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WORLD
NORTHEAST



- Blinken seeks progress on Gaza cease-fire-for-hostages deal
- King Charles III diagnosed with cancer: Buckingham Palace
- Arunachal Pradesh cabinet's nod to 2 new districts
- NSCN-IM condemns third degree punishment on Maring



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UNIVERSITY GAMES 2023 ASHTALAKSHMI

LAUNCH 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



Key Highlights

- ▶ **LOGO THAT INSPIRES**
A symbol that captures the essence of unity, competition and the spirit of the Games.
- ▶ **ANTHEM THAT RESONATES**
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**

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6 NORTHEAST

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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 party-related 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



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.

As Congress MLAs and Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi demanded to know what the minimum 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)

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



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.

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, while (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

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-



itate better surveillance, a patrol track along the border will also be paved," he said.

The home minister said a 10-km stretch of the border in Moreh in Manipur has already been fenced.

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 Pradesh and Manipur. Additionally, fence works covering approx 20 km in Manipur (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

ASSAM ASSEMBLY

Cong MLA suspended for disrupting proceedings

GUWAHATI, Feb 6: Congress 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.

Ahmed, who was escorted out of the House by marshals, later claimed that he suffered a minor injury in the process.

The MLA rose to his feet and started speaking immediately after BJP legislator Rupak Sarmah completed his speech while moving the motion of thanks on the Governor's address.

Claiming that wrong information was provided by Sarmah, 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 projects and the latter will be borne by the state.

"As such, it would be wrong to thank the prime minister as it is the state's money that is being spent on these projects," Ahmed said.

He also disputed the ruling party MLA's contention that the state's perennial flood problem has been solved, claiming that large tracts of land of his Baghor constituency continue to be inundated annually.

Speaker Daimary asked Ahmed to place his points during his opportunity to speak but as the Congress MLA persisted with his speech, the Speaker ordered his suspension.

The marshals immediately rushed to Ahmed's seat and forced him out of the House.

Ahmed, talking to reporters later, claimed that he has hurt his finger when the marshals pulled him out.

While the Speaker did not specify the period for which Ahmed has been suspended, Ahmed said he will be back in the House on Wednesday. (PTI)

612 grams of heroin seized in Karimganj

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 illegal drug trade.

The operation was carried out by the Karimganj Police based on specific intelligence inputs.

The authorities intercepted a vehicle entering Assam from a neighboring state, uncovering a concealed stash of heroin weighing 612 grams hidden in secret compartments within the vehicle.

Sarma took to the micro-blogging site X to acknowledge the successful operation, stating, "Based on a specific input, @karimganjpolice launched an anti-narcotics operation and intercepted a vehicle coming from a neighbouring state. 612 grams of heroin were seized from secret chambers of the vehicle & two people have been apprehended in this regard. Well done @assampolice!" The two individuals apprehended (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Lok Sabha passes bill to tackle exam malpractices

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: A 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 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 be 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 Dillajai, highlighted the influence of westerly winds originating from Jammu and Kashmir 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.

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 address industrial emergencies and natural calamities. In a statement, NTPC said its Bongaigaon plant 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 Nayan 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)

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

Innovative Tea Dryer to revolutionise small growers' operations



HT Correspondent

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 drying 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)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Something good comes out of every crisis - Dave Pelzer

Red Sea crisis

The 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.

Traders are grappling with skyrocketing freight costs, container shortages, and longer transit times, leading to disputes over contracts and cancellations of orders.

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.

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

In the kaleidoscope of India's socio-economic mosaic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is weaving threads of hope and empowerment for the downtrodden.

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.



With unwavering 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.

The journey towards beggar-free 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.

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.

opportunity, ensuring that the spectre of begging is banished from the collective conscience of the nation.

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.

But let us not be deterred by the cacophony of dissent, for the road to transformation is fraught with obstacles.

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.

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.

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."

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

At the heart of the Budget lies a pivotal focus on empowering women, a cornerstone that promises to elevate their role in the workforce.

Raising the bar for the "Lakshmi Didi" initiative from two crores to three crores is a significant step towards fostering women's entrepreneurship.

Cultural genocide of Palestinians

By: Asad Mirza

The war in Palestine, which was seen once as a human tragedy, has also exposed another side of the Zionist program, that of a 'cultural genocide'.

