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सत्यमेव जयते

Government of Assam



Viksit Bharat Viksit Assam

Chief Guest
Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Realising
Prime Minister's Vision

Assam achieves another
milestone in Transforming Lives

Highest number of
PMAY-G
Griha Pravesh
in the country in
a single day



GRIPA PRAVESH of more than
5,55,555 PMAY-G Houses

All these **PMAY-G** houses
have been completed in last **6 months**

**FACILITIES
PROVIDED
in each Pucca
House**

Electricity
Connection
under
SAUBHAGYA



Individual
Household
Toilets under
SBM(G)



Gas Connection
under
PM Ujjwala Yojana



Water
Connection
under JJM



9 March 2024

2 pm

Meleng Meteli, Jorhat, Assam



Sensex, Nifty edge higher to settle at fresh lifetime highs; metal, FMCG shares shine

MUMBAI, March 7: Benchmark Sensex and Nifty edged higher to close at fresh record highs on Thursday driven by gains in metal and FMCG shares amid firm global trends and foreign fund inflows. In a highly volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 33.40 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at a new peak of 74,119.39. During the day, it jumped 159.18 points or 0.21 per cent to hit an all-time high of 74,245.17.

The broader Nifty rose by 19.50 points or 0.09 per cent to close at a record 22,493.55. During the day, it climbed 51.6 points or 0.22 per cent to an all-time high of 22,525.65.

"Equity benchmark indices edged higher after hitting a record high amid a firm trend in the US market and FII inflows," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Faster-than-expected economic growth for the current fiscal year boosted sentiments for metal and capital goods stocks, Nair said.

Among Sensex firms, Tata Steel



rose the most by 3.9 per cent. JSW Steel gained 2.09 per cent, Tata Motors by 2.14 per cent, Bajaj Finserv by 2 per cent, and Bajaj Finance by 1.71 per cent. Asian Paints, ITC and Nestle were also among the major gainers.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank and Power Grid were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE

smallcap gauge climbed 0.70 per cent and midcap index spurred by 0.39 per cent.

Among the indices, metal jumped 1.36 per cent, capital goods climbed 1.05 per cent. Commodities (1 per cent), FMCG (0.98 per cent) and industrials (0.93 per cent) also advanced.

Auto, bankex, oil & gas and realty were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul settled in the green while Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday.

Analysts said that global indices exhibited mixed sentiments, driven by the Fed's signals of hope for a potential rate cut this year.

Further clarity on the labour market, anticipated with the release of non-farm payroll data on Friday, will offer insights into potential rate adjustments, they added. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹2,766.75 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.65 per cent to USD 82.42 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark jumped 408.86 points or 0.55 per cent to settle at a new record high of 74,085.99 on Wednesday. The Nifty climbed 117.75 points or 0.53 per cent to settle at a fresh closing peak of 22,474.05. (PTI)

SWAMIH fund to provide ₹160 crore to Stans Buildtech Homes to complete stalled project in Mumbai

NEW DELHI, March 7: Gov-

ernment-backed stress fund SWAMIH has provided ₹160 crore to Stans Buildtech Homes for the completion of a stalled housing project in Mumbai. In a statement on Thursday, real estate consultant Colliers India said the company assisted Stans Buildtech Homes in securing financing of ₹160 crore from SWAMIH Fund for its SRA (Slum Rehabilitation) project 'Sky Annex', located in Chembur.

To provide relief to customers who have booked houses in stalled projects, the government has established a SWAMIH (Special Window for Completion of Affordable and Mid-Income Housing) investment fund, managed by

SBICAP Ventures.

"A legacy of issues involving tenants, flat buyers, approvals, and lack of suitable financing to meet requirements led to the project being stalled, and is now set to resume, following the deal," Colliers said.

According to sources, the project, spread over 1 acre and comprising more than 400 units, was launched in 2015 by Hilton Developers. In 2016, Stans Buildtech entered into a joint development agreement to build this project, which later got stalled due to various issues, they added. With SWAMIH fund, the project will now be completed by the end of 2026.

"This deal exemplifies SWAMIH Fund's commitment to understanding and resolving complex real estate situations. By providing solution capital, we are not only unlocking value for various stakeholders but also fulfilling our objective of supporting homebuyers."

This transaction enhances our position as a key player in the Indian real estate market", said Suresh Kozhikote, Managing Director & CEO, SBICAP Ventures. Azizur Rehman Momin, Managing Director, Stans Buildtech Homes, said the company's objective, supported by the SWAMIH fund, is to guarantee the punctual completion of the project. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Organisations stage protest

cost of ₹4,500 crore. However, as on date no progress has been made in the project. Once considered among the finest and profitable fertilizer industries of the country, now it has been struggling to stay afloat due to declining production over the years."

"After the cabinet decision why has the government been taking time for setting up of the 4th plant? We urge PM Narendra Modi to intervene into the matter because he is the only person who can make it happen," Bora stated.

"The Namrup-3 plant set up in 1987, has been struggling due to outdated technologies and machineries. There has been a huge decline in the production of urea in the two units in recent years because of which the fertilizer plant is unable to cater to the huge demand for urea in the country. Now, the plant produces 700-800 metric tons of urea per day," he added.

Modi to arrive in state

In February 2022, then President Ram Nath Kovind had launched the 400th birth anniversary celebrations of Lachit Borpuhan and laid the foundation of a 150-foot bronze statue of the legendary commander, to be constructed at his memorial in an area of over 16.5 acres at Hoollongapar near Teok.

"The statue is in the first phase and work for the second phase is going on. A gallery with the history of the Ahom dynasty's 600 years rule will be presented, while another gallery will have contemporary Assam history. An auditorium having a capacity to accommodate 500 people will also be constructed. The total project cost will be ₹214 crore," Sarma said.

Lachit Borpuhan was a legendary army commander of the Ahom kingdom (1228-1826). He is known for his leadership in the 1671 'Battle of Sarighat' on Brahmaputra that thwarted a drawn-out attempt by the mighty Mughal forces, led by Raja Ramesingh-1, to take back Assam.

After the statue's inauguration, Modi will go to Meleng in Jorhat district by road to roll out a number of infrastructure development projects, funded by both state and central governments, and address the public.

"He will hand over 5,55,555 Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) houses to the beneficiaries, marking a significant milestone as the largest number of houses inaugurated in a single day in the country. He will also inaugurate the Tinsukia Medical College and Hospital and lay the foundation for the Sivasagar Medical College and Hospital," Sarma said.

Modi will also inaugurate a child cancer treatment project worth ₹300 crore at Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute (BBCI) in Guwahati under the PM-DevINE scheme, he added.

Other projects that the Prime Minister will inaugurate are capacity expansions of refineries at Digboi to 1 million metric tonne per annum (MMTPA) from 0.65 MMTPA (₹768 crore) and Guwahati to 1.2 MMTPA from 1 MMTPA (₹510 crore).

Modi will also start the expansion work for IOC's Betkuchi terminal (₹277 crore), partial inauguration of Barauni-Numaligarh gas pipeline up to Guwahati (₹3,992 crore), and dedicate OIL's two pumping stations for supplying crude from Guwahati to Bongaigaon (₹572 crore) and from Duliajan to Digboi (₹51 crore), he added.

"Besides, the PM will inaugurate two railway projects for doubling of tracks, worth Rs 1,328 crore. The first one is from Dhapdhara to Chhayganj and the other is from New Bongaigaon to Sarbhog," Sarma said.

After the function, he will leave for West Bengal on Saturday evening, he added.

Asked if the two-day visit will be a kind of Modi's beginning of the election campaign in Assam, Sarma said, "The PM comes to the Northeast frequently. This will be his third visit to Assam this year (2023-24). I don't think it has any relation to the elections. If Lachit Borpuhan's statue was ready earlier, he would have come then." (PTI)

NDA to win 22 of 25

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) currently has nine MPs in the state, while its allies AGP and UPPL have no representation. The Congress holds three seats and the AIUDF one, while another is an independent MP. (PTI)

'Will not give up Greater

the Centre. The tripartite agreement signed on March 2 in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah agreed to amicably resolve all issues of the indigenous people of Tripura related to history, land and political rights, economic development, identity, culture and language, according to an official statement.

After the swearing-in ceremony, senior leader Animesh Debbarma said his party would move towards their 'target'. When asked about 'Greater Tripaland', he said there would not be any shift from their demand. "We will work towards achieving our goal," Debbarma said.

When asked whether they would be able to launch a movement for their demand even after joining the government, he said, "Of course, we will be able to launch such a movement. There are instances of central ministers getting arrested while participating in movements. We will go ahead with our demands even in the government." The party chief, Pradyot Debbarma said, "Those who have become ministers cannot change the style of working. They must raise their demands even in the cabinet. Whatever happens outside will also happen inside. We will also speak in Delhi about our demands."

Chief minister Manik Saha said, "We all want peace... Very soon portfolios will be distributed to the newly inducted ministers."

The Tipra Motha MLAs were administered the oath of office by Governor Nallu Indrasena Reddy in a ceremony at Durbar Hall of the Raj Bhavan. Chief minister Manik Saha, his cabinet colleagues, Tipra Motha supremo Pradyot Debbarma and many leaders of the ruling parties, besides other dignitaries, were present during the swearing-in function.

Earlier in the day, Animesh Debbarma submitted his resignation as the leader of the opposition in the assembly to speaker Biswabandhu Sen. "The Tipra Motha has 13 MLAs in the 60-member assembly. Today, Tipra Motha became a part of the government as an ally of the BJP and was allotted two ministerial berths," Debbarma said. With the new inductions, the state now has 11 ministers, including the chief minister. According to the rules, the state can have 12 ministers including the CM. (PTI)

Govt to train tribal

200 students with the potential of high-paying placements in the industry. IISc director G Rangarajan said the country wants to become self-dependent and self-sufficient in the area of semiconductors, and the institute will provide the best possible training to tribal students.

Launching the initiatives at an event here, Union tribal affairs minister Arjun Munda said the ministry wants to connect them with the PM-JANMAN scheme.

The PM-JANMAN, with a budget of around ₹24,000 crore, focuses on 11 critical interventions through nine ministries and is aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) by saturating PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities. "When we are moving forward for a Viksit Bharat, it is important that tribals are not left behind," the minister said. Munda also asked officials to give more emphasis on mobile connectivity in remote tribal areas.

The officials said many tribal villages face inadequate connectivity because of geographical remoteness and terrain difficulties, and the ministry, in partnership with ISRO, plans to use satellite-based technology on a pilot basis to improve the connectivity of such tribal villages. "V-SAT stations will be established to resolve connectivity issues (community internet, e-governance, societal development) in 80 villages in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Odisha. The project will be extended to other states in the next phase," an official said.

ISRO chairman S Somanath, in a video message, said V-SAT connectivity will help the ministry handle education and healthcare-related activities. He said that the ministry could leverage satellite-based technology in areas such as agriculture and identifying tribal land going ahead. The ministry also signed pacts for a partnership with AIIMS-Delhi to establish "Bhagwan Birsa Munda Chair on Tribal Health and Haematology" at the renowned health institute.

It will serve as a multi-disciplinary platform for conducting advanced research on tribal health issues with special emphasis on sickle cell anaemia. AIIMS will also organise training programmes for doctors and paramedical staff working in tribal areas, the officials said.

The ministry is also collaborating with IIT-Delhi and IIM-Calcutta to develop a countrywide entrepreneurship ecosystem for the tribal youth. This partnership aims to create a sustainable social impact through tribal enterprises and startups, and raise awareness about entrepreneurship among tribal communities. This collaboration will provide comprehensive support, including ideation, funding, incubation, branding, marketing, and access to national and international markets to tribal artisans and producers, thereby enabling wider market access for their products, the officials said. (PTI)

Kaziranga hotels, resorts

more aware of the scientific methods of solid waste, grey water and black water management. The rating will be tied up to be displayed on online hotel booking websites to improve awareness of customers and attract environmentally conscious tourists.

