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- Need to win all 13 LS seats to make Punjab vibrant, says AAP leader

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Vol .No. XXV Issue No. 62 RNI-ASSENG/2000/12862 DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2024 PAGES 12 PRICE ₹ 8



Government of Assam



For All-round Development of Assam
Vikas Yatra



12 March 2024

Inauguration • Foundation Stones • Bhoomi Puja

Sivasagar

📍 Raichai Rural Stadium Demow, Thowra
🕒 12 noon

Total project cost ₹465 cr

Chief Guest
Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Guests of Honour

Dr Ranoj Pegu
Minister, Govt of Assam

Shri Topon Kumar Gogoi MP, Jorhat
Shri Sushanta Borgohain MLA, Thowra

Anchor project

Inauguration

Raichai Rural Stadium, Demow

Highlights

- ▶ State-of-the-art sports facilities
- ▶ Nurture sports talent of youth

Cost ₹13 cr

Other projects: 33 **Cost: ₹452 cr**

Charaideo

📍 Mahmora Sports Complex, Goroimari, Mahmora
🕒 1 pm

Total project cost ₹210 cr

Chief Guest
Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Guests of Honour

Shri Jogen Mohan Minister, Govt of Assam
Shri Bimal Borah Minister, Govt of Assam
Shri Topon Kumar Gogoi MP, Jorhat
Shri Dharmeswar Konwar MLA, Sonari

Anchor project

Inauguration

Mahmora Sports Complex

Highlights

- ▶ Facilities for training in various kinds of sports
- ▶ Nurture sports talent of youth

Cost ₹10 cr

Other projects: 17 **Cost: ₹200 cr**



Hailakandi

📍 Govt VMHS School Playground (Mela Field), Hailakandi
🕒 3 pm

Total project cost ₹157 cr

Chief Guest
Shri Jayanta Mallabaruah
Minister, Govt of Assam

Guests of Honour

Shri Kripanath Mallah MP, Karimganj
Zakir Hussain Laskar MLA, Hailakandi
Suzam Uddin Laskar MLA, Katlicherra
Nizam Uddin Choudhury MLA, Algapur

Anchor project

Bhoomi Puja

Improvement and upgrade of Ainakhal Anipur Bazar Achimganj (Part 1) Road

Highlights

- ▶ Length: 8 km
- ▶ Connects Ainakhal TE, Lakhinagar Part I, Lakhinagar Part II, Singala and Behul villages

Cost ₹26 cr

Ambulances: 17 **Other projects: 35** **Cost: ₹131 cr**

PM inaugurates Haryana section of Dwarka Expressway

GURUGRAM (Haryana), March 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday inaugurated 19-km long Haryana section of Dwarka Expressway, which will improve traffic flow and ease congestion between Delhi and Gurugram on NH-48 and will also boost economic activities in the National Capital Region.

The total length of Dwarka Expressway is 29 kilometre, out of which 18.9 km falls in Haryana, while the remaining 10.1 km is in Delhi. On March 9, 2019, the then Union ministers, Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitley and Nitin Gadkari had laid the foundation stone for Dwarka Expressway.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the Haryana section of the expressway, Modi said this will change the travel experience between Delhi and Haryana forever and will shift gear not just in vehicles but also in the lives of the people of the region.

"The inauguration of the Haryana section of Dwarka Expressway and the launch of 112 National Highway projects mark a milestone in the country's infrastructure development

"Dwarka Expressway will boost economic activities in the National Capital Region," he said.

The prime minister mentioned many long-pending projects that were completed by the present government such as Eastern Peripheral Expressway (announced in 2008 completed in 2018), Dwarka Expressway too was stuck



for the last 20 years. "Today, whatever work our government lays the foundation stone for, it works equally hard to complete it on time. And then we do not see whether there are elections or not," he said.

Modi added that projects like laying down of lakhs of kilometres of optic fibers in villages, airports in small cities, rural roads, were completed irrespective of the election time. The prime minister also held a road show here.

"Construction of expressways opens a lot of opportunities for rural India and Dwarka Expressway is itself a big example (of it)," he said. The prime minister said his government has successfully completed big infrastructure projects on time.

"My government has completed big infrastructure projects, including Dwarka Expressway, Eastern

Peripheral Expressway, Delhi-Meerut Expressway on time.

"These projects, along with the expansion of metro lines and the construction of international airports, are aimed at easing traffic congestion and reducing pollution in the region," he asserted.

The prime minister also noted that development of good roads also helps 2-wheeler and 4-wheeler automobile companies.

"Construction of expressways also helps development of industrial corridors which creates more employment opportunities."

The prime minister said the union government is focusing on construction of 9,000 km of high-speed-access controlled highways, out of which construction of 4,000 km has been completed.

He reminisced how, in the past, the area where the expressway is now built was considered unsafe,

with people avoiding it even after sunset.

However, today, it serves as a hub for major corporations, contributing to the rapid development of the National Capital Region (NCR). Dwarka Expressway is India's first elevated 8-lane access control urban expressway, being constructed at an estimated cost of ₹ 9,000 crore, as part of the Centre's ₹ 60,000 crore highway development plan in the NCR to decongest the national capital.

The Haryana section of Dwarka Expressway has been built at a cost of around ₹ 4,100 crore and includes two packages of 10.2-km Delhi-Haryana Border to Basai Rail-over-Bridge (ROB) and 8.7-km Basai ROB to Kherki Daula.

It will also provide direct connectivity to the IGI Airport in Delhi and Gurugram Bypass.

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari were present at the event. Gadkari said Dwarka Expressway is a state-of-art project.

"The government saved 20 per cent in construction cost against estimates in awarding contracts of Dwarka Expressway," Gadkari said. He also said there were projects worth ₹ 65,000 crore in Delhi and its nearby areas for construction of roads, highways and expressways.

Out of these, projects worth ₹ 35,000 crore have been completed and the rest will be completed by December, he added. (PTI)

Salesforce records impressive growth in India

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 11: Salesforce showcases a remarkable 35% Year-on-Year growth in new business in India, marking a significant milestone in driving efficiency and success for its diverse clientele across industries, according to its latest fiscal report. As Salesforce commemorates its 25th year in business globally, it solidifies its position as the third-largest software company worldwide, uniquely positioned to facilitate widespread digital transformation and capitalize on new AI advancements.

This year, prominent Indian enterprises like Air India, Atomborg, and Jaipur Rugs have partnered with Salesforce to devise digital strategies aimed at enhancing productivity, streamlining operations, and revolutionizing customer interactions amidst a landscape of evolving AI innovations.

Arundhati Bhattacharya, CEO & Chairperson, Salesforce India, expressed her enthusiasm for India's burgeoning technology adoption landscape, emphasizing Salesforce's commitment to empowering businesses with AI capabilities. She highlighted the company's focus on delivering unprecedented customer success through its trusted, unified Einstein Platform.

Salesforce recently expanded its Bengaluru office and its flagship Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Hyderabad, further establishing India as a key talent and innovation hub for the company. With 11,000 employees across multiple cities including Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Gurugram, Pune, and Jaipur, Salesforce continues to bolster its presence in India, actively hiring for various roles across technology, sales, and customer support. The company's growth in India is buoyed by a robust ecosystem comprising strategic partners, startups, over 2 million Salesforce developers, and a thriving Trailhead community, solidifying India's position as a key market outside the US.

Markets break two-day rally on weak global trends

MUMBAI, March 11: Stock market benchmark Sensex declined by 616.75 points on Monday, snapping its two-day gaining streak due to selling in metal and banking shares amid weak trends in the global markets.

Taking a breather after a record-breaking rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 616.75 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,502.64 due to profit taking. During the day, the barometer tanked 685.48 points to 73,433.91.

The broader Nifty slumped by 160.90 points or 0.72 per cent to close at 22,332.65.

"In the short term, Nifty could experience weakness, possibly leading to a decline toward the range of 22,200-22,250. Looking at the upside, immediate resistance is identified at 22,400 based on regulatory prices," Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst at LKP Securities, said.

Among Sensex firms, Power Grid and Tata Steel fell more than 2 per cent. HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, Hindustan Unilever and NTPC

were among the major laggards. Nestle, Bajaj Finserv and Bajaj Finance were among the gainers.

"Continued sell-off in global markets due to uncertainty over rate cuts impacted the domestic market sentiment, which is currently at an overbought level. The stronger-than-expected US non-farm payroll data and caution ahead of the release of US inflation data tomorrow kept investors on the edge," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. "The broader market continued its underperformance due to valuation concerns, while investors are rebalancing their portfolios to include safe haven assets like gold," he added.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 2.01 per cent and midcap index dipped 0.24 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, telecommunication plunged by 2.40 per cent, metal by 1.39 per cent, utilities by 1.25 per cent, realty by 1.16 per cent, and energy by 1.15 per cent. Healthcare was the only gainer.

Shares of State Bank of India settled 2 per cent lower on Monday after the Supreme Court trashed the public sector lender's plea seeking an extension of time to disclose the details of electoral bonds to the Election Commission and ordered it to give the data related to poll bonds by close of business hours on March 12.

The apex court also put the SBI on notice and said it may be inclined to proceed against the lender for "wilful disobedience" of its February 15 verdict, if the bank failed to comply with its directions and timelines.

Shares of JM Financial settled 10 per cent lower on Monday after Sebi had barred JM Financial Ltd from accepting new mandates to act as a lead manager for the public issue of debt securities, for flouting regulatory norms.

Also, scrip of Alembic Pharmaceuticals finished more than 2 per cent lower on Monday after the US Food and Drug Administration issued a Form 483 with four observations for the drugmaker's Gujarat plant. (PTI)

BRICS CCI WE's 4th annual summit highlights women's Achievements

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 11: BRICS CCI WE, the Women Empowerment arm of the BRICS Chamber of Commerce and Industry, hosted its 4th Annual Summit and Felicitation, focusing on the theme "The Changing Narrative: Women Development to Women-led Development." The event featured the unveiling of a report on tech and business horizons for women across BRICS nations and the convocation of the first batch of participants from the Global Women Leadership Programme.

Diplomats from various countries attended the sum-

mit, along with distinguished guests including Dr. Sonal Mansingh, Padma Vibhushan Awardee and Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. Addressing the gathering, Ms. Ruby Sinha, President of BRICS CCI WE, emphasized the shift towards empowering women to lead their own development.

Dr. Mansingh stressed the importance of women's leadership in creating a more equitable society. The summit also recognized outstanding women achievers, with Poonam Dhillon receiving the BRICS CCI WE Trailblazer Lifetime Achievement award for her contributions to women's empowerment across sectors.

Shyam steel unveils cutting-edge steel plant in Purulia

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 11: Shyam Steel marks a significant milestone with the inauguration of its fourth Integrated Steel Plant at JSK-II, Purulia, West Bengal. Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, virtually graced the event, underscoring its importance. With a capital investment of ₹ 1,500 crore, the Raghunathpur Steel Plant show-

cases Shyam Steel's dedication to innovation and sustainable growth. Phase 1 of its expansion boasts a steel-making capacity of 1.19 million tonnes per annum, equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including DRI Plants and a Rolling Mill.

Purushottam Beriwal, Director of Shyam Steel Industries, highlighted the plant's role in enhancing

capabilities and customer service, while Lalit Beriwal, Director, emphasized its contribution to local employment, with over 5,000 positions created. Situated at the Jungle Sundari Karmanagari, the 600-acre plant will drive economic growth in Purulia. Shyam Steel's ambitious vision aims to double its turnover to ₹ 9000 crores, aligning with India's steel production targets.

Govt moves, industry efforts set to transform healthcare, insurance penetration among women: experts

KOLKATA, March 11: Concerted efforts by the government and private insurance companies are expected to bring a sea change in healthcare and insurance penetration among women, which is extremely low at present, experts said. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has also been taking several measures to make health insurance products standardised, seeking to enhance coverage among all citizens, including women. In line with IRDAI's ambitious vision of achieving "Insurance for All by 2047," the industry is striving to cater to diverse customer segments, ensuring comprehensive coverage and distribution.

According to P Nanda Gopal, Founder and CEO of the Insurtech platform Upsure, rising medical inflation is compelling the financially savvy to choose health insurance over other necessities. As general literacy and awareness among women increase, they would be more active in financial decision-making, he said.

According to the National Family Health Survey India data, only about 30 per cent of women in India aged 15-49, were covered



under health insurance between 2019-2021. Nanda Gopal stated there are multiple reasons behind the low insurance coverage.

A recent survey undertaken by Future Generali India Insurance Company along with Unomer suggests that only one out of every five women (nearly 21 per cent) bought their health insurance policy independently and only one out of every three women (32 per cent) was aware of the coverage details of their health insurance. "I think the idea (of Insurance for All) is to make sure that your product covers every single cohort which is customized to every eco-

nomics segment, every social segment, said Anup Rau, Managing Director and CEO, Future Generali India Insurance.

"So, we thought that we would start over here. While we have got other innovative products, we thought we would start with the largest unaddressed minority in this country which is women by any metric," he said.

The company has introduced 'Health Powder' - a comprehensive policy to empower women and cater to their varied health needs.

According to the FGII Survey, nearly 75 per cent of women believe that existing health insurance policies fall short of addressing women-specific needs. Close to 94 per cent of the respondents agree that having a comprehensive health insurance plan for women would increase participation in the purchase process.

There is a need for targeted awareness campaigns and education initiatives aimed at informing women about the importance of health insurance and equipping them with the knowledge to make informed financial decisions, said Sapna Desai, Chief Marketing Officer, Manipal Cigna Health Insurance. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

Govt announces implementation

after the Supreme Court's strictures on the electoral bonds issue. "After seeking nine extensions for the notification of the rules, the timing right before the elections is evidently designed to polarise the elections, especially in West Bengal and Assam," the Congress leader said. Kerala CM Pinaray Vijayan described CAA as a communally divisive law and asserted that it will not be implemented in the state.

According to the Manual on Parliamentary Work, the rules for any legislation should be framed within six months of presidential assent or the government has to seek an extension from the Committees on Subordinate Legislation in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. Since 2020, the Home Ministry has been taking extensions at regular intervals from the parliamentary committee for framing the rules. No document will be sought from the applicants, an official said. Pakistani Hindu refugees, who have been living a life of uncertainty, welcomed the government's step. Dharamveer Solanki, a leader of Pakistani Hindu refugee families in Delhi, told PTI that around 5000 from the community will receive citizenship now.

"I and my family have been waiting for this for over a decade now. We are extremely happy that we will be finally called Indian citizens. I am glad I decided to return to my homeland in 2013," Solanki said.

Over 100 people lost their lives during the anti-CAA protests or police action. On Monday, security was stepped up in Shaheen Bagh, Jamia and other areas of the national capital as well as in various states where anti-CAA protests were held in the past. On December 27, 2023, Union home minister Amit Shah said that no one can stop the implementation of the CAA as it is the law of the land and accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of misleading people on the issue. Addressing a party meeting in Kolkata, Shah said it is the BJP's commitment to implement the CAA.

The TMC, led by Mamata Banerjee, has been opposing the CAA since the beginning. The promise of implementing the controversial CAA was a major plank of the BJP in the last Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in West Bengal. The saffron party's leaders consider it a plausible factor that led to the rise of the BJP in Bengal.

In the last two years, over 30 district magistrates and home secretaries in nine states have been given powers to grant citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians coming from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan under the Citizenship Act, 1955.

According to the annual report of the Ministry of Home Affairs for 2021-22, from April 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021, a total of 1,414 foreigners belonging to these non-Muslim minority communities from the three countries were given Indian citizenship by registration or naturalisation under the Citizenship Act, 1955. The nine states where Indian citizenship by registration or naturalisation is given under the Citizenship Act, 1955 to non-Muslim minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra. Authorities of none of the districts of Assam and West Bengal, where the issue is politically very sensitive, have been given the powers so far. (PTI)

CAA copies burnt, 'hartal'

The Nalbari district unit of AASU took out a protest rally and also burnt copies of the Act in front of the local municipal board office. Pointing out that the Sixth Scheduled areas and states with provisions for Inner Line Permit (ILP) in the North East have been exempted from CAA, Bhattacharjya said, "Our question is, something which is bad for some parts of NE, how can it be good for the other parts. In Assam too, in eight districts it will not be enforced." He also claimed that the CAA goes against the Assam Accord, which sets March 25, 1971, as the deadline for identification of illegal migrants in this northeastern state.

The AASU had been at the forefront in protesting against the CAA since the bill proposing the legislation was brought by the central government, and has already filed a petition in the Supreme Court against the Act.

Meanwhile, students have started protesting against the CAA in different parts of the state, including in front of Cotton University in Guwahati. The Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), which was formed post the anti-CAA movement in the state in 2019-20, staged protests in different parts of the state. Its members displayed black flags and raised slogans against the government as they took out protest marches in several parts, including Guwahati. The UFOA has called for a statewide 'hartal' on Tuesday, its general secretary and AJP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi told PTI. "We are going forward with our programme of a hartal tomorrow. We will also take up other protests, including gherao of the state secretariat, as announced earlier", he said. Opposition political parties, student bodies and other organisations had announced intensifying protests against the CAA when the rules were notified for its implementation. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had asked those opposed to the Act to fight it out at the Supreme Court, maintaining that protests on the streets will bear no fruit as it is already a legislation passed by Parliament. He had also warned that if political parties call for bandhs, they could lose registration as the Gauhati High Court had passed an order earlier prohibiting bandhs. With the CAA rules being issued, the Narendra Modi-led central government will start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who came to India till December 31, 2014. These include Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians. The CAA was passed in December 2019 but had not come into effect as rules were not notified till now. (PTI)

Oppn parties flay CAA

"There was a misinformation campaign by the opposition that crores of Hindus from Bangladesh would enter Assam after the law was passed by Parliament, but nothing of that sort has happened," Goswami said. AIUDF MLA Ashraf Hussain told PTI that the BJP has implemented the CAA before the Lok Sabha polls as it is 'greedy for Bangladeshi Hindu votes'. 'They have done it only to win this election and also to fulfil BJP's Hindutva agenda by polarising the Hindu votes,' he said.

The AIUDF protested the decision to implement the CAA as 'we favour Indian citizenship for anyone coming to Assam before March 25, 1971, and it should not be based on any religion or community', Hussain said. Assam Jatiya Parishad general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan told PTI that the people of Assam had protested against the CAA but the BJP ignored their emotions and notified the rules based on the strength of their numbers. "The people of Assam will not forgive the BJP for this law which is against the interest of the Assamese people. This is not acceptable and we will continue to protest against it", he said. Bhuyan also accused union minister Sarbananda Sonowal who hailed from the state and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of being 'puppets in the hands of the BJP government at the Centre for their selfish interests. They have committed a crime against the Assamese people'. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) state president Bhaben Choudhury told PTI that it will be marked as a "black day in Assam's history and the BJP will be remembered as a traitor for imposing the communal and anti-community CAA".

AAP will continue to protest against this law, he said. CPI(M)'s Assam secretary Suprakash Talukdar told PTI that this is a 'politically motivated step by the central government while the matter is already in the court'.

Earlier in Parliament, the Ministry of Home Affairs in a reply to a query had said that the government had no plans to introduce the law till it remains sub-judice, he pointed out. "Notifying the rules now is just immoral and shows that the BJP does not have any respect for the rule of law. This Act is anti-Constitutional and highly communal, which violates the Assam Accord," he said. The CPI(M) will protest against it as a party and as a part of the united opposition also. Talukdar added. With the CAA rules being issued, the Modi government will now start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who came to India till December 31, 2014. These include Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians.

The CAA was passed in December 2019 and subsequently got the president's assent but there were protests in several parts of the country against it. Over a hundred people lost their lives during the anti-CAA protests or police action. The law could not come into effect as rules had not been notified till now. The protests against the Act in the state were led primarily by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS). The protests turned violent with five persons losing their lives to police firing in 2019 and the arrest of KMSS leader Akhil Gogoi along with four others, to be called off only with the onset of the pandemic. It subsequently led to the creation of two new political parties in the state - the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), led by then AASU leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi and the Rajior Dal, headed by Akhil Gogoi. (PTI)

Sarbananda arrives at native

are being delivered at the doorstep of the beneficiaries. The old days of commission and middlemen has been completely weeded out, as Modi government takes everyone along towards the path of development, true to the spirit of his vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas.' India has become a global power of reckoning as we join hands to continue our journey towards a Viksit Bharat by electing Modi ji once again as the Prime Minister of India. I am sure that the work done under his leadership will ensure that our journey towards 'Atmanirbharta' remains on song and unhindered," he further said.

"It is my greatest privilege to be accompanied by Rameswar Teli ji who has done tremendous work for the Dibrugarh constituency. The constituency has a rich history and legacy in terms of economic prosperity and socio-cultural unity. Its dynamic culture expresses the composite and beautiful culture of Assamese society. All of us, irrespective of our linguistic diversity, are one when it comes to the development of Dibrugarh, which has tremendous potential to become a thriving centre of trade and commerce. Blessed by Mother Nature, Dibrugarh has always contributed handsomely with its world famous tea gardens and rich pools of natural resources," the Union minister said. Sonowal further said that the saffron party will win 400 seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. Union minister of state for petroleum and natural gas Rameswar Teli, who is also the incumbent Dibrugarh MLA, state ministers Bimal Borah and Sanjay Kishan, Chabua MLA Ponank Baruah, Dibrugarh MLA Prashanta Phukan, Lahowal MLA Binod Hazarika, Naharkatia MLA Taranga Gogoi, Khowang MLA Chakradhar Gogoi, Dhakuwakhana MLA Naba Doley, Duliajan MLA Teras Gowala and other senior BJP party members were present on the occasion.

