



NAIROBI, Feb 6: Thirteen children are dying each day of severe malnutrition at the Zamzam camp in Sudan's northern Darfur as a consequence of the 10-month war in their country, a medical charity said Monday.

The head of the U.N. refugee agency, meanwhile, warned that Europe may have to deal with a rise in the numbers of Sudanese refugees if a cease-fire agreement isn't signed soon between Sudan's warring sides and relief efforts aren't strengthened. One child is dying every two hours in the camp, according to Claire Nicolet, head of emergency response in Sudan for Doctors without Borders, or MSF.

"Those with severe malnutrition who have not yet died are at high risk of dying within three to six weeks if they do not get treatment," Nicolet said. MSF says that Zamzam, a camp of more than 300,000 people, was originally formed by people fleeing ethnically targeted violence in the region in 2003. However, since war broke out between Sudan's military and paramilitary forces in April 2023, camp residents have been cut off from vital humanitarian aid and medical care, the group said in a

statement. U.N. agencies and international aid organizations evacuated North Darfur after the war began in April, and have maintained only a limited presence since then, MSF said.

"Now, they have been almost completely abandoned. There have been no food distributions from the World Food Program since May. People are going hungry — and children are dving as a result." Nicolet said.

MSF said that it would rapidly increase the scale of assistance at the camp to provide treatment for children in the most critical condition. However, the scale of the disaster requires a far greater response than MSF can provide alone, the group said."The Europeans are always so worried about people coming across the Mediterranean. Well, I have a warning for them that if they don't support more refugees coming out of Sudan, even displaced people inside Sudan, we will see onward movements of people towards Libya, Tunisia and across the Mediterranean," U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said. "There is no doubt.'

More than 9 million people are thought to be internally displaced in Sudan, and 1.5 million refugees have fled into neighboring countries in 10 months of clashes between the Sudanese military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and the Rapid Support Forces, a powerful paramilitary group commanded by Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo.

The conflict erupted last April in the capital, Khartoum, and quickly spread to other areas of the country. Grandi said several countries neighboring Sudan — Chad, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Ethiopia - have their own "fragilities" and will be unable to give refugees enough assistance.

"When refugees go out and they don't receive enough assistance, they go further," Grandi said. He said the war in Sudan is becoming fragmented, with a number of militias controlling areas.

"Militias have even less hesitation to perpetrate abuse on civilians," he said, suggesting that it would create even more displacement. Grandi also said conflicts in places like Sudan, Congo, Afghanistan and Myanmar shouldn't be overlooked during the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. "Gaza is a tragedy, it needs a lot of attention and resources, but it cannot be at the expense of another big crisis like Sudan," he said. Grandi spoke a day after visiting Sudan and Ethiopia, which is recovering from a twoyear conflict in its northern Tigray region.

The United Nations says at least 12,000 people have been killed in Sudan's conflict. although local doctors groups say the true toll is far higher.

Dagalo's paramilitary forces appear to have had the upper hand over the past three months, with their fighters advancing to the east and north across Sudan's central belt. Both sides have been accused of war crimes by rights groups.Regional partners in Africa have been trying to mediate an end to the conflict, along with Saudi Arabia and the United States, which facilitated several rounds of unsuccessful, indirect talks between the warring parties. Burhan and Dagalo are yet to meet in person since the conflict began. (AP)

### **NEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024**

## REGION

# THE HILLS TIMES 7

# **Poi Leng concludes with reverence:** Thousands gather to bid farewell to renowned Buddhist scholar



traditions. On the occasion of Poi

Leng, various rituals including

drive, annadaan, khamsin thom-

tra, kant, sanghadaan, and petessa

In another memorial meeting

on Sunday, noted environmental-

ist and director of Nature's

Beckon, Dr Saumaydeep Dutta,

released the souvenir 'Buddhib-

rikshya' edited by Supritee

Shyam. In his speech, Dutta said

that only the Buddhist religion

prescribes the simplest ways of

searching the truth of existence

through steps humanly possible

for every person without any in-

Award Winner Buddhist scholar

Dr Shashana Bongsha Mahathera

Bhante passed away on August

23, 2023, in Solapathar, 30 km

from here. Dr Bhante was the

chief attraction of thousands of

Buddhist and Hindu pilgrims that

visited the shrine every year. He

was widely revered by people of

all faiths in Charaideo and

Sivasagar districts. Dr Shashana

Bongsha had over fifty books to

his credit, especially on many

oral traditions and scriptures of

Buddhist society. Through his

writings in Assamese language,

Dr Mahathera Bhante popu-

larised the lofty Buddhist philos-

ophy and literature among the

people. He also undertook a jour-

ney into Myanmar on foot on his

spiritual quest. He had a post-

graduation degree in Pali lan-

guage and received numerous

awards and recognitions from

various institutions and organisa-

tions during his lifetime

Anandaram Barooah

stitutional formalities.

The

cleanliness

mongalacharan,

were also performed.

HT Correspondent SIVASAGAR, Feb 6: The threeday Poi Leng celebrations, observed with utmost Buddhist religious sanctity following the passing of the highly revered Theravadi Buddhist writer and philosopher Dr Shashana Bongsha Mahathera Bhante of Salapathar Buddhist Monastery, came to an end on Monday amidst over 20 thousand people of all communities and beliefs. After about six months of preserving the body in strict Buddhist tradition at Solapathar Monastery, the sacred body of the Dr Shashana Bongsha Mahathera was consigned to flames according to Buddhist tradition on a decorated chariot with full state honours. Cultural minister Bimal Bora, Revenue minister Jogen Mohan, and Sonari MLA Dharmeswar Konwar, were present on the occasion and offered floral tributes to the great scholar. Gyanpal Mahathera, the presiding Bhante of Namphake Buddhist Monastery, set fire to the chariot carrying the body of Dr Shashana Bongsha Mahathera in religious tradition amidst an emotionally soaked ambiance around the crematorium.

Earlier, presiding over the last memorial meeting of Dr Bhante, Dr Jayram Beggi, retired commissioner of Arunachal Technical Education, said that Dr Bhante was a bridge of brotherhood and unity among the people of the two neighbouring states. State Cultural minister, Bimal Borah, said that the Buddhist scholar was hugely popular among people of diverse faiths and was one among a few who dedicated their whole life to advancing the state

**Nagaon District Unit of AAJU holds inaugural** executive meeting

# Governor Kataria attends golden jubilee celebration of Zeliangrong Heraka Association

Event honours contributions of Rani Gaidinilu and Haipau Jadonang

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 6: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria attended the 42nd general conference along with the golden jubilee celebration of Zeliangrong Heraka Association at Lodiram in Haflong on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said that religion and culture are subtle yet very vibrant influences on society, bridging the gap between the past and the future. Religion is the force that binds the human race with the thread of unity. The heritage of the Heraka

religion is also an integral part of

India's diverse religion and culture. It is the duty of everyone in society to preserve and develop it. Governor Kataria also said, "We need to promote our rich civilisation and values to protect our religion, culture, and tradition. Our future generation has a vital role in it. It is necessary for us to educate the youth about the greatness and glory of Indian civilisation and culture. They need to be familiarised with the basic principles of Indian culture, as well as spiritual and

moral principles.'

has recently introduced a unique

dining experience for passengers

and visitors at the Guwahati Rail-

way Station with the launch of the

Rail Coach Restaurant. This initia-

lightful ambiance for relishing re-

were apprehended for violating railway

regulations during a security operation con-

(RPF), Chaparmukh, on Monday.

ducted by the Railway Protection Force

The operation took place between Cha-

### **OBITUARY** hogiram Das, a noted educa-

tionist and social activist of the greater Dhing town,

breathed his last at his Dhing Ratna Nagar residence on Tuesday morning due to old age ailments. He was 84. Born in 1939 at Dhing No 2 Lahkargaon village, he began his career as a science teacher in Bhuragaon Hari Charan Government HS School and later transferred to Dhing KB HS School in 1985. He retired from Dhing KB HS School in 1998 after dedicating over a

dozen years of service there. He was associated with almost all socio-cultural as well as literary organisations of Dhing, including Dhing Sahitya Sabha, Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha, Dhing Ratna Bhavan Bihutoli, etc., until his demise. He leaves behind his wife, three daughters, and a host of relatives. His demise was mourned by various local organisations, dignitaries, and individuals, who also prayed for the eternal peace of his departed soul in heaven



edge and enduring values ingrained strength, the Governor said that centuries. "Our society is poised on a trajectory of remarkable advancement, steadfastly striving to reclaim its Vishwaguru status on the

global stage with firm resolve and determination," the Governor added

The Governor also said that the people of the Zeliangrong community should ensure greater participation of youth in the work of promoting Heraka religion and culture for which it is necessary to create an environment in which the youth are encouraged for new discoveries and inventions.

Moreover, the Governor said that the country can never forget the contribution and sacrifice of Rani Gaidinilu and Haipau Jadonang in the freedom struggle, who continued to work for the development of the Zeliangrong community and the preservation of the Heraka reli-

Chief executive member (CEM) of North Cachar Hill Autonomous Council (NCHAC), Debolal Gorlosa, president of Zeliangrong Her-Kehumbui Association aka Zeliang, general secretary Mungtuing Janme along with a host of other dignitaries were present at the

## Khatkhati Press **Club** launches 2024 calendar

HT Correspondent BOKAJAN, Feb 6: The Khatkhati Press Club unveiled its 2024 calendar at the premises of the Asom Jatiyatabadi Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) office on Tuesday.

Among the attendees were Anand Terang, president of the Khatkhati Press Club; Jitu Phukon, Central Executive Committee member of AJYCP; Moinul Hussain Ojha, secretary; Citra Baruah, president of the Anti Corruption Youth Power of Assam (ACYPA), Karbi Anglong, and various others

## WKADPC submits memorandum

HT Correspondent DONGKAMUKAM, Feb 6: On Tuesday, the West Karbi Anglong District Press Club (WKADPC) submitted a memorandum to KAAC chief Dr Tuliram Ronghang at his official residence in Diphu, demanding full functioning and upgrading of the sub-divisional to district-level District Information Public Relations Office (DIPRO) in Hamren, the district headquarters.

Assuring swift action, the chief executive member (CEM) pledged to facilitate the requested upgrade. The WKADPC delegation, in-

cluding president Joysing Terang, general secretary Alok Borbora, vice president Joyram Kathar, treasurer Si-im Hanse, and others, represented the pressing need for this enhancement.

# Assistant teacher

passes away HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Feb 6: Niren Gogoi (55), a resident of Deoriting Sikarisuk Gaon (Nemuguri) near Demow and an assistant teacher at Athabari Higher Secondary School, passed away on Monday night. Niren Gogoi suddenly fell ill and passed away on Monday night.

The body of Niren Gogoi was brought to Athabari Higher Secondary School on Tuesday, where the school staff along with the local community paid their last respects and offered their deepest condolences to the bereaved family.