Rupee jumps 10 paise to settle at 82.73 against US dollar

MUMBAI, March 7: Rising for the second straight session, the rupee climbed 10 paise to settle at 82.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking a weak American currency against major crosses overseas and a positive trend in equity markets.

Besides, foreign fund inflows and falling crude oil prices boosted the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic unit opened slightly up at 82.82 and gained further ground to touch the intra-day peak of 82.72 against the greenback.

The currency finally settled at 82.73 (provisional), up 10 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee settled 7 paise higher at 82.83 against the US dollar. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said the Indian rupee appreciated on Thursday on weak US dollar and positive domestic markets, while FII inflows also supported the rupee.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, declined 0.13 per cent to 103.18. Choudhary said the US dollar declined after Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell indicated cautious monetary policy moves and that the US central bank expects to cut interest rates later this year. "Disappointing economic data from the US also weighed on the dollar." Upcoming reports on weekly unemployment claims in the US and the country's trade data are expected to influence the investors' move.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias on weak US dollar and positive tone in the domestic markets. However, weak Asian and European markets and concerns over global economic slowdown may cap the sharp upside," Choudhary said, adding that "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹82.50 to ₹83". Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 0.82 per cent to USD 82.28 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex rose 33.40 points, or 0.05 per cent, to settle at its new lifetime peak of 74,119.39. (PTI)

Gold jumps ₹500 to scale record high of ₹65,650 per 10 grams

NEW DELHI, March 7: Gold prices on Thursday jumped by ₹500 to ₹65,650 per 10 grams in the national capital amid a rally in precious metal's rates in international markets, according to HDFC Securities.

Maintaining its upward march for the third straight day, the precious metal touched a fresh lifetime high of ₹65,650 per 10 grams. The yellow metal had closed at ₹65,150 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver prices also rallied by ₹400 to ₹74,900 per kg. In the previous session, it closed at ₹74,500 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at ₹65,650 per 10 grams, up by ₹500, taking bullish cues from the overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi,

senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,152 per ounce, up by USD 30 from the previous close.

Comex spot gold reached a new high of USD 2,161.50 per ounce in Asian trading hours on Thursday after Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell reiterated that the US central bank will most likely lower interest rates this year, Gandhi added.

In his semiannual Humphrey-Hawkins testimony to Congress, Powell said that the US Fed remains squarely focused on its mandate to promote maximum employment and stable prices for the American people.

The policy rate is likely at its

peak and it will likely be 'appropriate' to cut rates at some point this year, he added.

However, he observed that the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) still needs 'greater confidence' before cutting rates.

Silver was trading higher at USD 24.10 per ounce. In the previous trade, it had closed at USD 23.75 per ounce. "Looking ahead, the market focus shifts to the upcoming US Consumer Price Index (CPI) data for February, which is poised to be a key trigger for gold prices next week."

"Additionally, non-farm payroll and unemployment data to be released on Friday will provide further direction for gold trends," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said. (PTI)

Moody's ups growth forecast to 8% for FY24; India to remain fastest growing G20 nation

NEW DELHI, March 7: Moody's Ratings on Thursday raised India's GDP growth forecast for FY24 to around 8 per cent from 6.6 per cent on the back of strong domestic consumption and capital expenditure.

The estimate comes a day after RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said the economic growth in the current financial year could be close to 8 per cent in view of the third quarter GDP data released by the government.

The latest estimate of Moody's is about 140 basis points higher than the earlier projection of 6.6 per cent made in November 2023. The National Statistical Office (NSO) has projected 8.4 per cent growth in December quarter of the current financial year. It has also revised GDP estimates for the first and second quarters to 8.2 per cent and 8.1 per cent from 7.8 per cent and 7.6 per cent, respectively.

"We expect India to be the fastest-growing economy among major G20 countries, with its real GDP growth to accelerate to around 8 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 2024 (fiscal 2023-24) from 7 per cent in fiscal 2022-23," Moody's said in a report. Government capital expenditure and strong domestic consumption will underpin India's economic growth. Moreover, India is poised to benefit from increased global trade and investment opportunities arising from companies' strategies to diversify away from China, it said.

"We expect India's inflation rate will decline to 5.5 per cent in 2023-24 from a peak of 6.7 per cent in fiscal 2022-23, and further disinflation will support monetary easing going forward," it said.

With regard to the banking sector, the report said, non-performing assets (NPAs) will continue to fall as

the operating environment improves.

The system wide NPA ratio dropped to 3.2 per cent as at September-end 2023 from a peak of 11.2 per cent at the end of March 2018 because of recoveries and write-offs of legacy problem loans.

Slippage ratios – or the ratios of newly accredited NPAs to total standard assets during a period – will stay low, helped by India's strong economic growth, it said.

"We expect banks' Common Equity Tier 1 ratios to decline 50-80 basis points because of increase in risk weights for exposures to NBFCs and unsecured retail loans," Moody's said.

Still, banks' capitalization will remain strong as their internal capital generation keeps pace with capital consumption, it said, adding, they will also be able to raise capital easily if needed, given India's buoyant equity market.

On the profitability, the report said, it will remain at healthy levels but Net Interest Margin will witness marginal decline as banks reprice maturing deposits at higher rates to fully reflect previous hikes in prevailing interest rates.

The banking sector's profitability has improved substantially in the past five years mainly because of decrease in loan-loss provisions amid improvements in asset quality, it said.

Banks' funding has tightened in the past two years as credit growth has outpaced deposit expansion, with the system wide loan-to-deposit ratio (LDR) rising to 75.1 per cent as of March 31, 2023 from 64.9 per cent two years earlier.

LDRs are unlikely to rise further, however, as loan growth slows, banks' liquidity will remain adequate thanks to existing regulatory requirements. (PTI)

Transition to renewable energy could save Bengal ₹62,000cr over next decade: Study

KOLKATA, March 7: West Bengal can save a significant ₹62,000 crore over a decade by transitioning from thermal power to embracing renewable energy sources, a study by think tank Climate Risk Horizons (CRH) said on Thursday.

This transition could also play a pivotal role in helping India achieve its net zero emissions target, it said.

"Rising costs of coal-fired electricity underscore the potential missed opportunity in West Bengal's focus on renewable energy. Correcting this oversight could yield substantial financial gains for both the state and its electricity consumers," said Vishnu Teja, the analyst of the report.

According to the report, about 97 per cent of West Bengal's power is now coal-based, with only a meagre 200 MW of wind and solar capacity.

The report also highlights that many of the state's coal power units are over 20 years old and nearing the end of their operational life.



"Phasing out these older plants would lead to immediate savings by avoiding retrofit costs and penalties for non-compliance with emission norms," the report mentioned.

The CRH report recommends halting greenfield thermal power projects costing nearly ₹25,000 crore and redirecting these investments towards renewable energy and grid strengthening.

"Given the rising costs of dry

fuel and the increasing attractiveness of renewables on multiple grounds, the funds should be diverted towards renewables ecosystem to yield substantial savings," the report stated.

For instance, replacing higher-cost power contracts from centrally-owned coal plants with cheaper renewable energy could save up to ₹318 crore annually, the report said.

It also underscores the potential

savings from electrifying irrigation pumps with PV solar, estimating an annual saving of ₹20,720 crore for rice cultivation alone.

Savings from replacing thermal generation of Central and state-owned TPPs, in the state with RE at ₹2.7/kWh will save about ₹12,700 crore in 10 years.

However, building up the state's renewable energy portfolio will require upfront capital investments in RE, battery storage, etc.

Recognising the need for capital for deployment of the transition, Ashish Fernandes CEO of Climate Risk Horizons said, "The state government can tap the growing green bond market directly, or in partnership with the private sector, to finance these initiatives."

The state government had stated that it has plans to build a 1,760 MW solar capacity, 1,000 MW from the Turga Pumped storage power plant, and receive 230 MW from Bhutan and 118 MW from Teesta hydel projects.

The state is also heavily deploying rooftop solar panels at educational and office buildings. (PTI)

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Modi Sarkar Ki Guarantee
 Ensuring prosperity through Start-ups
 India is the world's 3rd largest start-up ecosystem
 Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat



Organisations stage protest demanding setting up of Namrup fertilizer plant

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, March 7: As many as 30 organisations under the banner of Namrup Har Karkhana Suraksha Aikyo Manch on Thursday staged a sit-in demonstration in front of the Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFCL) in Namrup demanding setting up of the fourth fertilizer plant. Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the state, the organisations staged the protest programme to attract the attention of the PM in setting up of the plant. The protesters held placards that read 'Save, Save our BVFCL'. Namrup BVFCL is one of the oldest fertilizer producing unit in India that has been struggling for its survival due to old machinery. However, the central government has been showing lackadaisical attitude in reviving the industry. The industry which is the only fertilizer industry in the entire Northeast has been neglected since its establishment. "The condition of BVFCL's third plant is not good. It is the only plant which has been producing



urea in northeast. We want to draw the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the revival of the industry. If it remains like this, it won't be long that the third plant will also shut down," said Tilewar Bora, working president of Namrup Fertilizer Aikyo Manch. Bora said, "In 2018 the Centre had approved in principle the proposal for setting up of the fourth unit at an estimated (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Modi to arrive in state on 2-day visit today

GUWAHATI, March 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate and lay foundation stones of projects worth around ₹ 18,000 crore during his two-day tour of Assam that will begin today, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. Addressing a press meet here on Thursday, Sarma said Modi will, for the first time, visit UNESCO heritage site Kaziranga National Park and undertake a safari. "The PM will inaugurate and lay foundation stones of a mix of state and central projects worth around ₹ 18,000 crore," he said. On February 4, the Prime Minister had launched infrastructure projects worth ₹ 11,600 crore. He is likely to lay the foundation stone of a ₹27,000-crore semiconductor plant of the Tata Group on March 13. Giving details of his tour programme, Sarma



said Modi will arrive in the state in the afternoon and will spend the night at the Kohora range of Kaziranga National Park, he added. "He is scheduled to land at Tezpur airport at 4 pm and reach Kaziranga by a chopper. Around

5.30am on Saturday, he will enter the park and will stay there for around two hours," Sarma said. The Assam government has kept both jeep and elephant safaris ready for Modi, who will enjoy any of the rides or both, he added. "This will be the first visit of Modi to the world heritage site. And I believe he must be the first Prime Minister to stay overnight at Kaziranga, but I have to check the records," Sarma said. After this, the PM will depart for Arunachal Pradesh, where he will attend two functions before returning to Jorhat district, he added. "After landing at Hoollongapar helipad, he will inaugurate the 125-foot tall statue of Ahom general Lachit Borphukan. The statue, constructed by Ram Vanji Sutar, has a height of 84 feet. With the pedestal measuring 41 feet, the total height of the statue stands at 125 feet," Sarma said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

Man found dead
SHILLONG: A middle-aged man from Guwahati was found dead at a hotel room in Shillong on Thursday morning, police said. Sijo Joseph (47) was found dead at the Hotel Assembly in Police Bazaar area, they said. "Following information from the staff of the hotel that an occupant of a room hadn't come out for more than a day, police broke open the door and found Joseph's lifeless body lying on the bed," East Khasi Hills district SP Rituraj Ravi said.

One held
AIZWAL: Assam Rifles personnel have arrested one person and recovered 3,000 rounds of cartridges of a sniper rifle and 10 passive night sight (PNS) devices in Mizoram's Lawngtlai district. Acting on a tip-off, the Assam rifles troops intercepted a vehicle at Sanagu market area, and recovered the ammunition of a sniper rifle along with the PNS devices, a statement issued by Assam Rifles on Thursday said. The vehicle's driver, a resident of Sangau-II village was apprehended in connection with the incident.