AGP fields Phani Bhusan,

a press conference at AGP headquarters here, senior party leader and Rajya Sabha MP Birendra Prasad Baishya said, "Following a meeting of the party leadership, we have decided on the candidature. We are confident of winning in both the seats." Choudhury, a former minister, is the longest-serving MLA of the state and represents Bongaigaon in the Assembly. Talking to reporters, Choudhury said, "I have accepted the party's decision and will contest the elections. But I will also continue serving my people in Bongaigaon." Barpetta is currently held by the Congress in the outgoing Lok Sabha.

Islam is a former MLA, having been elected from Mankachar in 2011. Islam exuded confidence of wresting the seat from AIUDF and said, "We have got good feedback from the people of Dhubri and are hopeful of winning the seat this time." (PTI)

ASI to unveil revamped

earmarked for signing of MoUs include Qutub Minar, Purana Qila, Uggur Sain's Baoli, Humanyun's Tomb, Upper Fort Aguda, Elephanta Caves, Agra Fort, Bhimbetka, Buddhist Stupa, Kailasnatha temple, Group of Temples Khajuraho, Safdarjung Tomb, and Group of Monuments Mamallapuram, among others, according to the ministry officials. The event will witness the signing of MoUs in the presence of various agencies, with Union minister of state for culture Meenakshi Lekhi and other dignitaries, underscoring the government's dedication to fostering partnerships for the preservation of India's diverse heritage, the statement said. "The selection process for Smarak Sarathi/Sathi involved due diligence, discussions with various parties, and assessment of their commitment as well as potential at each monument," it said. Selected 'Smarak Sarathi's' or 'Smarak Sathi's' shall be responsible for providing, and maintaining amenities, maintaining hygiene, accessibility, safety, and positioning them as "responsible and heritage-friendly entities", it added. (PTI)

7 NORTHEAST
8 NATION

Normal life affected in Nagaland over shutdown for separate state demand

Sikkim: SDF announces six candidates for assembly polls

Worst drought in last 3-4 decades: Deputy CM Shivakumar

Need to win all 13 LS seats to make Punjab vibrant, says AAP leader

Modi Sarkar ki Guarantee

Means Guarantee of fulfilling dreams of 140 crore Indians

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

Scan for more information

Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 enables persons eligible under CAA-2019 to apply for Indian citizenship

Govt announces implementation of CAA 4 years after it was passed



NEW DELHI, March 11: The Centre on Monday implemented the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, a move that comes four years after the contentious law was passed and paves the way for citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014.

The rules were notified days ahead of the expected announcement of the Lok Sabha elections. With this, the Modi government will now start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants -- Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians from the three countries.

Union copies minister Amit Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has

delivered on another commitment and realised the promise of the makers of the Constitution.

"These rules, called the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 will enable the persons eligible under CAA-2019 to apply for the grant of Indian citizenship," a Union home ministry spokesperson said. "The applications will be submitted in a completely online mode for which a web portal has been provided," the spokesperson added.

The CAA was passed in December 2019 and subsequently got the president's assent but there were protests in several parts of the country against it, with many opposition parties speaking out against the law calling it "discriminatory". The law could not come into effect as rules had not been notified till

now. "These rules will now enable minorities persecuted on religious grounds in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to acquire citizenship in our nation."

"With this notification, PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji has delivered on another commitment and realised the promise of the makers of our Constitution to the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians living in those countries," Shah said on X.

The Congress and other opposition parties slammed the government's step, alleging it is designed to polarise the coming Lok Sabha elections, especially in West Bengal and Assam.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also alleged that the announcement is yet another attempt to "manage the headlines" (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sarbananda arrives at native constituency to rousing welcome

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, March 11: The Union minister of ports, shipping and waterways and Ayush, Sarbananda Sonowal arrived in Dibrugarh to a rousing welcome as thousands thronged to the airport on Monday.

People welcomed the Union minister by addressing him as 'Aamar Sarbada' as he arrived here after being nominated as the party candidate from the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency.

Sarbananda Sonowal, who is a native of Dibrugarh constituency, took part in a road show as he moved from the airport to the Mancotta field where he later addressed a massive rally. More than 40,000 people gathered at the Mancotta field as he expressed his gratitude and respect to the people of the district for the unconditional love and support bestowed upon him. During the entire period, from the arrival at the airport, through the road show to the public rally, people could be heard addressing him as 'Aamar Sarba Da'.

Addressing the large gathering, the Union minister said, "I am truly blessed to receive the love and warmth shown by the people of the Dibrugarh constituency. My sincere gratitude to each one of you as I humbly bow down and reaffirm my commitment to serve the people to the best of my ability. The warm response by the people makes it certain that the BJP is on its course to form the government under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji for the third consecutive term. The sustained developmental work done by the Modi government in the last one decade has put Assam at the forefront of becoming the powerhouse of India's economic growth."

"Modi ji has accorded great importance to the elevation of the state and the Northeast to become a beacon of hope as it came out of its dark days of corruption, violence, and obscurity. Today, we have government welfare schemes that actually (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CAA copies burnt, 'hartal' announced in Assam as Centre notifies rules

Oppn parties flay CAA rules notification, BJP welcomes move

GUWAHATI, March 11: The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and 30 indigenous organisations on Monday burnt copies of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) in different parts of the state, including Guwahati, Barpeta, Lakhimpur, Nalbari, Dibrugarh and Tezpur.

The 16-party United Opposition Forum, Assam, (UOFA) announced a statewide hartal on Tuesday, besides taking up other agitational programmes in a phased manner.

"We will continue with our non-violent, peaceful, democratic movement against CAA. Alongside, we will also continue our

legal fight", AASU advisor Samujjal Bhattacharjya told PTI.

Bhattacharjya asserted that the indigenous people of Assam and Northeast will never accept CAA.

"On Tuesday, copies of the CAA will be burnt by the North East Student Organisation (NESO) in all state capitals of the region. AASU and 30 organisations will also take out torchlight processions in Assam, and launch a satyagraha from the next day," he said. In Dibrugarh, AASU members were engaged in a scuffle with police when the latter tried to stop them from taking out a procession from their office in the Chowkidingi area of the town. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GUWAHATI, March 11: Opposition parties in Assam on Monday flayed the BJP government at the Centre for implementing the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA), paving the way for granting citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan while the BJP has welcomed it. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), which had spearheaded a six-year agitation demanding identification and deportation of illegal immigrants in 1979, said it would fight legally against the Centre's move.

Congress leader of the opposition in Assam assembly Debabrata Saikia termed the notification of CAA as "unfortunate".

"When Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP had been saying since 2016 that all illegal foreigners will have to leave Assam, they betrayed the people of the state and brought in the CAA," Saikia told PTI. The people of Assam will make the PM and the BJP answerable for it, he



added. Rajiv Dal president and MLA Akhil Gogoi said, "The process to legitimise 15-20 lakh Bangladeshis Hindus illegally living in Assam has begun. There is no other way but to come out on the street and protest against this unconstitutional act."

Assam and several other northeastern states had witnessed widespread protests after the BJP-led government at the Centre moved towards amending the citizenship act in 2019.

A section of the people of the region were scared that if the CAA is implemented, it would endanger their identity

and livelihood. "This is Delhi's attack on Assam and the entire country. We appeal to all to come out and protest against this law peacefully and democratically," Gogoi told PTI. "Assam's long struggle against illegal immigration has been nullified with just this one act. This act will also open the doors for 1.7 crore Hindus living in Bangladesh to cross over to Assam. There is no other option but to fight against this act with full force. It has to be an all-encompassing protest," he said.

Chief advisor of AASU and North East Students' Organisation Samujjal Bhattacharjya told PTI that they will not accept the CAA and will continue to protest against it.

"We are already in talks with our advocates and will continue our legal fight against its implementation," he said.

Meanwhile, BJP senior spokesperson Rupam Goswami welcomed the notification of the rules of the CAA saying it was much awaited. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ASDC holds talks with KAAC on autonomous state issue

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 11: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) and frontal organisations on Monday held talks with the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) regarding the autonomous state issue. The meeting chaired by Chief Executive Member (CEM) of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang and attended by ASDC, Karbi Nimso Chingthur Asong (KNCA) - Karbi Women Organisation and Karbi Students Association (KSA - Jemson Timung), was held at the conference hall of Old KAAC Secretariat building here on Monday.

ASDC president, Chandra Kanta Terang said, "First, we discussed the longstanding demanding of the people of Karbi Anglong for creating an autonomous state under article 244 (A) of the Indian Constitution without separation from Assam. Successive governments have come and gone, but there was no positive response."

On CAA Terang said, "We have highlighted in the memorandum submitted earlier to CEM, KAAC, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union home minister Amit Shah to exclude the scheduled tribes dominated areas of Karbi Anglong from the purview of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), as it may endanger the local culture and aged old practices. We also mentioned that the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which was implemented by the Centre in 2016, should not be executed in the sixth scheduled areas. It should be exempted in the hill districts of the state, where scheduled tribes dominate."

Terang said that the CEM clarified that the 'give and take' policy is not going to affect the inter-state bound-



ary between Meghalaya and West Karbi Anglong areas. It will not affect the sixth scheduled areas of West Karbi Anglong.

Earlier the ASDC had submitted a memorandum to the chief minister and the Union home minister, Amit Shah for the creation of an autonomous state comprising of three hill districts of the state, namely Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao.

The ASDC also demanded that the CEM take up a resolution in the executive committee and pass it in the KAAC session to convince the state government to discuss it in the state legislative assembly and urge the central government to hold tripartite talks with it.

ASDC said the CEM has agreed to their demands and assured the delegation that he would meet the CM within a few days.

AGP fields Phani Bhusan, Zabeed Islam for IS polls

GUWAHATI, March 11: The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), a partner in the BJP-led government in the state, on Monday announced its candidates for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. It named Phani Bhusan Choudhury for the Barpeta constituency and Zabeed Islam for the Dhubri constituency.

Out of 14 Lok Sabha seats in the state, BJP is contesting from 11 constituencies, AGP from two and United People's Party, Liberal (UPPL) from one. The BJP has already announced its candidates for all 11 seats, while the UPPL is yet to name its nominee. Addressing (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Security tightened across Assam following notification of CAA rules

GUWAHATI, March 11: Security has been tightened across the state with additional deployment of police personnel following the announcement of the implementation of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) on Monday. All police stations have been put on an alert and barricades have been set up in major thoroughfares in almost all the towns of the state, including Guwahati, officials said.

Patrolling has been intensified in the sensitive areas with opposition parties announcing that they would launch protests against the notification of the rules.

The All Assam Students Union has also announced that it would burn copies of the CAA, take out torchlight processions and launch a 'satyagraha' against the notification of the rules.

Earlier, Assam Police had cancelled the long leaves of its personnel till the election process was over and also in anticipation of CAA notification. In December 2019, the protests against the Act were led primarily by

the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS).

The protests had turned violent with five persons losing their lives to police firing and the arrest of KMSS leader Akhil Gogoi along with four others, to be called off only with the onset of the pandemic.

It subsequently led to the creation of two new political parties in the state-the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), led by then AASU leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi and the Rajiv Dal, headed by Akhil Gogoi.

The Centre on Monday announced the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 for granting citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014. With the CAA rules being issued, the Modi government will now start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants -- Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians -- from the three countries. (PTI)

APHLC stages demonstration against illegal encroachment in PGR, VGR lands

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 11: The All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) held a sit-in-demonstration in front of the Semson Sing Ingti Memorial Park in Diphu on Monday against the delay of the eviction drive in professional grazing reserve (PGR) and village grazing reserve (VGR) land in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong.

APHLC president, JI Kathar had said in a meeting held at Arboretum-Craft Centre, Matipung here on February 20 that the Chief Executive Member (CEM), KAAC, Tuliram

Ronghang had said that the eviction process would begin by February 21. But the eviction drive has not been carried out so far. Kathar said, "The executive member of land and revenue, KAAC, Amarsing Tisso during his visit to Kheroni on February 16 had assured that by March 7 evictions would be carried out to clear encroachers from PGR/VGR land. However, till date EM Tisso has not done anything to initiate the eviction process citing various reasons. The model code of conduct is yet to be enforced and there is still time for

KAAC to carry out the eviction."

Kathar mentioned that 21 bighas of land belonging to Sarthe Phangcho has been captured by two persons from Bihar. They have forcefully settled on his land. Phangcho had filed a petition in the Gauhati High Court, which directed the KAAC to evict the encroachers and hand it over to the owner. The verdict was given in 2012.

The APHLC has urged the KAAC to take up the eviction drive seriously and blamed the BJP government for misleading the people.

NEW DELHI, March 11: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will unveil its revamped website on Tuesday, with an aim to seek wider engagement of people with the country's rich cultural heritage, officials said on Monday.

The ASI will also sign memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with various agencies for the adoption of monuments under the 'Adopt a Heritage 2.0' programme.

The revamped website launch event will take place at the National Museum here, with Union minister for culture G Kishan Reddy slated to join the event virtually, according to Union culture ministry officials.

"This newly upgraded platform offers diverse functionalities, with each vertical of ASI meticulously navigable, and users can effort-



lessly explore various aspects of India's rich cultural tapestry, from historical sites to educational resources," the ministry said in a statement. The revamped website is tailored to cater to "dynamic needs" of citizens across the country, it said.

Students will find the website to be a valuable resource for accessing information, it added.

This "comprehensive digital overhaul reflects ASI's commitment to leveraging technology for the benefit of all, ensuring that the nation's cultural treasures are ac-

cessible to a broader audience," the ministry said.

In a move aimed at furthering the preservation and promotion of India's cultural heritage, the ASI has envisioned the 'Adopt a Heritage 2.0' programme.

With more than 3,600 monuments under its protection across the country, the ASI recognises the importance of collaboration with external partners in ensuring safety and enhancement of visitors' experience at these cultural treasures, the ministry said.

The signing of MoUs under this programme will formalise the commitment of these agencies to take up the responsibility of adopting specific monuments, contributing to their maintenance and better showcasing to public, it said. The monuments (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Tomorrow is only found in the calendar of fools.
- Og Mandino

Protecting Farmers' Livelihoods

India's agricultural sector stands at a crossroads, grappling with the repercussions of its membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) for nearly three decades. The promises of increased market access and enhanced income for farmers have remained largely unfulfilled, leaving millions in distress. The recent protests by farmers, demanding India's withdrawal from the WTO, underscore the urgent need for reform. The prevailing situation is dire, as exemplified by the plight of small farmers in Punjab receiving inadequate compensation for their produce while facing stiff competition from imported fruits like oranges and apples flooding the market from distant shores. The failure of WTO mechanisms, particularly in addressing quantitative restrictions, has exacerbated India's agricultural woes. The flood of heavily subsidized agricultural products from Western nations has decimated local markets and pushed small farmers to the brink of bankruptcy. Despite assurances of fair trade, the reality is starkly different, with multinational corporations reaping the benefits at the expense of vulnerable farmers. The influx of foreign produce, coupled with the entry of retail giants like Amazon and Walmart, has further marginalized local producers and traders.

Central to the issue is the WTO's flawed approach to agricultural subsidies, which disproportionately favors wealthy nations. While developed countries enjoy lenient subsidy regulations hidden behind obscure clauses, developing nations like India face stringent caps and constant pressure to roll back support for farmers. The arbitrary 10 percent cap on procurement for the Public Distribution System (PDS) undermines India's ability to ensure food security for its population. Moreover, the dominance of corporate agribusiness cartels, both global and domestic, threatens to erode food sovereignty and exacerbate food insecurity. The concentration of power in the hands of a few corporations, such as Cargill and ADM, raises concerns about market manipulation and artificial shortages, further jeopardizing the livelihoods of farmers. It is imperative for India to reassess its approach to agricultural trade policies and prioritize the welfare of its farmers. Legal guarantees for Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) and the expansion of the PDS are indispensable measures to safeguard the interests of small farmers and ensure food security for all citizens. Additionally, India must advocate for reforms within the WTO to address the imbalance in subsidy regulations and protect the autonomy of developing nations in managing their agricultural economies.

Delinking Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) from the purview of the Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) is a crucial step towards securing domestic subsidy support and preserving MSPs. By mobilizing developing nations to collectively challenge the status quo within the WTO, India can assert its sovereignty and protect its farmers from unfair trade practices. The time for action is now. The government must heed the voices of the agitating farmers and take decisive steps to reform agricultural trade policies in alignment with the interests of the farming community. Failure to do so risks further exacerbating the already precarious situation faced by millions of farmers across the country. India's agricultural sector is in urgent need of comprehensive reform to address the systemic challenges posed by its membership in the WTO. By prioritizing the welfare of farmers and advocating for equitable trade policies, India can secure a sustainable future for its agricultural sector and ensure food security for generations to come.

SBI plea for extension of deadline on electoral bond details is unsustainable

By: P. Sudhir

The Supreme Court of India had struck down the electoral bonds scheme as unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary. That the Modi government would find this verdict unpalatable is not surprising, given the fact that the electoral bonds scheme was devised by it to legitimise political corruption.

The government has moved through the State Bank of India (SBI) to undermine the implementation of the judgment. The Supreme Court had directed that all the details of electoral bonds purchased since April 2019 must be made public, including the date of purchase, the name of the buyer and the denomination of the bond. For this, the State Bank of India, which was the sole agency for the transaction of electoral bonds, was asked to submit all the relevant details of the bonds to the Election Commission of India by March 6 and thereupon the Election Commission was to make public all the details by March 13.

The SBI has approached the Supreme Court on March 4 asking for more time to submit the details of electoral bond transactions. It has asked for an extension of the time till June 30. This would mean that instead of 21 days given to the SBI by the Supreme Court, the bank now wants another 116 more days to complete the work. In effect, the public will be informed about the details of the electoral bonds only after the Lok Sabha elections are over and a new government is formed. The request of the SBI has been met with widespread criticism and ridicule. All banking operations of the SBI are digitalised. According to a RTI reply given by the SBI, ₹ 60,43,005 was spent on IT system's development for the floating of electoral bonds out of a total cost of ₹ 1,50,15,338. If over ₹ 60 lakh was spent for developing an IT system for the electoral bonds scheme, how is it that the SBI now claims that certain records of the electoral bonds have been kept manually and in sealed covers at the Mumbai headquarters of the SBI?

When a bond is purchased at a designated branch of the SBI by any person or entity, that would be recorded digitally. When the bearer bond is deposited at any of the other designated SBI branches, for that too there would be a digital record. As early as in 2019, Nitin Sethi writing in the HuffPost India had shown how a bond issued by the SBI carries a secret alphanumeric code, which can be used to keep track of who bought a bond and to which party it has been donated to. Even if some of the records have been kept manually, there is no reason whatsoever to believe that accounting for 22,217 electoral bonds cannot be done in a space of 21 days. All that the SBI needed to do was to put additional personnel for the job. It is, therefore, crystal clear that the SBI has come out with a lame excuse and spurious reasons which amount to insulting the intelligence of the Supreme Court. The ulterior intent is also evident from the fact that the SBI filed its petition in the court just a day before March 6, so that missing the deadline becomes a fait accompli.

The Modi government and the ruling BJP have every reason to try and scuttle the publication of the details of the electoral bonds so far issued and redeemed. As the court itself pointed out, the scheme was so devised as to facilitate a quid pro quo. Once the break-up of ₹ 6,565 crore worth of bonds received by the BJP is known, then it can be correlated to which company or individual capitalist had donated the bond and what policy or favour was given as a quid pro quo. There is another angle which will be exposed by the publishing of the details of the electoral bonds received by the BJP. A study conducted recently by the Newslandry and The News Minute of corporate donations received by the BJP (not through electoral bonds) shows that there are at least 30 companies, which donated a total of nearly ₹ 335 crore to the BJP in the five previous financial years, had faced action by central agencies during the same period. Of these, 23 companies had never donated to the BJP between 2014 and the year of the action taken by a central agency like the ED or IT department; four of the companies donated a total of ₹ 9.05 crore within four months of the central agency visit; six firms that were already donating to the BJP handed over bigger amounts on the months following the searches. (IPA Service)

Beyond fasting: Embracing the essence of Ramadan

Ramadan, a Month of Piety and Salvation: Let this Ramadan mark a pivotal moment in your life—a liberation from the illusions of the world and an immersion into the profound sweetness of faith.

The month of Ramadan stands as a divine blessing from Allah Almighty, a time when Allah's light and blessings cascade upon us like a torrential rain. Yet, amidst the clamor of worldly pursuits, many fail to grasp the true value and significance of this sacred period. It is only those whose hearts yearn for the Hereafter, who recognize the unparalleled significance of this blessed month.

As the month of Rajab approaches, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would fervently supplicate:

"O Allah, bless us in the months of Rajab and Sha'ban, and grant us the arrival of Ramadan—extend our lives so that we may witness its arrival."