Niren Gogoi is survived by his wife, two daughters, one son, and a host of relatives.

experience reminiscent of dining in a train coach, allowing patrons to enjoy quality time with family and friends. In addition to offering a diverse menu of foods, snacks, and beverages, the coach restaurant also



Railway Station not only aims to cater to the culinary needs of passengers and the public but also seeks to generate non-fare revenue for the railways. Furthermore, this initiative is expected to create employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers, contributing to the local economy.

troduce more at 62 selected locations Chaparmukh RPF apprehends Renowned scholar delivers three for violating regulations insightful talk in Lumding

Kanpur.

rant promises a unique dining

gional flavours and other Indian delicacies. Equipped with state-ofthe-art infrastructure, the restauprovides facilities for purchasing culinary delights on the go. Currently, there are 14 operational coach restaurants across the NF Railway network, with plans to in-The introduction of the Rail Coach Restaurant at Guwahati

tive aims to provide a distinctive culinary journey for travellers seeking an extraordinary dining experience. The Rail Coach Restaurant, adorned with vibrant paintings, warm lighting, and comfortable seating arrangements, offers a de-

the profound reservoir of knowl-Guwahati Railway Station introduces Rail Coach Restaurant HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 6: NF Railway

India's greatness emanates not solely from its resources but from

Highlighting the nation's within its people, nurtured over

### HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Feb 6: The first executive meeting of the newly formed Nagaon District Unit of the All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU) was held at Kathiatoli Chariali, based at the Ma Manasha Hotel and Vivah Bhavan on Sunday last.

The meeting was organised in association with the Kathiatoli Press Club and chaired by Hareswar Borah, the president of AAJU, Nagaon

During the meeting, the district unit took a series of resolutions for its future activities in the greater interest of the journalist fraternity. Pankaj Kumar Nath, the state president of the organisation, attended the program as the chief guest.

While addressing the occasion, Pankaj Kumar Nath asserted that AAJU is working hard on a proposed law for the security of journalists, and its drafts will be finalised soon. He mentioned, "We will submit it to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and will request as well as demand him to pass it for the greater interest of the community."

During the program, the Kathiatoli Press Club felicitated two senior hawkers of the area and also the wife of the former senior central leader of AAJU Lt Homeswar Hira, a journalist pensioner. The felicitation program was mentored by Mukti Kam Laskar. AAJU's Nagaon District Unit initiated a resolution to its state committee in the meeting to proceed with a state-level journalist award in the name of Lt Homeswar Hira, who had contributed a lot to the organisation.

The meeting was anchored by Sofikur Rahman, the secretary of the district unit. Ajoy Mahatu, executive president of the district unit, Faizur Rahman, central executive, senior scribe, and Ghana Kanta Bora, the president of Kathiatoli Press Club, along with over fifty scribes from various press clubs in the district, participated in the meeting.

parmukh junction and Thekeraguri Railway Station following several incidents of stone pelting on running trains. Inspector Mukesh Kumar Rajak led the RPF team during the operation. Subsequently, the offenders were prosecuted under the relevant

sections of the Railway Act. Additionally, the RPF personnel organised an awareness campaign with villagers in the Dighaliati area to discourage trespassing on railway tracks, pulling the alarm chain, stone pelting, and cattle grazing on or near railway tracks.

# Guwahati IASST hosts faculty training program

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 6: The Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST), Guwahati, recently organised a comprehensive 5-day faculty improvement training program focused on the 'Study on Microbial Dynamics during Fermentation of Ethnic Foods and Beverages'. Hosted by the Advanced Level DBT Biotech Hub at IASST, the event saw enthusiastic participation from faculty members hailing from different states. Prof Ashis K Mukherjee, the director of IASST, underscored the

significance of understanding fermented food preparation, highlighting its cultural and scientific importance. He emphasised the workshop's goal of nurturing a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and research in this domain. "Such initiatives aim to cultivate a skilled workforce capable of propelling innovation and research in this domain and encourage participants to explore and comprehend the dynamics of ever-changing microbial processes in biotechnology," Prof Mukherjee stated.

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 6: Three individuals GUWAHATI, Feb 6: Kendriya Vidyalaya NFR Lumding organised an open interactive session on 'Physics Perspective and Interaction' with the eminent scholar Padma Shri Prof Harish Chandra Verma, the renowned physicist, author, and former professor of the Indian Institute of Technology,

> Professor HC Verma, the chief tary video on his life, work, and guest, and Prem Ranjan Kumar, achievements

DRM/LMG, both interacted with Professor HC Verma made the students. A total of 340 students session more engaging and interfrom three different schools of active by discussing and demon-Lumding participated in this interstrating real-life experiments on active session. The session began various important topics relevant with Professor HC Verma disto daily life. He also emphasised cussing what physics is and its the importance of observing daily relevance to everyday life. The life phenomena.

participants were thrilled and Furthermore, Professor HC eager to interact with HC Verma Physics Lab and Atal Tinkering of physics. after watching a short documen-

Lab, where the young scientists of the Vidyalaya showcased their self-made working models on topics such as smart dustbin, vehicle rear proximity sensors, tesla coin, solar & lunar eclipse, hot air balloon, coupled pendulum, etc., along with demonstrations. At the end of the session, a question-answer session was conducted where students raised their Verma visited the school's queries relating to various aspects

# **Memorial souvenir released**

### HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Feb 6: Nipon Boruah, a resident of Demow Sukapha Nagar, vice president of the All Tai Ahom Students Union (ATAŠU), Sivasagar District Committee, and adviser, Demow ATASU, passed away on January 26, 2024. On Monday, the Adyasraddha of Nipon Boruah was organised at his residence. A meeting was held where the souvenir named 'Nipon' was released by Basanta Gogoi, president of

ATASU, Central Committee. Jayanta Gogoi, president of ATASU, Demow Regional Committee, anchored the meeting. In the meeting, family members of Nipon Boruah, Umesh Chetia, president of Demow Press Club, Utpal Dowerah, secretary of Demow Press Club, Mridul Buragohain, a local media person, Sumeet Kumar Handique, ATASU leader, Jadab Gogoi, president of AYM, Central Committee, and other dignitaries and ATASU leaders were present.

# BTC and NEHHDC sign MoU to preserve cultural heritage

### HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Feb 6: In a significant step toward preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Government of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and North East Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NE-HHDC) at an event held at the Bodoland Guest House, Khanapara in Guwahati on Tuesday.

The signing ceremony of the MoU was attended by the chief executive member (CEM) of Bodoland Territorial Region, Pramod Boro, and Brigadier Rajiv Kumar Singh (retired), managing director of NE-HHDC, along with officials from both par-

The MoU emphasises promoting and sup-

porting the flourishing local handicrafts and handloom industries in the Bodoland region, strategically harnessing the distinctive artistic skills and rich traditional craftsmanship prevalent in the area.

CEM Boro hailed the signing of the MoU between the BTR Government and North East Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NEHHDC), stating that it brings a new dimension to the artistic skills and rich traditional craftsmanship in the region. He highlighted that the initiative aims to preserve the rich cultural heritage of BTR.

"This initiative strives to promote and support the flourishing local handicrafts and handloom industries in BTR, strategically harnessing the distinctive artistic skills and rich traditional craftsmanship prevalent in the region," Boro added.



# First train journey from Ledo to Ayodhya launched with religious fervour

### HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Feb 6: The inaugural ceremony of the first-ever train journey from North Eastern states to the holy city of Ayodhya commenced with great fervour on Tuesday morning. The ceremony took place at the Ledo Railway Station, where the train was flagged off by Santanu Pujari, executive member of the BJP State Committee, chairman of AIIC, and co-head of the Asthaa Train launched by the Indian Railway, Government of India.

Under the auspices of the 'Asthaa' scheme initiated by the Government of India, this special train has been arranged to facilitate pilgrimage to the sacred Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. Following the inauguration of the Lord Ram idol at Ayodhya on January 22, the Government of India organised this initiative to enable devotees to visit the revered temple.

The special train embarked on its journey with 300 pilgrims from the 83rd Margherita constituency of Tinsukia district. This marks a significant milestone in the region's connectivity to Ayodhya, fostering a sense of spiritual unity and reverence among the residents of the North Eastern states.

During the flagging-off ceremony of the special train Asthaa, BJP Tinsukia District Committee president Kusha Kanta Borah, Margherita BJP Town Mandal president Dheeraj Sonowal, Margherita Sadar Mandal BJYM president Sanjit Gogoi, senior BJP leader of Margherita Bhabesh Dutta, noted social worker of Ledo Anup Biswas, Tinsukia Railway Division DRM Uttam Prakash, and many BJP leaders of Margherita were present on this auspicious holy occasion.

# **NORTHEAST/REGION**

# Arunachal Pradesh cabinet's nod to 2 new districts

Keyi Panyor to be carved out from Lower Subansiri district, Bichom from East and West Kameng districts

ITANAGAR, Feb 6: The cabinet of Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu approved the creation of two new districts for ease of administration, a senior official said on Tuesday.

The decision to create the new districts was taken during a cabinet meeting chaired by the CM on Monday. The cabinet decided to carve out Keyi Panyor district

from Lower Subansiri and Bichom from East and West Kameng districts.

The number of districts in the northeastern state will now rise to 28.

During the cabinet meeting, it was decided that the Arunachal Pradesh (Reorganisation of Districts) (Amendment) Bill, 2024 will be introduced in the forthcoming budget session of the state assembly, which will commence on February 8.

Government spokesperson Bamang Felix said Keyi Panyor district will have its headquarters in Yachuli (Ter Gapin-Sam Sath area).

Moreover, as many as 67 posts have also been created for the new district consisting of group A, group B nongazetted, group C, MTS and ALC posts, Felix said.

Napangphung has been designated as the district headquarters of Bichom district.

The cabinet also approved several initiatives for Bichom, which include the funding for Eklavya Model Residential School in Bana, issuance of Land Possession Certificates (LPCs) for land and farms of Nyishi individuals in Aka area, and survey and preparation of DPR for the construction of a road from NH-13 to Richukrong circle headquarters to improve connectivity.

The cabinet also approved the Arunachal Pradesh Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill 2024, and Amendment of the Arunachal Pradesh (Land Settlement and Records) Act 2000 (Act No 10 of 2000), which would be tabled in the budget session of the assembly.

To bolster fire and emergency services, the council of ministers also sanctioned 53 additional posts across various categories, to be deployed in heliports and airports. These include five station officers, six sub-fire officers, 12 head constables (drivers), and 30 firemen.

Also, the cabinet gave the nod for the establishment of new judicial courts, with the creation of 103 posts across various categories. (PTI)



# MTU students protest against unfair conduct of exam



IMPHAL, Feb 6: Students of the Manipur Technical University (MTU) staged a protest in the college campus at Takyelkhongbal in Imphal West district on Tuesday against the alleged irregularities on the part of the authorities of the university in conducting examinations.

The students stormed the administration block of the university at its campus while demanding a fair examination.

The students declared that they will not appear in the upcoming examinations if their demand of conducting a fair examination, is not fulfilled by the authorities

The agitating students said that they will not accept conducting the same exam in different modes while alleging that the authorities have been conducting the same exam in offline as well as online modes.

Talking to reporters, the students alleged that the university authorities are arranging online mode examinations for a certain section of students while the same exam is conducted on offline mode for the rest of the students

The students said that they have no objection in conducting the exam in online or offline mode. But, the exam must be conducted equitably.

They said that students of all the communities were receiving the brunt of the ongoing crisis and the authorities must treat them equally.

DIMAPUR, Feb 6: National Socialist Council of Nagalim The students further alleged unfair-(NSCN-IM) on Tuesday exness in the conduct of the examinapressed its shock and contions while claiming that students attending physical classes regularly demned the third degree punishment being handed out to are getting low marks in the internal D K Korungthang Maring at the assessment while those students who are said to be attending classes on onhands of paramilitary personnel of 3rd Assam Rifles on January line mode were being given higher 3.In a press release, the NSCNmarks IM alleged, "What really caught

The protest will continue until the the attention of all who value demand for conducting the exam equihuman rights is the appalling betably is not considered by the administration of the university. The students havior of 3rd Assam Rifles post in Tengnoupal, Manipur, targetsaid that they would not appear in the upcoming exams if the authorities failed ing an innocent person and looting ₹ 4 lakh in cash and Maruti to consider their demand. (NNN)

added.

photos are stored.

officer said.

man if needed.