Myanmar national held
AIZWAL: Assam Rifles personnel have recovered 1.3 kg of heroin worth ₹ 9.6 crore and arrested a Myanmar national for possessing the contraband in Mizoram's Champai district, an official of the paramilitary forces said on Thursday. Acting on a tip-off, Assam Rifles team carried out a search operation in the district's Zokhawthar village, located near the Mizoram-Myanmar border on March 5 and arrested the smuggler after seizing the contraband from his possession.

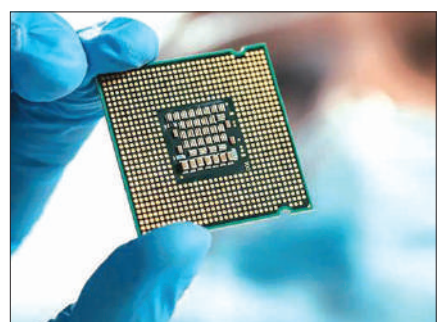
NDA to win 22 of 25 Lok Sabha seats in Northeast: Himanta

GUWAHATI, March 7: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday asserted that the ruling BJP-led alliance will win 22 of the 25 Lok Sabha constituencies in the Northeast in the upcoming elections. Addressing a press conference here, Sarma said only three of the 14 seats in Assam are "uncertain at the moment". "The NDA will win 22 of the 25 seats in the Northeast. Except for Assam, we hope to win all seats in other states of the region," he added. The convener of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), the regional arm of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), asserted that the upcoming Lok Sabha polls are "simple elections" for the ruling front and it will win the polls without any difficulty. "This time, development is the only issue.

Enormous works have been done to improve the overall infrastructure of the region," he added. The chief minister said the BJP-led alliance is targeting to win 11 seats in Assam. "If the people of Assam shower us with more blessings, we may increase our tally to 12 seats in the state. It will not be more than that. However, the winning margins will be huge this time in all the seats," he added. Sarma also claimed that the delimitation of constituencies in Assam by the Election Commission of India will ensure that indigenous people represent 105 of the 126 assembly seats in the state. The BJP has released a list of 11 Lok Sabha candidates from Assam. The remaining three seats have been left for allies Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL). (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt to train tribal students in semiconductor technology

NEW DELHI, March 7: The Centre will provide training to tribal students in semiconductor technology in collaboration with the Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Science. In partnership with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the tribal affairs ministry also plans to use satellite-based technology on a pilot basis to improve mobile and internet connectivity in remote tribal villages. Officials said there are high prospects of jobs in the semiconductor industry in the coming years against the backdrop of the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) launched by the government. The ISM is a specialised and independent business division within the Digital India Corporation that aims to build a vibrant semiconductor and display ecosystem to enable India's emergence as a global hub for electronics manufacturing and design. The tribal affairs ministry, in partnership



with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), will establish a training fab unit which will offer a course on semiconductor technology to tribal students. An official said, "2100 NSQF-certified level 6.0 and 6.5 trainings in semiconductor technology will be offered over three years." This will be an advanced job-oriented programme for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Will not give up Greater Tipraland demand': Tipra Motha after joining BJP

AGARTALA, March 7: Tipra Motha, which formally joined the BJP-led government in Tripura on Thursday, said it would not give up its demand for a separate 'Greater Tipraland' state by carving out

areas falling under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC). Senior Tipra Motha leader Animesh Debbarma and party MLA Brishaketu Debbarma took oath as ministers in the

BJP-led government during the day. The development comes days after a tripartite agreement was signed in New Delhi between the Tipra Motha, the Tripura government and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Kaziranga hotels, resorts get Swachhata Green Leaf Rating Certificates

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, March 7: Golaghat district commissioner has distributed the Swachhata Green Leaf rating certificate to hotel owners at the Forest Convention Centre in the Kohora range of the Kaziranga National Park. The Bokakhat sub-divisional verification committee has completed the process of verification of 11 hotels, resorts and homestays situated around Kaziranga under the 'Swachhata Green Leaf Rating System'. While four hotels secured 1-leaf rating, five hotels have secured 3-leaf rating. The Diphlu River Lodge and Medini Homestay qualified for 5-star rating under the system. They have adopted unique practices to avoid use of plastic such as use of betel nut leaf



plates, jute slippers, wooden handwash dispensers, cotton mats etc. Under this rating system, hotels, resorts and homestays will self-evaluate their existing waste management and sanitation related infrastruc-

ture based on set criteria and submit their findings to the local administration. After this, a sub-divisional verification committee will physically verify the criteria, based on which a district level committee will assign green leaf ratings of either 1, 3 or 5 green leaves on the basis of the marks obtained by them. 'Swachhata Green Leaf Rating System' was launched jointly by Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), Assam and the state department of tourism on February 22 at Kaziranga in the presence of senior officials of the central and state governments. Vini Mahajan, secretary of DDWS under the Union ministry of Jal Shakti explained the unique rating system, which aims to promote safe and green sanitation practices to the owners of hotels, homestays and resorts located in and around Kaziranga. It is expected that the Swachhata Green Leaf rating will make both the hotel owners and tourists (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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(NHM/D/2023-24/2003)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

A woman is like a tea bag - you can't tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water. -Eleanor Roosevelt

Musings on Women's Day

As the world prepares to commemorate International Women's Day on March 8th, it's a poignant moment for women across India to reflect on their ongoing struggles and achievements. In the words of Luce Irigaray, an Italian poetess, and author, women bear the seed, flower, and fruit of life, constantly repairing its fabric. Yet, their journey towards equality and recognition remains fraught with challenges, particularly under the present regime. From the poignant tales of Bilkis, Jahira, and countless others, to the recent atrocities in Hathras and Kathua, women in India continue to grapple with systemic injustices. Despite constitutional protections, their rights and freedoms are under constant threat, while perpetrators of violence often go unpunished. Yet, International Women's Day serves as a reminder of their resilience and the strides made towards gender equality. The theme of International Women's Day in 2023, "Embrace Equity," resonates deeply in the current socio-political climate. It calls upon governments and leaders to address gender disparities and ensure equal opportunities for all. This echoes the sentiments of women's rights activists who have long fought for suffrage and equal rights, dating back to the early 20th century.

Throughout history, women advocating for their rights have faced harsh criticism and ridicule. Figures like Mary Wollstonecraft, who championed suffrage in England, were labelled as "filthy witches," while others, like Madam Curie, faced discrimination in their pursuit of scientific acclaim. Despite these obstacles, women have persisted in their quest for equality, with organized movements gaining momentum over time. The October Revolution of 1917 marked a turning point for women's liberation in Russia, with initiatives aimed at dismantling traditional gender roles. Leaders like Lenin recognised the importance of women's participation in both the economy and society, advocating for collective solutions to household drudgery. Figures like Kollontai highlighted the oppressive nature of the traditional family structure, arguing that true emancipation could only be achieved through gender equality at home and in the workplace. Today, as we celebrate International Women's Day, it is imperative to acknowledge the progress made towards gender equality, while also recognising the challenges that remain. Women in India continue to face barriers to full participation in society, from economic inequality to systemic violence.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, it is imperative to acknowledge the progress made towards gender equality, while also recognising the challenges that remain. Women in India continue to face barriers to full participation in society, from economic inequality to systemic violence. It is incumbent upon all of us to continue the fight for gender equity, ensuring that every woman has the opportunity to fulfil her potential. As we commemorate International Women's Day, let us recommit ourselves to the ongoing struggle for gender equality. Let us honour the resilience and strength of women across India, who continue to defy expectations and push for a more just and equitable world. Only through collective action and solidarity can we truly embrace the spirit of International Women's Day and build a future where every woman can thrive. International Women's Day serves as both a celebration of women's achievements and a reminder of the work that lies ahead. As we reflect on the progress made and the challenges that remain, let us reaffirm our commitment to gender equality and justice for all.

From vision to reality: Great Nicobar Island's transformation plan

In the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, where geopolitical interests converge and strategic manoeuvres shape regional dynamics, India finds itself at a critical juncture. With China's expanding presence in the Indian Ocean, including port interests in Sri Lanka and recent activities in the Maldives, India has raised alarms about safeguarding its maritime interests. Against this backdrop, India has embarked on a bold initiative centered around the Great Nicobar Island, signalling its resolve to bolster its maritime capabilities and regional influence.

Situated approximately 1,800 kilometers east of India's mainland, Great Nicobar Island has emerged as the focal point of a massive development project worth \$9 billion. Envisioned as a South Asian equivalent of "Hong Kong," the project aims to transform the island into a bustling economic hub.

Plans include the establishment of an international airport, a shipping terminal, tourism infrastructure, a power plant, and an industrial zone, among other facilities.

President Droupadi Murmu's recent five-day visit to Great Nicobar Island, which commenced on February 19, has been widely interpreted as a strategic move aimed at advancing the development project and fostering regional growth. The megaproject, unprecedented for the approximately 1,800-square-kilometer island, features a strategic port as its centerpiece, aligning with India's Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 aimed at bolstering its maritime development leading up to the country's centennial independence anniversary.

The proposed terminal boasts a natural water depth of over 20 meters, positioning it to accommodate the largest container ships, thereby catalyzing economic growth in the region. However, beyond economic considerations, experts also highlight the potential security aspect of the initiative, given the strategic location of the Andaman and

Nicobar Islands along major sea routes. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands hold profound strategic significance for India. Situated east of India's mainland, in proximity to Indonesia's Sumatra, and just a few hundred kilometers away from Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia, these islands have long been pivotal in regional geopolitics. Historical accounts underscore the complex dynamics surrounding the islands, with Indonesia once laying claims to Great Nicobar Island.

In the aftermath of the 1962 conflict between India and China, the Indian Navy assumed the responsibility of safeguarding and maintaining control over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. At the time, concerns about potential Indonesian aggression loomed large. Indonesia's Navy's interest in capturing the Nicobar Island was perceived as a credible threat by Indian authorities, exacerbated by corroborating reports from Pakistani sources.

To counter potential aggressive actions, the Indian Fleet was strategically deployed in the Bay of Bengal, serving as a deterrent against any adventurist moves by Indonesia in the region. These accounts shed light on the volatile geopolitical dynamics and underscore the strategic importance of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, particularly during the 1965 conflict, highlighting the intricate web of relationships and power dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region.

As India forges ahead with its ambitious development plans for Great Nicobar Island, it reaffirms its commitment to bolstering its maritime capabilities and asserting its influence in the Indian Ocean region. Against the backdrop of evolving geopolitical realities, India's strategic moves in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands epitomize its proactive stance in safeguarding its maritime interests and shaping the contours of regional security and stability. (The author can be reached at shashankadas0007@gmail.com)



Maha Shivaratri: A journey into the cosmic emptiness of Shiva

Mahashivaratri unfolds as a night filled with boundless possibilities. This unique occasion, occurring on the fourteenth day of each month, marks the darkest night in the lunar calendar. While one might instinctively lean towards the embrace of light, the celebration of Shivaratri, both on a monthly basis and the special day of Mahashivaratri, appears to be revelry in the essence of darkness. It might defy the rationale of a logical mind that typically shuns darkness in favor of light. However, delving into the profound meaning, the very essence of "Shiva" is encapsulated in the concept of "that which is not." In this context, "that which is" pertains to existence and creation, while "that which is not" embodies the enigmatic essence of Shiva.

"That which is not" can be understood as a profound perspective on perception. When you open your eyes and focus on the minutiae, you'll witness a plethora of creations. However, if your gaze is set on the grandeur, you'll discern the colossal presence within existence - a vast emptiness. Often overlooked amid the conspicuous galaxies are the expanses of emptiness that cradle them. This boundless emptiness, this limitless expanse, is what Shiva encapsulates. Contemporary scientific understanding aligns with this concept, acknowledging that everything emanates from nothing and eventually returns to nothing. It is within this framework that Shiva, symbolizing the vast emptiness or nothingness, earns the epithet of the great lord or Mahadeva.