Two months prior to the advent of Ramadan, the anticipation and eagerness for its arrival palpably resonate, as prayers ascend for its swift arrival and blessings.

The etymology of the word "Ramadan" itself, originating from Arabic, signifies "scorching," indicative of the intense heat during its inception in Islamic history. However, scholars also assert that it symbolizes Allah's special mercy, ablaze with forgiveness for His fasting servants.

Ramadan emerges as a beacon of divine mercy, bestowed upon humanity to alleviate the spiritual stagnation that permeates our hearts during eleven months of worldly preoccupation. Through dedicated worship and introspection, we cleanse our souls of neglect and rust, rekindling our connection with Allah Almighty and embarking on a transformative journey towards spiritual renewal.

Fasting, enjoined upon the last ummah, serves as a conduit to attain piety, with its prescribed duration from sunrise to sunset. This blessed month not only commemorates the revelation of the Holy Qur'an but also heralds the Night of Decree (Lailat al-Qadr), a night brimming with boundless blessings. Furthermore, the establishment of Taraweeh prayers amplifies the sanctity and efficacy of this sacred time.

In the profound words of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), "Whoever fasts in the month of Ramadan out of faith and in the hope of reward, their past sins shall be forgiven."

As Ramadan approaches, anticipation mounts, for it is a month of boundless blessings, forgiveness, and divine mercy—a time when inner peace envelops us in its pure embrace.

Ramadan is not merely a temporal event but a transformative journey, a sacred odyssey toward spiritual awakening and divine closeness. It is a month of introspection, a time to recalibrate our priorities and realign our hearts with the eternal truths of faith. Amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life, Ramadan beckons us to pause, to reflect, and to reconnect with our Creator.

In the quiet moments of pre-dawn suhoor and the solemnity of iftar gatherings, we find solace in the remembrance of Allah and the fellowship of fellow believers. Through fasting and prayer, we purify our souls and cultivate a deeper sense of empathy and compassion for those less fortunate. Ramadan is a time of self-discipline, a spiritual boot camp where we train our bodies and minds to resist temptation and strive for righteousness.

But Ramadan is not just about abstaining from food and drink; it is about cultivating a state of inner peace and contentment that transcends the material world. It is a month of heightened spiritual awareness, a time when the barriers between the seen and unseen

are facing obscure it now.

The problems Prime Minister Sharif is facing need long term solutions. Yet he needs to reassure himself, his party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, his supporting party Pakistan People's Party and the populace that he is on the "right track. The Pakistani Prime Minister seems to have missed the wood for the trees as his take on Kashmir is a pointer. Large segments of leaders in Pakistan are calling for restoration of bilateral trade with India.

Suspension of bilateral trade hurts Pakistan more than it does India. But Sharif raking up the Kashmir issue chose to overlook it and walk along a path which appeared to him as familiar Pakistan desperately needs a new direction. The task for Sharif is cut out. It is to restore a modicum of internal stability. Steps need to be chalked out to bring the economy on an even keel.

Focussing on the economy first one is

upon those before you that you may become righteous.' With this verse, it is made clear that fasting is ordained compulsory for all Muslims, serving as a pathway to righteousness.

May we heed the call of Ramadan, embracing its blessings and striving to attain righteousness through fasting."

How we attain piety in Ramadan

(1) Increase in Worship: To attain the blessings of Ramadan, we must elevate our worship. Incorporating additional prayers, such as Nawafil, is essential during this sacred month. After Maghrib, strive to perform at least six (6) Rak'ats of Sunnah. Arrive a few minutes before Isha prayers to recite two or four Rak'ats of Nafil. Cultivate the habit of waking up a few minutes earlier for Sehri and engage in

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Aubaid Ahmad Akhoo

four Rak'ats of Tahajjud. Similarly, consider offering the prayers of Ishraq, and if sleep prevails, engage in a few Rak'ats of Chasht. Post-Zuhr, recite two Rak'ats of Nafil with two Sunnahs, and four Rak'ats of Nafil before Asr. The essence of prayer is to establish a profound connection with Allah, as articulated in the hadith narrated by Hazrat Abu Hurayrah: "The worshiper is closest to his Lord in prostration."

(2) Abundance of Quran Recitation:

During Ramadan, prioritize the recitation of the Holy Quran, for this month holds special significance in relation to the divine scripture. It was during Ramadan that the Holy Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), serving as a beacon of guidance for Muslims worldwide. The Quran is not merely a book; it is a comprehensive guide encompassing all aspects of faith and life. It serves as a source of healing, enlightenment, guidance, and mercy for humanity. Despite attempts throughout history to extinguish its light or distort its message, the Quran has remained unaltered, a testament to its divine preservation. The Prophet (PBUH) himself engaged in increased Quranic recitation during Ramadan, as evidenced in Bukhari Sharif. Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa, revered for his piety, completed multiple recitations of the Quran daily during Ramadan. It is incumbent upon us to follow their exemplary devotion by increasing our Quranic recitation during this blessed month. Even the layperson should strive to recite at least three verses daily, ensuring a continuous engagement with the Quran throughout Ramadan.

(3) Correct Recitation of the Holy Quran in Taraweeh:

During this blessed month, it is imperative for every believer to ensure that the recitation of the Quran in Taraweeh prayers is conducted with utmost care and reverence. Rushing through the recitation is contrary to the majesty of Almighty Allah, and the Quran itself admonishes those who recite it haphazardly. Sadly, there have been instances where the Imam, due to haste, fails to enunciate the words of the Quran correctly. Surah Al-Fatiha is sometimes recited in a single breath, and the bowing, prostration, and Tashahhud are not performed properly. Furthermore, Taraweeh prayers are hurriedly concluded within forty or fifty minutes, while lengthy discussions ensue for hours afterward. This disregard for the sanctity of Quranic recitation not only deprives individuals of blessings but also incurs the Quran's disapproval. Let us strive to avoid such negligence and ensure that our recitation and listening of the Quran during Taraweeh is conducted with diligence, precision, and proper pronunciation.

"Ramadan: Fasting for Spir-

itual Nourishment"

(4) Abundance of Seeking Forgiveness:

One of the crucial aspects of Ramadan is seeking forgiveness for one's sins. A famous hadith narrated by Hazrat Ka'ab bin Ujrah recounts an incident where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) ascended the pulpit and exclaimed 'Amen' three times. When questioned about it, he revealed that Angel Jibreel (PBUH) had invoked curses upon those who do not seek forgiveness in Ramadan, to which the Prophet (PBUH) responded 'Amen'. This emphasizes the urgency of seeking repentance and forgiveness during this blessed month to avoid misfortune.

(5) Arrangement of Prayers:

Arranging prayers is essential to receive the blessings of Ramadan. It is believed that the prayers of fasting individuals are readily accepted. According to a tradition narrated by Abu Hurayrah, the supplications of three individuals are guaranteed acceptance: a fasting person until they break their fast, a just ruler, and the oppressed. (Tirmidhi Sharif; Musnad Ahmad) Fasting, as enjoined in Surat Al-Baqarah (2:184), not only brings blessings but also offers numerous health benefits, as validated by science and medicine. It is a means of cleansing the body and enhancing mental well-being. Allah (SWT) is with those who exercise self-restraint, as stated in the Quran (16:128).

Fasting extends beyond abstaining from food and drinks; it entails restraining all bodily faculties, including the eyes, ears, and tongue. It involves avoiding falsehood, backbiting, cursing, and suspicion. Cultivating good morals during Ramadan is essential for traversing the Sirat (bridge) with ease. Fasting teaches self-discipline and offers a noble pathway to spiritual growth, earning the favor of Allah (SWT).

(6) Lailat-ul-Qadr: The Treasured Night of Ramadan

"Allah has made Laylat al-Qadr in this month, which is better than a thousand months..." (Al-Qadr 97:1-5)

Lailat-ul-Qadr, the Night of Decree, is the prized jewel of Ramadan. This night holds more blessings than a thousand months and offers Muslims a chance for salvation. It is a night of prayer, meditation, dua (supplication), and seeking forgiveness for past sins. Yet, it is unfortunate that often this night is treated more as a festival than a time for worship. Many spend the night in leisurely pursuits, neglecting the opportunity for spiritual growth.

According to Hadith, Lailat-ul-Qadr falls on one of the odd nights of the last ten days of Ramadan, potentially on the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, or 29th night. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructed his followers to seek it in the last ten nights, especially during the odd nights. Hazrat Ayesha narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) advised reciting the following dua on Lailat-ul-Qadr:

"O Allah! You are the Forgiver. If you like to forgive, forgive me."

(7) Ramadan: A Gateway to Knowledge and Faith

Ramadan provides an excellent opportunity to increase one's knowledge of the faith. While the month is characterized by increased worship and spiritual activities, it is also crucial to prioritize learning the essentials of religion. Acquiring knowledge about Tawheed (belief in the Oneness of Allah), Prophethood, and the Hereafter enhances one's faith and understanding of Islam.

"Ramadan is about breaking bad habits, not putting them on pause."

This month of piety calls for arranging prayers not only for oneself and loved ones but also for the wider community and the world of Islam. It is a time to seek

protection from evil and guidance towards righteousness.

"O my Lord, save us from all evil, guide us to the path of righteousness. Ameen."

"Ramadan is not just about changing our schedules; it is about changing our hearts." Fasting during Ramadan is a means to cultivate obedience to Allah's commands, suppress worldly desires, and attain piety. The gates of Heaven open, the gates of Hell close, and the devils are chained during this sacred month. Fasting was ordained on all Muslims to attain righteousness, emphasizing the importance of this spiritual journey. Ramadan serves as an opportunity to build faith, seek forgiveness, and cultivate a sense of accountability to Allah.

O Ramadan, come swiftly, for we eagerly await your luminous crescent.

As the blessed month draws near, let us prepare our hearts and minds to receive its blessings. Let us rid ourselves of distractions and worldly attachments, and open ourselves fully to the transformative power of Ramadan. For in this sacred month lies the opportunity for spiritual rebirth and renewal, for the forgiveness of sins and the attainment of divine mercy. May Allah grant us the strength and steadfastness to make the most of this blessed month, and may He shower His blessings and guidance upon us all. Ameen.

Ultimately, Ramadan serves as a time of reflection, renewal, and spiritual rejuvenation. It's an opportunity to cultivate virtues such as gratitude, generosity, and empathy, fostering a deeper connection with our Creator and our fellow human beings. Through fasting, we not only nourish our bodies but also enrich our souls, paving the way for inner transformation and spiritual enlightenment.

This lengthy period of Ramadan is accompanied by abundant blessings, as Allah showers His mercy upon us all. Let us seize this opportunity to express gratitude to Him. Not everyone who witnessed this Ramadan will be fortunate enough to experience it again next year. May we all immerse ourselves deeply in the spiritual essence of this Ramadan and beseech Allah to bless us with its return in the future.

Ramadan is a time of spiritual renewal, growth, and reflection. Let us make the most of this blessed month by seeking knowledge, strengthening our faith, and striving for piety and righteousness. Wishing you and your family a joyous Ramadan filled with blessings, peace, and boundless happiness. May this sacred month bring you profound satisfaction and delightful moments that resonate deeply in your heart. May your days be illuminated with the light of faith and your nights adorned with the serenity of prayer. May you find joy and contentment in abundance throughout the year and beyond. Ramadan Mubarak!

Ramadan draws near, a celestial boon.

Awaiting eagerly, the crescent moon's swoon.

A month of blessings, cascading like dew.

Forgiveness abundant, a divine ensue.

Mercury descends, in torrents so fine.

Allah's grace, an endless vine.

Words fail to capture the peace within.

In this month of bliss, where hearts begin.

O Ramadan, hasten, unveil your grace.

We yearn for your light, our souls to embrace.

Come swiftly, with your radiant boon.

For in your arrival, our spirits commune.

(The author is a distinguished Educational Columnist, Motivational Speaker, and Associate Editor of the weekly educational publication Education Quill)

Pak PM Sharif fails to cheer the common people through his maiden speech

By: Tirthankar Mitra

Shehbaz Sharif, on taking charge as prime minister of a new Pakistani dispensation has raked up the Kashmir issue even as he finds himself presiding over a precarious economy with the country's situation worsened by sharp polarisation and a fraught security system. Pakistan in so many words is in choppy waters.

This is why Sharif who occupies the seat of power with a fractured mandate for his own party notwithstanding has raised this issue. Delivering his maiden address after taking over on Sunday he waved the red flag before the people of Pakistan hoping it will get a sympathetic hearing in the course of which other issues would be lost track of. His mind still being clouded with the schemes to get PPP's support on government formation it has not occurred to him that the issue is a lost one in present backdrop. The series of problems the Pakistanis

are facing obscure it now.

The problems Prime Minister Sharif is facing need long term solutions. Yet he needs to reassure himself, his party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, his supporting party Pakistan People's Party and the populace that he is on the "right track. The Pakistani Prime Minister seems to have missed the wood for the trees as his take on Kashmir is a pointer. Large segments of leaders in Pakistan are calling for restoration of bilateral trade with India.

Suspension of bilateral trade hurts Pakistan more than it does India. But Sharif raking up the Kashmir issue chose to overlook it and walk along a path which appeared to him as familiar Pakistan desperately needs a new direction. The task for Sharif is cut out. It is to restore a modicum of internal stability. Steps need to be chalked out to bring the economy on an even keel.

Focussing on the economy first one is

aghast to learn that budget deficit remains large and inflation is high. The Pak government does not have the money to manage the annual external sector gap for a next few years. A short term arrangement with IMF ends in March. Pakistan's external creditors including China are reluctant to lend more money or restructuring past loans till it enters into a longer term agreement with the IMF. To turn a corner in the right direction requires further belt tightening not only by the common man but also by the articulate and influential elite. The PML(N) paid a heavy price in the recently concluded election for its dispensation's austerity measures and now it's supporter PPP wants to dissociate itself from pain-inducing measures

But all the same, the PML-N is ready to repeat the same to keep Imran Khan led Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf at bay. Such measures are expected to turn around the economy in two to three years. Internal security

situation in Pakistan has gone for a toss. A sharp rise in terror attacks by Tehrek-e-Taliban Pakistan and Baloch groups are on a rise. There is nothing to write home about the external security situation of Pakistan. Relationship with India remains on a tense stand-off. Meanwhile trouble has called on the Sharif dispensation from a quarter it least expected. Tension has mounted with Afghan Taliban, an erstwhile protege of Pakistan. Issues of recognition of the Durand Line as the border between the two countries together with reining in of terror activities of TTP from Afghan soil sticks out like a sore thumb in the bilateral relations.

Reverting to the relation with India, Sharif will belatedly realise that he had reduced his government's negotiating space. Such space has already been shrunk by Pakistan's internal preoccupation. The government's will to deliver remains constrained by the army. (IPA Service)

How early Europeans made their way to the 'exotic' east after learning of its riches

By: Radhika Seshan

The European expansion was not a development that grew from — so to speak — 'internal causes'. Quite to the contrary, it was the reaction to a mighty challenge which, at that time, had already been tempting the Occident for no less than two thousand years, tantalisingly rousing a certain predatory mentality among the Europeans of the Mediterranean — Schmidt.

Europeans began to wake up to the reality of Asia in a much more tangible fashion in the thirteenth century, when Marco Polo's travel accounts began to be disseminated in Europe. The thirteenth century had already seen Europe opening up in a number of ways. For example, this was the century in which the great fairs of the Champagne country, today in France, began to be the centre of the large-scale exchange of the products of north and south Europe and, more importantly, the place where traders from around Europe could come to purchase the goods of the eastern lands that were being brought in by the Italian merchants. In the same century, a Jewish rabbi by the name of Benjamin from the Spanish city of Tudela, set out on his travels around the Mediterranean. He focused on identifying the cities which still had a large Jewish population — and he found quite a few! And as I said earlier, one place that he mentioned, the only one outside the Mediterranean region, lay on the Malabar coast. The Crusades had started over a century earlier, and warrior knights like the Knights Templar had already established themselves as an important group across Europe. At the beginning of this century, the fourth crusade, which was supposed to attack Egypt, attacked Byzantium instead. Through all of this, the Italian cities of Venice and Genoa, in particular, continued their trade across the Mediterranean, to procure the goods of Asia. Venetian networks, in particular, included things as diverse as the trade in wine and spices and the establishment of a regular postal service between Venice

and Constantinople. This was something that the King of Persia considered so important that in 1320 he granted the Venetian couriers the freedom to travel throughout his dominions.

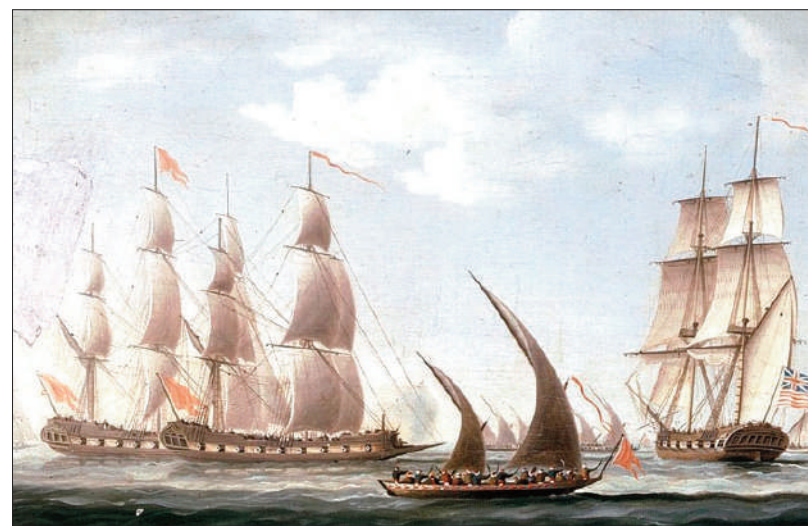
At another level, too, knowledge of the lands of the east impinged on Europe, through the Mongol invasions. The wealthy and 'exotic' east had always been part of the European imagination. But now, Europe began to realise that the eastern lands were not just fabulous, fabulously wealthy or imagined, but real, really wealthy and probably really dangerous! The eastern lands were still 'fabulous', but were now becoming more tangible, and this tangibility had, at its core, the range of goods that were available. Crusaders who went through Venice or through Constantinople on their way to the Holy Land began to see, in the markets of Constantinople and further east, products that were not visible in Europe. Even the Mongols, a highly mobile and warlike force, who according to reports had only one large city in their dominions, dealt in gold, which was still limited in Europe.

Another dimension was provided by the Crusading Knights, particularly the Knights Templar. While the wealth that they accumulated may have increased in size along with the stories they told, they were all undoubtedly based in fact. The east acquired a materiality that fed into the fables of the fabulous east and these stories now started being fleshed out with eyewitness accounts. Finally, tales began to circulate in Europe about a priest king named Prester John. These stories had originated in the twelfth century but began to spread much more in the following century. Legend has it that Prester John was a Christian king, who ruled over a fabulously wealthy 'eastern' land, but whose kingdom was now surrounded by 'infidels and pagans'. He was reported to have written a letter to the Pope, appealing for help, and in return, promised that he would welcome all good Christians, who could then trade within his territories.

Stories about Prester John's land mentioned, among other things, the size of his kingdom and its wealth, displayed most clearly in his people eating off plates made of gold and silver, and of jewels being worn by everyone. His kingdom was supposed to be somewhere in the east; and so, travels began in search of this promised land. Marco Polo's account, in which he included a note about the 'land of Prester John', and its concrete descriptions of the wealth of China, gave added fillip to this quest. Over the next few centuries, the search for Prester John informed many of the travels to the east; and finally, this search was narrowed down to the Indian Ocean world, including Central Asia.

Prester John was first located in Malabar, where it was said St Thomas had been martyred and his bones were buried. The martyrdom took place in the modern city of Chennai, and the relics were supposedly taken to Edessa and later to Italy, but Malabar was fixed as the location of Prester John's kingdom. As knowledge about the existence of a Christian community in Malabar spread, a bishop named Judanus was sent to take charge of the bishopric of Quilon in the fourteenth century. By the middle of the fifteenth century, Prester John's kingdom had moved to Ethiopia; but at the same time, it was also located in Central Asia and, a little later, in Japan! The one thing that remained constant, was that he and his kingdom were always located with, or within, the Indian Ocean world. And so, for Europe, India (and Asia) became even more the land of plenty. All they had to do, was get to this world.

Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, as more stories of this fabulous land spread and as more accurate sources of information also began to find their way into Europe, the fascination with these eastern lands grew. The accounts of travellers like Marco Polo in the thirteenth century, John Marignolli in the fourteenth century, and Nicolo Conti in the fifteenth century, all helped in the dissemination of factual knowledge about the riches of the east. Linked to the fif-



teenth-century voyages of exploration, this combination of fact and fiction made access to these lands even more desirable. In 1453, came the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman troops. One immediate result of this was the (temporary) closure of the trade routes that led east, which meant, if nothing else, a shortage of pepper, the spice most demanded in Europe. When trade resumed (which it did, quite soon), the traders found that customs duties and assorted tolls and taxes were now collected much more strictly than had been the case. One consequence was naturally an increase in prices, which, allied to the already prevailing suspicions of the Ottoman bureaucracy, made the search for a route that bypassed the Ottoman empire altogether, even more urgent. This was linked to the voyages of exploration that had already begun, and now gathered momentum. It was the age of legendary explorers — Bartolomeo Dias, Amerigo Vespucci, Christopher Columbus, Vasco da Gama and many more. In 1494, by the Treaty of Tordesillas, it was declared that Papan sanction for discovery and conquest had been given to Spain and Portugal, so all lands west of the line of the treaty were to be for Spain, and those to the east for Portugal. The treaty was observed more in its absence than its ob-

tolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope. Then came Vasco da Gama, who reached Malabar in 1498, and returned to Portugal in 1499. I must emphasise that such knowledge was not restricted to the Portuguese and the Spanish, and was shared among many people, as can be seen in the Piri Reis map. This, a map created in the Ottoman empire early in the sixteenth century and believed to be the first world map, has the outlines of South America drawn in it. Interestingly, this was also a region to which the Ottoman ships never sailed. Piri Reis seems to have drawn upon the knowledge of the Portuguese and Spanish mariners who had visited this continent.