## We must modernise, but remain anchored to our roots: Arunachal Guv and participants.

ITANAGAR, Feb 6: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lieutenant General (Retired) K T Parnaik on Tuesday called on people to remain connected to their roots and take pride in cultural heritage and traditions.

Participating in the 'Boori-Boot Yullo' festival of the Nyishi community at Nahralagun near here, Parnaik said ethnic festivals are a great means to foster bonding among people. Stating that festivals of Arunachal Pradesh are closely associated with agrarian activities,

punishment on Maring

dacoity.

ing. (NNN)

environment and nature, Parnaik advised all to promote their mother tongues and nurture community bonding. "We must modernize, but remain anchored to our roots," he said.

He urged people to retain customs and tradi-Saket Kushwaha, who also took part in the celtions and positively look towards development ebrations, stressed the documentation of the in the fields of education, art, literature, health cultural values, traditions and practices of varand prosperity of the people. The governor and his wife also visited the

Boori-Boot Yullo altar (Uii Rugi) and the Nyib Naam (priest house) and interacted with priests

> Tripura govt to introduce health insurance for those not included in PMJAY

AGARTALA, Feb 6: The The press statement of the Tripura government will soon in-NSCN-IM then said that this is troduce a health insurance scheme nothing less than committing to provide Rs 5-lakh cover for families, which have not been in-The NSCN-IM further said cluded in the Pradhan Mantri Jan that those Assam Rifles person-Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), a minnel involved in the crime deister said on Tuesday. serves to be meted befitting

Of the 9.75 lakh families in the northeastern state, around 5.49 lakh have already been covered under the PM-JAY.

As many as 4.15 lakh families will get the benefit under the Chief Minister Jan Arogya Yojana (CMJAY), state tourism minister Sushanta Chowdhury told reporters. Besides, 10,000 workers' families registered with the state labour department will also be eligible for the health benefit.

'The state cabinet, in its last meeting held on Monday, has cleared the proposal for introducing CM-JAY for 4.15 lakh families which are not included in the PM-JAY," the minister said. In the last budget speech, state finance

## lakh seized, 2 arrested in Arunachal

Heroin worth ₹2

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024



ITANAGAR, Feb 6: Heroin worth around Rs 2 lakh was seized and two persons arrested in the Pakke Kessang in Arunachal Pradesh, police said on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off, a house was raided in Niti Darlong village near Seijosa in the Pakke Kessang district on Monday.

Thirty-five vials filled with heroin, a soap case filled with heroin and 164 empty vials were found, superintendent of police, Tasi Darang told PTI. One person, Jumyir Gangkak (22) was arrested in connection with the seizures, he said.

During interrogation, Gangkak told the police that she had procured the drugs from a person in neighbouring Assam, he added

Acting on the information, police on Tuesday arrested another person, Afial Husain (22) from Khonamukh village in Assam's Sonitpur district. Around 12.37 gram of heroin was seized from him.

An investigation is underway, police said, adding that it was the first drugs-related case in the Pakke Kessang district. (PTI)

essence of Nvishi community of Kamle district. was presented on the occasion. (PTI)

They also participated in the customary Punu

Rajiv Gandhi University vice-chancellor,

A cultural programme, depicting the cultural

dance with cultural troupes and invitees.

ious tribes of the state.

## **Budget session of Mizoram** Assembly to start from Feb 19 AIZWAL, Feb 6: The first



budget session of the Mizoram Assembly under the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government headed by chief minister Lalduhoma will commence on February 19, a senior official said.

Assembly commissioner secretary Vanlalthantlingi said a detailed programme will be chalked out in the meeting of the

Business Advisory Committee (BAC) to be held this week. Lalduhoma, who also holds the finance portfolio, will present the first budget of the new government, she said. (PTI)

# **DEO constitutes MCMC** in East Garo Hills

### HT Correspondent

WILLIAMNAGAR, Feb 6: East Garo Hills district election officer (DEO) has constituted a media certification and monitoring committee (MCMC), for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

According to an order issued in this regard, the DEO, Vibhor Aggarwal will be the nodal officer who will be assisted by all the additional deputy commissioners and ACs, district public relations officers, WG Momin as the member secretary, Eldin A Sangma, Journalist of the DPRO, Shanborlang Warjri, DIO and Juliush Marak of

# Kolkata couple held for murdering Pune man in posh Guwahati hotel

GUWAHATI, Feb 6: In a tragic end to a the girl started avoiding the victim, who belove triangle, a couple hailing from Kolkata came more possessive and started blackmail-

said. "The Pune man also started contacting

her family members as well as the boyfriend,

who were residents of Kolkata, in his bid to

force her to marry him. He also shared the

intimate photographs with the boyfriend," he

along with her boyfriend made a plan to meet

the businessman at a hotel and somehow

take away his mobile phone in which those

ingly she brought sleeping pills and bhang-

infused laddoos to feed him," the police

"They planned to sedate him and accord-

Accordingly, all three persons came to

Guwahati separately on Monday. The

woman met the Pune man at the Lokpriya

Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in

Guwahati and then left for Radisson Blu

Her 23-year-old boyfriend also checked in

hotel, where they checked in, Barah said.

at another room of the same hotel.

In order to stop the blackmailing, she

"At around 2 pm, the boyfriend entered their room and a fight broke out between the was arrested on the charge of murdering a ing her by showing photographs of their Pune businessman in a luxury hotel in intimate moments, the police commissioner two men. The Pune man was injured and died later. Finding the victim unconscious

NSCN-IM condemns third degree

Gypsy after giving 3rd degree torture to DK. Korungthang".

Guwahati, police said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference here, Guwahati police commissioner Diganta Barah said the incident took place on Monday afternoon at the hotel, where the three persons had stayed.

"The victim, identified as 44-year-old Sandeep Suresh Kamble from Pune, came in contact with the woman during one of his business trips to Kolkata in September 2023," he added.

The 25-year-old woman was a store manager at a restaurant at the Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata and as their relationship became intimate, they spent time together at hotels in at least two cities earlier. Barah said.

"The victim had clicked photographs of their intimate moments during such stays. He also used to send expensive gifts to the accused. The deceased, who is already married, wanted to marry her too and kept on forcing her to break off her relationship with her boyfriend," he added.

Gradually their relationship fell apart and

# Heroin seized in Mizoram, Myanmar national among 4 held

AIZWAL, Feb 6: Four people, including a Myanmar national, were arrested in Mizoram's Aizawl on

Tuesday after heroin was seized from their possession, an excise department statement said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of excise department personnel carried out operations at two separate locations in Aizawl during which 617 grams of heroin were seized, it said.

During an operation conducted at Durtlang leitan area, 577 grams of the narcotics substance were recovered from the possession of a Myanmar national, and two others.

In another operation conducted in Electric Veng area in Aizawl, excise officials seized 40 grams of heroin from the possession of a drug peddler, the statement said.

The four accused were booked under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. (PTI)

AGARTALA, Feb 6: After a gap of five years, two tigers were taken to Tripura's Sepahijala Zoological Park, bringing cheers among animal lovers of the northeastern state, an official said Tuesday

Two leopards, a pair of peacocks and four pheasants were also brought to the park as part of an animal exchange programme from Bengal Safari in north Bengal's Siliguri.

"The exchange programme was taken up under the guidance of the Central Zoo Authority. These animals will be released in the zoological park for public view after a month of quarantine," deputy conservator of forest (DCF), wildlife, Krishna Dulal Roy told PTI on Wednesday.

During the quarantine period, all the exchanged animals' health will be constantly monitored, he said

profusely bleeding from the nose, they decided to leave the hotel," Barah added.

punishment after getting them

arrested and tried under IPC ap-

The NSCN-IM also said it

condemned such an act of cru-

elty that is inhuman and degrad-

plicable to torture and dacoity.

Initially, the couple went to Kamakhya Railway Station to catch a train heading towards Kolkata, but they changed the plan and decided to catch their pre-booked flight at 9:15 pm from Guwahati, he said.

"When they were going towards the airport, they were arrested," he added.

The boyfriend had made a call to the hotel reception, saying that the guest of Room No 922, where the businessman had checked in, might be sick. This call led to their arrest. The hotel employees rushed to the room

and, after finding the guest lying dead in a pool of blood, called the police. The accused also brought ropes to tie the

The police found the two accused in CCTV footage of the hotel. Their details were also received from the property.

The details along with photos of these two suspects were immediately circulated among the local police personnel for interception, leading to their arrest.

During interrogation, they confessed to the crime. (PTI)

minister Pranajit Singha Roy announced that the CM-JAY would be introduced for the benefit of the people who are not covered under the PM-JAY, and ₹ 59 crore was provisioned in the budget.

"Initially, ₹ 59 crore was sanctioned for unveiling CM-JAY but now it has been increased to Rs 104 crore annually. With this, all the families in the state will get the benefit of health insurance of Rs. 5 lakh per annum", he said.

"The CM-JAY scheme is prepared in line with the PM-JAY as the benefit will be cashless and paperless. The insurance cover is  $\overline{\mathbf{\xi}}$  5 lakh for each family annually and it will be available in all the 26,000 hospitals across the country. It is a revolutionary decision of the BJP government which reflects the Prime Minister's vision-Sabka Saath Saab Ka Vikash", he added. (PTI)

# Tripura zoo gets tigers, leopards

Animals brought in as part of exchange programme under the Central Zoo Authority



Two lions, a pair of spectacled langurs and three blackbucks were sent to Bengal Safari authorities as part of the exchange programme. "The roar of Royal Bengal

Tigers was missing at the Sepahi-

jala Zoological Park after the death of two big cats due to old age-related ailments in 2018. After a hectic process, we were able to bring two tigers from Siliguri zoological park. We hope that the presence of tigers will at-

tract more visitors to the zoo," he said. Two more animal exchange programmes- one with Bannerghatta Zoological Park in Karnataka and Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Tirupati are in the pipeline.

Roy said the North Eastern Council (NEC) has approved a plan to give a facelift to Sepahijala Zoological Park, amounting to Rs 52 crore.

The fund will be utilised for the much-awaited expansion plan of the state's finest zoological park.

"Of the 68-acre zoological park, around 28 acres remain unutilised. We want to expand the zoo areas to accommodate more animals by setting up new enclosures", he said.

A plan is also mooted to introduce battery-operated vehicles from the entry point of the zoo to animal enclosures for convenience to visitors, he added. (PTI)

Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau (SIB).

# Man sentenced to 30 years imprisonment for sexual abuse of minor

### HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Feb 6: The court of special judge in Jorhat on Tuesday sentenced a man to 30 years rigorous imprisonment for sexually abusing a minor girl.

The additional Jorhat district and sessions judge (Jorhat) AJ Borah as special judge on Tuesday while pronouncing the judgement convicted Vicky Gupta (32), a resident of Jorhat town under section 6 (1) of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012, and sentenced him to 30 years rigorous imprisonment.

A fine of Rs 10,000 was also imposed on Gupta and in default of the payment the convict will have to undergo another two years rigorous imprisonment. Altogether seven witnesses were examined during the trial by the court.

The judge also referred the matter to the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Jorhat for grant of compensation to the victim under the Victim Compensation Scheme

As per the FIR lodged by the parents of the victim on April 4, 2019 at the Jorhat police station, Gupta was accused of sexually exploiting a five-year old minor girl, who was his neighbour four months before lodging of the complaint.

The parents alleged that when they had come to know about the offence from their daughter they confronted Gupta, who offered Rs 20,000 to them to hush up the incident. However, the victim's family refused and approached the police.