Across various religions and cultures

worldwide, a consistent theme echoes - the acknowledgment of the omnipresent and all-encompassing nature of the divine. Upon reflection, it becomes evident that the sole entity capable of truly pervading every inch of existence is darkness, nothingness, or emptiness. Typically, discussions about well-being connect the divine with light.

However, when individuals transcend the pursuit of personal well-being and delve into the contemplation of dissolution, the divine is often characterized as darkness. In this context, the nature of worship and spiritual practice shifts towards embracing the concept of dissolution, and darkness becomes the symbolic representation of the divine.

Light, in essence, is a transient phenomenon within the realm of your consciousness. It lacks the quality of eternity, always confined to a finite existence as it begins and inevitably concludes. On our planet, the sun stands as the most formidable source of light. Yet, even the sun's brilliance can be halted by a mere hand, leaving a residual shadow of darkness in its wake. This inherent limitation in the nature of light underscores its impermanence, even in the grandeur of solar radiance.

Darkness, unlike light, is an all-encompassing force, omnipresent and without constraint. The less mature perspectives in our world have often associated darkness with malevolence, portraying it as the devil. However, when we speak of the di-

vine as being pervasive, it inherently aligns with darkness, for only darkness holds the attribute of being truly all-pervading. It requires no external support; it simply is, everywhere.

Unlike light, which emanates from a source with a finite lifespan, darkness has no specific origin. It is a self-contained source, ubiquitous and omnipresent. Therefore, when we invoke the name Shiva, we are essentially acknowledging the vast emptiness that underlies existence. In the cradle of this boundless emptiness, creation unfolds, and it is this cosmic emptiness that we reverently refer to as Shiva.

Within Indian culture, the ancient prayers diverge from the common themes of self-preservation, personal protection, or worldly prosperity. Instead, the essence of these age-old invocations

echoes a profound sentiment: "Oh lord, annihilate me so that I may transcend and embody your divine nature." The focus of these prayers lies not in safeguarding individual interests, but in embracing a transformative journey towards spiritual alignment with the divine. The aspiration is to surrender the self in order to attain a higher state of being, mirroring the essence of the divine.

In the celebration of Shivaratri, marked by the darkest night of the month, lies a unique chance for individuals to transcend their limitations and immerse themselves in the boundless essence of the creative source inherent in every human being - the

seed of creation. Mahashivaratri serves as an invitation and a potential gateway to connect with the profound emptiness residing within each person, an emptiness that serves as the wellspring of all creation. It offers an opportunity to tap into the vast expanses within, experiencing the very source from which all manifestations emerge.

Shiva, a figure characterized as the destroyer, simultaneously embodies the essence of boundless compassion and generosity. Renowned as the greatest giver, his compassionate nature is woven throughout the fabric of yogic tales, showcasing remarkable and astonishing expressions of benevolence. Mahashivaratri, therefore, stands as a distinctive night not only for introspection and dissolution but also as a profound occasion for receiving. It marks an opportunity to tap into the expansive reservoir of Shiva's compassion, a force that extends beyond conventional boundaries and unfolds in extraordinary ways.

Our fervent wish and blessing are that you traverse this night not merely in wakefulness but in profound awakening, experiencing, even if just for a moment, the vastness of the emptiness we refer to as Shiva. May this night transcend the ordinary and become a transformative journey, allowing you to touch the essence of this cosmic emptiness. May it be a night not just passed, but lived with a heightened awareness, opening the door to a deeper understanding of the boundless dimensions within. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

Maha Shivratri: Occasion of union of Shiva and Shakti

By: Er. Prabhat Kishore

Karpurgauram Karunavaram Sansarsaram Bhujjagendraharam. Sadavasantam Hridayaravinde Bhavam Bhavani sahitam Namami.

(The one who is pure like Kapur, whose personality is the embodiment of compassion. Those who are the essence of the entire creation and the one with the serpent king as his garland reside in the heart, including Lord, Shiva and Kamal in the mud and I bow you)

Indian culture is based on spiritual values, in which Bhagwan Shiva, the god of gods, pervades in every particle. He is omniscient and is equally revered and venerated by both the gods and the demons. Shiva is the foster and Shiva is the destroyer, Shiva is the beginning and Shiva is the end. Shiva is the power and Shiva is the eternal. Shiva is the embodiment of power and Shiva is also the eternal proof of the light of life on earth. He is corporeal and formless as well. He is the first Guru of this world. Shiva is in each and every particle of this universe.

Na Punyam Na Papam Na Saukhyam Na Dukham Na Mantram Na Teertham Na Vedas Na Yagyam.

Aham Bhojanam Naiva Bhojyam Na Bhokta Chidananda Roopah Shivoaham Shivoaham.

(I am neither virtues, nor sin, nor happiness nor sorrow, nor Mantra, nor pilgrimage, nor Veda nor Yagya. I am neither food, nor I eat nor I am to ate, I am consciousness, I am bliss, I am Shiva.)

The nature and personality of Lord Shiva teaches positivity, simplicity, love, balance, and yoga in human life. All the Navaratas possessed by Lord Shiva have their own relevance. Trishul represents three powers - knowledge, desire and perfection. Damru represents Creation and Brahmanad, Rudraksh represents purity and satvikta, Nandi represents righteousness, Ganga represents the stream of spirituality, Chandra symbolises from origin to the end, the snake king Vasuki represents to keep the ego under control, the Third eye is a symbol of intelligence, and the Vyagra Chhal (Tiger-skin) is a symbol of fearlessness and perseverance.

Maha Shivaratri, which is celebrated on Falgun Krishna Paksha Chaturdashi Tithi, has been mentioned in various Purans such as Skanda Puran, Linga Puran, Padma Puran. There are

several legends, traditions, beliefs and customs which makes this occasion special among the festivals celebrated in the world.

According to the belief, on this day Bhagwan Shiva appeared in the form of Linga at midnight, due to which He is considered to be lord of Chaturdashi Tithi and Falgun Krishna Pasha Chaturdashi is celebrated as Mahashivaratri and other Chaturdashis are celebrated as Shivratri. Devotees celebrate the day with zeal and enthusiasm with locally featured traditions. This day is said to be the beginning of creation.

Mahashivaratri is said to be fortunate day because the Moon (represents life) and the Sun (represents Shiva) it is close to each-other on this day. According to the mythological belief of Sanatan Dharma, on this day Mahadev, the saviour of the world, tied the nuptial knot with Mata Parvati, the mother of the world. This is the night of the union of Shiva and Shakti. Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of Linga, which reflects both Shiva and Shakti.

The Shivling has two parts - the Linga which represents the male part i.e. Shiva and the Yoni which represents the female part i.e. Shakti or Parvati. In a combined form, both worldly and spiritual are the emblematic of unity and completeness.

According to Shiva Puran, once there was a heated argument between Brahma, the creator of world and Vishnu, the sustainer of the world, regarding their superiority over each other. Realizing the devastating consequences of ego of the two, Bhagwan Shiva emerged as a ray of light in the

form of Jyotirlinga i.e. Agni Shivaling, having the effect of cures of suns on the night of Phalguna Krishna Paksha Chaturdashi Tithi. (Phalgun Krishna Chaturdashyamadidevo Mahanishithi. Shaivalinga Tyodbhavah Koti Surya Samprabhabh.) This had neither origin nor end (symbolising that ego has no end). He challenged both gods to locate the origin and end of the light. Brahma ji transformed into a swan and went upwards to find the upper end while Vishnu ji took the form of a boar and went inside the earth. But both the gods failed in their campaign and it was self-evident that no-one but Shiva is the supreme among the gods. This incident of Mahashivaratri also teaches to stay away from ego, anger, falsehood and pride.

On the occasion of Mahashivaratri, Adidev had appeared in the form of Jyotirlinga at 64 holy places of the world, but due to human being aware of only 12 of these places, we know and worship only the twelve Jyotirlingas (Somnath, Mallikarjuna, Mahakaleshwar, Omkareshwar, Kedarnath, Bhimashankar, Vishwanath, Trimbakeshwar, Vaidyanath, Nageshwar, Rameshwar, Gushmeshwar). On Mahashivaratri, a series of lamps are decorated in the temples so that the flame of fire can be generated like a lamp.

On this auspicious occasion, fasting, night awakening, yoga and Havan-pujan are performed by devotees in the night, which is the destruction of planetary defects and enemies, along with the path of salvation. Shivam Chamokshe Cha Mahadeve Sukhe.

On Mahashivaratri itself, Lord Shiva had consumed Halahal poison, the destroyer of the universe which came out during the Samudra Manthan, to protect the universe.

Due to this his throat turned blue and he was called Neelkanth. As the poison was held in his throat, it caused severe burning all over Shiva's body. Devotees offer milk, water, honey, ghee, sugar etc. on Shivaling to reduce the burning so that by the grace of Shiva, happiness, peace and progress can come in the world.

Like the Panch Bhuta (five great elements) of the earth, namely - Kshiti (Land), Jal (water), Pavak (Fire), Gagan (Sky) and Vayu (Wind), the five faces of Lord Shiva are respectively described as Ishaan, Tatpuruush, Aghor, Vamadeva and Sadyojata. On this night, the position of the northern hemisphere and the planets and constellations of the earth is such that the Kundalini energy awakens in the human body. Lord Shiva is revered by 108 names like Pashupati, Rudra, Nataraj, Jagdish, Bhairav, Vishwanath etc.

Shiva after being engaged in meditation in Yogamudra for centuries had become stable and united in Kailash Parvat on Mahashivaratri. Shiva is the most supreme and divine ruler of the universe who acts as a creator, promotor as well as destroyer. Mahashivaratri is the night when Shiva performs the heavenly dance of creation, preservation, and destruction. It marks the remembrance of "overcoming darkness and ignorance" in life and in the world. (The author is a technocrat and educationist)

The United Nations has failed to keep peace and security in the world

By: Nantoo Banerjee

Two ongoing devastating wars - one in Ukraine and the other in the Gaza strip - have so far killed and injured tens of thousands of civilians since last year. The Ukraine-Russia war started in February 2022. As of February 15, this year, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) verified a total of 30,457 civilian casualties in the course of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Of them, 19,875 were reported to have been injured.

Nearly 3.7 million Ukrainians were internally displaced. Around 6.5 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded globally. Approximately 14.6 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2024. In Gaza, at least 29,782 people have been killed and 70,043 wounded in Israeli attacks since October 7, last year. The revised death toll in Israel stands at 1,139. The war continues. Gaza-based Palestinians, comprising large numbers of children and women, are dying in hordes almost every day. So far, little pressure has been exerted by the friends of Israel and Palestine on the two sides to bring the mindless war to an end.

So far, the UN, including its all-powerful Security Council, proved to be totally ineffective to stop the wars in Ukraine and Gaza to establish peace and human security in the two politically explosive regions. In Ukraine, the US and its allies are actually fanning the war by providing massive arms and financial assistance adding to the endless suffering of the people of the east European nation. Last

week, French President Emmanuel Macron went to the extent of openly discussing the possibility of sending European troops to Ukraine to help the country fight the war against Russia, threatening a major escalation of the largest ground war Europe has witnessed since World War II and challenging the authority of the UN. Russia has responded immediately with the possibility of a nuclear war in Europe. France is one of the UN Security Council's five permanent members. In a way, President Macron's public outburst once again undermined the authority of the UN. There are at least 10 other countries and regions where civil wars, armed violence and terror attacks have been causing human disasters for years and even for decades. They include Afghanistan, Burkina Faso and the Sahel, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Lake Chad Basin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and the Yemeni Houthi rebels-controlled Red Sea. In Afghanistan, nearly 150,000 civilian casualties have been recorded since the US military withdrawal in 2021. By now, some 28.3 million people need humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. The inter-communal conflict in Chad and the Lake Chad Basin has been going on for nearly 15 years.