Adam Smith, in the eighteenth century, stated that the discoveries of America and the sea route around the Cape of Good Hope to India, were the 'two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind'. The Indian historian, Ashin Das Gupta, has however said that the arrival of Vasco da Gama on Indian shores was a 'landmark wherein we do not quite know what it marks'. So, what did these discoveries mark? The general tendency has often been to talk of the proceedings, from the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century till the establishment of British colonial rule in the eighteenth century, as a seamless process of the country's takeover by the Europeans, with the Indians being passive on-lookers, or sometimes even active participants, for reasons of personal aggrandisement. Linked to this is another idea — that the Europeans succeeded because they were masters of the sea and, from there, made their way to the land, while the Indians restricted themselves to land alone. Indians, lacking knowledge of the importance of the sea, ended up losing both land and sea. Such statements, though unfortunately widely accepted still, are ahistorical, for they are chronologically and factually inaccurate. The reality was nowhere near as effortless as it is made out to be. So, what exactly changed and over how much time? (Courtesy: *The Wire*)

'The media won't tell you but', 'it's all a conspiracy': How to spot disinformation tactics

By: H Colleen Sinclair

Information warfare abounds, and everyone online has been drafted whether they know it or not. Disinformation is deliberately generated misleading content disseminated for selfish or malicious purposes. Unlike misinformation, which may be shared unwittingly or with good intentions, disinformation aims to foment distrust, destabilise institutions, discredit good intentions, defame opponents and delegitimise sources of knowledge such as science and journalism.

Many governments engage in disinformation campaigns. For instance, the Russian government has used images of celebrities to attract attention to anti-Ukraine propaganda. Meta, parent company of Facebook and Instagram, warned on November 30 that China has stepped up its disinformation operations. Disinformation is nothing new, and information warfare has been practiced by many countries, including the US. But the internet gives disinformation campaigns unprecedented reach. Foreign governments, internet trolls, domestic and international extremists, opportunistic profiteers and even paid disinformation agencies exploit the internet to spread questionable content. Periods of civil unrest, natural disasters, health crises and wars trigger anxiety and the hunt for information, which disinformation agents take advantage of.

Certainly it's worth watching for the warning signs for misinformation and dangerous speech, but there are additional tactics disinformation agents employ.

It's just a joke

Habaganda is a tactic in which disinformation agents use memes, political comedy from state-run outlets, or speeches to make light of serious matters, attack others, minimise violence or dehumanise, and deflect blame. This approach provides an easy defense: If challenged, the disinformation agents can say, "Can't you take a joke?" often followed by accusations of being too politically correct.

Shh...tell everyone

Rumor-milling is a tactic in which the disinformation agents claim to have exclusive access to secrets they allege are being purposefully concealed. They indicate that you will "only hear this here" and imply that others are unwilling to share the alleged truth — for example, "The media won't report this" or "The government doesn't want you to know" and "I shouldn't be telling you this..."

But they do not insist that the information be kept secret, and will instead include encouragement to share it — for example, "Make this go viral" or "Most people won't have the courage to share this." It's important to question how an author or speaker could have come by such "secret" information and what their motive is to prompt you to share it.

People are saying

Often disinformation has no real evidence, so instead disinformation agents will find or make up people to support their assertions. This impersonation can take multiple forms. Disinformation agents will use anecdotes as evidence, especially sympathetic stories from vulnerable groups such as women or children. Similarly, they may disseminate "concerned citizens'" perspectives. These layperson experts present their social identity as providing the authority to speak on a matter: "As a mother..." "As a veteran..." "As a police officer..." Convert communicators, or people who allegedly change from the "wrong" position to the "right" one, can be especially persuasive, such as the woman who got an abortion but regretted it. These people often don't actually exist or may be coerced or paid.

If ordinary people don't suffice, fake experts may be used. Some are fabricated, and you can watch out for "inauthentic user" behavior, for example, by checking X — formerly Twitter — accounts using the

Botometer. But fake experts can come in different varieties.

- A faux expert is someone used for their title but doesn't have actual relevant expertise.
- A pseudoexpert is someone who claims relevant expertise but has no actual training.
- A junk expert is a sellout. They may have had expertise once but now say whatever is profitable. You can often find these people have supported other dubious claims — for example, that smoking doesn't cause cancer — or work for institutes that regularly produce questionable "scholarship."
- An echo expert is when disinformation sources cite each other to provide credence for their claims. China and Russia routinely cite one another's newspapers.
- A stolen expert is someone who exists, but they weren't actually contacted and their research is misinterpreted. Likewise, disinformation agents also steal credibility from known news sources, such as by typosquatting, the practice of setting up a domain name that closely resembles a legitimate organisation.

You can check whether accounts, anecdotal or scientific, have been verified by other reliable sources. Google the name. Check expertise status, source validity and interpretation of research. Remember, one story or interpretation is not necessarily representative.

It's all a conspiracy

Conspiratorial narratives involve some malevolent force — for example, "the deep state" — engaged in covert actions with the aim to cause harm to society. That certain conspiracies such as MK-Ultra and Watergate have been confirmed is often offered as evidence for the validity of new unfounded conspiracies.

Nonetheless, disinformation agents find that constructing a conspiracy is an effective means to remind people of past reasons to distrust governments, scientists or other trustworthy sources.

Good vs evil

Disinformation often serves the dual purpose of making the originator look good and their opponents look bad. Disinformation takes this further by painting issues as a battle between good and evil, using accusations of evilness to legitimise violence. Russia is particularly fond of accusing others of being secret Nazis, pedophiles or Satanists. Meanwhile, they often depict their soldiers as helping children and the elderly.

Be especially wary of accusations of atrocities like genocide, especially under the attention-grabbing "breaking news" headline. Accusations abound. Verify the facts and how the information was obtained.

Are you with us or against us

A false dichotomy narrative sets up the reader to believe that they have one of two mutually exclusive options; a good or a bad one, a right or a wrong one, a red pill or a blue pill. You can accept their version of reality or be an idiot or "sheeple."

Turning the tables

Whataboutism is a classic Russian disinformation technique they use to deflect attention from their own wrongdoings by alleging the wrongdoings of others. These allegations about the actions of others may be true or false but are nonetheless irrelevant to the matter at hand. The potential past wrongs of one group do not mean you should ignore the current wrongs of another. In all of these cases, the disinformation agent is aware that they are deflecting, misleading, trolling or outright fabricating. If you don't believe them, they at least want to make you question what, if anything, you can believe.

You often look into the things you buy rather than taking the advertising at face value before you hand over your money. This should also go for what information you buy into. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Medical myths: All about sugar

By: Tim Newman

Today is the first day of Sugar Awareness Week. With this in mind, the Medical Myths truth wagon will take a cruise to Sugar Town via Misconception Lane.

Over the centuries, this crystalline sweetener has invaded everyone's snacks, drinks, guts, and minds. It has caused its fair share of controversy, too.

Although everyone is familiar with sugar as a concept, we'll start with a brief explainer.

What is sugar?

Sugar is a soluble carbohydrate — a biological molecule consisting of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms. Other carbohydrates include starch and cellulose, which is a structural component of plant cell walls.

Simple sugars, or monosaccharides, include glucose and fructose. Granulated sugar is a compound sugar, or disaccharide, known as sucrose, which consists of glucose and fructose. During digestion, the body breaks down disaccharides into monosaccharides. Still, the chemistry of sugar does not explain its infamy. The substance gained its dastardly reputation because it tastes delicious and, if consumed too freely, is bad for our health.

Article summary:

1. Sugar is addictive

Some experts believe sugar is an addictive substance. For instance, the authors of a controversial narrative review in 2017 write:

"Animal data has shown significant overlap between the consumption of added sugars and drug-like effects, including bingeing, craving, tolerance, withdrawal, cross-sensitization, cross-tolerance, cross-dependence, and reward and opioid effects."

However, this review focuses on animal studies. As the authors of another review explain, "there is a methodological challenge in translating this work because humans rarely consume sugar in isolation."

Dr. Dominic M. Dwyer from Cardiff University's School of Psychology explains, "Although certainly present in some people, addiction-like behaviours toward sugar and other foods are present only in a minority of obese individuals. However, we should remember that sugar can drive the overconsumption of foods alongside its addiction-like potential."

Along similar lines, Prof. David Nutt, Chair of the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs and head of the Department of Neuropsychopharmacology and Molecular Imaging at Imperial College London, writes:

"There is not currently scientific evidence that sugar is addictive, although we know that sugar has psychological effects, including producing pleasure, and these are almost certainly mediated via brain reward systems."

It is worth noting that even though health experts do not class sugar as an addictive substance, that does not make it healthful.

2. Sugar makes kids hyperactive

This is perhaps the most common myth associated with sugar: eating candy causes children to run wild. In fact, there is no sci-

entific evidence that sugar increases hyperactivity in the vast majority of children.

For instance, a 1995 meta-analysis in JAMA combined data from 23 experiments across 16 scientific papers. They concluded: "This meta-analysis of the reported studies to date found that sugar (mainly sucrose) does not affect the behaviour or cognitive performance of children."

However, people with children may doubt the truth of this conclusion. For those interested in reading more, we address this myth extensively in an earlier edition of *Medical Myths*.

3. Sugar causes diabetes

Another relatively common myth is that sugar directly causes diabetes. However,



there is no direct link between the two. The confusion perhaps arises because there is an intrinsic association between blood sugar levels and diabetes.

The story is a little more complicated, though. Overweight and obesity are risk factors for type 2 diabetes, and consuming high levels of sugar does increase the likelihood of developing overweight or obesity. However, sugar is not the direct cause of type 2 diabetes.

As for type 1 diabetes, dietary and lifestyle factors do not play a part.

4. Avoid fruit when dieting

Fruits are delicious, partly because they are sweet, thanks to naturally occurring sugars. Because of their sugar content, some people believe that we should avoid eating fruit when maintaining a moderate weight.

This is a myth. Fruits contain a range of healthful compounds, including a variety of vitamins and minerals, and fiber.

Fruit consumption is associated with health benefits, including a reduced mortality rate.

One study concluded that freeze-dried mango "does not negatively impact body weight but provides a positive effect on fasting blood glucose." Another study found that consuming blueberries enhanced insulin sensitivity.

However, it is worth noting that the two studies mentioned above received grants from the National Mango Board and the United States Highbush Blueberry Council, respectively.

Make of that what you will, but there is no doubt that consuming fruit benefits health. Removing it from our diet to reduce sugar intake would be a mistake.

5. We must eliminate sugar from our diet Because we know consuming excess sugar is bad for health, it makes sense to reduce our intake. However, it is not necessary to remove it from our diet entirely.

As we noted above, fruits contain sugar, and they benefit health, so cutting it from

our diet would be counter-productive.

As with everything in life, moderation is key. With that said, sweetened beverages, such as soda, have associations with several negative health consequences, including kidney damage, cellular aging, hip fractures, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and more.

Cutting soda from our diets would certainly not be a terrible idea.

6. Sugar causes cancer

Despite the rumors, most experts do not believe sugar directly causes cancer or fuels its spread. Cancer cells divide rapidly, meaning they require a great deal of energy, which sugar can provide. This, perhaps, is the root of this myth.

However, all cells need sugar, and cancer cells also require other nutrients to survive, such as amino acids and fats, so it's not all about sugar. According to Cancer Research UK:

"There's no evidence that following a sugar-free diet lowers the risk of getting cancer, or boosts the chances of surviving if you are diagnosed."

As with diabetes, there is a twist — increased sugar intake has links with weight gain, while overweight and obesity are linked with increased cancer risk.

So, although sugar does not directly cause cancer and does not help it thrive, if someone consumes high levels of sugar and develops obesity, their risk increases.

Scientists are continuing to investigate the relationship between cancer and sugar intake. If there are links between the two, they are likely to be convoluted. For instance, the American Cancer Society write:

"There is [...] evidence that a dietary pattern high in added sugars affects levels of insulin and related hormones in ways that may increase the risk of certain cancers."

One study, which included data from 101,279 participants, concluded that "[t]otal sugar intake was associated with higher overall cancer risk," even after controlling for multiple factors, including weight.

Other researchers have found links between sugar intake and specific cancers, such as endometrial cancer and colon cancer. However, for now, the link is not as solid as the rumour mill claims.

The take home

Sugar is a much-researched topic. Typing "sugar health" into Google Scholar brings up more than 78,000 results from 2020 alone. Navigating this amount of content is unwieldy, and, as with any scientific topic, there are disagreements.

Something to bear in mind is that many studies investigating the health impacts of sugar receive funding from the food industry. One review of research into soft drink consumption, nutrition, and health examined the results of 88 relevant studies.

They found "clear associations" between soft drink intake, body weight, and medical issues." Tellingly, they also report that "studies funded by the food industry reported significantly smaller effects than did non-industry-funded studies."

Although there are a number of misunderstandings surrounding sugar, some things are certain: although it might not directly cause diabetes or cancer, eating high levels of sugar is not healthful. Moderation, I am afraid, is the solution. (Courtesy: *Medical news Today*)

Over hundred principals & head teachers equipped with skills to implement National Education Policy 2020

Sonitpur completes 52 day capacity development program

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, March 11: Under the collaboration of the District Institute of Education & Training and Samagra Siksha, Sonitpur, a 52-day long capacity development program on 'School Leadership' was completed on Monday for more than a hundred principals and head teachers of all the higher secondary and secondary schools located within the district of Sonitpur. With the program design of 6+2+4 days face-to-face training and sharing, the program included fieldwork and internships too.

During the inaugural program, Dr Raj Kiran Doley, lecturer of DIET & State Resource Group (SRG) Member of Leadership Academy, Assam, oriented the participants about the entire course design and various aspects of conducting the program in different phases. He also emphasised the significance of leadership qualities of a school head, especially in the context of implementing the Na-



tional Education Policy 2020 and the roles to be played at different stages of education under the 5+3+3+4 structure to bring about quality changes into the schooling system. The ADC (education)-cum-district mission coordinator Kabita Kakoti Konwar attended the inaugural program and addressed the participants. The DPO (TT) of SSA Ramen Medhi coordinated the entire program. The other resource persons involved in

conducting the program were Manisha Baishya, Barasha Deka, Debananda Hazarika, Abul Islam, Dhurum Sula Bodo, and Lill Bahadur Thakuri. In addition, block resource persons Dulal Das, Kuddrat Ali, Khirada Deka, Anjan Deka were present during the program to provide necessary support.

In the first phase of the program, the participants were allowed to engage in fieldwork at their respective schools for 10 days.

Again, the participants came back for 2 days of review and feedback workshop in face-to-face mode and were then sent back for an internship for another 30 days at their respective schools. Following this, they had a face-to-face gathering for another 4 days in which they shared their experiences of implementing the takeaways from the program and discussed the changes they could make in their respective schools.

It is noteworthy that this is an overarching capacity development program of Samagra Siksha and SCERT that has been implemented in all the districts of Assam for enhancing leadership skills amongst the school heads and ensuring school effectiveness. The participants will soon be awarded joint certification from NIEPA, Delhi, and SCERT, Assam, for successfully completing the course, as informed by Dr Doley, the SRG Member of State Leadership Academy.

CEM Pramod Boro initiates multi-faceted developmental projects in Baksa



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 11: Stepping towards making a massive ushering of sustainable development in the entire Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) districts, Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region, laid the foundation stone at Shimla to construct the Bir Chilangang Basumaty Memorial Mini Stadium in Baksa district on Monday amidst the presence of Koklabari MCLA Montu Boro.

CEM Boro laid the foundation stones for several developmental projects in Baksa district, which include the construction of RCC Bridge No. 1/11 on NH 127(A) to Harsinga Road, construction of a road from

NH-127 (A) Dharani Das House (Majarsupa) to NH 127 (A) Tukrakuchi Dakhinsupa via Tukrakuchi Boro-supa, and construction of Martyr Sujit Narzary Auditorium Hall.

CEM Boro also inaugurated the newly constructed building of Koklabari Chapaguri College. Boro said that the BTR Government has been emphasising on bringing all-round development to society, and accordingly launched various missions meant for social welfare and development.

He stated that the BTR Government is committed to working for the massive ushering development of the citizens.

Rameswar Teli affirms loyalty to BJP

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 11: Rameswar Teli, the Union minister of state for Petroleum and Natural Gas, etc., claimed that he is not upset with the BJP for its decision to deny him a ticket for the Lok Sabha polls.

He also denied reports that he was leaving the saffron party. "There is no possibility that such events will occur," Teli said.

He told reporters on Monday, "I am a committed member of the BJP. My function will be decided by the party. If the party chooses to field a different candidate in Dibrugarh this time rather than me, that is perfectly alright." Since 2014, Rameswar Teli has served as the

MP for the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha seat. In 2021, he was appointed a minister of state at the Center.

Meanwhile, Union minister Sarbajit Sonowal will run from the Dibrugarh seat this time. He won the same constituency in 2004 and was elected to the Lok Sabha. However, in the general elections of 2009, Sonowal was defeated by Congress in Dibrugarh.

Soon after, he joined the BJP. Teli added that he has already spoken with chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

"I have talked with the chief minister. He informed me that the party might offer me an organisational role," the Union minister of state stated.

AYM Central Committee convenes press meet

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, March 11: The Asomiya Yuva Mancha (AYM), Central Committee organised a press meet at Demow Press Club on Monday. Addressing the media at the club, Jadab Gogoi, president of Asomiya Yuva Mancha (AYM), Central Committee, discussed several issues.

The AYM Central Committee expressed serious concern about the incident that occurred at Ajmal Hamm Hospital in Hojai on Sunday. Criticising Badruddin Ajmal, Gogoi emphasised that doctors working in Ajmal Hamm Hospital should be proficient in Assamese language.

The AYM Central Committee urged chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to take immediate action against doctors at Ajmal Hamm Hospital who are not fluent in Assamese. Additionally, the AYM criticised comments made by artists Simanta Sekhar and Pradip Dutta Roy regarding the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). Gogoi alleged that the construction of Raichal Rural Stadium in Demow is of low quality and costs ₹ 12 crores 60 lakhs, which will be inaugurated by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday. The AYM Central Committee has demanded an inquiry into the matter.

Citizens' meet advocates autonomy for Jorhat Institute of Science and Technology

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, March 11: The Jorhat district unit of AJYCP, in association with a group of alumni of Jorhat Institute of Science and Technology (JIST), formerly known as Science College, organised a citizens' meeting at the auditorium of Jorhat Science Centre and Planetarium on Sunday to discuss various problems of the institute with the aim of revamping it as a multi-purpose educational institute under the NEP, 2020, with autonomy. An AJYCP functionary informed that the meeting, jointly presided over by Bichitra Kumar Borah, a retired TRA official, and Jorhat district AJYCP president Pranabjyoti Saikia, was attended by several educationists and noted citizens.

AJYCP state assistant general secretary Siba Kalita, while stating the objective of the program, narrated the institute's journey and mentioned various problems faced by JIST at present. Dr Prashanta Goswami, a recipient of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar prize, also attended the meeting via online mode. After several

persons expressed their views and suggestions on the subject, the meeting adopted a resolution for the restoration of the institute's past glory, established in 1971. The resolution called for enacting an act by the government to grant autonomous status to JIST as a science and information technology institute by retaining the science and engineering sections as two separate schools. Additionally, seeking administrative reforms in the institute, the resolution also demanded the allocation of funds separately for JIST in the annual budget. Another demand in the resolution was the introduction of biology and environmental science courses in the institute. Dr Rajib Lochan Goswamee, Dr Amrit Goswami, both retired chief scientists of CSIR-NEIST, Jorhat, Dr Rajendra Prasad Das, a retired agriculture scientist, Dr Bimala Prasad Baruah, a retired scientist, Dr Bani Hazarika, an alumnus of JIST, and Raja Chakrabarty, a social worker, were among the people who participated in the meeting, which was anchored by AJYCP Jorhat district committee general secretary Babu Dutta.

31st Bn SSB pays tribute to martyr head constable

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, March 11: The 31st Bn SSB, Gossaigaon, in a function organised in its unit, paid rich tribute to the martyr head constable/GD Lakshmana Rao Rakkam, who sacrificed his life while on duty on March 11, 2023. The unit observed a solemn two-minute silence for the departed soul for eternal peace.