# Govt official held for taking bribe

### <u>HT Bureau</u>

GUWAHATI, Feb 6: A team of the vigilance and anti-corruption department has arrested an extension officer for taking bribe from a person.

According to sources, the accused, Emtaz Mondal, extension officer of the state fishery department in Dhubri cum in-charge deputy chief executive officer, South Salmara Zilla Parishad had demanded a bribe of ₹ 10,000 from a person for payment of bills related to works done under Jal Jeevan Mission. Later, he reportedly reduced the bribe amount to ₹ 8,000.

Unwilling to pay the bribe, the complainant approached the directorate of vigilance and anti-corruption for taking necessary legal action against the accused.

Based on the complaint, the vigilance team on Monday laid a trap in the office of the chief executive officer, Zilla Parishad in South Salmara, Mankachar, Hatsingimari. Mondal was caught red handed in his office chamber, in presence of independent witnesses, immediately after he accepted ₹ 8,000 as bribe from the complainant. The tainted bribe money has been recovered from his possession and has been seized accordingly.

In this connection a case has been registered in ACB Police Station on 05/02/2024 vide Case No. 12/2024, under Section 7(a) of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018).

According to sources, necessary legal action is being initiated.

5'

# NATION

# Students, candidates not be under purview of proposed law on cheating: Jitendra Singh in LS

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: Students and candidates will not be under the purview of the proposed law to check malpractices in examinations, Union minister Jitendra Singh told Lok Sabha on Tuesday as the house took up a discussion on the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024. The bill which seeks to deal sternly with malpractices and irregularities in competitive examinations with provisions for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine up to ₹ 1 crore was introduced in the house on Monday.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024

"We have not kept student or candidate under the purview of this law," Singh, Union Minister of State for Personnel, said, intervening in the debate.

Satya Pal Singh, former Mumbai Police Commissioner and BJP MP from Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat, said when he was the HRD minister he got to closely see the malpractices in the PhDs which was a mandatory requirement for being recruited as assistant professors.

"People used to get their PhDs written from others, journals were not being written by candidates themselves... thousands of teacher training institutions used to be on paper and we worked on the clo-

## ED attaches assets of Bihar JD(U) MLC in 'illegal' sand mining case

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday said it has attached two immovable assets worth over ₹ 26 crore "acquired" by Bihar MLC and JD(U) leader Radha Charan Sah as part of a money laundering investigation linked to alleged illegal sand mining in the state.

The money laundering case stems from a total of 19 FIRs registered by Bihar Police under various sections of the IPC and Bihar Mineral (Concession, Prevention of Illegal Mining, Transportation and Storage) Rule, 2019 against Broad Son Commodities Private Limited and others.

Probe found, the ED claimed in a statement, that the "illegal sale of sand and its mining was mainly controlled by a syndicate and Radha Charan Sah, being a syndicate member, generated huge proceeds of crime through Broad Son Commodities Private Limited."

"He layered and laundered the proceeds of crime with the assistance of his son Kanhaiya Prasad using hawala network," it said. (PTI)



sure of such institutions... these kind of institutions are ruining generations," he said.

mitted by various entities involved "The punishments proposed in in the conduct of public examinathe bill and addition of sections of tions by the central government organised crime are a welcome and its agencies. step... I have seen that up to 50 students from one district are getting vention of Unfair Means) Bill, selected...how is this possible 2024, introduced by Singh, menwithout cheating," he asked. tions "leakage of question paper or

Kathir Anand, DMK MP from Vellore; Chinta Anuradha, YSR Congress MP from Amalapuram (Andhra Pradash): Rahul Ramesh Shewale, Shiv Sena MP and BJD MP Achyutananda Samanta, also spoke in support of the bill. At present, there is no specific

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: The Enforcement Directorate

on Tuesday searched some premises of chief minister

Arvind Kejriwal's personal assistant Bibhav Kumar

and others as part of its probe into charges that the AAP

received kickbacks of ₹ 17 crore through "irregulari-

ties" in a Delhi Jal Board tender, official sources said.

This action is part of a money laundering investigation

focusing on alleged bribes that were garnered through

irregularities in the DJB tendering process and purport-

The bill proposes action against organised gangs, mafia elements and those indulging in malpractices and will not even spare government officials found in collusion with them. The move comes against the

backdrop of cancellation of a series of competitive tests such as the teacher recruitment exam in Rajasthan, Common Eligibility Test (CET) for Group-D posts in Haryana, recruitment exam for junior clerks in Gujarat and constable recruitment examination in Bihar following question paper leaks. The objective of the bill is to bring in greater transparency, fairness and credibility to the public examination systems and to reassure the youth that their sincere and genuine efforts will be fairly

rewarded and their future is safe. Addressing a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament at the beginning of the Budget session on January 31, President Droupadi Murmu had said the government is aware of the concerns of the youth regarding irregularities in examinations.

"Therefore, it has been decided to enact a new law to deal sternly with such malpractices," she had said. (PTI)

# Horse trading attempts will invite stern action: Bihar Deputy CM ahead of trust vote

PATNA, Feb 6: Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Choudhary on Tuesday asserted that the newly formed NDA government will sail through the trust vote slated for next week and warned the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan of "stern action" if horse trading was attempted. Choudhary, who also heads the BJP's state unit, spoke to PTI here upon returning from Delhi, where in the last couple of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. "The BJP's relationship with chief minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) has matured over the past few decades, with a few bittersweet experiences in between. The synergy will be on display during the trust vote which we are bound to win," said Choudhary. The government which was

days, he called on top leaders like formed on January 28 is scheduled to seek vote of confidence on February 12, the inaugural day of the budget session.

Mahagathbandhan leaders, who are sore over the sudden loss of power caused by the JD(U)supremo's volte-face, have been claiming that the day might see some upset with RJD leader Awadh Bihari Chaudhary still occupying the Speaker's chair. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1... CM not availed air

to refrain from arguing but as the ruckus persisted, Daimary adjourned the proceedings for 10 minutes. When the House re-assembled, Daimary requested the members to abide by the rules and procedures for the conduct of business in the House.

"No one was there for my protection, I felt alone in conducting the proceedings," he said, referring to how both ruling and opposition members did not heed his words. Quoting the assembly rule book, the speaker said, "I request the members to allow each other to speak and also let the ministers give their replies."

The House was adjourned for an hour soon after the end of Question Hour over an adjournment motion brought by AIUDF over eviction drives in Goalpara and Dhubri districts. As the speaker said the motion is being disallowed and urged the AIUDF to raise the matter under other provisions, the opposition party members persisted with a request for the adjournment motion.

This led the speaker to adjourn the House for one hour, the second adjournment of the day. (PTI) India decides to fence

have also been approved, and the work will start soon," he said. Manipur shares around 390 km of border with Myanmar, but only about 10 km has been fenced so far. In July last year, the state government shared data that around 700 illegal immigrants entered the state.

Besides, Mizoram has seen an influx of anti-Junta rebels in thousands since the military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021. According to government estimates, several thousand refugees are living in different parts of Mizoram since the coup.

Mizoram shares a 510-km-long border with Myanmar.

Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh had also said that several persons from Myanmar tried to enter into his state but returned on seeing the presence of a large number of security personnel. Apart from Manipur and Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh shares a 520-km border with Myanmar and Nagaland shares a 215-km border with the country

On February 3, after meeting Shah, the Manipur chief minister said the Centre is set to take "some important decisions" in the interests of the people of the state.

Singh had also held a meeting with senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs at the North Block and had "a productive discussion on the strategic measures undertaken for fostering peace in Manipur". Manipur has been witnessing sporadic violence.

Ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023 after a tribal solidarity march was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. More than 200 people have been killed in the violence.

While a section of Kukis has demanded a separate administration or separation from the Manipur government, the Meitei groups are dead against it and warned legislators against any such design and asked them to foil such attempts.

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

The rest belong to other communities. Shah paid a four-day visit to the state as part of his efforts to calm down the warring communities. However, intermittent violence continued. (PTI)

# Over ₹ 1.15 lakh crore

an amount of ₹ 22,790 crore was repaid till 2022-23. She added that the process to repay the loans on time was going on

Expressing concern over growing debt, Gogoi said that even as states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have more debt burden, revenue from their own sources was multiple times more than Assam's earnings

Congress MLA Bharat Chandra Narah also said that since the interest payment by the state cannot be more than 10 per cent of the total revenue received, the government must inform the House as to what the total interest payment and revenue received were in the year 2022-23 and 2023-24. Neog replied that the latest data from January 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024 will be available at the end of 2023-24 fiscal. She maintained that all loans were taken as per rules, adding that availing 'loans is not a bad thing as it is essential for infrastructure development. (PTI)

# NTPC, IOC ink pact for

edly channelled as election funds to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the officials said. A dozen premises in the national capital were searched by the federal agency's officials from 7 am under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The residences of Bibhav Kumar, former Delhi Jal Board member Shalabh Kumar, the office of Pankaj Mangal and others. party Rajya Sabha MP and national treasurer N D Gupta, and the premises of Chartered Accountant (CA)

Pankaj Mangal and others associated with the ruling party in Delhi were covered in the search action. In response to the raids, Delhi minister Atishi accused the authorities of attempting to "intimidate" the AAP. These searches are related to an investigation con-

cerning alleged irregularities in the tendering process of the Delhi Jal Board, for which the ED had previously arrested retired Jal Board chief engineer Jagdish Kumar Arora and contractor Anil Kumar Aggarwal on January

Following the ED's assertion that further custodial interrogation was necessary to uncover a "larger conspiracy," a special PMLA court had extended their remand by five days on Monday.

The money laundering case originated from a CBI FIR that alleged corruption and bribery in the Delhi Jal Board of the Delhi government. The FIR alleged that Arora awarded contracts to NKG Infrastructure Ltd. for a total cost of ₹ 38 crore, despite the company's failure to meet the technical eligibility criteria. ED officials claimed that NKG Infrastructure Ltd. secured the bid by submitting forged documents. The probe further indicated that the contract was inflated, allowing kickbacks to be collected back from the contractors.

Arora is alleged to have been "aware" of the fact that the company does not meet the technical eligibility, the officials said, claiming that he received "bribe" amounts both in cash and bank accounts and passed these alleged kickbacks to Bibhav Kumar, Shalab Kumar,

The kickbacks, according to the officials, were also passed on as election funds to the AAP.

An analysis by the ED claimed that out of the contract value of ₹ 38 crore, only about ₹ 17 crore was spent on the tender work, with the remaining funds allegedly siphoned off under the guise of various false expenses, including bribes and election funds.

The raids came on a day Atishi claimed in a press conference that the ED had "deleted" audio recordings of witness statements in certain cases, including the excise policy probe involving AAP functionaries, a charge denied by the federal agency.

The ED officials said the agency was proposing to take legal action against the Delhi minister and that no footage was deleted. It said audio recording of interrogation began only in October 2023. (PTI)

assisting the candidate in any manner unauthorisedly in the public examination" and "tampering with the computer network or a computer resource or a computer system" as offences done by a person, group of persons or institutions. ED raids Delhi CM's PA, others over charges of

substantive law to deal with unfair

means adopted or offences com-

The Public Examinations (Pre-

answer key", "directly or indirectly

AAP receiving kickbacks from DJB contractor

# India to see USD 67 billion investments in gas sector in 5-6 years: PM



BETUL (GOA), Feb 6: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said India will witness a USD 67 billion investment in the natural gas supply chain in 5-6 years as part of "unprecedented" investments flowing into the energy sector to meet the needs of the world's fastest growing major economy.

Speaking at the second edition of the India Energy Week here, he said reforms by his government are leading to a rise in domestic natural gas production as part of the wider aim to increase the share of the fuel in the energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030 from current 6.3 per cent.