This could be described as an attempt to get rid of the civilisational treasures of the Palestinian land, so that no one could lay claim to it in the future.

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.

In his report for Al Jazeera, Indiab Farazi Sabur reported that an ancient harbor 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.

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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.

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

and economically disadvantaged women, enabling them to collaboratively strive for economic self-sufficiency.

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.

The interim Budget strategically places a spotlight on agriculture, demonstrating a strong dedication to uplifting rural communities and boosting consumption demand.

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 investments in agricultural infrastructure.

Additionally, there is a concerted 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.

In tandem with agriculture, the Budget places a paramount focus on the social sector, underscoring the commitment to safeguarding lives and livelihoods.

Initiatives such as the formation of a committee for expanding medical colleges and the facilitation of loans to fuel the entrepreneurial aspirations of the youth are pivotal steps aimed at enhancing employability and propelling the growth engines of the

economy.

With a substantial contribution of 29 percent to the GDP, the MSME sector stands to reap substantial benefits from the government's proactive measures.

Likewise, the government's forward-looking vision is evident in its support for technology, research and development (R&D), and a strong push towards advancing the green economy.

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

Simultaneously, the commendable emphasis on green energy is noteworthy. Initiatives such as providing viability gap funding for tapping into offshore wind energy, bolstering the ecosystem for electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, coal gasification, and promoting rooftop solarization, collectively contribute to fostering sustainability and pro-

pellent 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.

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.

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.

Champai Soren's convincing win in Jharkhand Assembly test is a victory for India Bloc

By: Kalyani Shankar

The 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.

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.

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.

Jharkhand has had political instability and Maoist violence since it was formed. In contrast, Chhattisgarh, created simultaneously, has been relatively politically stable.

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 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.

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.

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.

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.

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)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT By: Dipak Kurmi

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



HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Feb 6: The three-day 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 Nampake Buddhist Monastery, set fire to the chariot carrying the body of Dr Shashana Bongsha Mahathera in religious tradition amidst an emotionally soaked ambience 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

culturally and through religious traditions. On the occasion of Poi Leng, various rituals including mongalacharan, cleanliness drive, annadaan, khamsin thoma, kant, sanghadaan, and petessa were also performed.

In another memorial meeting on Sunday, noted environmentalist and director of Nature's Beckon, Dr Saumaydeep Dutta, released the souvenir 'Buddhibrikshya' edited by Supriye 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 institutional formalities.

The Anandaram Barooah 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 popularised the lofty Buddhist philosophy and literature among the people. He also undertook a journey into Myanmar on foot on his spiritual quest. He had a post-graduation degree in Pali language and received numerous awards and recognitions from various institutions and organisations during his lifetime.

Nagaon District Unit of AAJU holds inaugural executive meeting

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 Mahata, 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.

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."

Highlighting the nation's strength, the Governor said that India's greatness emanates not solely from its resources but from the profound reservoir of knowledge and enduring values ingrained within its people, nurtured over 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 religion.

Chief executive member (CEM) of North Cachar Hill Autonomous Council (NCHAC), Debolal Gorkhola, president of Zeliangrong Heraka Association Kehumbi Zeliang, general secretary Mungtuing Janme along with a host of other dignitaries were present at the function.

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 Jatiyatibadi 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; Moinal Husain 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, including president Joying 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.

OBITUARY

Thogiram Das, a noted educationist 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 Lakhargaon village, he began his career as a science teacher in Bhuragaoon 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.

Guwahati Railway Station introduces Rail Coach Restaurant

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Feb 6: NF Railway has recently introduced a unique dining experience for passengers and visitors at the Guwahati Railway Station with the launch of the Rail Coach Restaurant. This initiative 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 delightful ambience for relishing regional flavours and other Indian delicacies. Equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure, the restaurant promises a unique dining 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



provides facilities for purchasing culinary delights on the go. Currently, there are 14 operational coach restaurants across the NF Railway network, with plans to introduce more at 62 selected locations.

The introduction of the Rail Coach Restaurant at Guwahati 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.