Chiranjib Bhattacharjee, commandant 31st Bn SSB Gossaigaon; Dr TT Hatzaw, CMO (MO); Parag, second-in-command; LN Singh, deputy commandant; and Dighade SR, deputy commandant, were also present at the program and paid floral tributes to the departed soul.

Chiranjib Bhattacharjee, commandant 31st Bn SSB Gossaigaon, while paying floral tributes to the martyr head constable/GD Lakshmana Rao Rakkam, recalled his sincerity, punctuality, and activeness in duty.

Gas connections provided to 500 women beneficiaries

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, March 11: Swadeshi Gas Agency, Kamrup ceremonially distributed gas connections among 500 women beneficiaries of the greater Kamrup area under the Ujjwala scheme initiated by the Government of India on Monday here. At a function held at Kamrup Kendriya Raas Field, the gas cylinders and other appliances, including connection details, were distributed among the women beneficiaries by the proprietor of the gas agency. Local MLA Jitu Goswami attended the programme as the chief guest and initiated the distribution of the gas connections in the presence of Dharitri Baruah, chairman of Kamrup Municipality Board, Jayanta Phukan, vice-chairman of Kamrup Municipality Board, Babul Bora, president of Kaliabor district BJP, and other dignitaries. The programme was mentored by Dharmendra Koushik, the proprietor of the gas agency, as per a press note asserted here.

Nowgong Girls' College launches handloom weaving centre

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, March 11: An ethnic handloom weaving centre was launched at Nowgong Girls' College in the early part of this month to promote the skills of age-old indigenous tradition of ethnic handloom weaving among the students of the college.

The centre was inaugurated to create an atmosphere of learning skill-based craftsmanship and foster employability among students. Dr Mira Barua, vice principal of the college, inaugurated the centre at a prestigious function held at the college. The centre is an initiative of the English department of the college and is coordinated and supervised by Dr Mridula Kashyap and Recho Benjamin Teron. A 10-day-long workshop was organised by the centre to mark its establishment at the college, where Anita Basumaty from Dimapur attended the workshop as a resource person. Basumaty conducted engaging sessions on the skills and craft of



handloom weaving.

Over 26 students participated in the workshop where they learned to weave Bodo aronai, Karbi poho, and ethnic handkerchiefs. The closing ceremony of the workshop was held on Monday at the college. A small video showcasing the various activities recorded during the workshop was also screened during the closing ceremony.

Dr Kulen Chandra Das, principal of the college, and other faculty members present in the closing ceremony distributed certificates among all the participants. The vote of thanks was presented by Recho Benjamin Teron, as stated in a press note here.

BPF asserts confidence in winning two LS seats

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 11: The Bodoland People's Front (BPF), once a Congress ally in Assam, is prepared to contest the Lok Sabha elections on their own.

Hagrama Mohilary, the chief of the BPF, said on Monday, "Our party will field candidates in two Lok Sabha seats—Kokrajhar and Darang. Neither Congress nor any other party are our allies. We will contest polls independently."

He claimed that the BPF is in a strong position and that the party will win both of these seats.

"BPF will win the Darang seat with at least 1 lakh votes. I can promise everyone that the Kokrajhar Lok Sabha constituency would have an even larger winning margin," asserted Mohilary.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has often asserted that the BJP will secure at least 11 Lok Sabha seats in the state. In Bodoland, the saffron party and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) have formed an alliance.

Mohilary responded to Sarma's statement by stating, "Assam has 14 Lok Sabha seats. The BJP can win the remaining 12 seats, with the exception of two."

Additionally, he stated that UPPL would struggle to compete against BPF in the Lok Sabha elections.

Notably, during the last state assembly election, the BPF was a member of the grand coalition headed by the Congress. But the BPF distanced itself from the Opposition group when the alliance failed to remove the BJP from office.

Essential medicines found discarded

HT Correspondent

DALGAON, March 11: There is immense anger in the area over the discovery of medicines in the bins of Kharupetia Hospital in Darrang district. According to reports, locals noticed iron syrup and other essential medicines discarded in the garbage next to Kharupetia Hospital on Monday morning, despite all the medicines having a validity of one year. There is no indication of who disposed of the medicines intended for patients in the garbage instead of administering them. Meanwhile, when questioned about the discarded medicine in the garbage, the hospital staff brushed off inquiries.

Historic election marks new era for Sikh Pratinidhi Board Eastern Zone, Dhubri

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 11: Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Dhubri Saheb ji is a historical Gurdwara where Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib ji visited and is run by Sikh Pratinidhi Board Eastern Zone (SPBEZ), Dhubri consisting of 40 Gurdwara Prabhanda Committees from the northeastern region including nearby areas like Siliguri and Cooch Bihar.

In the history of Sikh Pratinidhi Board Eastern Zone (SPBEZ), Dhubri, elections were held on March 9, 2024 for the first time, consisting of the electoral roll of Gurdwara Prabhanda Committees. The shift in paradigm from selection to election is a milestone in the history of Sikh Pratinidhi Board Eastern Zone, Dhubri, as the process of election was undertaken for the first time to ensure free, fair, peaceful, and transparent election. After the due process of filing nominations, scrutiny of nominations, preparation of the list of valid nominated candidates, withdrawal of candidates, and publication of the list of contesting candidates for the post of president and general secretary, both the candidates for the post were declared unanimously elected uncontested. Sardar Daljit Singh from Guwahati as president (pradhan) and Sardar Ra-



gurmeet Singh as general secretary. Sardar Daljit Singh ji, president, and Sardar Rajgurmeet Singh ji, general secretary, thanked the entire Sadh Sangat for the trust shown and at the same time expressed to work for building brotherhood among the society and work for spreading Sikhism and imbuing the principles of Sikhism with a special thrust on the younger generation. They also expressed gratitude for the kind help and guidance of the district administration, Dhubri, forwarded in ensuring free, fair, peaceful, and transparent elections.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati sets benchmark for inclusive celebrations on Women's Day

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 11: NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati, the flagship power station of the North East, celebrated International Women's Day on Saturday with unparalleled enthusiasm, showcasing its steadfast commitment to gender equality and empowerment.

In a dynamic celebration, employees of NTPC Bongaigaon participated in a myriad of activities to honour the occasion. The morning commenced with a heartening gesture as the female employees of NTPC were felicitated alongside their counterparts from the Bodoland Territorial Region Administration (BTC) under the theme 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress' for their selfless contributions to society. Jatin Bora, (ACS), secretary, Women and Child Development, and Pami Brahma (ACS), joint secretary, Women and Child Development, accompanied by Karunakar Das, executive director of NTPC Bongaigaon, honoured these exceptional women, acknowledging their invaluable roles in both the workplace and society at large.

The event commenced with an insightful address by Jatin Bora, secy., Women and Child Development, BTC, who shed light on the multifaceted contributions of women towards societal progress. Pami Brahma (ACS), joint secretary, Women and Child Development, BTC, emphasised the paramount importance of gender inclusivity and the collective endeavour required to achieve true equality.

A series of captivating activities and presentations ensued, highlighting the triumphs and challenges faced by women across various spheres of life. Panel discussions explored gender-sensitive policies, while interactive workshops focused on skill develop-

ment and entrepreneurship, providing a platform for constructive dialogue and idea exchange. The highlight of the celebration was the recognition of exemplary women achievers from within the organisation and the local community. Through a prestigious awards ceremony, individuals demonstrating exceptional leadership, innovation, and resilience were lauded, serving as inspirational figures for future generations.

Karunakar Das, executive director, NTPC Bongaigaon, reiterated the company's unwavering commitment to fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion. "At NTPC Bongaigaon, gender equality isn't merely a goal but a foundational principle driving our operations. By celebrating International Women's Day inclusively, we aspire to catalyse positive change and foster a more equitable society," he added. He also elaborated on the various initiatives under-



taken by NTPC towards women's empowerment.

The program also featured a session with Preeti Priyadarshinee, Northeast correspondent, CNN News 18, Onkar Nath, AGM (HR), and Dr Ela Chakrabarty, CMO, NTPC Bongaigaon, graced the occasion and celebrated the cause. Dr

Kriti Agrawal, NTPC Bongaigaon, also spoke on behalf of all female employees and highlighted the empowered role of women in today's world. Later, all employees of NTPC and BTC Sect were felicitated with planters and certificates of appreciation for their contributions to the area's development.

The event concluded with a collective pledge to persist in the pursuit of gender equality, both within the organisation and the broader community. Participants expressed their resolve to dismantle barriers and stereotypes, striving towards a more inclusive and progressive future for all.

In the evening, a special felicitation program for women employees of the power station was organised under the stewardship of Karunakar Das, executive director, NTPC Bongaigaon, on the theme 'Inspire Inclusion'. Das, along with K C Muraliedharan, CGM, O&M, presented planters and customised watches to the female employees. Speaking on the occasion, K C Muraliedharan, CGM (O&M), acknowledged the holistic contribution of women in today's industrialised world and their efforts towards society. Chief guest on the occasion, Karunakar Das, in his keynote address, spoke on the

theme of Women's Day and highlighted the contribution of all the ladies, including the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, towards creating an inclusive society.

A band of six girls titled 'Hurricane Girls', the first female band of Assam, performed on the occasion, singing popular tunes on women's empowerment enthralled the entire gathering. The program was also graced by Mayank, CGM, Project Management, Induri S Reddy, GM (Maintenance), Asutosh Biswas, GM (Operation), senior members of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, Vani Reddy, and Jhuma Biswas. A cake-cutting ceremony was also done on the occasion.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati continues its endeavours to champion gender equality and women's empowerment, and such initiatives serve as a testament to the company's enduring dedication to creating a fairer and more just society.

ENPO demands creation of Frontier Naga Territory to be carved out of 6 districts of Nagaland

Normal life affected in Nagaland over shutdown for separate state demand

KOHIMA, March 11: Normal life was affected in six districts of eastern Nagaland on Monday due to an indefinite shutdown called by Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) to press for its demand for a

separate state, officials said. Shops and commercial establishments remained closed and most vehicles were off the roads as the ENPO, the apex body of seven Naga tribes in the region called for the

shutdown to press for its demand.

Power department, medical, fire and other emergency services, besides media and weddings were, however, exempted from the purview of the bandh.

The ENPO demands that a separate 'Frontier Naga Territory' state be carved out of the six districts of Mon, Tuensang, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak and Shamator. The decision to call for the shutdown was taken

at the ENPO's headquarters in Tuensang district on Sunday, sources in the body said. The ENPO has resolved not to allow any political party to campaign in the region for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls till the settlement

of their demand. On March 5, ENPO declared a 'public emergency' in the region to press for their demand. On March 8, it enforced a 12-hour shutdown from 6 am as part of 'public emergency'. (PTI)

NPF to support ruling NDPP candidate in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, March 11: The Naga People's Front (NPF) has decided to support the ruling People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) consensus candidate from the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) Chumben Murry for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Nagaland in the upcoming general elections.

The decision to this effect was taken by the working committee of the party at a meeting at its central office in Kohima on Monday.

The NPF, which supports the PDA government from outside, has two members in the Naga assembly. Earlier, the Nagaland unit of JDU, which is part of the NDA at the Centre, also decided to

support the PDA candidate. The party has one MLA in the state assembly.

NPF secretary general and MLA Achumbemo Kikon said the working committee resolved to extend support to the NDPP candidate for the lone Nagaland parliamentary constituency in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections, upholding the spirit of opposition-less government, which is now at the helms of affairs in the state with an objective to play the role of an active facilitator to bring about an early honourable, acceptable and inclusive solution to the protracted Indo-Naga political issue.

On the Outer Manipur parliamentary constituency, Kikon said there are four applicants, including the sitting NPF MP

seeking the party ticket. He said the NPF central office has constituted a search committee to identify the rightful candidate, "whose report and recommendation is still awaited".

He added that the party working committee resolved to meet again at the NPF central office in Kohima on March 18 to discuss and decide on the matter.

Besides the NDPP, the Congress has fielded Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee president Supongmemren Jamir to contest the Lok Sabha seat in the state.

With no other party or candidate declaring their candidature so far, the lone Lok Sabha seat in the state is most likely to witness a two-cornered contest.

Over 3,300 proxy staffers in govt departments in Mizoram

AIZWAL, March 11: At least 3,365 state government employees in Mizoram have hired substitutes, who illegally work in their place in various departments, especially in rural areas, officials said. Soon after assuming power in December last year, the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government headed by chief minister Lalduhoma sought information on substitute employees and asked them to report themselves by January.

According to information received so far about the discrepancies, the school education department has the highest number of substitute employees at 1,115, followed by the health and family welfare department at 624 and the power and electricity department with 253 proxies, the officials said.

Of those who had hired substitute employees, 2,070 government employees reported that they had to do it because of health reasons, while 703 cited domestic problems.

Other reasons cited by the employees for hiring proxies were absence of residential quarters, inaccessibility of the villages where they were posted and language problems, among others. Lalduhoma had recently said that the state cabinet will consider the cases of substitutes being hired by government employees and take a final decision. Mizoram has around 50,000 state government employees. (PTI)

Peace gradually returning to state: Manipur CM

IMPHAL, March 11: Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh on Monday said peace has been gradually returning to the state, particularly over the last four months.

Addressing the public at a function for the distribution of welfare benefits, Singh said, "We are working hard for peace to return. Peace has begun to return in the last four months compared to the period following the outbreak of violence on May 3 last year."

Reflecting on the May 3 incident, Singh expressed regret, saying, "What was unfortunate was that we didn't anticipate there would be targeted and deliberate attacks on the government."

Singh elaborated, "We thought it was a simple rally for the students," referring to the rally organised by the All Tribal Students Union Manipur against the demand for scheduled tribe status by the Meitei community.

Singh, however, pointed out that the attacks were isolated to one or two places, with no incidents reported in other parts of the hill districts.

"At that time, security personnel and police were inadequately deployed as it was a sudden attack leading to loss of lives and property and for which I express my sincere condolences," Singh said.

"However, the government has taken up steps so that such incidents do not occur

again. Efforts to deploy state forces at vulnerable and hotspot areas are almost over," he said and urged the people to restore "the old Manipur prior to the outbreak of violence."

Singh highlighted various development projects initiated by the government, including the construction of football fields and the development of Unity Mall, aimed at showcasing the culture of all recognised communities in the state.

He emphasised the importance of welfare schemes for the marginalised sections of society and praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for implementing such initiatives.

Singh also addressed the issue of border security, emphasising the need for fencing along the porous international borders to prevent illegal entry.

He urged the people to cooperate with the central government for the state's development and cautioned against engaging in vigilante activities.

Regarding the distribution of welfare benefits, Singh mentioned the implementation of direct benefit transfer (DBT) for faster and transparent fund distribution, eliminating middlemen and corruption.

Singh also emphasised the need for collaboration with the central government and urged the public to work together to address the challenges facing the state. (PTI)



ASF killed 47,000 pigs in Mizoram during 2020-2023

AIZWAL, March 11: More than 47,000 pigs have died due to the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF) in Mizoram causing a monetary loss to the tune of ₹ 132.2 crore during the period 2020-2023, state animal husbandry and veterinary minister C Lalsawingunga told the assembly on Monday.

In a written reply to a question from opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) member Robert Romawia Royte, the animal husbandry and veterinary minister said that a total of 47,269 pigs have died and 25,182 others culled due to the outbreak of African Swine Fever during 2020-2023.

He said that the outbreak has affected 19,017 families and caused monetary loss to the tune of ₹ 132.2 crore.

Earlier, the minister had also informed the assembly that the ASF outbreak has been more or less contained now.

He had said that the state government has still imposed a ban on the import of pigs from outside the state.

The outbreak of ASF was first reported at Lungsen village in south Mizoram's Lunglei district near the Indo-Bangladesh international border in March 2021.

Officials believed that the outbreak was caused by pigs illegally imported from the neighbouring country.

Mizoram shares a 318-km-long international border with Bangladesh.

More than 33,400 pigs have been killed by ASF in 2021. The ASF resurfaced in February 2022, and again in May and July 2023, according to officials.

In July 2022, carcasses of wild boar were found in jungles in Champhai district in the eastern part of the state bordering Myanmar and subsequent laboratory tests revealed that they died of ASF.

Mizoram was also hit by Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) in 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2020, killing thousands of pigs and piglets causing a loss to the tune of ₹ 10.62 crore. (PTI)

Two held for IED blast in Shillong

SHILLONG, March 11: Meghalaya Police on Monday arrested two persons for their alleged involvement in planting and detonating an IED at the disputed Punjabi Lane area here on March 9. One person was injured in the blast.

The two have been identified as Tarson Lymba and Ebakordor Nongpluh, police said.

Lymba, 58, who is a member of the Hynniewtre National Youth Front (HNYF), was arrested from Dawki in West Jaintia Hills district and Nongpluh, 26, was picked up from Shillong, SP Rituraj Ravi said.

The modus operandi of the blast bore resemblance to the blasts in the past, which were triggered by the outlawed Hynniewtre National Liberation Council, the SP said, adding that none had come forward to claim responsibility for it. (PTI)

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL DEPARTMENT OF WORKS BRANCH SECRETARIAT HAMREN-782486

No.KAAC/HRN/W-8/2023-24/2

Dated:- 11/03/2024

RE-TENDER NOTICE

Reference this Office Memo.No. **KAAC/HRN/W-8/2023-24/23(A)** dated 09/02/2024, is hereby notified that Sealed **Re-Tenders** are hereby invited, affixing Non refundable KAAC court fee stamp (Receipt) Rs10.00 (Rupees Ten) only from all KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms of Works Department and will be received by the undersigned up to 4 P.M on **15/03/2024** and will be opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the tenderers or their authorized agent if any.

If the day of the opening of tender happens to be any holidays/Non-working day, the tender will be opened in the next working day. The undersigned has the right to accept, reject any tender without any reason thereof and will not be bound to accept the lowest tender quoted rate.

Sl. No.	Name of Works	Tender Amount	A/A Amount	Earnest Money	Time allowed for completion
1.	Const. Of Community Hall At Umpanai Dukan (Seven Day Adventist Village)	Rs.10,00,000.00	Rs.10,00,000.00	ST/ST/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	30 Days
2.	Const. Of Road at Durong	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 10,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
3.	Const. Of Toilet both for Boys and Girls at Plasa English School, Umjarai	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 10,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
4.	Const. Of Open Stage at Mandap Bazar under Amreng Constituency, KAAC	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 10,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
5.	Const. Of Waiting Shed at Mandap Bazar under Amreng constituency, KAAC	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 10,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
6.	Const. Of Open stage at Dikhlem Karbi Gaon under Amreng Constituency, KAAC	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 10,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
7.	Const Of Open Stage at Zerikingding Ronghang Arong under Amreng constituency, KAAC.	Rs. 10,00,000.00	Rs. 10,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
8.	Const. Of Chain link boundary wall and Ringwell at Bhoksong Rongker Compound	Rs. 6,50,000.00	Rs. 6,50,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
9.	Rongker shed at Langsudo Donkasarpo Enghi gaon	Rs. 3,00,000.00	Rs. 3,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
10.	Rongker shed at Langsudo Longbui gaon	Rs. 3,00,000.00	Rs. 3,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
11.	Rongker shed at Langminso Im Terang gaon	Rs. 3,00,000.00	Rs. 3,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days
12.	Const. Of Kitchen Set 2 Nos. At Sangkachep Church Langkircha	Rs. 5,00,000.00	Rs. 5,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% GENERAL=2%	20 Days

Detail NIT/ document and name of works amounts may be obtained from Office of the E.E. (Work) KAAC, Branch Secretariat, Hamren during working hours.

Terms & Conditions

N.B

- The rate to be quoted as % (Percent) above/below/as per schedule rate for building/sanitary/works for all division under CPWD-21.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of call deposit/bank draft & should be attached with the tender, without which no tender will be accepted.
- The contractor shall Repair/Re-construct if the works executed failed due inferior quality of works. The KAAC Authority will take legal action if the contractor refuses to Repair/Re-construct the work.
- The work must be carried on as directed by the RE (W), KAAC/KAAC Authority.
- The following up to date documents should be enclosed with the tender.
 - Professional Tax Clearance Certificate.
 - Sale Tax Clearance Certificate/ GST registration.
 - KAAC Registration (Contractual).
 - Call Deposit.
 - Caste Certificate. Bank Account number & Pan Card.
- Payment will be made subject to availabilities of fund
- The undersigned is not bound to accept the lowest quoted rate.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer (Work)
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
Branch Secretariat
HAMREN

Memo No. KAAC/HRN/W-8/2023-24/2(A)

Dated 11/03/2024

GOVT. OF ASSAM, OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, DIPHU GOVERNMENT COLLEGE, DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT :: ASSAM

Website: diphugovernmentcollege.com
No.DGC/VI-54/2023-24/295B

Email: diphugovtc@gmail.com
Dated Diphu the 11th March, 2024.

NOTIFICATION

This is for general information to all the aspiring candidates of Four Years Undergraduate (FYUG) Degree programme of Arts, Science & Commerce streams seeking admission at Diphu Government College, Diphu for the academic session 2024-2025, are hereby informed that the merit of the candidates for session 2024-2025 will be decided on the basis of NTA-CUET (National Testing Agency-Common University Entrance Test) score as per the direction issued by the Assam University, Silchar. As such, all concerned are hereby informed to visit NTA-CUET portal i.e. <https://cuetug.ntaonline.in> for more information and registration of the same. The last date for submission of online application is 26th March, 2024 as per NTA website. The matter may be treated as important and urgent.