Natural gas is seen as a transition fuel in India's march towards net zero carbon emission by 2070. Gas, which is used to generate electricity, make fertiliser or turn into CNG for running automobiles as well as for cooking, is considered less polluting fuel than other fossil fuels such as coal.

Modi said India's world-beating economic growth rate is fuelling a surge in energy needs.

"India is the world's third largest energy, oil and LPG consumer. It is the fourth largest LNG importer and refiner as well as the fourth largest automobile market," he said, adding the nation's energy demand is estimated to double by 2045.

Noting that India Energy Week 2024 is taking place at a time when India's GDP growth rate crossed 7.5 per cent in the first six months of the financial year, Modi said that the pace of growth is higher than the global growth estimate making India the fastest growing economy in the world.

He also mentioned about the International Monetary Fund's prediction of similar growth trends in the future.

"Economic experts around the world believe that India will soon become the third largest economy in the world," Modi said.

He called on global investors to seize the opportunity to invest in the world's fastest growing energy market.

"Together, we can build a future that is prosperous and environmentally sustainable," he said.

The prime minister also held a roundtable with global oil and gas CEOs and experts, but details were not immediately available.

Elaborating on his government's plan to meet the growing demand, he said the effort is to ensure affordable fuel is available to all on a sustainable

The prime minister said that despite adverse global factors, India is among the few nations where petrol prices have come down and 100 per cent electricity coverage was achieved by electrifying crores of houses in the last two years.

"India is not just meeting its needs but is also shaping the global direction," he said.

The energy needs are to be met through a combination of conventional fuels and renewable sources such as biofuels and next-generation fuels such as hydrogen

India, he said, is witnessing "unprecedented investments in the energy sector"

The record ₹ 11.11 lakh crore of investment outlined in the interim budget for 2024-25 last week will see a big part going into energy, he said. "This amount will create assets in railways, roadways, waterways, airways or housing which will need energy leading to India's efforts to expand its energy capacity," he said.

Modi said domestic natural gas production has risen due to reforms in the last few years and the country is making efforts to take the percentage of gas in the primary energy mix from 6.3 per cent to 15 per cent. "This will see an investment of about USD 67 billion in the next 5-6 years."

Highlighting the circular economy and concept of reuse being a part of India's ancient traditions, the prime minister said ethanol blending in petrol has been raised to 12 per cent from 1.5 per cent in 2014 and a global alliance on biofuels formed with about 22 nations and 12 international organizations to encourage the use of biofuels in the world, creating economic opportunities worth USD 500 billion.

Ethanol blending has led to a reduction in carbon emissions by about 42 million tonnes, he said, adding as many as 9,000 petrol pumps in the country are today selling E20 or petrol doped with 20 per cent ethanol extracted from sugarcane or grains.

Also, the government is working on setting up 5,000 plants to produce compressed biogas from agri and municipal wastes.

Addressing global environmental concerns, he remarked, "despite being home to 17 per cent of the world's population, India's carbon emission share is only 4 per cent.'

"We are committed to further improving our energy mix by focusing on the development of environmentally sensitive energy sources," he said.

The prime minister said India ranks fourth in the world in renewable energy installed capacity, which now makes up for as much as 40 per cent of the nation's installed capacity. "In the past decade, India's solar energy installed capacity has grown by more than 20 times.

Prime minister Modi noted that the launch of a major mission, aimed at installing solar rooftop panels in one crore homes across India, will not only make one crore families self-reliant in the energy sector but also establish mechanisms to deliver excess electricity generated directly to the grid.

Touching upon India's stride in the green hydrogen sector, he said the National Green Hydrogen Mission will pave the way for India becoming a centre of hydrogen production and export. He expressed confidence that India's green energy sector can make both investors and industries a sureshot winner.

India Energy Week 2024 is being held from February 6 to 9 in Goa, and is India's largest and all-encompassing energy exhibition and conference, bringing together the entire energy value chain. (PTI)

threats and mitigation strategies. They will also promote loss-control procedures related to hazards associated with member industries. The Mutual Aid Agreement will be effective for a period of five years, with provisions for renewal and periodic review. (PTI)

# Innovative Tea Dryer

innovative design features a gas-fired natural draft/forced draft system, integrating a heat exchanger and direct heating mechanism. Constructed with heat-resistant steel, the burning chamber incorporates an overhead plenum chamber, alongside ambient air inlet and hot air flow chutes, equipped with air flow control mechanisms and parameter recording ports for precise monitoring of psychometric properties.

"With a capacity of 35 kg per batch, translating to 175 kg per day, our dryer not only enhances operational efficiency but also delivers superior tea quality, as validated by a recovery rate of 32.6 per cent, surpassing conventional methods," added Bora, underscoring the dryer's performance parity with commercial counterparts

The unveiling of this pioneering tea dryer underscores Assam Agricultural University's commitment to driving innovation and empowering small tea growers, heralding a new era of sustainable and technologically advanced tea production in the region.

# 612 grams of heroin seized

during the operation are now in custody, and investigations are underway to determine the source and destination of the seized narcotics. The successful operation highlights the state government's commitment to combating the menace of drug trafficking and ensuring the safety and well-being of the citizens.

Assam Police, under the leadership of Sarma, has been actively working towards curbing the drug trade in the state. The latest seizure marks a significant achievement in the ongoing efforts to eliminate the flow of illegal substances and maintain law and order.

# Lok Sabha passes bill

following question paper leaks. The bill also proposes a high-level national technical committee on public examinations that will make recommendations to make the computerised examination process more secure.

The committee shall look into developing protocols for insulating digital platforms, devising ways and means for developing foolproof IT security systems, ensuring electronic surveillance of examination centres and formulating national standards and services for both IT and physical infrastructure to be deployed for conduct of such examinations.

In many instances, it has been observed that organised groups and mafia elements involved in malpractices deploy solver gangs, use impersonation methods and indulge in paper leaks.

The bill primarily aims to deter such nefarious elements.

The objective of the bill is to bring in greater transparency, fairness and credibility to the public examination systems and to reassure the youth that their sincere and genuine efforts will be fairly rewarded and their future is safe.

Addressing a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament at the beginning of the Budget session on January 31, President Droupadi Murmu had said the government is aware of the concerns of the youth regarding irregularities in examinations.

"Therefore, it has been decided to enact a new law to deal sternly with such malpractices," she had said.

Responding to the criticism by some opposition members that the government is centralising everything, Singh said the Modi-government believes in cooperative federalism and the bill does not attempt to centralise all the systems.

He said that whenever any exam is cancelled, the effort would be made to hold the re-examination as early as possible.

However, he added that there can not be any firm timeline for re-examination of cancelled exam as often such cases are examined by investigative agencies and they take their own time.

The minister also said that the UPSC is conducting exams in 14 languages and "we hope to gradually include all 22 languages"

Participating in the debate on the bill, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said that the bill talks about penal provisions and is absent on prevent measures.

He also accused that the entire emphasis of the government is to centralise all the authorities.

Citing reports, Chowdhury said that the country has witnessed large number of cases with regard to data leaks and how the government intends to plug these loopholes.

N K Premachandran (RSP) demanded that the provisions of the bill are against the principles of criminal jurisprudence and hence it should be referred to the standing committee for scrutiny. TMC leader Kalyan Banerjee said that there is no dirth of laws but the real problem is with their implementation. Most of the opposition members by enlarge supported the bill. (PTI)

## ENTERTAINMENT

### WEDNESDAY, FEBUARY 7, 2024

# Cara Delevingne<br/>to make theatre<br/>debut withSuccess of films like<br/>'12th Fail' a silver lining for<br/>cinema: Vishal Bhardwaj

LOS ANGELES, Feb 6: Actor-model Cara Delevingne is set to make her theatrical debut at London's West End with the musical Cabaret. Delevingne, known for films

such as Anna Karenina and Suicide Squad, will essay the role of Sally Bowles in the play.

Cabaret is a musical based on 1951's play I Am a Camera by John Van Druten, which itself is based on Christopher Isherwood's 1939 novel Goodbye to Berlin.

According to Variety, the stage production will commence from March 11 and continue until June. Delevingne said she is happy to start a new journey from home.

"There are no words to explain the excitement I have to return home to make my stage debut in such an iconic role. I am so inspired by the brilliant actors who have played Sally in past productions around the world and in this one in the West End. I cannot wait to be a part of this brilliant cast and production," she added.

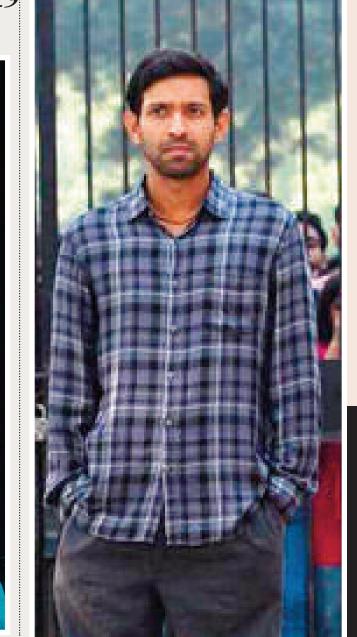
Regarded as one of the most successful musicals of all time, Cabaret is set in 1929–1930 Berlin.

"It revolves on the hedonistic nightlife at the seedy Kit Kat Klub and focuses on the American writer Clifford Bradshaw and his relationship with English cabaret performer Sally Bowles. Keeping an eye on matters is the Emcee," read the synopsis of the play.

Olivier winner Luke Treadaway will play the role of the Emcee. (PTI)







# MANOJ BAJPAYEE KEEN ON SHOOTING 'THE FAMILY MAN' IN ARUNACHAL, OTHER NE STATES: DEPUTY CM

**JAIPUR, Feb 6:** Filmmaker Vishal Bhardwaj has described the success of "12th Fail" "like a silver lining" for independent films at a time when no one is sure about what will work in theatres.

There was a time, Bhardwaj said, when it was not difficult to get films like his Shakespeare trilogy — "Maqbool", "Omkara" and "Haider" — or movies like "Dev D" and "Oye Lucky Lucky Oye" financed.

"Independent cinema has progressed a lot. In fact, it progressed and is now regressing. What's responsible for that, we all are exploring. There was a time when 'Haider', 'Maqbool', 'Omkara', which still had commercial stars, but films like 'Dev D' and 'Oye Lucky Lucky', we used to easily get money to make those kinds of films.

"Now it's very difficult to raise money for these kind of films because everyone is scared, everyone is exploring 'ki kya chalega theatres mein' (what will work in theatres)," Bhardwaj said during a press conference at the recently concluded Jaipur Literature Festival 2024. He praised filmmaker Vidhu Vinod Chopra for "12th Fail", a film that surprised trade analysts by performing exceptionally well at a time when spectacle cinema seems to be the flavour of the season. Mounted on a reported budget of Rs 20 crore, the Vikrant Massey-starrer released in cinemas in October and is still running despite being available on OTT. It has earned over Rs 70 crore at the box office. "A silver lining in this is the success of '12th Fail'. There is no star, there is no weirdness, the background score is also beautiful. It is pure filmmaking by Vidhu Vinod Chopra and I think this is his best film. "To see the kind of success and love the film got, if there is a silver lining that the audience is there to watch every kind of film but it must be worth it for them to come to theatres. So we all are exploring whether a film like 'Animal' will work or a film like 'Jawan' or 'Pathaan' or a mindless south Indian action film. It is all imbalanced," he said. (PTI)

Prime Video unveils series 'Love Storiyaan', set to premiere on February 14

**MUMBAI, Feb 6:** Streamer Prime Video on Tuesday announced "Love Storiyaan", a six-part series that will chronicle the extraordinary love stories of six real-life couples. Conceptualised by Somen Mishra, the Amazon Original Series draws inspiration from the stories featured on India Love Project, a social media initiative by former journalists Priya Ramani, Samar Halarnkar and Niloufer Venkatraman.