The conflict in Congo has so far affected 26.4 million people who badly need humanitarian assistance. The violence and brutality in Somalia, ethnic cleansing in South Sudan and inter-communal conflict in Sudan have sent millions of peoples in utter distress. Syria is one of the world's worst affected countries trapped in the vi-

olence assisted by outside powers. In the Red Sea, controlled by allegedly Iran-backed Yemeni Houthi pirates, a trillion-dollar annual global sea trade has been severely impacted. All the countries mentioned in the list are UN members. Yet, the UN stands totally ineffective, if not unconcerned, to help establish peace and security in the region.

The helpless condition of the UN and its rarely cooperative five-member Security Council, led by two rival groups (one under the US and the other a Russia-China combine) are increasingly creating a situation which the world witnessed in the 1930s under the League of Nations. The League was the first worldwide intergovernmental organization whose principal mission was to maintain world peace.

The League of Nations was established on January 10, 1920, at the initiative of victorious Allied powers at the end of the First World War. The League of Nations failed as aggressor nations - as also its powerful permanent members such as France and Britain - undermined the authority of the world body. France and Britain even ignored the League in their efforts to appease Germany's Hitler at the early stage, which arguably led to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. By 1937, the League became a totally useless body. It was formally disbanded on April 19, 1946.

Right now, trust between the UN's member-governments appears to be reaching a breaking point. Not many countries trust the UN for resolving or reshaping critical intergovernmental issues. China is seriously questioning the legitimacy of the

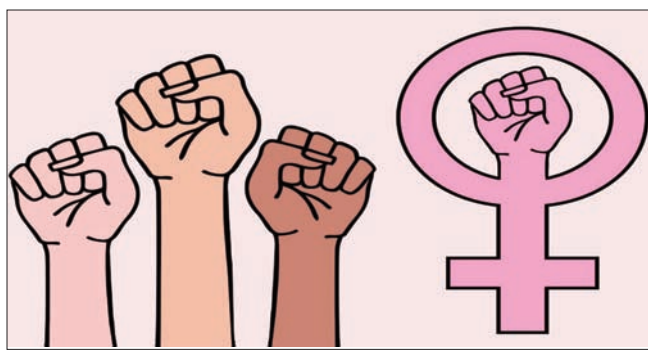
US to help establish the world order. New intergovernmental bodies such as BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa group), Quad (Quadrilateral Dialogue involving the US, Japan, India and Australia), US-Japan-Australia Strategic Cooperation, Aukus (the Australia-UK-US strategic pact), and Beijing's own multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or a Chinese Marshall Plan for global dominance involving so far some 60 countries pose a new challenge to the diminishing UN authority.

Interestingly, China is believed to be the main opposer to the UNSC reforms for now. Earlier, the western powers resisted the call for the reforms.

To be effective, the UN needs to be urgently revamped. The UNSC must recognize the changing world order - economic and strategic. It is unthinkable that some of the world's most influential countries today such as India, Japan, Germany and Brazil are still to become permanent members of the UNSC. India is the world's most populous country, fifth largest economy, and the fourth largest military power after the US, Russia and China. Japan and Germany are economic and technological super powers.

Brazil is South America's most influential country. Their presence as permanent members of the UNSC would have made the council much stronger to deal with the global political impasse. The deepening global crisis demands a fundamental and rapid shift in the operational style of the UN. The UNSC must recognize and represent the contemporary global power dynamics. (IPA Service)

What's cooking together? Feminism, patriarchy and fake feminism



By: Dr. Mridusmita Duara

International Women's Day is celebrated globally on 8th March to recognize the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. It also serves as a reminder of the ongoing fight for gender equality and women's rights. The day is an opportunity to reflect on the progress made in advancing women's rights and to raise awareness about the challenges and barriers that women still face around the world. The origins of International Women's Day can be traced back to the early 20th century when women's rights movements were gaining momentum around the world.

The day has its roots in labor movements and socialist movements, with the first National Women's Day being observed in the United States in 1909. It later evolved into International Women's Day, as women's rights activists from various countries came together to promote gender equality and women's suffrage.

Additionally, it is a time to honour the contributions of women to society and to advocate for further improvements in areas such as education, healthcare, employment, and representation in leadership roles.

International Women's Day deeply intertwined with feminism. As we know that Feminism, as an ideology, advocates for gender equality and the empowerment of women, making International Women's Day an important occasion to reflect on the progress made towards these goals and to continue advocating for change.

Feminism provides the ideological framework for understanding the significance of International Women's Day. It highlights the ongoing struggle for women's rights and the need to address issues such as gender-based discrimination, violence against women, unequal access to education and healthcare, and disparities in political and economic representation. Thus, it serves as a reminder of the work that still needs to be done to achieve full gender equality and as a call to action for individuals and societies to continue striving towards this goal.

The United Nation's Theme for International Women's Day 2024 is "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress". While we talk of women's progress, we also need to acknowledge the fact that patriarchy and fake feminism are two significant phenomena that forms a blockage in achieving gender equality and rights.

While patriarchy is a social system that privileges men and maintains male dominance in many aspects of society, including politics, economics, and culture. Fake feminism, on the other hand, refers to the superficial or insincere adoption of feminist ideas or language for personal gain or to uphold patriarchal structures. Patriarchy and fake feminism are intertwined in numerous intricate ways.

One way in which patriarchy and fake feminism intersect is through the usage of feminist symbols just to maintain the status quo. For example, individuals or institutions may claim to support gender equality while simultaneously perpetuating systems of exclusion and oppression. This can manifest in various forms, such as individuals and organizations using feminist lectures, slogans and campaigns their while showcasing women only as symbols while practicing exclusion and passing policies that harm women.

Additionally, fake feminism can serve to undermine genuine efforts towards gender equality by misrepresenting feminist or achieving gender justice goals. This can lead to confusion about what feminism truly entails and hinder progress towards breaking patriarchal structures.

Moreover, patriarchy often encourages the promotion of certain types of feminism that are more acceptable to the status quo while marginalizing radical forms of feminism. Fake feminism may thus prioritize the interests of privileged groups within the feminist movement, such as white, heterosexual, middle-class women, while neglecting the concerns of marginalized women.

Thus, the term "Fake feminism" refers to describe actions or ideologies that claim to support feminism but actually undermine its core principles and in practice it is something that is just not aligned to gender justice, inclusion and rights. Some examples are those organizations a few women or promote superficial gender diversity without addressing underlying power imbalances. This can give the appearance of supporting feminism while maintaining the male dominance in decision-making roles.

While feminist language and metaphors are used in their marketing campaigns to sell products or improve their public image, without making meaningful changes to their workplace policies or addressing gender inequality within their organizations.

It is not always men that practice oppression and exclusion but also women who is seen to be involved in bringing down other women, be it at the personal or professional level. Sometimes women are the "torch bearers" of patriarchy too. We commonly see

Selective Feminism when individuals or groups support feminist principles only when it benefits them personally or politically, while ignoring or actively opposing feminist issues that do not directly affect them. This can include supporting gender equality in some contexts while opposing it in others, such as reproductive rights or LGBTQ+ rights.

Similarly, White Feminism refers to a form of feminism that prioritizes the experiences and concerns of white, middle-class women while marginalizing the experiences of women of colour, LGBTQ+ women, and other marginalized groups; fake feminism fails to address intersectionality and often perpetuates racism and other forms of exclusion and discrimination.

Overall, fake feminism poses a significant obstacle to achieving gender equality and social justice. It is essential to recognize and challenge instances of fake feminism while augmenting the voices and initiatives of genuine feminist movements working towards inclusive, intersectional, and transformative change.

Thus, we see that the relationship between patriarchy and fake feminism is of mutual reinforcement, with fake feminism serving to uphold patriarchal power structures by using feminist language and ideas for superficial, self-serving purposes and as per one's convenience only. (The author is an Assistant Professor of Social Work, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Guwahati. She can be reached at mridusmita123@gmail.com or 80112 23369)

By: R K Sinha

The barbarous behaviour of some youths in Dumka in Jharkhand last Friday, a week before the Women's Day, has raised more questions than we have found answers to far. First and foremost, it has raised the question of safety to working and other women who don't mostly remain confined to the four walls.

Times have changed. More and more women are coming out and want to work shoulder to shoulder with men in every field, not just in offices. But the Dumka incident has raised an alarm bell. The Spanish woman in discussion was a traveller. Along with her husband she had covered more than sixty countries including the US before coming to India.

Her plan was to travel to Nepal via Jharkhand and from there to other countries which were not visited. They had safely reached the outskirts of Dumka. But by the time they came to the town riding on their bikes it was dark. So they decided to take rest and resume the journey next day. A tent which they were carrying was pitched up.

Unaware of what was in store for them, they were preparing for meal and rest. It had not dawned on them till then that they would be approached by some unknown persons at that hour. But this is what had happened.

Four youths in their 20s suddenly arrived at the spot and after a brief talk attacked the husband. She was sexually assaulted after his hands and feet were tied. Soon thereafter three others of the same age group were called. She cried and cried but nobody could come as the place was located outside the populous area.

Women and educate them further. Many a time, women face a

similar situation. To carry on and narrate the story further, she got up after they had left, started her motorcycle and parked that at a police station to register a complaint. Policemen behaved well, registered the complaint and took care of her. A team of policemen soon swung into action and three culprits were nabbed. Chief minister Champai Soren who has recently replaced Hemant Soren told media persons later that nobody, howsoever big, would be spared and that he would take such a stern action that nobody would dare to repeat the act.

There are two problems and they must be highlighted for the good of women who work in the field and are not house makers: first, all such women should face such lawbreakers bravely and two, they should not shy away from them. Many of them do not approach the police due to family pressure and stigma attached to it. Thousands of cases go unreported for these reasons in this country which is rising fast otherwise.

It is not to suggest that they have remained where they were in other areas until a decade back. Now, they are active and working together with men in all fields including defence and aviation. The total number of working women in organised and unorganised sectors is not immediately available, but it would run into crores. And it is rising by the day.

What is noteworthy, many of them are ready to do night duties. Ofcourse, the managements where they are doing night duties have taken special care and seen to it that they safely work and return home. Some states in the country have framed laws and created special police teams to prevent



International Women's Day 2024: The rise of Nari Shakti

By: Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

This year International Women's Day seems to have a special significance all over India as the 2024 Lok Sabha Election will be fought on the major issue of the rise of Nari Shakti in India "All oppression creates a state of war. And this is no exception" -wrote Simone de Beauvoir. In the poem 'Phenomenal woman' Maya Angelou wrote, "That's me. I walk into a room just as cool as you please, and to a man, The fellows stand or Fall down on their knees. Then they swarm around me, A hive of honey bees. I say, It's the fire in my eyes, And the flash of my teeth, And the swing in my waist, And the joy in my feet."

Today on the International Women's Day we recall the author of "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" Civil rights activist, poet, playwright, director, actor, professor and writer Maya Angelou is perhaps best known as the most popular Feminist writer of African American literature. She voiced all that is essential in the feminist thinking or Simon De Beauvoir Virginia Woolf, Kate Millet and Betty Friedan Maya Angelou advised women, "Never make someone a priority when all you are to them is an option". She was bold enough to advise women, "If you don't like something, change it. Because she knew, "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you" Maya Angelou could say in clear words "I do not trust people who don't love themselves and yet tell me, "I love you". Her most famous work is I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, an autobiography about her childhood. The book is a testament to the need for resilience in the face of discrimination.