Sd/-
Principal i/c.
Diphu Govt. College, Diphu.

Memo. No.DGC/VI-54/2023-24/2953

Dated Diphu the 11th March, 2004.

SC dismisses WB's plea against HC order transferring Sandeshkhali ED team attack case to CBI

NEW DELHI, March 11: In a setback to the West Bengal government, the Supreme Court on Monday dismissed its plea challenging a Calcutta High Court order transferring to the CBI the probe into the January 5 attack on an Enforcement Directorate (ED) team in Sandeshkhali, allegedly by supporters of the now suspended TMC local strongman Shahjahan Sheikh.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Sandeep Mehta, however, ordered expunging certain remarks and observations made against the state government and the police in the March 5 order of the high court.

"Insofar as the (HC) directions, we are not inclined to entertain this SLP. However, the observations made with regard to conduct of police and the state government shall stand expunged," the apex court said in its order.

It noted the submission of Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, that he has no objection to expunction of the remarks if the final order transferring the probe to CBI remains as it is.

During the hearing, the bench posed several questions to senior advocate Jaideep Gupta, representing the West Bengal police, as to why suspended TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh was not promptly arrested after the January 5 attack and why there was a delay in the investigation of the case.

"Why was he (Sheikh) not arrested for 50 days?" the bench asked Gupta.

The senior lawyer said there was a stay on the investigation at that time and the state government had to move the high court for clarification.

"After the clarification of the order of the high court, he (Sheikh) was arrested in 24 hours. Even earlier also, after the January 5 attack, when the police had registered an FIR in the case, seven people were arrested," Gupta contended, adding that to say there was a delay in investigation is "utterly incorrect".

He added several observations were made by the high court based on "speculative findings" against the police which can create "havoc" in the state.

When Justice Mehta referred to the high court order, which said 42 FIRs were lodged during the relevant period and wanted to know why they were registered and against whom, Gupta replied all these did not relate to the incident of attack. He said these were registered over a period of time and indeed involved Sheikh and some others.

"So, why weren't charge sheets filed? How long does it take?" Justice Mehta asked Gupta.

The senior lawyer said in the instant case, the observations made by the high court are not borne out by material on record.

"They did not inform us when a team of CRPF and ED went to Sandeshkhali on January 5. After the incident, we registered the FIR and asked them to assist but they said that they were busy. There was no delay on our part," he added.

Raju, who narrated the sequence of events of January 5, contended that if the investigation was not handed over to the CBI, the probe by the state police will be a farce.

"They tried to water down the case insofar as the assault of the ED officers was concerned. Three ED officers were injured. Section 307 of IPC (attempt to murder) was made out but they filed some other case and that's why the investigation was stayed by the court. It was only after the high court asked that the Advocate General agreed to add section 307 of IPC," Raju alleged. (PTI)

Worst drought in last 3-4 decades: Deputy CM Shivakumar

People may have to wait for a few hours for water to reach them

BENGALURU, March 11: Amid the acute water shortage in Bengaluru, Karnataka deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar said on Monday the State had not witnessed such a severe drought in the past three-four decades, and the next two months are "very much important" but the situation is not as grave as being projected by the opposition BJP.

Following the woes, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has said it will take legal action against those drilling unauthorised borewells within the city limits.

The order comes just days after the civic body banned usage of potable water for non-essential purposes -- cleaning vehicles, construction of buildings and roads, for entertainment purposes or decorations like fountains -- in Bengaluru and stated that violators would be fined Rs 5,000.

Shivakumar also asserted there is no question of releasing Cauvery river water to Tamil Nadu at any cost now.

The situation is not that grave being projected by the BJP, Shivakumar said targeting the

safron party, and urged the outfit to ensure clearance from the central government for Mekedatu, Mahadayi and other water projects of the state.

Responding to a question, he said, it was not his job to ask people to work from home (in the wake of the water crisis), and such a situation has not arisen yet. "It is only a blow-up."

The government is committed to providing water to citizens of Bengaluru at any cost. "People may have to wait for a few hours for water to reach them."

The administration is making all efforts to manage the crisis and supply water to the citizens, he said, adding, steps have been taken to control the water "mafia" in the city.

"In the last 30-40 years we had not seen such drought; though there was drought earlier we had never declared such a large number of taluks as drought-affected," Shivakumar told reporters here.

Shivakumar, also in-charge of Bengaluru development, said wherever Cauvery river water has to be supplied in the city, it is being done, but out of 13,900-



odd borewells in Bengaluru, about 6,900 have become defunct.

"So to control the situation, we have arranged for tankers to supply water. Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) are making all efforts in this regard," he added.

Karnataka has declared drought in 223 out of 240 taluks, out of which 196 are categorised as severely drought affected.

Alleging that the opposition (BJP-JD(S) combine) was trying

to indulge in politics over the issue, Shivakumar said the administration has on its part made efforts to control the water mafia, and provide water by taking it from private borewells, and also rates have been fixed based on distance travelled by the water tankers.

Stating that the next two months are "very much important", Shivakumar, who is also the Water Resources Minister, said priority is to ensure that there is no wastage of water.

"(By implementing) Cauvery fifth stage (project) -- we will

make all efforts to provide Cauvery water to 110 villages (around Bengaluru) at the earliest by May last week," he said.

To control the water "mafia", more than 1,500 private water tankers have registered so far and time has been extended for others also to register till March 15, Shivakumar further said. Police, Regional Transport Office (RTO), BBMP and BWSSB will monitor it and there will be a board with registration number on tankers.

"Operating illegally and charging exorbitantly Rs 5,000 or 6,000 (per tanker of water), such things are going on. To control, its price has been fixed based on the distance travelled," he noted.

Pointing out that in areas or taluks bordering Bengaluru like Hoskote, Kanakapura, Ramana-gara, Anekal and Channappana, the water table has improved, thanks to tank filling projects that were undertaken, he said, "we have made an agreement with farmers there to draw water. We will also give water for industries, also building construction. We don't want their activities to stop." (PTI)

Need to win all 13 LS seats to make Punjab vibrant, says AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal

MOHALI (PUNJAB), March 11: AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal on Monday launched his party's campaign in Punjab for the upcoming general elections and accused the BJP of trying to topple the Bhagwant Mann government by approaching its MLAs.

He asked people to ensure his party's victory in all 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab to raise their voices in Parliament. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a constituent of the INDIA bloc, is fighting the Lok Sabha elections alone in Punjab.

At the event, the AAP also rolled out a slogan highlighting the leadership of Chief Minister Mann and saying that the party's presence in Parliament too would add to the respect Punjab enjoys. "Sansad vich vee Bhagwant Mann, khushaal Punjab de vadhegi shaan," the slogan reads. "Today we are launching our campaign with this slogan," Kejriwal said.

Seeking victory for AAP on all 13 Lok Sabha seats in the state, he said, "We do not

need these seats for ourselves. (These are) to work more for your family and to make your family more prosperous. To make Punjab 'Rangla' (vibrant), we need 13 seats," the Delhi chief minister added.

"If you send AAP's 13 (candidates) as MPs, they will raise your voice in Lok Sabha. If your work is stopped like the rural development fund is withheld, they will go to the residence of that minister concerned and will not budget till the funds are released. An MP can go to the residence of any minister."

Apart from 13 MPs from Punjab, four will come from Delhi and one from Kurukshetra in Haryana, the AAP national convener said, adding, "We are winning in Gujarat and Assam."

"Then we will have 20 MPs in Lok Sabha and 10 (currently) in Rajya Sabha. If we have 30 MPs, they will become our strength in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha," Kejriwal said. The AAP and the Congress

have sealed a seat-sharing deal for Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, Gujarat, Goa and Haryana but decided to contest separately in Punjab considering the "special circumstances" in the state. The AAP has already announced three candidates for Assam.

Addressing the event, Kejriwal slammed the Centre for allegedly withholding ₹ 8,000 crore of Punjab's funds and accused the BJP of trying to topple the AAP government in the state by approaching its MLAs.

"The Centre has withheld ₹ 8,000 crore of Punjab's funds. It is a lot of money. How many schools, hospitals, mohalla clinics could have come up with that fund?" he posed.

Kejriwal hit out at the Centre for rejecting Punjab's tableau at the Republic Day parade. "How could they reject it?"

"Now they approach MLAs every day in Punjab to topple the state government. They want to topple the government of the people of Pun-

jab," he claimed.

Kejriwal also accused the Centre and the Punjab governor of harassing Chief Minister Mann every day.

"Only Bhagwant Mann is fighting for you. He is fighting against the Centre, the BJP and the governor. If you give him 13 seats, it will become his 13 hands and will fight against the BJP in Delhi. They will raise your voice in Lok Sabha," said the Delhi CM.

Kejriwal questioned the "silence" of the MPs of different parties over the Centre allegedly withholding the state's funds and rejecting its Republic Day tableau.

"When the Centre withheld Punjab's ₹ 8,000 crore funds then where were these MPs? Only Jalandhar (AAP) MP raised voice in Lok Sabha. Where are the rest of the 12 MPs? Why did they not fight for Punjab? When Punjab's tableau was rejected then where were these MPs? They never raised the voice of the people of Punjab," he alleged. (PTI)

Hope and happiness among Pak Hindu refugees in Delhi

NEW DELHI, March 11: Pakistani Hindu refugees residing in Delhi expressed hope and happiness on the implementation of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act on Monday, saying they are elated that "we will be called Indian citizens finally".

Ahead of the Lok Sabha election, the Centre announced the implementation of the contentious CAA 2019 for granting citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014.

Dharamveer Solanki, who is considered the chief of the Pakistani Hindu refugee community in Delhi, told PTI that around 500 from the community will receive citizenship now.

"I and my family have been waiting for this for over a decade now. We are extremely happy that finally we will be called Indian citizens now. I am glad I decided to return to my homeland in 2013," Solanki said.

"It feels like a huge burden has been lifted from our shoulders. With the implementation of this act, around 500 Pakistani Hindu refugee families who live here, will get citizenship," Solanki told PTI.

With the CAA rules being notified, the Modi government will now start granting Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants from the said countries. These include Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians.

The CAA was passed in December 2019 and subsequently got the president's assent but there were protests in several parts of the country against it.

The law could not come into effect as rules had not been notified till now. (PTI)

My third term will write new chapter in rise of women power: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, March 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday cited a host of women-centric schemes of his government to assert that only a society which boosts women's standing and creates opportunities for them can advance.

His third term will write a new chapter in the rise of women power, Modi said at a 'Sashakt Nari-Viksrit Bharat' programme, exuding confidence of retaining power in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

In a swipe at previous governments, he said women's lives and hardships were not a priority for them while the BJP dispensation has come out with different initiatives to help them at every stage of life.

Modi said he is the first prime minister who spoke of a host of issues related to women, including lack of toilets, use of sanitary pads, adverse effects of smoke-causing kitchen fuels like wood and coal, and the need for bank accounts

from the ramparts of the Red Fort, a reference to his Independence Day speeches. He said political parties like the Congress made fun of him and insulted him for this.

He asserted that what he saw at his home, in his neighbourhood and villages during his travels shaped his sensibilities and schemes for women.

Over Rs 8 lakh crore has been disbursed among women under various government schemes, Modi said.

Over 1 crore women have become 'Lakshmi Didi's' so far, he said.

The prime minister said that his experience has been that a little help to women can make them a help to others. Those politicians who are only concerned about their families can never understand this, he said.

At the 'Sashakt Nari-Viksrit Bharat' programme, Modi disbursed around Rs 8,000 crore as bank loans to self-help groups (SHGs). (PTI)

Voice not being heard: Churu MP Rahul Kaswan joins Congress after quitting BJP

JAIPUR/NEW DELHI, March 11: Churu MP Rahul Kaswan on Monday resigned from the BJP and joined the Congress in the presence of party president Mallikarjun Kharge in the national capital.

After joining the Congress, Kaswan, who was denied ticket by the BJP for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, said he felt his "voice was not being heard" in the party. Kharge welcomed him in the Congress fold, saying the party needs such people who have fought against power.

"I heartily welcome Rahul Kaswan ji on joining the Congress Party. I am happy that Rahul Kaswan ji, who fought against feudal people and have supported the farmers' issue, has joined the Congress Party,"

Kharge said.

"If people with such ideology keep joining the Congress party, then the BJP will certainly be decimated. The BJP has always been intimidating people, but we need people like Rahul Kaswan ji," he added.

The Congress chief also referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speeches in different languages across the country and said he wants to have a "mastery" on everything but continues his habit of intimidating people.

Speaking to reporters after joining the grand old party, Kaswan said, "My entire family was working with honesty and dedication in the region, but a time came where I felt that my voice was not being heard (in the BJP)."

"I felt that I will suffocate if I cannot raise the issues of my farmer brothers," he added.

Welcoming Kaswan into the Congress fold, Rajasthan PCC chief Govind Singh Dotasra said he took membership of the Congress party in Delhi in the presence of party chief Kharge. "Undoubtedly Rahul Kaswanji's spirit of farmer welfare and public service will lend strength to public issues and strengthen the party organisation," Dotasra said.

Earlier announcing his decision to resign from the BJP and Lok Sabha membership, Kaswan expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party leaders for giving him the opportunity to represent Churu as the MP twice. (PTI)

LOST

I, lost my Transfer Certificate and Migration Certificate of Dr. KN Modi University bearing University Enrolment No.- 1617020904001.

Bolon Rongpi, S/o- Moniram Rongpi, Vill.- Rongnihan, Ward No. 3, PO & PS- Diphu, Dist.- Karbi Anglong, Assam

AFFIDAVIT

I, lost my Transfer Certificate and Migration Certificate from Dr. KN Modi University on 24/02/2024 around Diphu Market.

Bolon Rongpi, S/o- Moniram Rongpi, Vill.- Rongnihan, Ward No. 3, PO & PS- Diphu, Dist.- Karbi Anglong, Assam

Cong MLAs rebellion 'black chapter': HP CM

SHIMLA, March 11: The rebellion by the six Congress legislators who "sold their souls" for their vested interests would be remembered as a "black chapter" in the history of the state, Himachal Pradesh chief minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu said on Monday.

The MLAs -- Sudhir Sharma, Ravi Thakur, Rajinder Rana, Inder Dutt Lakhnupal, Chetanya Sharma and Devinder Kumar Bhutto -- had cross-voted in the Rajya Sabha election for the lone seat in Himachal Pradesh, leading to the defeat of the Congress' official candidate Abhishek Manu Singhvi.

Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania later disqualified the six MLAs for allegedly defying a party whip on voting for the state Budget in the assembly. Addressing a public gathering at Indora in Himachal's Kangra district, the CM said the disqualified MLAs were being escorted by the central security agencies, but won't be able to face the people of their constituencies.

"Their actions will be remembered as a black chapter in the history of the state. They sold their souls for their vested interests," Sukhu said. Terming the BJP as a "power hungry" party, he said the people will never forget and forgive the attempts by the saffron party to topple the democratically elected government in Himachal Pradesh by using 'dhan bal' (money power). (PTI)

LIC Silchar Divisional Office "Jeevan Prakash" Meherpur, Silchar, Assam, 788015 Email: os.silchar@licindia.com

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Tender for SITC of soundless / noiseless Diesel Generator set (D.G. Set) in Acoustic enclosure on monthly hire basis including fuel at 3 (three) units under Silchar Divisional Office, as follows :-

SL. NO.	BRANCH	BO CODE	CAPACITY
1	Hailong BO	49C	15KVA
2	Hailakandi BO	49A	25KVA
3	Agartala BO-II	49E	25KVA

Sealed Tenders are invited for each location separately, on hiring basis from experienced Firms / Agencies under **Two Bid, Technical Bid (T.B) & Financial Bid (F.B) system** for "SITC of silent type DG Set of 15/25 KVA capacity (as specified branch wise in the above list) with Kirloskar / Cummins / Eicher / Ashok Leyland / Mahindra / approved equivalent engine on hire basis. The tenders will be issued from 12/03/2024 to 01/04/2024 and the last date of receipt of offer will be 02/04/2024 upto 15:00 Hrs. The Technical Bid (T.B) shall be opened on the next working day i.e. 03/04/2024 (at 11:30 Hrs For Branch serial no 1 to 3) For further details visit our Corporation's website www.licindia.in/Tenders. Any subsequent change in stipulated dates or Terms & Conditions of the notice for hiring of generator will be published on our website only. Interested parties are requested to keep track of our website for any corrigendum or change.

The Life Insurance Corporation reserves the right to accept or cancel any tender without assigning any reasons thereof.

Important Points to be noted.

Separate Tender (Technical Bid, Financial Bid, EMD etc) is to be submitted for each branch clearly mentioning the name of the Branch Office (BO) for which the Tender is submitted.

Place : Silchar Sr. Divisional Manager Date : 12/03/2024

Climate crisis in Maharashtra's Beed forces women to choose between 'wombs' and livelihoods

NEW DELHI, March 11: In the semi-arid lands of Maharashtra's Beed district, women face a stark choice -- endure excruciating menstrual pain or risk losing their livelihoods.

Climate-induced droughts have ravaged the region, pushing families into poverty and forcing women to migrate in search of work in sugarcane fields.

However, the demanding nature of this labour -- coupled with exploitative contracts -- leaves women with few options but to undergo hysterectomies to avoid missing work and incurring financial penalties, according to a new paper from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Lata Waghmare, who migrates to Karnataka with her husband every year to work as cane cutters, said she delivered her second baby in a sugarcane field, scared of taking a leave post-delivery because of "khada (leave)" charges.

"The penalty for skipping one day's work is in the range of Rs 500 to Rs 1,000. I got back to work five days after

the delivery. To feed the baby, I carried her to the field with me," she told IIED.

"While carrying the cane bundles, I kept her on the floor in one corner. The tractor ran over my baby. I lost my child," she added. The 34-year-old Dalit woman returned to work the following day, unable to take leave to grieve.

"I bled for a month after the delivery. In March 2010, I went to Beed and got my uterus removed. (The) doctor told me that lifting heavy bundles and not taking rest post-delivery led to the bleeding," she said. Hysterectomies of this kind are still taking place despite widespread outcry in the country. The procedure, performed mostly in private clinics, can leave women with lasting pain and mental health problems.

Researchers surveyed 423 households in two different areas of Beed for the paper titled "Women Paying the Cost of Climate Crisis with their Wombs". Of the total, people from 253 households migrated to work in the sugar industry. The majority of those migrating for

work said they cut sugarcane during the harvest season. Local labour contractors -- known as "mukkadams" -- typically hire husband-and-wife teams or "jodis" to work in pairs, not through formal contracts but informal agreements.

A typical day for these labourers involves shifts ranging from 12 to 16 hours, throughout the six-month harvest period. Men will usually cut the cane while the women will tie and stack bundles. These pairs are often subjected to wage deductions for work missed, creating a fear of taking any leave.

Jayashree Owhal, a 45-year-old cane cutter from Kathawada village in Beed district, told the researchers, "My (menstrual) cramping became unbearable after a point. I went to see a gynaecologist in Beed, he suggested I should stop lifting heavy bundles but that was the only source of income for us. So I decided to get the hysterectomy done and get rid of this every month 'pain and strain'." (PTI)

Bengal's Matua community celebrates implementation of CAA rules

KOLKATA, March 11: A section of West Bengal's Matua community celebrated the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) 2019 at the headquarters of the sect in Thakurnagar, North 24 Parganas, on Monday, claiming it to be their 'second independence day'.

Matuas, originally from East Pakistan, are a weaker section of Hindus who migrated to India during the Partition and after the creation of Bangladesh.

The community, with an estimated population of three million in the state, can tilt the scales in favour of a political party in more than 30 assembly seats in Nadia, and North and South 24 Parganas districts bordering Bangladesh.

Members of the Matua community celebrated the occasion by beating drums and exchanging pleasantries and expressed their gratitude towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and local MP

and Union minister Santanu Thakur for the Act's implementation.

They hailed the moment as a defining one for them, expressing joy at finally being granted citizenship. They referred to it as their "second independence day".

However, a TMC supporter from the area, belonging to the sect, claimed that people of the community had previously obtained voter ID cards, ration cards, and Aadhaar cards, which were deactivated by the BJP a month ago.

The Matuas had once stood behind the TMC but supported the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The rules for implementation of the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) 2019 were notified on Monday, paving the way for granting citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, according to officials. (PTI)

Electoral Bonds: Cong hails SC decision of dismissing SBI plea but calls for info on 'who gave who'

NEW DELHI, March 11: The Congress on Monday hailed the Supreme Court for dismissing the SBI's plea seeking an extension of time to furnish electoral bond details but said it should also give directions to ensure the nation gets to know who contributed funds to the BJP to bag contracts.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said those who came to power on the promise of bringing black money back from Swiss banks in 100 days did whatever they could to hide the data of their own bank from the Supreme Court.

Earlier in the day, the Supreme Court rejected the State Bank of India's plea seeking an extension of time and ordered it to disclose the details of electoral bonds to the Election Commission by close of business hours on March 12. A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud also directed the EC to publish the details on March 15.