The show is backed by filmmaker Karan Johar's Dharmatic Entertainment and set to premiere on Prime Video on Valentine's Day on February 14, a press release said. "Love Storiyaan" features six real-life couples from across the country and their stories of love, hope, happiness, and triumph over all adversities.



**ITANAGAR, Feb 6:** Actor Manoj Bajpayee is keen to explore shooting the next episodes of his hit web series 'The Family Man' in Arunachal Pradesh and other states in the region, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said.

Mein said that he met Bajpayee at the Jaipur airport recently, and while interacting with the National Award-winning actor, he came to know about his willingness to visit Arunachal Pradesh and other Northeastern states to explore sites for shooting. "During our interaction, Manoj ji expressed his willingness to

"During our interaction, Manoj ji expressed his willingness to visit Arunachal and other Northeastern States to explore sites for shooting the next episodes of his popular series on Amazon the 'Family Man'. He also expressed his genuine interest in promoting tourism of the State," the deputy CM posted in X.

"I extended a warm welcome and invited him to be my guest, recognizing the potential for his visit to showcase the unparalleled beauty and cultural richness of Arunachal Pradesh to a broader audience. Looking forward for (to) his visit to my home State," he added. Bajpayee had earlier shared that shooting for the muchawaited third season of the series will begin in February-end, and it will be mostly shot in the Northeast. (PTI) It is directed Akshay Indikar, Archana Phadke, Collin D'Cunha, Hardik Mehta, Shazia Iqbal and Vivek Soni. Johar, the director of films such as "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai", "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham..." and "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani", said the series marks

Dharmatic's first foray into bringing real stories of real people to audiences. "'Love Storiyaan' for us, is

nore than just a faithful retelling of real-life love stories. The series looks at love in all its forms, painting a beautiful picture of connections that go beyond the ordinary," Johar said.

"... These are stories of real people, from different backgrounds, who faced colossal roadblocks in their journey of



finding true love and shown tenacity and persevered by powering through the barriers of culture, faith, gender or even war," he added.

Aparna Purohit, head of Originals, India and Southeast Asia, Prime Video, said the show is a testament to Prime Video's unwavering commitment to crafting narratives that not only mirror the rich diversity of the audience but also deeply resonate with their hearts.

"This series opens a door to authentic and uplifting stories of love that transcend societal boundaries and challenge norms. It intricately intertwines a delicate tapestry, certain to tug at the viewers' heartstrings for its resonant storytelling," she said.

"Love Storiyaan" is executive produced by Johar, Mishra and Apoorva Mehta. (PTI)

# Song of success: Flautist Rakesh Chaurasia on Grammies, guru and the night like no other



**NEW DELHI, Feb 6:** It was a night unlike any other. Sitting with some of the best known musicians from across the world and genres in Los Angeles' Crypto.com arena, flautist Rakesh Chaurasia says he wasn't really prepared to get a Grammy notwithstanding his two nominations.

But he did – and in both categories. It was his first nomination at global music's most celebrated award ceremony and just that was almost enough, the 52-year-old said. "I felt it was fine that I got the nomination but that's it, because when I was sitting there, talking about other people who were there, they got their awards after six nominations, or nine nominations. But god is kind to me that the album came out in 2023 only, it got the nominations the same year, and now the awards," Rakesh Chaurasia told PTI in a telephonic interview from the Los Angeles airport late Monday night.

The first Grammy was as part of the ensemble of tabla maestro Zakir Hussain, American banjo player Bela Fleck and American bassist Edgar Meyer for the best global music performance for "Pashto" and the second for best contemporary instrumental album for "As We Speak". "Pashto" is one of the 12 songs in the fusion album "As We Speak".

Talking with fellow musicians at the glittering event on Sunday night (LA time), Rakesh Chaurasia felt oddly assured it wasn't his time yet.

Sitting at the airport, waiting for his flight back home to Mumbai, the flautist talked to PTI about receiving the award, his inspirations, and global music at

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large. Growing up under the tutelage of flautist and uncle Hariprasad Chaurasia and watching the likes of Zakir Hussain create magic with the tabla, Rakesh Chaurasia credited the two legends for inspiring him to follow the way of music.

Hussain, who received three Grammys, continues to perform with the two generations of the Chaurasias – the uncle and the nephew, the guru and the shishya. "There is always something to learn from him (Hussain). Since childhood I have admired him and watched him. He used to accompany babu ji, my guru Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, and when they both were performing together, it was an amazing experience, one had to be there to really witness the magic," Rakesh Chaurasia said. "It's a blessing for me to be a witness when they are performing and realise that I have played with them. These are a bunch of musicians who are really gods in music," he added.

Carrying the legacy of a grand figure such as Hariprasad Chaurasia does come with some challenges but he said he has managed to use them to be better at his work. "It's like a coin, it has two sides – it feels very great, at the same time it's worrying because you are carrying such a big name on your shoulders. Because people will always compare me with my uncle. "So it's good in a way that I am on my toes all the time, keep practising and try to do better and better. I cannot reach where he has taken the flute, but at least I have been keeping the family name going and keeping this instrument alive," the musician said. (PTI)

### **NEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024**

## SPORTS

# EDITION OF ISL TO KICK OFF ON SEP

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: The top-tier Indian Super League, which will run into its 11th edition, will kick off on September 14 and will run till April 30, 2025, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) announced on Tuesday. As usual the senior competition calendar for the next season (2024-25) will kick off with the Asia's oldest tournament Durand Cup slated from July 26-31.

I-League on the other hand will be held from October 19-April 30, while the Super Cup will run concurrently with the league season from October 1-May 15.

I-League 3, which will act as a qualifying tournament for I-League 2, will be held from August 1-Sep-

tember 30. I-League 2 is slated from January 15-April 30.

The 78th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy will be held from November 5-15 (Group Stage) and December 1-15 (Final Round). The Indian Women's League will be held from October 25-April 30. The IWL-2 will be from January 25-April 30.

The 29th Senior Women's National Football Championship will take place in September (Group Stage) and October (Final Round).

All the senior leagues are set to finish by the end of April next year. it was decided in the AIFF executive committee.

As far as the national state tourna-

ments are concerned, the season will begin with the Junior Boys and Junior Girls National Football Championship tier 1 and tier 2 in July.

It will be followed by the Sub-Junior Boys and Sub-Junior Girls National Football Championship tier 1 and tier 2 in August.

The National Beach Soccer Championship will be held in February next year, the Men's Futsal Club Championship will take place in May 2025.

The AIFF Youth Leagues (U13/U15/U17) are set to have a nine-month calendar from September-May.

The nomination criteria for member associations for the 2024-25 sea-

son of the IWL 2, I-League 3, the 30, 2025. Leagues AIFF Youth (U13/U15/U17) and the Men's Futsal Club Championship have also been

released Durand Cup: July 26-August 31, 2024. I-League 3: August 1 - September

30, 2024. AIFF Youth Leagues

(U13/U15/U17): September 1, 2024 May 31, 2025. Indian Super League: September

14, 2024 - April 30, 2025. I-League: October 19, 2024 - April 30.2025

Indian Women's League: October 25, 2024 - April 30, 2025.

IWL 2: January 25, 2025 - April

I-League 2: January 15, 2025 -April 30, 2025. Super Cup: October 1, 2024 - May

15, 2025. Junior Boys National Football

Championship Tier 1 and Tier 2: July 15 - July 31,

2024. Junior Girls National Football

Championship Tier 1 and Tier 2: July 15 - July 31,

2024. Sub-Junior Boys National Football

Championship Tier 1 and Tier 2: August 5 - Au-

gust 31, 2024.

Sub-Junior Girls National Football Championship Tier 1 and Tier 2:

August 5 - August 31, 2024.

29th Senior Women's National Football Championship Group Stage: September 1 - September 15, 2024

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29th Senior Women's National Football Championship Final Round: October 1 - October 15, 2024

78th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy Group Stage: November 5 - November 15, 2024; Final Round: December 1 -December 15, 2024.

National Beach Soccer Championship: February 1 - February 20, 2025. AIFF Men's Futsal Club Championship: May 1 - May 20, 2025. (PTI)

There is a lot of work

to be done: Zaheer on

India's batting

# We wanted to take captaincy pressure off Rohit, he adds value as batter: Boucher

CAPE TOWN, Feb 6: Mumbai Indians head coach Mark Boucher has revealed that Rohit Sharma's removal from the team's captaincy was a tough decision meant to free him as a batter given that he did not have a great run in the past couple of seasons. The Relianceowned franchise, in the most talked about one-way 'all-cash trade' in the IPL history, bought back all-rounder Hardik Pandya after his successful two-year stint with Gujarat Titans. The team subsequently named him the skipper replacing Rohit, who led the side to five IPL titles.

"We saw a window to get Hardik back as a player," Boucher told South Africa-based podcast 'Banter with The Boys'.

"We still want him (Rohit) as a player, absolutely because we know he has some great value to add and just go out there and actually enjoy it, without the hype of being the captain," he said.

"He probably hasn't had the best couple of seasons with the bat but he has done well as captain and I just thought after speaking with whole Mumbai Indians group, we thought may be this is an opportunity for him to step in for his last year or so," the coach added.

While the hype around an Indian skipper will still be there but Boucher expects Rohit to operate more freely with the bat. "He will still captain India so

that hype is going to be there but when he steps into the IPL, may



be take that extra bit of pressure off him as captain and may be we get the best out of Rohit Sharma...," he hoped.

...playing with nice smile on his face and spending time with beautiful family that he has got, there's no easy way to do it," he said. Boucher said Rohit's busy schedule also puts pressure on Indian captain.

"One thing I picked up with Roh (nickname) is that he is a fantastic guy and he has been captaining for ages and he has been doing really well and not just for MI but for India as well, he walks into a place and there are cameras on him and he is so busy," Boucher said.

Rohit enjoys a massive fan base in social media and Boucher urged fans to understand his removal was a cricketing decision.

stand this in India and people get quite emotional about it...it is more of a cricketing decision that was made...it will bring the best out of Rohit as a person and a player and let him just go out there enjoy and score some good runs." On Pandya's return, Boucher said that the Baroda man has shown admirable leadership skills for Gujarat Titans in the past two editions

he said. (PTI)

Former India pacer Zaheer Khan has highlighted the hosts' batting frailties in the ongoing series against England, saying it was only because of the individual brilliance of Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill that India won the

second Test. Indian batters didn't fire as a collective unit in the second Test

the second essay besides pacer Jasprit Bumrah's sensational bowling effort to secure a series-level-

ing 106-run win. "There "A lot of people don't underare a few

concerns when you look at the team - batting is something that

"He is a Mumbai Indians boy and he won his first year as captain and came runner up in the second year, so there's obviously some very good leadership skills,"

VISAKHAPATNAM, Feb 6: century and they still managed to

as the home side rode on opener Jaiswal's first innings 209 and Shubman's 104-run knock in

they will be talking about because under surface, we have seen India do better," Zaheer said on JioCinema. India set England a 399-run target and despite Zak Crawley being the only one breaching the half-century mark, the visitors were able to score 292 runs.

"You look at England's second innings, there is only one half- on February 15 in Rajkot. (PTI)

The SA T20 organisers also as-

get close to 300. That is what collective effort can do. We have seen two brilliant innings -Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill, but with the bat, there is a lot of work to be done," Zaheer added. In a dominant position after

taking a 190-run first innings lead, India had collapsed to a shocking 28-run defeat in the series opener and were under tremendous heading into the second Test.