Chaparmukh RPF apprehends three for violating regulations



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Feb 6: Three individuals were apprehended for violating railway regulations during a security operation conducted by the Railway Protection Force (RPF), Chaparmukh, on Monday.

The operation took place between Chaparmukh 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 propelling 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.

Renowned scholar delivers insightful talk in Lumding

HT Bureau
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, Kanpur.



Professor HC Verma, the chief guest, and Prem Ranjan Kumar, DRM/LMG, both interacted with students. A total of 340 students from three different schools of Lumding participated in this interactive session. The session began with Professor HC Verma discussing what physics is and its relevance to everyday life. The participants were thrilled and eager to interact with HC Verma after watching a short document-

ary video on his life, work, and achievements.

Professor HC Verma made the session more engaging and interactive by discussing and demonstrating real-life experiments on various important topics relevant to daily life. He also emphasised the importance of observing daily life phenomena.

Furthermore, Professor HC Verma visited the school's Physics Lab and Atal Tinkering

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 queries relating to various aspects of physics.

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 (ATASU), Sivasagar District Committee, and adviser, Demow ATASU, passed away on January 26, 2024. On Monday, the Advayradha 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 (NEHHDC) 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 NEHHDC, along with officials from both parties.

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.

Cara Delevingne to make theatre debut with 'Cabaret'

Success of films like '12th Fail' a silver lining for 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 Good-bye 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)



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", "Omkaara" 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', 'Omkaara', 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 theatra 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

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



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 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 much-awaited third season of the series will begin in February-end, and it will be mostly shot in the Northeast. (PTI)

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 Nilufer 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.

It is directed by 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 more 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 Grammys, 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

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)

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 became captain at 22. (PTI)

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 consumed the liquid on board his team's flight to Surat after the match against Tripura last month. He had to be admitted to a hospital to treat the burning sensation in his mouth and throat.

Agarwal went on to file an FIR alleging foul play. He consequently missed Karnataka's last engagement against Railways.

However, he was cleared of any major health issue by the doctors here, paving the way for his comeback to the team.

Promising batter Nikin Jose had led Karnataka against Railways 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.

Currently, Tamil Nadu lead Group C with 21 points, same as 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 in-form 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 Abhishek Shetty missed 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 Bedare, Rohit Kumar AC, Hardik Raj. Coach: PV Shashikanth. (PTI)

India beat Nepal 4-0 to enter SAFF 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 Remruatpui Colney (90+3) got the other goals for India. (PTI)

PCB appoints Syed Mohsin Naqvi as its full-time chairman

LAHORE, Feb 6: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday unanimously elected veteran administrator Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi as its chairman for a three-year 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 Naqvi 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 his last 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. Naqvi has a tough job in his hand with the Pakistani senior team going through its lowest ebb following



the ODI World Cup debacle in India last year.

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 yet to see a progressive curve as Pakistan endured a 0-3 whitewash in the Test series in Australia and lost to New Zealand 1-4 in a T20I series. (PTI)

We don't really do theories, will find way to counter Bumrah: McCullum

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.

Bumrah ran through the England 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 playing 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 how best to go about it," McCullum 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



was quoted as saying by 'ESPN-cricinfo'.

The former New Zealand captain, however, lauded the skill-sets the Indian strike bowler possess.

"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 in the air.

"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".

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 in-

Indian bowlers restrict SA to 244/7 in U19 World Cup semifinals

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.

South Africa found fight through wicketkeeper batter Lhuan-dre Pretorius (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 Pretorius and Seletswane milking 72 runs for the third wicket. But they took nearly 22 overs for that.

The South African top-order

formed 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)

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 Pretorius 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 Priyanshu Moliya shackled the host batters' progress in this phase, bowling a tidy line and length.

Pretorius, who tried to bring in some momentum hammering Moliya for a six over the mid-wicket, departed just as the alliance began to blossom. (PTI)

PCB appoints Syed Mohsin Naqvi as its full-time chairman

LAHORE, Feb 6: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday unanimously elected veteran administrator Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi as its chairman for a three-year 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 Naqvi 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 his last 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. (PTI)

Magical Bumrah was difference between two sides in 2nd Test: Hussain



LONDON, Feb 6: The magical first innings spell by Jasprit Bumrah was the difference between India and England in the just-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 Jadeja 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)