The bench, however, said it had not directed the bank to match the details of donors and donee with other information. The SBI has to just open the sealed cover, collate the details and give the information to the EC, it said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that after the SBI asked for four-and-a-half months to publish the electoral bond details, it became clear that the Narendra Modi government was making every possible effort to cover up its dark deeds.

"With the Supreme Court's deci-



sion, the country will soon come to know who donated to the BJP through electoral bonds. This is the first step in exposing the corruption, scams and transactions of the Modi government," Kharge said in a post in Hindi on 'X'.

"Even now, the country will not find out for which contracts the select capitalist donors of the BJP were giving donations to the Modi government and the Supreme Court should give appropriate directions for that," he said.

Kharge also cited media reports to allege that the BJP used to "extort donations" by getting the Enforcement Directorate, Central Bureau of Investigation and the Income Tax Department to conduct raids.

"The Supreme Court's decision is a victory for transparency, accountability, and a level-playing field in democracy," the Congress president added. At a press conference, Kharge was asked about the top court not directing the bank to

match the details of donors and donee with other information to which the Congress president said the information as to who gave whom would not be known.

"What is the point of that? We need to know who gave you (the government) the donation, what contracts were given to that person, what exemptions from ED were given, what were I-T department exemptions and what kind of benefit was given to them. But you are not giving that," he said.

Rahul Gandhi too attacked the government over the electoral bonds issue, saying, "Narendra Modi's 'donation business' is about to be exposed!"

Those who came to power by promising to bring back black money from Swiss banks in 100 days left no stone unturned in the Supreme Court to hide their own bank data, Gandhi said in a swipe at the Modi government.

"Electoral Bonds will prove to be

the biggest scam in Indian history and will reveal the real face of Narendra Modi in front of the country by exposing the nexus between corrupt industrialists and the government," the former Congress chief said in a post in Hindi on 'X'.

"The chronology is clear -- donate and take business; donate and take protection," Gandhi added.

He alleged that the Modi government showered blessings on those who donated and imposed tax burdens on the general public.

In a post on 'X', Congress general secretary, organisation, K C Venugopal, said, "The Supreme Court has once again come to protect Indian democracy from the devious machinations of this regime."

"It was laughable for the SBI to seek an extension on a simple one-day job. The fact is that the government is scared of all their skeletons tumbling out of the closet," he said, adding, "This mega corruption scandal, as certified by the Supreme Court, will expose the unholy nexus between the BJP and its corrupt corporate masters."

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said the top court's order "is a tight slap" on the SBI for defying its earlier order.

"This was a self-inflicted stain. The order of the Supreme Court today gives an opportunity to SBI to wipe the stain and redeem itself. I am sorry for the Chairman of SBI and the fine band of officers that they placed themselves in this situation," Chidambaram said in a post on 'X'. (PTI)

Will oppose CAA if it is discriminatory and aims at usurping people's rights: Mamata

KOLKATA, March 11: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday said she would fiercely oppose the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) if she found it to be discriminatory against groups of people living in India and if it curtailed their existing citizenship rights in any manner.

Speaking at a hurriedly convened press conference from the state secretariat, Nabanna, barely minutes before the CAA rules were officially notified by the Centre, Banerjee said this was her "primary response" based on media reports that the announcement was likely to be made soon.

Banerjee stated she would offer her detailed opinion on CAA on Tuesday after thoroughly going through the notification and the finalised rules.

She asked, "Why do this only days before the Lok Sabha polls are scheduled to be announced? Why did the Centre have to wait for four years to notify the law after it was passed in Parliament?"

The Centre should have published the notification "before leaking it to the press... Why wait for the sundown? This, after all, is not freedom at midnight", Banerjee said.

Stating that people living in India already enjoyed guaranteed rights to education, property ownership and electing public representatives, Banerjee said she apprehended that the CAA could be used as a possible precursor to implementing NRC across the nation.



"We will oppose NRC implementation at all costs. I am only worried as to whether the new CAA rules would make the previous entitlements of our citizens invalid. Will the documents they hold lose value now?" the TMC chief said.

The Centre on Monday announced the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, a move that comes four years after the contentious law was passed and paves the way for citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

The rules were notified days ahead of the expected announcement of the Lok Sabha elections.

"I ask what was the tearing hurry to rethink citizenship when elections are knocking on the door," the Trinamool Congress supreme added.

Banerjee said her concerns stemmed from the fact that the previous law (NRC) aimed at "nullifying the existing rights of citizens. I consider this to be an attempt to hoodwink and deceive the people".

Calling the Centre's move a "show off" and akin to "offering a

lollipop to a kid", Banerjee questioned the effective use of the possible online portal through which CAA applications could be made.

"Will the system work?" the chief minister asked.

She said that the alleged attempts to cancel the Aadhaar cards of Matua and other Namasudra community members in West Bengal were a "ploy" to lend credence to the CAA notification.

"We had understood that conspiracy in advance and called it out," she said, in an apparent reference to the protest letter on deactivated Aadhaar cards she shot off to Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month. Stating that the CAA and the NRC are sensitive to not just Bengal but also to the North-eastern states, Banerjee said she doesn't want unrest before the Lok Sabha elections.

"The BJP is forcefully provoking the people before the polls," she declared.

"We ask the people to not worry about their rights. Trinamool will be the first party to raise its voice and actively resist any attempt to curtail them," she said.

Referring to PM Modi's congratulatory message on DRDO's successful launch of the Agni5 missile, Banerjee said, "I congratulate the scientists behind the feat. Their success is the nation's success."

"I had also congratulated the scientists behind our successful lunar mission. But let me add that these scientific endeavours began some four decades ago from the time of Indira Gandhi." (PTI)

Apollo Hospitals announces launch of multi-specialty emergency medical centre in Ayodhya

AYODHYA (UP), March 11: The Apollo Hospitals Group on Monday announced the launch of a state-of-the-art multi-specialty emergency medical centre at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi pilgrimage site in Ayodhya.

Talking about the advanced services of the centre, Apollo Hospitals Group Chairman Dr Pratap C. Reddy said that a wide range of better medical services will be available in the centre.

These range from basic first aid to medical emergency services, including heart attack and stroke, he said, according to a statement issued by the hospital.

Dr Reddy also said that the centre will also have 24x7 critical care support and ICU backup for both adults and children.

The construction work of this hospital will start soon.

According to the statement, online super speciality consultation will be available at the centre through the latest telemedicine technology. Through this, the patient's access to specialists will become very easy.

The Emergency Medical Center will be constructed in an area of approximately 5,000 square feet.

According to the statement, medical services at the centre will be absolutely free for the pilgrims coming for the darshan of Shri Ram Lalla.

Dr Mayank Somani, MD and CEO of Apollo Hospitals Lucknow, said that the services of this centre run by Apollo Hospitals Lucknow are a proof of our dedication.

This initiative is a testament to Apollo Hospitals' unwavering commitment towards the health and well-being of the pilgrims visiting Ayodhya, he said. (PTI)

First phase of Mumbai coastal road inaugurated; CM Shinde calls it engineering marvel

MUMBAI, March 11: Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde on Monday inaugurated the first phase of the coastal road between Worli and Marine Drive in south Mumbai and said it is an "engineering marvel". A 10.5-kilometer-long stretch will be opened for traffic in the first phase, an official earlier said, adding that motorists can enter the coastal road from Worli Seafare, Haji Ali interchange and Amarnon's interchange points, and exit at Marine Lines.

Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar and other dignitaries were present at the inauguration of the south-bound corridor of the coastal road.

After the inauguration, CM Shinde and other dignitaries showed green flags to the electric buses of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) ferrying women and a vintage car rally on the coastal road.

The work on the ambitious project started on October 13, 2018 and its projected cost is Rs 12,721 crore.

A world-class Central Park spread over several acres will come up along the road,

named 'Dharmaveer Sambhaji Maharaj Coastal Road, according to CM Shinde.

He said the coastal road was built using advanced technology and it can be called an "engineering marvel".

All precautions have been taken for the safety of people on this road, he said, adding that its second phase will be opened for traffic in May.

The coastal road will be connected to the Bandra-Worli Sea Link and there onwards it will be extended up to Dahisar, he said.

The 53-km-long coastal road, being constructed till Dahisar, will help the people in saving fuel and time, besides reducing pollution, the CM said.

The coastal road has been named after Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj (son of Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj) and opened on the occasion of his death anniversary, he noted.

A statue of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj will be erected in Worli, next to the coastal road, Shinde said.

The CM said 175 acres of green space is being developed as part of the coastal road

project, besides 120 acres or racecourse land. Thus, Mumbai will get a Central Park spread over around 300 acres, he added.

Without naming former CM Uddhav Thackeray, Shinde blamed the previous government for putting a "speed breaker" in the way of the project.

Shinde and deputy CM Fadnis targeted Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and his MLA son Aaditya Thackeray over the latter's social media posts seeking to take credit for the coastal road development.

Fadnis said despite he then being the chief minister, Uddhav Thackeray had not invited him for the project's ground-breaking ceremony.

On the occasion, Shinde also said the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has made a provision of Rs 500 crore in its budget for the Siddhivinayak Temple area development in the city.

A DPR (detailed project report) is being prepared for it, the CM said, adding he has asked to appoint the same architect for the work who prepared the Mahakal corridor plan in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain city. (PTI)

ISRO's new meteorological satellite initiates earth imaging ops, first captured images released

BENGALURU, March 11: ISRO on Monday said its meteorological satellite INSAT-3DS has initiated earth imaging operations, and released the first set of images captured by the on-board payloads (6-channel Imager and 19-channel Sounder).

The Imager and Sounder payloads are similar to the ones flown on INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR, but significant improvements have been achieved in radiometric accuracy, black body calibration, thermal management, and imaging throughput, among others.

The payloads were designed and developed at the Space Applications Centre (SAC), Ahmedabad. The first images are processed and released at the Master Control Facility, Hassan in Karnataka.

Noting that the 6-channel Imager equipment

captures images of the earth's surface and atmosphere across multiple spectral channels or wavelengths, it said the use of multiple channels allows for gathering information about various atmospheric and surface phenomena, such as clouds, aerosols, land surface temperature, vegetation health, and water vapour distribution.

"The Imager could be configured to capture specific features of interest," ISRO said.

The 19-channel Sounder captures radiation emitted by the earth's atmosphere through channels carefully chosen to capture radiation emitted by different atmospheric constituents and properties like water vapour, ozone, carbon dioxide, and other gases, while others may be designed to measure temperature variations in different layers of the atmosphere, it added.

These payloads generate over 40 geophysical

data products such as Sea Surface Temperature, Rainfall (precipitation) Products, Land Surface Temperature, Fog Intensity, Outgoing Longwave Radiation, Atmospheric Motion Vectors, High-Resolution Winds, Upper Tropospheric Humidity, Cloud Properties, Smoke, Fire, Mean Surface Pressure, Temperature Profiles, Water Vapor Profiles, Surface Skin Temperature and Total Ozone for the user community.

The data collected derives information about the vertical structure of the atmosphere, crucial for weather forecasting, climate monitoring, and understanding atmospheric processes, ISRO said.

The space agency said after completing orbit-raising operations, the satellite, launched on February 17, reached the designated geostationary slot for the In Orbit Testing (IOT) on February 28. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, March 11: If India has to become a developed country, it should strive to become a "world leader" across all sectors, including in the field of archives, Union Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said on Monday and asserted that the Modi government's mission is "Virasat Bhi, Vikas Bhi".

In his address during an event held here at the National Archives of India (NAI) on its 134th foundation day, he said that work culture needs to change when it comes to societal attitude towards the elderly and old archival resources.

The minister of state for culture in a lighter vein said that many retired people say that their children tell them that "they are old and fit to be kept in an 'archive'".

"That work culture needs to be changed... the elderly are part of the country's legacy," he asserted. Meghwal said the central government driven by the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi talks about "Virasat Bhi, Vikas Bhi" (development along with heritage preservation).

"Our mission is 'Virasat Bhi, Vikas Bhi'," the minister said. He also launched a digital exhibition 'Subhas Abhinandan', based on the life and legacy of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, drawing from the archives of the NAI.

"India should become a world leader... If it has to become a developed country, it should become a world leader. No sector should be left in which we are not a world leader. The archives

sector should also be such that other countries would come and admire these archival treasures of India," he added.

He cited the example of yoga and Ayush, saying these are sectors in which the "world looks at India".

As also launching of satellites, other countries can do it, but "India offers quality and affordability", he said.

Meghwal said the Modi government has emphasised on the upkeep of heritage and taking pride in the country's rich cultural legacy. "Earlier, not much attention was paid to our 'virasat' (heritage)," he said.

Later, the culture ministry issued an statement on the exhibition. In this period of 'Amrit Kaal', "to strengthen our roots and lay the foundation of the future, it is extremely important to depict, read, write and understand our history that laid the foundation of modern India", he was quoted as saying in the statement.

"The National Archives of India, at present, has in its repositories a collection of over 34 crore pages of public records, which include files, volumes, maps, bills assented to by the President of India, treaties, rare manuscripts, oriental records, private papers, cartographic records, important collection of gazettes and gazetteers, census records, assembly and parliament debates, proscribed literature, travel accounts etc. A major chunk of oriental records is in Sanskrit, Persian and Odia," the statement said. (PTI)

Living with lymphatic filariasis: Stigma, struggle and tenuous survival for thousands in India

With 40 percent of the global case load, India is amongst the countries most affected by the disease caused by parasitic worms and transmitted to humans through infected mosquitoes

MUZAFFARPUR/GOPALGANJ (BIHAR), March 11: Imagine carrying 10 to 20 kg of dead weight on your foot or arm every day of your life. Now imagine being stigmatised for it, losing dignity, respect and the ability to work. That's how life is for many thousands of people suffering from lymphatic filariasis, a neglected tropical disease commonly known as elephantiasis.

With 40 per cent of the global case load, India is amongst the countries most affected by the disease caused by parasitic worms and transmitted to humans through infected mosquitoes. It is mostly concentrated in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where lymphatic filariasis has historically been a public health worry due to various factors, including population density, poverty and limited access to healthcare services.

A mass drug administration (MDA) programme has been key in the strategy to control LF in

Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Besides, patients with more than 40 per cent disability have been issued unique disability IDs that give them a monthly pension of ₹ 400.

Beyond the numbers though is the stark reality of living with a disability that is not reversible and no cure, leaving many women in particular alone and abandoned by their families.

At 65, Kaushalya Devi, who can barely manage to move with a massively swollen left leg, finds that lymphatic filariasis has robbed her of any agency over her life. And it is not just about her physical limitations.

"Over a period of time, I lost any and every decision making power in my family. Then my husband and my children started getting irritated with me and moved out. I now stay alone and work as a domestic worker to make ends meet," Kaushalya, from Meenapur village in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district, told PTI.



Kaushalya, who manages to make about ₹ 80-100 a day depending on the work she gets, has got a disability card that gives her ₹ 400 a month. But it's just not enough, she said.

When lymphatic filariasis develops into chronic conditions it leads

to lymphoedema (tissue swelling) or elephantiasis (skin/tissue thickening) of limbs and hydrocele (scrotal swelling). Meena Kausar lives not too far away.

The social stigma associated with the disease is the most difficult aspect to live with, the 34-

year-old said, echoing Kaushalya. "I wear saris and not salwar kurtas to hide my feet. People stare and some even consider us 'man-hoods' (cursed). We are not called to weddings or auspicious occasions. This is a disease caused by mosquito bites but how many people know that?"

"When an acute attack occurs, it feels like one is going to die," she said, recounting the agonising pain attack every week or 10 days.

Acute attacks in lymphoedema denote sudden and intense bouts of swelling, inflammation, and discomfort in the affected limb or area. Typically occurring in individuals with chronic lymphoedema, these episodes can be triggered by factors like infection, trauma, overuse, climate changes, or hormonal fluctuations.

Meena said it is a very expensive disease to manage.

"I've borrowed ₹ 2.5 lakh for my treatment, and to repay the loan, I work as a farm worker,

earning just ₹ 80 per day. Moreover, my disability limits my ability to work to just three-four hours a day, leaving me with no other viable means of income."

According to Neetu Kumari from the NGO Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR), women filaria patients face a unique social predicament as there is a lack of concern from their own family.

"When the diagnosis of filariasis is first confirmed, families often initiate treatment. However, it's crucial to understand that this is a lifelong condition with no cure, only control. As time passes, families, especially those already burdened by poverty, carry on with their lives. The financial strain of managing this disease often leads to taking loans, which gradually breeds resentment within the household. Tragically, it's all too common for these women to be abandoned," she said.

Men, too, confront their own tri-

als. Ram Sagar Bharat, once a hopeful 20-year-old young man with dreams of joining the army, now grapples with the debilitating effects of filariasis.

Now 60 years old, Bharat has developed lymphoedema and both legs have been infected and he can't move without support. But he has to pay back a loan of ₹ 2 lakh and has to continue to work as a daily labourer in the field in Sher village in Bihar's Gopalganj district.

"The situation is such that a slight scratch in the foot can result in high fever for seven-eight days. Life has never been easy but since this disease it has been unbearable. At times, I feel it is better to die than live like this," said Bharat, who like Meena suffers from frequent bouts of acute pain.

Dr Rakesh Kumar, chief medical officer in Meenapur village, said the only thing that can be done for these patients is to mitigate the progression of the disease. (PTI)



OSCARS 2024: COMPLETE LIST OF WINNERS AT 96TH ACADEMY AWARDS

NEW DELHI, March 11: R-rated biographical drama "Oppenheimer" dominated the 96th edition of the Oscars, winning seven awards out of 13 nominations including top honours of best picture and director for Christopher Nolan, his first.

It was also a night of firsts for other members of the "Oppenheimer" team with Cillian Murphy (best actor), Robert Downey Jr (best supporting actor), Hoyte van Hoytema (best cinematography), and Jennifer Lame (best film editing) bagging their maiden Oscars.

The Academy Award for best actress went to Emma Stone for "Poor Things" as she bested frontrunner Lily Gladstone of "Killers of the Flower Moon".

This is Stone's second best actress Oscar after her 2017 win for "La Land".

L-R: Cillian Murphy accepts the Oscar award for best performance by an actor in a leading role for "Oppenheimer"; Emma Stone wins best performance by an actress in a leading role for "Poor Things"; Christopher Nolan poses in the press room with the awards for best director and best picture for "Oppenheimer".

"The Zone of Interest" wins Oscar award for best international film

Here's the complete list of winners:

Best Picture: "Oppenheimer" Emma Thomas, Charles Roven and Christopher Nolan

Best Director: Christopher Nolan, "Oppenheimer"

Best Actor: Cillian Murphy, "Oppenheimer"

Best Actress: Emma Stone, "Poor Things"

Best Supporting Actor: Robert Downey Jr., "Oppenheimer"

Best Supporting Actress: Da'Vine Joy Randolph, "The Holdovers"

Best International Feature Film: "The Zone of Interest" (United Kingdom)

Best Original Screenplay: "Anatomy of a Fall", Justine Triet and Arthur Harari

Best Adapted Screenplay: "American Fiction", Cord Jefferson

Best Documentary Short Film: "The Last Repair Shop"

Best Documentary Feature: "20 Days in Mariupol"

Best Cinematography: Hoyte Van Hoytema, "Oppenheimer"

Best Live Action Short Film: "The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar"

Best Animated Short Film: "WAR IS OVER! Inspired by the Music of John & Yoko"

Best Animated Film: "The Boy and the Heron" Best Makeup and Hair-styling: "Poor Things", Nadia Stacey, Mark Coulier and Josh Weston

Best Production Design: "Poor Things", James Price, Shona Heath and Zsuzsa Mihalek

Best Costume Design: "Poor Things", Holly Waddington

Best Visual Effects: "Godzilla Minus One"

Best Film Editing: "Oppenheimer", Jennifer Lame

Best Sound: "The Zone of Interest", Tarn Willers, Johnnie Burn

Best Original Score: Ludwig

Coransson, "Oppenheimer"

Best Original Song: Billie Eilish, Finneas O'Connell, "What Was I Made For?" from "Barbie".

(PTI)

'NAATU NAATU' ALSO MAKES APPEARANCE

'RRR' sequence part of Oscars 2024 tribute to stunt community

NEW DELHI, March 11: An action sequence from SS Rajamouli's "RRR" made an appearance at the 96th Academy Awards in a montage celebrating the contribution of the stunt community towards international cinema.

Oscar nominees Ryan Gosling and Emily Blunt presented the 1.15-minute showreel at the grand event, which was held on Sunday night at Los Angeles' Dolby Theatre.

"They have been such a crucial part of our industry since the beginning of cinema. To the stunt performers and stunt coordinators who help make movies magic. We salute you," Gosling said. "They are truly the unsung heroes who risk life and limb for cinema," added Blunt.

Despite years of lobbying, the Academy Awards have yet to introduce a new category for stunts. Earlier this year, it announced plans to add its first new category in more than 20 years to recognise casting directors.