Additionally, India were without star batter Virat Kohli and the injured trio KL of Rahul, Ravindra Jadeja and M o h a m m e d Shami in Vizag.

"If you are one down in the series, you need that

aggression, fight and bethese conditions, on this sort of a lief to make sure that it is 1-1 after the end of the game. And I think Rohit was able to bring out those individual performances from the players.

The third Test of the fivematch series, which is part of the current World Test Championship (WTC) cycle, will begin

AIFF plans to hold

# India hockey player Varun Kumar accused of rape, booked under POCSO act

DELHI, Feb 6: Arjuna awardwinning Indian hockey player Varun Kumar has been booked under the stringent POCSO act by the Bengaluru Police after a woman accused the defender of sexually abusing her multiple times when she was a minor.

The 22-year-old, in her complaint filed on Monday, said that she came in contact with Varun in 2018 through Instagram, and the player raped her on multiple occasions promising her of marriage when she was 17.

She said Varun was training at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre in Bengaluru when she met him. Varun, who was awarded the Arjuna in 2021, was recently promoted as a DSP in Punjab Police.

"Based on the complaint received from the woman, we

BENGALURU/NEW have registered a case on Monday against the Hockey player under appropriate section of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and sections 376 (rape) and 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property) of the Indian Penal Code," a senior Bengaluru Police officer said on Tuesday.

Varun, who was in the Indian standby list for the Tokyo Olympics, is currently training with the national squad in Bhubaneswar for the upcoming FIH Pro League. India are scheduled to face Spain in their opening encounter on February

There was speculation that Varun, a 2022 Commonwealth Games silver-medallist, is on the run, but Hockey India rubbished the rumour.

"He is not absconding. He is in Bhubaneswar with the team,' a Hockey India source told PTI. Varun, who hails from Himachal Pradesh, made his debut for India in 2017.

In the FIR, the woman has alleged that Varun insisted on meeting her after they got in touch on Instagram and she relented after some of his friends convinced her.

The two eventually became friends and got into a relationship

According the woman, he took her to a hotel in Bengaluru's Jayanagar in July 2019 and made physical relations with her despite being aware that she was a minor. She said she had resisted but he promised to take their relationship a step further and marry her later. "She accused him of getting

physical with her on several occasions over the five-year long relationship she shared with him on the pretext of marriage," the FIR stated.

The woman alleged that he started distancing himself from her and stopped responding to her calls and messages after her father died last year.

According to her FIR, Varun paid her a visit after the tragedy but stopped communicating after that.

She said that Varun resumed communication with her when she approached the police on a previous ocassion. However, he again distanced himself when she persisted on the topic of marriage.

He then threatened to upload her photos on social media if she exerted pressure on him. (PTI)

# during SA20 league, franchise says he is safe

Fabian Allen mugged

CAPE TOWN, Feb 6: West In- Tuesday. "The franchise works closely with the league to ensure dies all-rounder Fabian Allen was mugged in Johannesburg while he the safety and well-being of its was there to compete in the ongoplayers and staff, while also aling SA T20 League for his franlowing them to have free personal chise Paarl Royals, who said the time as well. "Following the inciplayer is safe and was provided all dent, the player was provided with possible support after the incident. the necessary support by the fran-Allen was robbed outside his chise and the league, and was team hotel at gunpoint on January keen to continue his participation 25. Paarl Royals said he would be at the SA20, and has since been in action during the team's Elimiavailable for selection (twice also

nator against Joburg Super Kings featuring in the playing XI for the on Wednesday. Royals)," it added. ...Paarl Royals would like to state that the West Indian allserted its commitment towards the rounder is safe, and enjoying his safety and security of everyone intime at the SA20 as he, along with volved. "The league places utmost his teammates and support staff, importance on ensuring the safety prepares for the all-important and security of every individual Eliminator on Wednesday," the associated with the seamless opfranchise said in a statement on eration of the league." (PTI)

Super Cup in FA Cup format from 2024-25 season

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: The Super Cup, India's premier knock-out football tournament and which also offers a spot in the AFC Champions League 2, is set to adopt a new format in the 2024-25 season, similar to England's FA Cup.

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) in its calendar for the upcoming season has slotted the Super Cup in the October 1, 2024 to May 15, 2025 window.

The Super Cup, which replaced the country's top knock-out tournament Federation Cup in 2018, normally has a duration of less than a month.

"The AIFF wants the Super Cup in FA Cup (of England) style from this season. That is why it has a window of more than seven months," an AIFF source told PTI.

The Super Cup will run almost concurrently with the top-tier Indian Super League (ISL) and the second tier I-League in the 2024-25 season.

The details of the tournament, including the exact format, will be announced later.

The Football Association Cup of England is an annual knockout domestic competition. First played during the 1871–72 season, it is the oldest national football competition in the world.

The FA Cup is open to all clubs from 10 tiers of the footballing pyramid in England, including the Premier League (PL) sides.

The competition starts with qualifying rounds featuring the lower division teams, with the higher ranked clubs slotting in at the advanced stages based on league hierarchy.

The Super Cup, organised by the AIFF, is open to all ISL and I-League clubs, the top two division of the domestic league system.

The last Super Cup was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, in January, with 16 clubs competing in the group stage. (PTI)

# With Jadeja as inspiration, Saumy makes transition from academics to cricket

CHENNAI, Feb 6: Teenage Indian left-arm spinner Saumy Kumar Pandey, one of the leading wicket-takers in the ongoing U19 World Cup in South Africa, possesses a striking similarity to Ravindra Jadeja's bowling action. The reason is simple: the veteran India allrounder is Pandey's inspiration.

Hailing from Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, Pandey was fascinated by Jadeja's body language and intent on the field and tried every single day to emulate his icon. The cricketer has shown tremendous potential for the future with 16 wickets in five games so far, with a best of 4/19.

"Jadeja has been his inspiration. He has been fascinated by Jadeja's body language and



fielding intent," Pandey's child-According to Anthony, hood coach Aril Anthony told Pandey is also a brilliant student, PTI on Tuesday. who passed his higher secondary

subjects with flying colours. So, what made him foray into cricket?

"Initially, when he started playing cricket at age 7 or 8, he was physically very weak. He was advised by doctors to do some physical activity to boost his immunity," added Anthony. "His father told me that he had

a huge interest in cricket since childhood and was able to hold the bat at the age of three or four. "He was a sharp kid. Even in

academics, he scored around 93 per cent in Higher Secondary. His parents wanted him to be an engineer or a doctor but were left spellbound after seeing him bowl under my guidance (chuckles).

"He has a knack of grasping

things quickly and implements as a spinner; he was never into currently witnessing at the World Cup," said his coach.

Both his parents are government teachers, which could be the reason he has excelled in academics and also quickly honed the intricacies of spin bowling. Anthony said that when Pandey, the highest wicket-taker for India in the U19 World Cup

teenager's wish was to become an all-rounder like Jadeja. "He wanted to become an all-

rounder and was very much interested in batting as well. However, the skill that imbowling, and I advised him to focus on his bowling. He started

them well, which is what you are fast bowling," added Anthony. Anthony said that besides bagging 135 wickets in the last three years at the junior level, Pandey also finished as the second-highest wicket-taker in district-level U16 and U19

> tournaments. He has also fared well in the 2022-23 Cooch Behar Trophy, where he emerged as the second-highest wicket-taker for Madhya Pradesh, scalping 23 wickets in nine innings at an av-

Pandey's good run of form could attract him towards the Indian Premier League but Anpressed me the most was his thony has cautioned the youngster not to get carried away. (PTI)

so far, came to him, the

erage of 15.17.

## SPORTS

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024

# Challenge for Test cricket is revenue-sharing model, not scheduling: Graeme Smith



CAPE TOWN, Feb 6: As Test engagements shrink amid mushrooming T20 leagues across the world, former South Africa captain-turned-administrator Graeme Smith said the five-day format needs a balanced revenue-sharing model than a busy calendar to survive.

Currently, India is the biggest beneficiary of the ICC's revenue distribution model, assured of 38.5 per cent of the total earnings for the 2024-27 cycle. While the Indian board will get USD 231 million annually, West Indies would get just about USD 27.50 million, South Africa USD 26.24 million and a minnow like Afghanistan would fetch only USD 16.82 million per year.

Smith said the challenge lies in addressing this disparity.

"Everyone talks about scheduling but the real challenge for Test Cricket is financial

modelling. You have heard Johny Grave (Cricket West Indies CEO), he has been openly speaking about the revenue sharing model," Smith, who is the commissioner of the ongoing Betway SA T20 League, told PTI Bhasha in an interview.

West Indies winning the Test in Australia is great for the game but they didn't get any revenue for that tour. We discuss in MCC Cricket Committee meetings what should be the revenue sharing model to make nations so financially strong that they want to play Test Cricket.

"Players feel that they can make more money playing T20 rather than Tests. Those financial decisions eventually impact the format," added the former MCC cricket committee member.

Several West Indies players prefer to be T20 freelancers and reject contractual agreement with the cricket board, citing lack of

funds. As a result, the Caribbean board, along with Pakistan, has been vocal in its criticism of the model

Despite being one of the most successful Test players from his country, Smith said the T20 format is important for the growth of the game and making sure that it remains commercially viable.

"I love Test Cricket and I want Test Cricket to be strong but it is probably a 6 or 7 nation format and T20 is for growth. It is introducing new players, new fans and new markets to the game," he said.

"It is important for South African cricket to bring gravitas to its own product and keep cricket in this region strong," said the league commissioner of Betway SA20 league.

Smith said the idea is to create all-format players, taking a cue from the IPL which threw up talent like Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya and Yashasvi Jaiswal.

"We want to follow the IPL in producing all format players. We would love to see our national team competing in World Cups and playing Test matches all around the world and having a robust T20 league as well," he added.

Smith said he is mighty impressed with the performance of young guns like Jaiswal and Shubman Gill in Test cricket.

Jaiswal became the third youngest Indian to score a double century in the just-concluded second Test against England while Gill struck a hundred in the same match.

"Indian Cricket is so blessed that they have so much talent. When we talk about these two, their fame and their skills come into light largely through the IPL. Talent is coming through different platforms now and if you are good enough, you can still play every format," said the veteran who has 9265 runs in 117 Tests.

He feels sad that the once formidable South Africa has failed to perform well in the five-day format in the recent past.

"It hurts. We haven't played good Test Cricket for long. We have some quality players but no one is averaging above 40 while when we played the average of six players was about close to 50," said Smith who led his country to record 54 Test wins.

He also said that Indian Cricket has enough talent to see through the transition phase once legends like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are retired.

"Virat and Rohit have been incredible for Indian Cricket. I think Indian Cricket will always have enough talent but it will be a sad day to see these guys retire," he said.

Considered one of the greatest ever captains of all time, Smith did not give any names when asked who he thought could be the future captain of the Indian team.

"I think someone who can handle the expectations and pressure and manage the players. Captaining India is a very big job and comes with a lot of responsibility and a lot of pressure," said the veteran who be-

Mayank Agarwal returns to lead Karnataka against TN in Ranji Trophy



BENGALURU, Feb 6: Karnataka captain Mayank Agarwal, who was recently hospitalised after drinking a suspicious liquid on-board a flight, has recovered and will return to lead his team against Tamil Nadu in its next Ranji Trophy Group C match in Chennai from Friday.

The 32-year-old batter had con-

sumed the liquid on board his

team's flight to Surat after the

match against Tripura last month.