Simone de Beauvoir wrote novels, essays, biographies, autobiographies, and monographs on philosophy, politics, and social issues. She was best known for her "trailblazing work in feminist philosophy". The Second Sex (1949), a detailed analysis of women's oppression and a foundational tract of contemporary femi-

nism. She argued that patriarchy was a political institution that could only survive through women's subordination to it. Millet also claimed that all Western social institutions reinforce this dynamic.

Because of the overnight success of her book, she found herself a reluctant spokesperson for the feminist movement. Virginia Woolf was best known for her novels, especially Dalloway (1925) and To the Lighthouse (1927). She also wrote pioneering essays on artistic theory, literary history, women's writing, and the politics of power. Briefly, Virginia Woolf wants women to be free in every field. She states that the rights given to men about working with equal rights as men, fair wages or equal pay, having equal right in education and sex equality should be given to women, as well.

Betty Friedan's feminism emphasized career-oriented independence for women and men instead of domestic life. Betty Friedan launched modern feminism, arguably the most influential and successful intellectual movement of the 20th century. The phrase "feminine mystique" was coined by Friedan to describe the assumptions that women would be fulfilled from their household, marriage, sexual lives, and children. The prevailing belief was that women who were truly feminine should not want to work, get an education, or have political opinions.

Mary Wollstonecraft (Vindication of the Rights of Women: 1792), Elizabeth Stanton (History of Woman Suffrage: 1881), Betty Friedan (The Feminine Mystique: 1963), Germaine Greer (The Female Eunuch: 1970), bell hooks (Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center: 1984), Audre Lorde (Sister Outsider: 1984), Naomi Wolf (The Beauty Myth: 1990), Eve Ensler (The Vagina Monologues: 1996) and, recently, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (We Should All Be Feminists: 2014) inspired India's robust tradition of feminist writers who have stood up for the cause and added powerful voices to the women empowerment movement. Tarabai Shinde was born in



Buldhana. She wrote many books and was the first author known for feminist writing. Her work, "Stri" is a comparison between men and women and is considered as one of the country's modern feminist.

The Scroll once published an article regarding the robust line of feminist writers from India who have been writing against male injustice since the sixth century BCE. Many of the nuances of gender, religion and caste struggle in the Indian context can be understood through the writings of such women. The brilliant anthology Unbound (2015), edited by Annie Zaidi, contains records of "breakaways" voices of women who chose their spiritual aspirations above everything else. Advocates of the "great tradition of ancient Hinduism", include the names of the sages Gargi, Maitreyi and Lopamudra.

The Bhakti Movement became a level playing field and yielded stars like Andal (7th or 8th century CE), Akka Mahadevi (12th CE), Lal Ded (14th century CE), and Meerabai (16th century CE), among others. Though primarily devotional and directed towards male gods, their poems reflect autonomy of spirit in a society. In their outright rejection of conventional gender roles and attributes, they set the earliest examples of feminism in action. The written records Ahval-I Humayun Badshah by Gulbadan Begum (sixteenth century CE) made her perhaps the first female historian of the Mughal court.

Writing was also among the many talents of the great empress Nur Jahan - she is known to have written poetry. Like her, Padshah Begum Ja-

hanara too was renowned for her ideas of female freedom. A renowned Sufi faqirah (ascetic) herself, she wrote Risalah-i-Sahibiyah was - a biography of her chosen spiritual master, Mullah Shah - and Mu'nis al-Arwā, a biography of the great saint, Moinuddin Chisti. Her niece Zeb-un-Nissa followed in her footsteps and became an accomplished scholar, a patron of the arts. Indian feminists included the trailblazer such as Savitribai Phule, who is rightfully considered the pioneer of women's education in India.

Along with her husband, Jyotirao Phule, she worked tirelessly for those oppressed by caste and provides access to education for girls. She wrote poetry reflecting her struggles and ideals, which were published as the compilations titled Kavya Phule and Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar. Maharashtra's glorious feminist Pandita Ramabai in her personal life married outside her community and caste. Urnila Pawar's book The Weave of My Life (1988), written a century later tells us exactly those tales.

India's second wave of feminism was reflected in the works of post-Independence writers like Ismat Chughtai, Amrita Pritam, Mahasweta Devi, Krishna Sobti, Kamala Das and Kamala Markandaya. They explored notions of boundaries, bodies and sexualities. Chughtai was known for her especially radical feminist views, and the story of Lihaaf (1942) and her persecution is of course well known. Other such discourses include Sobti's Mitro Marjani (1966), Amrita Pritam's Pinjar (1950), Kamala Das's autobiography My Life

(1973), Mahasweta Devi's Breast Stories (translated from Bengali by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1997), and Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve (1955). In addition to these fiction writers, academics such as Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy, and activists such as Kondapalli Koteswaramma and Kamla Bhasin have contributed remarkably to the understanding and fostering of feminism in India.

Women writers, activists, journalists and "influencers", however, confronted the trolling and upheld the need to smash brahminical patriarchy. The oppressive systems of gender and caste hierarchy were questioned simultaneously.

In cognitive psychology literature, empowerment means to enable one to act. Psychological empowerment at the individual level is a link between a sense of personal control and efficacy and a willingness to change and take action. The major contribution of women to literature has been their exploration of societal standards. Pioneer of such is Jane Austen whose works repeatedly explored the standards set for women, typically being marriage and gentility. Her works explored vanity of societal rules in the Victorian England. In India we see writers like Amrita Pritam, Anita Desai however; empowerment of women now can be categorized into five main parts - social, educational, economic, political and psychological.

Social Empowerment refers to the enabling force that strengthens women's social relations and their position in social structures. The reading of

literature may thus play an important part in developing the self of the reader: more particularly, it provides a context in which the reader's own experience can be reassessed through constructive reformulation of the meaning and scope of the emotions. The roles of women in literature may be seen as cages - small and unnaturally restricting. And as birds in cages, if one flaps her wings too long and hard against the steel bars, the wings will break.

Few women characters are given the strength or courage to resist these limits. Sahitya Akademi and Padmabhushan awardee Anita Desai dwells on descriptive passages and vivid imagery to bring alive nuances of the female ways of life in her novels Fasting, Feasting (about difference in lifestyle in India and America) and Cry, the peacock (a woman haunted by a prediction made in her childhood). Anita Nair is a prolific writer, best known for her novels Mistress (focussing on Kathakali dance of Kerala), Ladies Coupe (conversations between women in a train compartment), Idris: Keeper of Light (Somalian trader visiting southern India in 17th century) and Better Man (about friendships). Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is best known for Mistress of Spices (a shopkeeper who helps customers satisfy their desires with spices tinted with magic) and Oleander Girl (journey across post 9/11 America to find the protagonists true identity).

The Palace of the Illusions is, a retelling of Mahabharata through Draupadi's POV is an excellent one on Indian mythology. Divakaruni's works are largely set in India and the United States, and often focus on the experiences of South Asian immigrants especially the female suffering Sahitya Akademi awardee K.R. Meera is a prominent Malayalam writer Yellow is the Colour of Longing, Hangwoman (thoughts on capital punishment and the story of a woman who has to continue her family tradition).

The Gospel of Yudas (love and betrayal in post Naxalite era) and The Poison of Love (story of a woman with a phi-

lasmant to school going girls and others. The number of stalking has come down heavily after these new decisions.

The intention behind the stalking is not only to harass a woman. That has some ulterior motives including having sexual relationship. In national capital Delhi hundreds of women live in makeshift or small houses in New Seemapuri area. Most of them are migrant labourers from Bihar, UP, Jharkhand and Odisha. Some Bangladeshis have also joined them. Strangely, some officials for money or other reasons have provided Adhar and other necessary documents to them make the stay hassle-free.

The place has setups like Mahila Panchayats where they can complain against stalkers and seek action against them. Councillors attached to them enlighten women - tell them what they can do to and what laws are there for their safety. They also look for solutions to their other problems.

These Panchayats have a link with Delhi Brotherhood Society with which Father Solomon George has a long association. He has told many tales of harassment to women. For example, some of the stalkers somehow find mobile numbers of these women phone them in the night and send vulgar pictures. Some of the women get so perturbed that they even decide to shift or leave the work assigned to them. The Society has established a college in Delhi and a school in Haryana. Father said that most of the stalkers are thick-skinned and habitual offenders - do not pay heed to sane advices.

Clearly, something more has to be done to make the workplace safer for women and to make them self-reliant. Several laws are in existence for decades for women safety but the crime graph has not come down yet when we celebrate World Women's Day. What is needed is a major change-a major change in outlook and behaviour. In India, a woman is called a Goddess- but for nothing. (The writer is a senior Editor, columnist and an ex-MP)

Turkey struggles to stop violence against women; At least 71 have been killed this year

ISTANBUL, March 7: Muhterem Evcil was stabbed to death by her estranged husband at her workplace in Istanbul, where he had repeatedly harassed her in breach of a restraining order. The day before, authorities detained him for violating the order but let him go free after questioning.

More than a decade later, her sister believes Evcil would still be alive if authorities had enforced laws on protecting women and jailed him.

"As long as justice is not served and men are always put on the forefront, women in this country will always cry," Cigdem Kuzey said.

Evcil's murder in 2013 became a rallying call for greater protection

for women in Turkey, but activists say the country has made little progress in keeping women from being killed. They say laws to safeguard women are not sufficiently enforced and abusers are not prosecuted.

At least 403 women were killed in Turkey last year, most of them by current or former spouses and other men close to them, according to the We Will Stop Femicides Platform, a group that tracks gender-related killings and provides support to victims of violence. So far this year 71 women have been killed in Turkey, including seven on Feb. 27 — the highest known number of such killings there on a single day.

The WWSF secretary general,

Fidan Ataselim, attributed the killings to deeply patriarchal traditions in the majority Muslim country and to a greater number of women wishing to leave troubled relationships. Others want to work outside the home.

"Women in Turkey want to live more freely and more equally. Women have changed and progressed a lot in a positive sense," Ataselim said. "Men cannot accept this, and they are violently trying to suppress the progress of women."

Turkey was the first country to sign and ratify a European treaty on preventing violence against women — known as the Istanbul Convention — in 2011. But President Recep Tayyip Erdogan withdrew

Turkey from it 10 years later, sparking protests.

The president's decision came after pressure from Islamic groups and some officials from Erdogan's Islam-oriented party. They argued that the treaty was inconsistent with conservative values, eroded the traditional family unit and encouraged divorce. Erdogan has said he believes that men and women were not biologically created as equals and that a woman's priority should be her family and motherhood.

The president insists that Turkey does not need the Istanbul Convention, and has vowed to "constantly raise the bar" in preventing violence against women. Last year, his government strengthened legisla-

tion by making persistent stalking a crime punishable by up to two years in prison.

Mahinur Ozdemir Goktas, the minister for family affairs, says she has made protecting women a priority and personally follows trials.

"Even if the victims have given up on their complaints, we continue to follow them," she said. "Every case is one too many for us." Ataselim said the Istanbul Convention was an additional layer of protection for women and is pressing for a return to the treaty. Her group is also calling for the establishment of a telephone hotline for women facing violence and for the opening of more women's shelters, saying the current number is

far from meeting demand. Most of all, existing measures should be adequately enforced, Ataselim said.

Activists allege that courts are lenient toward male abusers who claim they were provoked, express remorse or show good behavior during trials. Activists say restraining orders are often too short and those who violate them are not detained, putting women at risk.

"We believe that each of the femicide cases were preventable deaths," Ataselim said.

Each year, women's activists in Turkey take to the streets on International Women's Day on March 8 and on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on Nov. 25, demanding

greater protection for women and Turkey's return to the treaty.

Turkish authorities regularly ban such rallies on security and public order grounds.

Demonstrators often carry signs that read: "I don't want to die" — the last words uttered by Emine Bulut, who died in a cafe in Kirikkale in central Turkey after her husband slit her throat in front of her 10-year-old daughter. Her death in 2019 shocked the nation.