Calling it "a sweet surprise", the official 'X' page of "RRR" on Monday expressed gratitude to the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for including the film at this year's awards. "Glad that @TheAcademy included #RRRMovie action sequences as part of their tribute to the world's greatest stunt sequences in cinema," the post read. (PTI)



India-set 'To Kill a Tiger' loses to '20 Days in Mariupol' in docu feature Oscar category

NEW DELHI, March 11: "To Kill a Tiger", set in a village in Jharkhand, lost to "20 Days in Mariupol" in the best documentary feature category at the 96th edition of the Academy Awards. Directed by Ukrainian filmmaker and war correspondent Mstyslav Chernov, "20 Days in Mariupol" follows the story of Ukrainian journalists trapped in Mariupol after Russia's invasion. Other Oscar nominees in the best documentary feature category were "Bobi Wine: The People's President", "The Eternal Memory", and "Four Daughters". A Canadian production, "To Kill a Tiger" is directed by Delhi-born Nisha Pahuja, an Emmy-nominated filmmaker based in Toronto. It had its world premiere at Toronto International Film Festival 2022 where it won the Amplify Voices Award for Best Canadian Feature Film. The film follows Ranjit's uphill battle to find justice for his 13-year-old daughter who was abducted and later sexually assaulted by three men. "Ranjit goes to the police, and the men are arrested. But Ranjit's relief is short-lived, as the villagers and their leaders launch a sustained campaign to force the family to drop the charges. A cinematic documentary, 'To Kill a Tiger' follows Ranjit's uphill battle to find justice for his child," according to the official website of "To Kill a Tiger". (PTI)



First international film festival in Chandigarh to open with 'The Taste of Things'

CHANDIGARH, March 11: Cinevesture International Film Festival (CIFF), the first international film festival to be held in Chandigarh from March 27 to 31, on Monday announced its line up of over 67 titles including world cinema, Indian feature films, classics as well as shorts films.

The festival will open with Juliette Binoche-starrer French culinary drama "The Taste of Things", which won director Tran Anh Hung the best director prize at Cannes. It will come to a close with South Korea's highest grossing film of 2024, horror drama "Exhuma" ("Pamyoo"). CIFF will showcase 24 award-winning international features in the World Cinema section, 16 indie gems in the India Unveiled, 27 shorts in Brief Encounters, a curated section of

children's films and timeless classics from Satyajit Ray to Guru Dutt. The festival will screen acclaimed films like Holocaust drama, "The Zone of Interest", which won the international feature film Oscar on Sunday, Palme d'Or winner and Hirokazu Kore-eda's "Monster", last-year's best actor Oscar winner "The Whale" and acclaimed documentary "Seven Winters in Tehran" among others.

Award-winning Indian features and documentaries such as Marathi film "Sthal", "Stolen", Rima Das' Assamese film "Tora's Husband", Gurvinder Singh's Punjabi feature "Adh Chanan Raat", Harjit Singh's documentary on the late Punjabi painter and writer Imroz, Lijo Jose Pellissery's Malayalam film "Malaikottai Vaaliban", Sreemoyee Singh's documentary "And, To-

wards Happy Alleys", an ode to Iranian cinema and poetry featuring Jafar Panahi, Varun Grover's short "Kiss" Riz Ahmed starrer short "Dammi" are also part of the line-up.

The festival will host stars like Richa Chadha, Ali Fazal, Roshan Mathew, Gulshan Devaiah, Varun Grover, Rasika Duggal, Rashmeet Kaur (singer), Hansal Mehta, Shekhar Kapur, Sudhir Mishra, and Tahira Kashyap Khurrana.

The opening and closing films will be open air screenings in the Government Museum & Arts Gallery, Sector 10, the main venue of CIFF 2024. Three more Open Air screenings are scheduled of classics such as "Jalsaghar", "Kaagaz Ke Phool", "The Godfather Coda: The Death of Michael Corleone", a recut of the original

"Godfather 3" by Francis Ford Coppola to mark the 30th anniversary of the film.

An experiential cinema exhibition to celebrate the centenary of Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand is also set up in the Rose Garden Underpass in collaboration with National Film Archives (NFDC) and students of Chandigarh College of Architecture. Children's films are open to all children from the ages of 10-17 years at 9 AM each day from 27-31 March 2024 at Cinepolis Jagat.

The inaugural edition of the festival, organised by Cinevesture Pvt Ltd founder and CEO Nina Lath, will also feature CIFF/market to facilitate the business and craft of filmmaking. More than 15 curated projects by creators with a strong presence in the Indian film industry

are being presented at market.

CIFF will also feature workshops, master classes and panel discussions. "Cinevesture International Film Festival is envisaged as a platform for the two key stakeholders, namely audiences and producers. Its various verticals have been designed keeping the same in mind. We trust that in time, CIFF will serve as a reliable festival offering high-quality content for audiences and enhanced business opportunities for the film industry," Nina Lath said. The festival is supported by the Government Museum & Art Gallery, Chandigarh, Department of Tourism Chandigarh, and Chandigarh Administration.

VS Kundu, a retired IAS and the former head of the National Films Division of India, has come aboard as the director of the film

festival and industry veteran Bina Paul serves as the artistic director.

"CIFF is the first global-scale cinema event to ever happen in Chandigarh with the support of Chandigarh Tourism, the Department of Culture and Chandigarh Administration. It is a truly international film festival designed to match the best international film festivals," Kundu said.

"Our endeavour is to build a strong foundation for an annual event that the global film industry will look forward to, and which will foster effective business relationships between producers and distributors and the filmmakers of the region," he added.

Paul said the festival aims to bring "a potpourri of cinema" to the people of Chandigarh. (PTI)

RISHABH PANT ON TRACK FOR IPL COMEBACK

Shami's comeback likely by home series against Bangladesh in September: Jay Shah

DHARAMSALA, March 11: India's premier pacer Mohammed Shami, who is recuperating from an ankle surgery, is expected to make his comeback with the home Test series against Bangladesh later this year, BCCI secretary Jay Shah told PTI.

Shami missed the five-match Test series against England and will also sit out of the IPL after having undergone surgery for Achilles tendon last month. He will also miss the T20 World Cup to be jointly hosted by the West Indies and the USA in June.

Shami last played for India in the ODI World Cup where he was their standout performer. India will host Bangladesh for two Tests and three T20 Internationals in September.

"Shami's surgery is done, he is back in India. Shami's return is likely for the home series against Bangladesh. KL Rahul needed an



injection, he has started rehab and is at the NCA," said Shah while

talking to media here. Rahul missed the last four Tests

of the England series after complaining of pain in his right quadriceps. He is expected to turn up for Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL, having undergone treatment in London.

Rishabh Pant on track for IPL comeback

The BCCI secretary also gave an update on Rishabh Pant, who is set to make his much-awaited comeback in the IPL. Pant has been out of action since a horrific car accident in December 2022.

"He is batting well, he is keeping well. We will declare him fit very soon. If he can play the T20 World Cup for us, that will be a big thing for us. He is a big asset for us."

"If he can keep, he can play the World Cup. Let's see how he does in the IPL," said Shah.

The accident had left Pant with a severe right knee injury that re-

quired a ligament reconstruction surgery besides a fractured wrist and ankle. But he has done well to bounce back.

His IPL franchise Delhi Capitals' head coach Ricky Ponting has already stated that he would be participating in the league.

IPL can't accept foreign investment

Asked about the potential of foreign investment in the IPL, Shah said that is not possible considering the BCCI is a society and not a company.

"BCCI is a society and nobody can invest in it," Shah asserted.

It had been reported last year that Saudi Arabia was eyeing multi-billion dollar investment in the IPL.

In India, a registered society cannot accept foreign investment without the approval of the central government and the Reserve Bank of India. (PTI)

Australia move to second in WTC table after 2-0 series win over New Zealand



DUBAI, March 11: Australia have overtaken New Zealand to take the second spot in the World Test Championships ranking following the 2-0 series win over their Trans-Tasman rivals in Christchurch on Monday.

The win in the second Test helped Australia collect 12 points on their road to defending the World Test Championship mace.

Australia have improved their percentage points from 59.09 to 62.50 after 12 matches.

New Zealand have dropped from 60 percentage points to 50 to be third on the list. They have played six games.

India, who have won six of their nine matches, continue to lead the table 68.51.

One guy stood up in key moments: Cummins after thrilling series-win over NZ

Cummins lauded his team for its fearless attitude and particularly praised wicketkeeper Carey for his series-clinching effort, saying the story of the rubber was that one player who stood up when they needed.

A Herculean effort from Alex Carey alongside Mitchell Marsh's 80 and Pat Cummins' late heroics helped Australia defeat New Zealand in the second Test and seal the series.

Australia had won the first Test by 172 runs in Wellington last month.

Carey finished on 98 not out

while Cummins (32 not out) struck the winning runs off New Zealand debutant Ben Sears (4/90), whose double-wicket over to collect Mitchell Marsh and Starc, earlier looked to bring the Kiwis back into the match.

In the end, the 61-run partnership between Cummins and Carey sealed the deal for Australia.

"If the scoreboard is not moving, you always feel in the game (from the bowling side), but if they're just chipping away at it seems like it's all happening pretty quickly."

"So that was a goal today - just always be busy out there. Just keep the run rate ticking over, bit by bit getting closer." Cummins was quoted as saying by ICC after the end of the match.

Cummins feels the 92-run first innings lead over New Zealand played a big role in Australia's success in the keenly-contested clash.

"That day one moved really quickly. And then after that the pitch flattened out and it was a bit tougher going for the bowlers. But yeah, the first innings lead was always key."

"I think the story of this series was in key moments one guy stood up, and we didn't necessarily play complete games but you know, someone stood up and made themselves a match-winner. (We) keep finding ways to win. It's a pretty awesome squad," he said.

"Amazing win, bit by bit, the boys were fantastic today." (PTI)

Amandeep ready for all challengers in sixth leg of WPGT

GURUGRAM, March 11: Amandeep Drall will be among the favourites to win the sixth leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour, which gets underway at the DLF Golf and Country Club here this week.

It will be an exciting week with 46 players, the highest ever on the WPGT, and the prize purse will be a whopping Rs 25 lakhs.

For the second straight week, the players will be playing over four rounds and 72 holes.

Amandeep, who won by four shots, will be challenged by Vani Kapoor, Hitaashee Bakshi and Sneha Singh. While Vani featured in Singapore last week, Hitaashee leads the WPGT Order of Merit, whereas Sneha is the only multiple winner this season. The field also includes the promising amateur Vidhatri Urs, who has also won on the Pro Tour this season.

Another amateur to watch out for will be Zara Anand, who, along with Vidhatri, will be playing on the Indian Golf Union's national team at the Queen Sirikit Cup. One of the interesting features this week is that the entire three-member Indian Golf Union's team for the Queen Sirikit Cup, Vidhatri, Zara and Heena Kang are in the field.

It has been a closely-contested season so far with four different winners in the last five events. All of them are in the field this week.

Among the others looking for their first win of 2024 will be Gaurika Bishnoi, who was second to Amandeep last week, along with Ridhima Dilawari, Neha Tripathi, Seher Atwal and Khushi Khanjau. A total of seven amateurs will be playing on the field. (PTI)

Pistol shooter Rudransh Khandelwal wins silver in Para World Cup



NEW DELHI, March 11: India's Rudransh Khandelwal and Nihal Singh settled for silver and bronze respectively in the mixed 50m pistol (SH1) category as a gold medal eluded the hosts on day three of the Para Shooting World Cup here on Monday. Rudransh, Nihal and Tokyo Paralympics silver medalist Singhraj also bagged the mixed 50m pistol (SH1) team silver with China claiming the top step on the podium. Teenaged shooter Rudransh, who had secured a Paris Paralympic berth last year, shot 223.2 in final to finish behind Italy's Davide Franceschetti, who totalled 230.0 for the gold medal.

Nihal had to settle for a bronze medal with 202.8 points.

Earlier in the qualification round, Rudransh shot 530 and Nihal 527 to enter the eight-shooter final placed sixth and seventh.

In the mixed 50m pistol (SH1) team event, the trio of Rudransh (530), Nihal (527) and Singhraj (516) aggregated 1573 for the silver medal with China taking the gold with a combined score 1611. Rifle shooter Mona Agarwal is the only one so far to have won a gold medal for India in the prestigious Para World Cup for India. (PTI)

Lifter Mirabai Chanu to train in Paris ahead of Olympics

NEW DELHI, March 11: Former world champion weightlifter Mirabai Chanu's proposal to train in Paris ahead of the Olympic Games was on Monday cleared by the government.

The Tokyo Olympics silver medalist will acclimatise to the weather and prepare for the quadrennial showpiece during her month-long stint in La Ferte-Milon in Paris, according to a statement by the Sports Ministry's Mission Olympic Cell.

The 29-year-old Chanu, who competes in the 49kg category, will be accompanied by two coaches and a physiotherapist.

The government will bear the cost for air tickets, visa fees, accommodation, food, training, local transport and medical insurance among other expenditures under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS).



The Mission Olympic Cell also cleared the proposals of equestrian exponent Anush Agarwalla to compete in eight competitions and buy equipment for his horses.

"TOPS will cover his and his coach's accommodation costs, entry fees, two horse feed costs,

coach fees, and horse grooms costs among other expenditures."

Judoka Asmita Dey and shooter Arjun Singh Cheema's request for financial assistance were also cleared.

"MOC also approved judoka Asmita Dey's proposal for financial

assistance to participate in Grand Prix, Austria and shooter Arjun Singh Cheema's request for financial assistance towards participation in ISAS Dortmund competition," said the statement.

The request for financial assistance by ace Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal for participation in two international competitions along with expenditure for his support staff was also approved by MOC.

"The other proposals approved by MOC during the meeting were financial assistance towards hiring of video analyst for badminton players Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, extension of contract for weightlifter Jeremy Lalrinnunga's physiotherapist and financial assistance towards buying equipment for track athlete Amoj Jacob," the statement added. (PTI)

Satwik and Chirag at forefront as Indians chase glory at All England

BIRMINGHAM, March 11: Hopes will be high on French Open champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty to end India's 23-year-old title drought at the All England Championships as they lead the country's charge in the tournament, starting here on Tuesday.

Prakash Padukone (1980) and Pullela Gopichand (2001) were the last Indians to claim the title with Saina Nehwal (2015) and Lakshya Sen (2022) being the only ones to come close when they finished runner-ups.

The prestigious tournament holds an iconic status in India but over the years its exclusivity has somewhat dwindled as it is now one of the four Super 1000 event on the international calendar. Satwik and Chirag have already won a Super 1000 title in Indonesia last year and given their stellar run this season, expectations would be at a record high when the two towering shuttlers take the court this week, following their exploits at Paris on Sunday night.

Satwik and Chirag, the Asian Games champions, have bossed over their opponents this season, reaching three finals -- Malaysia Super 1000, and India Super 750 before winning at Paris and will remain India's biggest hopes of a title finish at the Utilita Arena

Birmingham here.

Standing in front of them in the opening round will be the veteran Indonesian pair of Mohammad Ahsan and Hendra Setiawan, the three-time world champions, who has left the Indians with a lot of heartbreaks in the past. The 'Daddies' had defeated Satwik and Chirag the last time they faced in the French Open last year and the Indians will be etching for revenge.

If they cross the opening hurdle, the Indian duo is likely to face the Malaysian pair of Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik, who has proved to be a nemesis for them but the Indians had defeated them thrice in the last three meetings. Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu will also face an acid test this week with world no. 1 and top seed Korean An Se Young lined up in the second round once the Indian tame Germany's Yvonne Li, against whom she has a 2-0 record.

Sindhu has shown that she has recovered well from the left knee injury that left her on the sidelines for four months before her campaign in the French Open last week.

With the legendary Padukone by her side, Sindhu matched Olympic champion Chen Yu Fei before marginally falling short in the quarterfinals in Paris.



The 68-year-old Indian will also be a constant source of inspiration for Lakshya Sen, who received a big boost in his race for Olympic qualification with a semifinal finish at the French Open last week. Sen will be up against Malaysia's Ng Tze Yong with a likely clash with fourth seed Dane Anders Antonsen standing in the second round.

World no. 7 HS Prannoy had made the semifinal of the India Open but bowed out in

the first round last week and will hope to go deep in the draw this week after opening against Chinese Taipei's Su Li Yang.

Kidambi Srikanth, who is racing against time to make the cut for Paris, however, will have to play out of his skin as he faces top seed and world no 1 Viktor Axelsen in the opening round, while young Priyanshu Rajawat will have to fight it out against Indonesia's Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo. (PTI)

India skipper Rohit Sharma took full advantage of the tentative field placings on day four of the Ranchi Test Stokes gave India the upper hand, says Ian Chappell

SYDNEY, March 11: Legendary Australian cricketer Ian Chappell has punched holes in England skipper Ben Stokes' aggressive leadership tactics during the just-concluded five-Test series against India, saying some of his decisions were responsible for the visitors' 1-4 series humiliation.

He said that while the need of the hour on the third evening of the fourth Test in Ranchi was to give the ball to pace stalwart Jimmy Anderson to make early breakthroughs, Stokes decided to bowl part-time spinner Joe Root, thus missing a trick.

"On the third evening, Stokes desperately needed to start India's chase with his best two bowlers and try to claim at least one wicket. Incredibly, he gave the ball to a part-timer, Joe Root, and ignored the experienced, probing bowling of Jimmy Anderson. India took full advantage and



scored an invaluable 40 runs off just eight overs," said Chappell in his column for ESPNcricinfo.

India did not lose a wicket in the post-tea session on day three, scoring 40 invaluable runs to put the pressure back on England. India won the Test by five wickets

to take an unassailable 3-1 lead in the series.

"Stokes missed a trick in Ranchi. He then compounded his error by allowing too many easy singles on the final day (day four) by resorting to some cautious field placings. At a time when Stokes

needed to be extremely brave as captain and hope he got lucky, he was abnormally conservative."

"India probably would still have won but at least by going on the attack, Stokes would have given England their best chance of an upset victory."

He said that Stokes could probably take a lesson or two from former Pakistan skipper Javed Miandad, who was a "leadership master" in trying situations.

Chappell added that India skipper Rohit Sharma took full advantage of the tentative field placings on day four of the Ranchi Test with a thoughtful innings, and India's solid opening partnership helped seal victory.

"By allowing easy singles, Stokes gave his opponents the upper hand. He also needed to use the experience and guile of Anderson to try and force the issue on the third evening but instead re-

lied on the part-time spin of Root." Chappell said that Kuldeep Yadav ripped open England batters' vulnerabilities to quality wrist spin, adding that R Ashwin did the job by decimating the lower order.

"In the final Test (in Dharamsala), England again capitulated to spin -- this time it was the wrist version, from the talented Kuldeep Yadav, who broke open England's vulnerable batting order while R Ashwin plundered the bottom half as offspin was again dominant."

"India have been getting stronger in this series, while England are regularly being overwhelmed by spin. They're fortunate it's the final Test. Despite all the feel-good stories and bold predictions, India and Australia are still flexing their muscles as dominant teams," Chappell added. (PTI)

Drama at wrestling trials: Vinesh does not let bouts start in two categories

PATIALA, March 11: Keen to ensure that she remains in reckoning for the Paris Games, star wrestler Vinesh Phogat did not let selection trials start in the women's 50kg and 53kg categories and demanded a written assurance from the authorities that a final trial will be held in the 53kg weight class before the Olympics.

Vinesh, who had accused former WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of sexual harassment and led a prolonged protest against the BJP MP, turned up at the SAI centre to compete in the 50kg trials.

The 29-year-old used to compete in 53kg before the protest but has lowered her weight class since Antim Panghal has already earned an Olympic quota in that category.

However, Vinesh did not let the competition start and demanded a written assurance. She also sought permission to compete in both 50kg and 53kg trials on Monday, leading to a bizarre situation.

The officials went into discussions. The wrestlers who are to compete in the 50kg weight class were complaining to the officials. "We are waiting since the past 2.5 hours," they said.

This is despite the fact that IOA ad-hoc panel has already announced that a final trial will be held to pick India's representative in 53kg. The best four wrestlers in 53kg will compete in trials near the Games and the winner will be asked to compete with Antim.

The winner of that bout will represent India.

"Vinesh wants an assurance from the government. Probably she fears that if WFI gets back the control, the federation may change the selection policy. But how can the government give assurance on this. The government can't interfere in selection matters," a coach, present at the trials, told PTI.

"Probably she wants to secure her future. If she loses 50kg trials today she wants to ensure that she remains in hunt in 53kg. If she finishes in top-4 today in 53kg, she remains alive for Paris Games qualification," the coach added. (PTI)



Government of Assam
Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department &
Higher (Technical) Education Department



Centre of Excellence

Inauguration of Nalbari Polytechnic, Nalbari and Virtual inauguration of Centres of Excellence at ITI Kajalgaon, ITI Nagaon, ITI Tinsukia and Sonitpur Polytechnic as a part of joint initiative of Govt. of Assam and Tata Technologies Ltd.



Key Objectives

- Establishing Centre of Excellence in 39 Govt. ITIs and 34 Govt. Polytechnics across Assam
- Industry 4.0 solutions and tools support to collect, analyse, and interpret vast amounts of data in real-time and the creation of intelligent factories.
- It aims to enhance productivity, efficiency, and flexibility while enabling more intelligent decision-making
- Customization in manufacturing and supply chain operations
- Reduce waste, and even design and innovate products that are more sustainable throughout their lifecycle.



13 March 2024



Nalbari Polytechnic, Nalbari

Inauguration by

Shri Jayanta Mallabaruah

Minister, Skill, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Tourism etc, Assam

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