He had to be admitted to a hospi-

tal to treat the burning sensation

Agarwal went on to file an FIR

alleging foul play. He conse-

quently missed Karnataka's last

However, he was cleared of

any major health issue by the doc-

tors here, paving the way for his

Promising batter Nikin Jose

had led Karnataka against Rail-

wavs in the absence of Agarwal

and the former champions eked

out a nervy one-wicket win at

Surat with veteran Manish

Pandey making an unbeaten fifty.

engagement against Railways.

in his mouth and throat.

comeback to the team.

Karnataka. But TN are leading the chart because of their better net run rate 2.06. Agarwal's return will boost their batting as the Karnataka opener so far has scored 310 runs from four matches at an average of 44 with two hundreds and a fifty.

Karnataka have also received further boost in batting as the inform Devdutt Padikkal too will be available for this match. From three matches, the left-hander has amassed 369 runs at an average of 92.25 with two hundreds.

Padikkal missed the last match because the 23-year-old was part of the India A squad that faced England Lions at Ahmedabad.

Opener Dega Nischal and Abishek Shetty moved aside for Agarwal and Padikkal.

Karnataka squad against TN: Mayank Agarwal (captain), Nikin Jose (vice-captain), Devdutt Padikkal, Samarth R, Manish Pandey, Sharath Srinivas (wk), Aneesh KV, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Vasuki Koushik, Shashikumar K, Sujay Sateri (wk), Vidwath Kaverappa, Venkatesh M, Kishan S Be-Currently, Tamil Nadu lead Group C with 21 points, same as Group C with 21 points, same as dare, Rohit Kumar AC, Hardik Raj.

### came captain at 22. (*PTI*) **PCB appoints Syed Mohsin** We don't really do theories, will find **India beat Nepal** 4-0 to enter SAFF Naqvi as its full-time chairman way to counter Bumrah: McCullum

# U-19 Women's **Championships final**

DHAKA, Feb 6:Neha struck twice in a second-half blitz as India beat Nepal 4-0 in their last league match to storm into the final of the SAFF U-19 Women's Championships here on Tuesday.

India will face hosts and defending champions Bangladesh in the final to be played on Thursday.

The Young Tigresses had earlier won their first match 10-0 against Bhutan, followed by a 0-1 defeat to Bangladesh.

After a goal-less first half, the Indian girls dished out an impressive display in the second session to slam in four goals. Neha scored in the 54th and 80th minutes while Sulanjana Raul (85th) and Cindy Remruatpuii Colney (90+3) got the other goals for India.(PTI)

LAHORE, Feb 6: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday unanimously elected veteran administrator Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi as its chairman for a threeyear term. The election was held at a special meeting of the Board of Governors (BoG) at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Lahore.

"I am deeply honoured and humbled to have been unanimously elected as the Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board," Naqvi was quoted saying in the PCB website

"I am thankful for the trust and confidence reposed in me. I am fully committed to upgrading the standard of the game in the country and bringing professionalism in the administration of cricket in Pakistan."

A Pakistani media baron, the 45-year-old Naqbi is the 37th full-time chairman of the PCB.

Presently, he is serving as the incumbent caretaker Chief Minister of the State of Punjab.

Former Pakistan skipper Ramiz Raja was their last



the ODI World Cup debacle in India last year.

Zealand 1-4 in a T20I series. (PTI)

After failing to enter the semis of the marquee event, Babar Azam quit as Pakistan skipper. Shan Masood was later appointed as their Test skipper, while

pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi took over that role in

white-ball formats. But their fortune is vet to see a

progressive curve as Pakistan endured a 0-3 white-

wash in the Test series in Australia and lost to New

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: England were at the receiving end of Jasprit Bumrah's sensational spell in the second Test but head coach Brendon McCullum expects his players to work out a way to tackle the immense threat posed by the star Indian pacer.

batting line-up, known for their ultra-aggressive Bazball approach, returning figures of 6/45 to help dismiss the tourists for 253 in their first innings and set up India's series-levelling win in Visakhapatnam.

McCullum, also known for his aggressive batting during his playcricinfo' ing days, was non committal when asked how England plans to deal with Bumrah in the remaining three Tests, simply saying that his team does not believe in theories. "We don't really do theories. It is about making sure the guys are totally clear and present, confident and have conviction in their method. They are a lot better than I ever was and they will work it out in the air. how best to go about it," McCul-



was quoted as saying by 'ESPN-

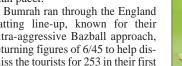
The former New Zealand captain, however, lauded the skill-sets the Indian strike bowler possess.

"We've played some really good cricket over the last two Test matches. Yes, we have come out on the wrong side of it here, but we got it across the line in the first one.

"The conviction about how we go about it is as strong as it ever has been. We have done some really good things over the last couple of weeks."

The England side flew back to Abu Dhabi, their pre-series base, after the second Test in Visakhapatnam. They will return to India on February 12 and reach Raikot on the same day ahead of the third Test beginning on February 15.

McCullum said it will be a different "camp" to the one ahead of the tour



full-time chairman before he was sacked one year into his tenure due to "political interference" in December 2022. Najam Sethi and Zaka Ashraf then held the post as interim chiefs with the latter stepping down in January this year. Naqbi has a tough job in his hand with the Pakistan senior team going through its lowest ebb following

## Indian bowlers restrict SA to 244/7 Australia's Michael Klinger replaces Rachael Haynes as Gujarat Giants head coach for WPL 2

MUMBAI, Feb 6: Former Australian cricketer Michael Klinger on Tuesday replaced Rachael Haynes as the head coach of the Gujarat Giants for the second season of the Women's Premier League (WPL).

The second season of the WPL will start on February 23 and will be played across two cities in New Delhi and Bengaluru.

Gujarat Giants, who finished last in the five-team tournament in the inaugural edition, will take on defending champions Mumbai Indians in their season opener in Bengaluru on February 25.

Former India captain Mithali Raj will continue in her role as the mentor and advisor for the team while Nooshin Al Khadeer will remain the bowling coach, the franchise informed in a media release. However, the release did not mention if batting coach for the first season Tushar Arothe would continue in his role.

"Gujarat Giants have a chance to do something special in the season 2 of the Women's Premier League. I am eagerly looking forward to working with cricketing legend in Mithali Raj, who has played a transformative role in women's cricket in India," said Klinger, who played three T20Is for Australia in 2017 and was the assistance coach for Sydney Thunder in Women's Big Bash League. "His expertise with the bat is also well-known and will surely benefit some of the younger members of our team," Raj was quoted as saying in the release. (PTI)

**BENONI (SOUTH AFRICA),** Feb 6: Indian bowlers limited South Africa to 244 for seven with a well-oiled performance on a pitch that offered them considerable assistance in the ICC Under-19 World Cup semifinals here on Tuesday

Africa found fight South through wicketkeeper batter Lhuan-dre Pretorious (76, 102 balls) and Richard Seletswane (64 100 balls), but those efforts were not enough to rattle the five-time and defending champions. After losing Steve Stolk and David Teeger inside the first 10

overs, South Africa consolidated with Pretorious and Seletswane milking 72 runs for the third wicket. But they took nearly 22 overs for that. The South African top-order

in U19 World Cup semifinals just could not get going against India pacers Naman Tiwari (1/52) and Raj Limbani (3/60) who found appreciable pace, bounce and carry from the Willowmoore

track to trouble them. Even when Seletswane and Pretorious were reconstructing the SA innings, they failed to score at a brisk pace, as the run-rate for a large part remained under four.

Left-arm spinners Saumy Pandey (1/38) and Musheer Khan (2/43) along with off-spinner Privanshu Moliya shackled the host batters' progress in this phase, bowling a tidy line and length

Pretorious, who tried to bring in some momentum hammering Moliya for a six over the midwicket, departed just as the alliance began to blossom. (PTI)

lum said. "There are contrasting ways of going about it...we will see where we get to. For now, we have to tip our cap to Jasprit and say that spell (in the first innings of the second Test) was as good as anything we have seen so far on this trip," he

"It's all condition-dependent. When the ball is swinging like that he becomes even more of a threat. He is a fantastic bowler in all forms of the game. He is unique with his release points and with how much swing he can generate

"No doubt he is very good, but we have come up against very good bowlers all through the last 18 months or so and found ways to counter them and that is what we have got to do in this one.' He also said that the 1-1 scoreline after two Tests was a "fair reflection that we're in the contest".

"There will not be a whole lot of training. The boys have worked incredibly hard in Abu Dhabi keeping in mind they all came here with a lot of cricket under their belts as well.

"We have had plenty of training days, two varying Test matches, and this is an opportunity to step away from the heat of the battle.

"I was talking to Rahul Dravid and he mentioned all his boys are shooting home as well. Home for us is a little way away, so we chose Abu Dhabi, and we are going to enjoy the families. Then when we get to Rajkot, we drop the shoulder and go hard." (PTI)

PCB appoints Syed Mohsin Naqvi as its full-time chairman

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of the game in the country and bringing professionalism in the administration of cricket in Pakistan.'

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Najam Sethi and Zaka Ashraf then held the post as interim chiefs with the latter stepping down in January this year. (PTI)

# Magical Bumrah was difference between two sides in 2<sup>nd</sup> Test: Hussain



LONDON, Feb 6: The magical first innings spell by Jasprit Bumrah was the difference between India and England in the iust-concluded second Test, according to former England captain Nasser Hussain, who said the visitors were powerless against the Indian pacer's genius.

India's go-to bowler in all formats, Bumrah displayed brilliance with the ball to play a key role in the team's series-levelling 106-run win.

The pacer put up a reverse swing master-class in England's first innings that yielded him six wickets (6/45), following it up with a three-wicket haul in their second essay for match figures of 9 for 91.

"I think, really, it was just the magic of Jasprit Bumrah that was the difference. He got three-for today (Monday), but it was that incredible spell in the first in-

nings, 6-45, that blew away England for 253 on a really good, flat pitch," Hussain wrote in his column for 'Sky Sports'.

Bumrah's bowling and young Yashasvi Jaiswal's first innings double ton were the highlights of India's win in Visakhapatnam.

Hussain felt that England could do nothing but "doff their cap" to the genius of Bumrah

"Sometimes you can be critical of your own team, look at your performance and say, 'what could we do better?' But sometimes you also have to just just doff your cap to the opposition and say they were touched by genius.

"That's exactly what happened. That spell from Bumrah in England's first innings was genius. Reverse swing, with his slightly unorthodox action and the way he leans across to the offside, he creates an-

gles," he added

Bumrah dismissed Joe Root for the eighth time in Test cricket before producing a ripping yorker that bamboozled an in-form Ollie Pope in England's first innings

"He's all over Joe Root at the moment he's got him out eight times in Test cricket - and he got Ollie Pope with an absolute beauty of an in-swinging yorker. "He also bowled Ben Stokes from round the wicket, who dropped his bat in disbelief.'

Hussain feels England should be prepared for an even stronger hit-back from the hosts in the remaining three Tests.

"It is set up perfectly, with three Tests to play. I think it will be a tight series but England are going to have to expect India to come back even harder.'

In the opening two Tests, India were

without the services of Virat Kohli, who opted out due to personal reasons and the injured Mohammed Shami.

The hosts suffered another blow when Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul were ruled out of the second Test as well.

"India have missed quite a few key players so far. Mohammad Shami, I think, is out for the series. Ravi Jadeia could well be out for another Test match and Virat Kohli has been out of the first two. We are talking about some serious cricketers there.

"Kohli may well come back in, KL Rahul also, so I would expect a stronger Indian side in those last three games of the series. England will know that they're going to have to up their game," Hussain said.

The third Test will begin in Rajkot on February 15. (PTI)

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