Evcil, killed in a salon where she worked as a manicurist, suffered physical and mental abuse after eloping at 18 to marry her husband, who is currently serving a life sentence in prison, her sister Kuzey said. (AP)

Israel would allow 20 to 30 aid trucks to enter northern Gaza from Israel today

Pressure grows on Israel to open more aid routes into Gaza by land and sea as hunger worsens

RAFAH, March 7: Efforts to get desperately needed humanitarian aid to war-ravaged northern Gaza gained momentum on Wednesday with the European Union increasing pressure for the creation of a sea route from Cyprus to Gaza and British Foreign Minister David Cameron saying that Israel's allies were losing patience.

While aid groups say all of Gaza is mired in a humanitarian crisis, the situation in the largely isolated north stands out. Many of the estimated 300,000 people still living there have been reduced to eating animal fodder to survive. The U.N. says that one in six children younger than 2 in the north suffers from acute malnutrition.

Amid the global pressure to alleviate the crisis, two Israeli officials said Wednesday the government will begin allowing aid to move directly from its territory into northern Gaza and will also cooperate with the creation of the sea route from Cyprus.

Israel would allow 20 to 30 aid trucks to enter northern Gaza from Israel on Friday, the start of more regular deliveries via that route, one of the officials said. It will also begin doing security checks Sunday on aid in Cyprus before it's delivered via sea to Gaza, the official said.

The ship will be part of a pilot project to



test the feasibility of the sea route. The aid is UAE-funded and made possible with US involvement.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the upcoming shipments with the media.

Aid groups have said it has become nearly impossible to deliver supplies within most of Gaza because of the difficulty of coordinating with the Israeli military, the ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of public order. It is even more difficult to get aid to the north.

Trucks carrying humanitarian aid have to drive from the Rafah crossing with Egypt or the Kerem Shalom crossing with Israel, both on the southern edge of Gaza, through the conflict zone to reach the largely cut-off areas in the north.

Last week, an attempt by the Israeli military to facilitate the movement of aid ended in tragedy when more than 100 Palestinians were fatally shot by Israeli forces or trampled to death in a melee.

On Wednesday, hundreds of people ran along a seaside road on the outskirts of Gaza City to collect bags of flour and boxes of water and canned food donated by Turkey and Egypt and were part of a shipment trucked in from southern Gaza. British Foreign Secretary David Cameron met with Benny Gantz, a visiting member of Israel's war Cabinet, and pressed him to increase the flow of aid into Gaza.

"We are still not seeing improvements on the ground. This must change," Cameron said in a statement posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

South Africa, which filed a genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, asked the court Wednesday to order Israel to allow in aid "to address famine and starvation" in Gaza.

Meanwhile, European Union Commission Chief Ursula von der Leyen will visit Cyprus on Friday to inspect installations at the port of Larnaca, from where aid would leave for Gaza if a sea route is established, Cypriot government spokesman Constantinos Let-

ymbiotis said.

EU spokesman Eric Mamer said the bloc is hopeful the corridor will open "very soon." Concerned by the lack of access to food, the United States, Jordan and other nations have begun making air drops of aid in recent days, but aid groups say only a fraction of the needed assistance can be delivered by air.

The war began with a Hamas attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which Palestinian militants killed around 1,200 people and took about 250 hostages. More than 100 of them were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November.

The attack sparked an Israeli invasion of the enclave of 2.3 million people. Gaza's Health Ministry said Wednesday the Palestinian death toll from the war climbed to 30,717. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government and maintains detailed casualty records. It does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its tallies but says women and children make up around two-thirds of those killed. Israel says it has killed over 13,000 Hamas fighters, without providing evidence.

Aid groups say the fighting has displaced most of the territory's population and pushed a quarter of the population to the brink of famine. (AP)

Houthi missile attack kills 3 crew members in Yemen rebels' first fatal assault on shipping

DUBAI, March 7: A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels on a commercial ship in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday killed three of its crew members and forced survivors to abandon the vessel, the US military said.

It was the first fatal strike in a campaign of assaults by the Iranian-backed group over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The attack on the Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier True Confidence further escalates the conflict on a crucial maritime route linking Asia and the Middle East to Europe that has disrupted global shipping.

The Houthis have launched attacks since November, and the US began an airstrike campaign in January that so far hasn't halted their attacks.

Meanwhile, Iran announced Wednesday that it would confiscate a USD 50 million cargo of Kuwaiti crude oil for American energy firm Chevron Corp. aboard a tanker it seized nearly a year earlier. It is the latest twist in a years-long shadow war playing out in the Middle East's waterways even before the Houthi attacks began.

The US military's Central Command said an anti-ship ballistic missile launched from a Houthi-controlled area in Yemen struck the True Confidence, causing sig-



nificant damage to the ship. In addition to the three deaths, at least four crew members were wounded, with three in critical condition. Two aerial photos released by the US military showed the ship's bridge and cargo on board ablaze.

"These reckless attacks by the Houthis have disrupted global trade and taken the lives of international seafarers simply doing their jobs, which are some of the hardest jobs in the world, and the ones relied on by the global public for sustenance of supply chains," Central Command said.

The attack came after the ship had been hailed over radio by men claiming to be the Yemeni military, officials said. The Houthis have been hailing ships over the radio in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden since beginning their attacks, with analysts suspecting the rebels want to seize the vessels. (AP)

Pak court extends stay order on oath-taking for candidates allotted reserved seat

PESHAWAR, March 7: A Pakistani high court on Thursday extended till March 13 the stay order on the oath-taking of those candidates who were allotted reserved seats in the National Assembly that ex-premier Imran Khan's party-backed SIC has claimed should have been given to it.

A two-member bench of the Peshawar High Court was hearing the case filed by the 71-year-old former prime minister Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) about the allotment of reserved seats to women and minorities.

On Monday, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) ruled that former-cricketer-turned-politician Khan's PTI-backed SIC is not eligible for the reserved seats allotted to women and minorities in Parliament and their share of seats should be allocated to other parties. In its ruling, the ECP stated that the SIC could not claim the share in the reserved seats for the women

"due to non-curable procedural and legal defects and violations of mandatory provisions of the Constitution." After the February 8 general elections, almost all 93 independently elected candidates backed by the PTI joined the right-wing SIC to receive its share of reserved seats for women and minorities.

A total of 266 seats of the lower House of Parliament were up for grabs out of the 336, while 60 seats were reserved for women and 10 for minorities. The reserved seats are allotted proportionately to the winning parties based on their numbers.

Hearing the case on Thursday, the PHC bench adjourned the case till March 13 and summoned the Attorney General for Pakistan, Mansoor Usman Awan, to appear before the court on the next hearing.

On Wednesday, the PHC issued a stay order preventing members from swearing in on the reserved seats and directed the top electoral body to submit its response by Thursday. (PTI)

Poland sees its most violent protest yet by farmers and supporters against Ukraine imports, EU rules

WARSAW, March 7: Poland saw its most violent protest by farmers and supporters yet on Wednesday as some participants threw stones at police and tried to push through barriers around parliament, injuring several officers, police said.

Police used tear gas and said they detained over a dozen people and prevented the protesters from getting through to the Sejm, the Polish parliament.

Farmers are angry over European Union climate policies and food imports from Ukraine that they say threaten their livelihoods. Such protests have occurred across the 27-member EU in recent weeks, but this one was decidedly angrier than earlier demonstrations in the central European nation.

Police noted on the social media platform X that its officers "are not a party to the ongoing dispute" and warned that behavior threatening their safety "cannot be taken lightly and requires a firm and decisive response." The deputy agriculture minister, Michal Kolodziejczak, said he didn't believe that "real, normal farmers caused a riot in front of the Sejm today," and that it was neces-



sary to isolate "provocateurs and troublemakers." He did not say who he thought was behind the violence.

Farmers on tractors blocked highways leading into Warsaw while thousands of their supporters gathered in front of the prime minister's office before marching to the parliament. Some trampled a European Union flag and burned a mock coffin bearing the word "farmer."

Farmers were joined by miners, foresters, hunters and other supporters. They blew horns and set off firecrackers and smoke bombs, despite police warnings that the use of pyrotechnics was banned. Some protesters burned tires.

The protesters are demanding a withdrawal from the EU's Green Deal, a plan meant to fight climate change and protect biodiversity, in-

cluding with plans requiring farmers to reduce the excessive use of polluting chemicals to boost their crops.

The protests have led politicians to water down some provisions.

The protesters also want the Polish-Ukrainian border closed to stop the imports of Ukrainian food products, which farmers say drive down market prices and put Poland's agricultural sector in jeopardy.

The protest increased pressure on the government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk, a former president of the European Council who is strongly pro-EU and seeks to support Ukraine as it fights Russia's invasion.

Tusk has sought to meet the farmers' demands, calling their frustrations justified. He has said he plans to propose amendments to the Green Deal.

Anti-Ukrainian slogans have featured at the protests in Poland, where authorities have said they are concerned that Russia is trying to leverage legitimate concerns to create divisions between Warsaw and Kyiv.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing make up less than 3% of Poland's GDP, according to the World Bank. (AP)

China accuses US of devising tactics to suppress China despite improvement in relations



BEIJING, March 7: China's foreign minister accused the US on Thursday of devising tactics to suppress China's rise and criticized the Biden administration for adding more Chinese companies to its sanctions lists.

Wang Yi, speaking to media during the annual meeting of China's legislature, said China's relations with the US have improved since Presidents Xi Jinping and Joe Biden met in November, but America has not fulfilled its promises.

"If the US always says one thing and does another, where is its credibility as a major power? If the US gets nervous and anxious when it hears the word China, 'where is its confidence as a major power?'" he said.

"If the US is obsessed with suppressing China, it will eventually harm itself," Wang also demanded

that members of the UN Security Council stop blocking Palestine from becoming a member of the United Nations.

The 70-year-old veteran diplomat, who has earned Xi's trust, returned to the foreign minister's post last summer after his successor, Qin Gang, was abruptly dismissed without explanation after a half year on the job. Wang is also the ruling Communist Party's top foreign affairs official, a more senior position that he moved to when Qin became foreign minister at the end of 2022.

Analysts had speculated the Communist Party might use the weeklong meeting of the National People's Congress to name a new foreign minister, but that appeared off the table after an agenda released on the eve of the opening session did not include personnel changes.

China's UN ambassador, Zhang Jun, said during a Security Council debate in January that China supports Palestine becoming a full member as soon as possible, as a first step toward creating a Palestinian state, according to Chinese media reports.

Wang called on Thursday for a major international conference to draw up a roadmap and timetable

for a two-state solution. "We support Palestine becoming a full member of the United Nations and call on individual members of the Security Council not to set obstacles for this any more," he said.

He accused the United States, without mentioning it by name, of stirring up trouble in Taiwan and the South China Sea. China says that self-governing Taiwan is part of China and should be under its control, and it claims a wide swath of the South China Sea, putting it at odds with the Philippines, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian neighbors.

The Philippines and the US have accused China of aggressive tactics in trying to block Philippines ships from reaching reefs and other outcroppings that both sides claim, most recently in a collision between coast guard vessels of both countries this week.

"For unreasonable provocations, we will take just countermeasures," Wang said. "We also advise certain countries outside the region not to stir up trouble, choose sides, and not to become disruptors and troublemakers in the South China Sea."

He said countries that insist on maintaining official ties with Taiwan are interfering in China's domestic affairs. (AP)

'The Conspiracy to oust me from the Presidency,' was out for sale starting on Thursday Gotabaya Rajapaksa hints India insisted on his continuation as Sri Lanka's President in 2022

COLOMBO, March 7: Gotabaya Rajapaksa, ousted as the president of Sri Lanka in a popular public uprising in 2022, on Thursday hinted that India was keen on his continuation despite the growing public discontent against him at the behest of certain Western powers.

"There was, in fact, a major foreign power that was insisting that I should not resign and they had demonstrated their willingness to do whatever it takes to keep Sri Lanka with essentials," Rajapaksa, 74, writes in his book without naming India.

Titled "The Conspiracy to oust me from the Presidency," Rajapaksa's book was out for sale starting on Thursday but there was no official book launch.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation and fleeing away from the country to the Maldives in mid-July 2022 came after India had extended a credit line with assistance worth USD 4 billion when Sri Lanka's economy went bankrupt with long queues for essentials and fuel for four months preceding this development.

His book does have a reference

to this critical aid received from India.

"Yet I resigned from the presidency to give the people of Sri Lanka some respite," the former president says in the book, adding that after two years of Covid lockdowns, closure of schools and loss of employment, the cost of living increases. "I did not want to put the people through a protracted political stand-off on my account."

"...I resigned in order to put an end to the political conspiracies and sabotage that was making life intolerable for everyone," he said, adding, "It would be extremely naive for anyone to claim that there was no foreign hand in the moves made to oust me from power."

"Determined foreign powers and certain local parties were financing and organizing violent protests and sabotage for my removal and they would not have stopped so long as I had remained in power.

Thus the people would have had to endure more sabotage, more short ages, more riots and demonstrations and normalcy would not have been restored," the former president writes. He did not name any country but sentences such as "Some countries like to portray themselves as the guardians of democracy and the rule of the law world over" do make it obvious to which Western nation he is pointing fingers at.

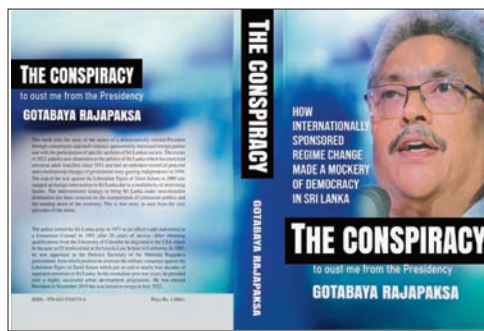
"In fact, the biggest damage to democracy in any developing na-

tion comes not from global powers that are said to have authoritarian forms of government but from certain wealthy developed democracies and their paid fifth columnists," he says.

There is also another reference where he says, "The acts of sabotage, destabilisation and violent mass protests organised and funded by certain developed nations in order to achieve their political objectives have been well documented" and goes on to mention examples since 2005 from Sri Lanka where foreign interventions prevailed and where Sri Lankan people prevailed.

Rajapaksa, who was the commander-in-chief of forces as the president, blames the personality clashes within the defence establishment for the intelligence breakdown, which had resulted in an incorrect assessment of the looming threat.

By naming individuals, he laments that differences among them had "contributed to not making accurate assessment" of the build-up that was gaining momentum via social media for his ouster. (PTI)



Interim budget of ₹ 1395.93 lakh addresses withdrawal of wages of officers, staff of BTC Secretariat

Pramod Boro presents interim budget

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, March 7: Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Council, who is also in-charge of finance, presented the interim budget for the period from the April 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024 at the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTCLA) House, Bodofa Nwgrw in Kokrajhar on Thursday.

A one-day interim normal budget session (vote on account) of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) for 2024-25 was conducted at the BTCLA.

The interim budget is purely for withdrawal of salary and wages for only three months for officers and staff of the BTC Secretariat starting from April 1, 2024 to June 30, 2024 for an amount of ₹ 1395.93 Lakh.

Speaker of the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly, Katiram Boro, chaired the



Pramod Boro said that the full BTC budget for the financial year 2024-25 shall be presented before the August House after lifting of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

He said that the BTR government is committed to work for all round development of the citizens and is subsequently rendering services for promoting healthy growth of the region. He said that the government of BTR is working towards achieving economic development of the people of the region.

Meanwhile, Boro also inaugurated a medical unit and a library at BTC Legislative Assembly Building to facilitate the medical services and reading environment amongst the elected representatives of the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly.

Speaker of BTC Legislative Assembly, Katiram Boro, deputy Speaker Abhiram Mahanayak, deputy chief executive member, Gobinda Chandra Basumatary and BTR executive members were present on the occasion.

budget session, and discussed widely on the vote on account of the BTC Legislative Assembly. In his budget speech, CEM

Pramod Boro said that the full BTC budget for the financial year 2024-25 shall be presented before the August House after lifting of

Anti-CAA stir gains momentum in state



HT Correspondent SIVASAGAR, March 7: Several organizations including Rajgor Dal, CPI (M), Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP), Congress and AAP on Thursday took out a protest demonstration in Sivasagar Station Chari against the BJP government's decision to implement the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA).

Chandan Phukan of AAP said that the Assamese as a community is apprehensive of a troublesome future if CAA is implemented and hence, an all-out protest against CAA has been launched.

Pradip Borgohain of AJP told the media that all opposition parties have unitedly begun their opposition to CAA and warned the Centre and the state government that a more vigorous movement will be launched if the controversial act is not repealed.

Monoranjan Konwar of the Congress said that the Centre is hell-bent on implementing CAA because it hopes to improve its poll prospect in West Bengal and Assam with Hindu voters migrating from neighbouring Bangladesh.

Dharma Baruah of CPI said that the state BJP intends to destroy the Assamese community and make it a minority in their state.

Meanwhile, the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) Sivasagar took out a bike rally from the Boarding Field in Sivasagar against implementing CAA in the state as part of their state-wide protest programme on Thursday.

Samiran Phukan, assistant secretary of AASU, warned the state government of massive protests everywhere if it does not withdraw CAA which will permanently alter the demography of Assam.

Our Nagaon correspondent

add: Along with the rest of the state, the district unit of the Asom Jatiyatbadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) also staged a sit in protest against implementation of CAA in the state, in front of the office of the Nagaon district commissioner here on Thursday and also demanded the immediate repeal of the controversial act.

Several activists from the youth and students' organization participated in the agitation and shouted anti-CAA slogans. During the stir, Pragjyotish Bonia and Debasish Das, the president and secretary of the district unit of the organization respectively, strongly criticized the ruling saffron party at the Centre as well as in the state. They said that the government conspired to bring the act forcefully in action just ahead of the upcoming general election only to avail political mileage or benefits although the issue is sub-judice in the Supreme Court.

Both the leaders said the organization would not allow implementation of the act in the state and would persist long with all possible democratic measures to resist it.

Our Bokajan correspondent add: The Asom Jatiyatbadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), Bokajan on Thursday held a protest dharna against CAA in front of their office here. They held the dharna for two hours.

AJYCP and All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) have opposed the implementation of CAA.

The protest was attended by AJYCP members from Bakolia, Parokhuwa, Deopani and Santipur. President of APHLC, Bokajan LA, Samson Teron and others also participated in the protest programme.

All Assam Students Union, Karbi Anglong and Bokajan

branches also held a protest against CAA by taking out a motorcycle rally in Bokajan LA on Thursday in which many joined in.

Our Jorhat correspondent add: The Jorhat district unit of AJYCP on Thursday staged a sit-in demonstration in front of the Jorhat district commissioner's office complex here.

The protesters holding banners and placards in their hands, shouted slogans against the central government opposing its move to implement C (A) A. 2019 from this month. Stating that the law poses a serious threat to the languages, art and culture of the indigenous people of Assam, the protesters sought repeal of the said act.

AJYCP state assistant general secretary Siba Kalita, cultural secretary Suraj Kalita, publicity secretary Ashim Jyoti Saikia, executive committee member Nabajyoti Bora, Jorhat district committee president and general secretary, Pranabjyoti Saikia and Babu Dutta respectively and advisors of the Jorhat district committee, Zakir Hussain and Nripen Rajkhowa were among those who took part in the protest programme.

Meanwhile, as per the call made by AASU and 30 other Indigenous organizations, the Jorhat district unit of AASU on Thursday took out a motorcycle rally across the town from the Jorhat stadium to oppose C (A) A 2019 and its implementation.

The protesters shouted slogans against the Centre seeking repeal of the act and urged the government not to go ahead with the implementation of the act, which they termed as a black law. They stated that the said act contradicted the Assam Accord, which was for safeguarding the interests of indigenous people of the state in all spheres.

Training cum awareness on women's rights held



HT Correspondent NAGAON, March 7: As part of the 'International Women's Day' celebrations, District Hub for Empowerment of Women, state department of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the District Legal Service Authority, Nagaon organized a training programme in Nagaon on Thursday.

The training cum awareness programme was held with an aim to educate and empower Self-Help Group (SHG) members on crucial legal frameworks including the protection of women from domestic violence Act, 2005, sexual harassment of women at workplace (prevention, prohibition and redressal) Act, 2013 which addresses workplace harassment, protection of women from domestic violence Act, 2005, which safeguards against domestic violence.

hall, Chapanala Panchayat, brought together a diverse group of women eager to enhance their understanding of their rights and available support mechanisms. Led by a distinguished panel advocate from the District Legal Service Authority, Jesmin Begum the training covered vital aspects of the aforementioned acts, providing participants with practical insights and knowledge.

The esteemed resource person, delivered an engaging session, elucidating the provisions and safeguards outlined in the sexual harassment of women at workplace (prevention, prohibition and redressal) Act, 2013 which addresses workplace harassment, protection of women from domestic violence Act, 2005, which safeguards against domestic violence,

and the Assam victim compensation scheme, offering financial assistance to victims.

Through interactive discussions participants gained invaluable insights into navigating legal channels and seeking recourse in instances of discrimination, harassment, or violence. The training focused on the importance of awareness and proactive engagement in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment within the community.

Speaking on the occasion, Barnalika Goswami, district mission coordinator, District Hub for Empowerment, Nagaon expressed gratitude to all participants for their enthusiastic engagement and reiterated the commitment of the organisation to continue fostering a supportive environment for women's advancement.

The training programme was skillfully moderated by Tajuddin Ahmed, district programme assistant, District Hub for Empowerment of Women, ensuring the smooth flow of information and active engagement of participants throughout the session.

This training programme stands as a testament to the collective efforts towards building a more inclusive and equitable society, where every woman can exercise her rights with confidence and dignity.

Body recovered in Margherita

HT Correspondent MARGHERITA, March 7: A body was found hanging from a tree in the Margherita Tea Estate in tinsukia district on Thursday.

The deceased has been identified as Hazari Urang, an aspiring football player of Margherita. He resided with his family at the Basti Line in the Margherita Tea Estate. Family members of the deceased have said foul play to be behind his mysterious death.

"My brother had gone out at 11 am on March 3. When he did not return home, we lodged a missing report in the local police station. However, today in the afternoon we got to know his body was found hanging from a tree in the forest area of the Margherita Tea Estate," said Bishnu Urang, elder brother of Hazari.

"We suspect that someone has killed my younger brother, Hazari," said Bishnu.

Meanwhile, the police soon reached the spot and sent the body for autopsy to the Tinsukia Civil Hospital.

The police have begun investigations into the matter.

Waris Punjab De supporter rushed to AMCH on health grounds

HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, March 7: One more supporter of 'Waris Punjab De', who was lodged in the Dibrugarh Central Jail has been sent to the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) for treatment after his health deteriorated.

Basant Singh was taken to AMCH on Thursday after his health condition deteriorated due to 'hunger strike'.

Earlier two of the associates of Amrit Pal Singh namely, Kulwant Singh and Gurmeet Singh were admitted at AMCH's intensive care unit on Wednesday due to their poor health.

Kulwant Singh was admitted at AMCH on the night of March 5 at around 10 pm after he suffered from epilepsy.

"Their health condition is good and they have no serious issues. They are suffering from weakness. We

got to know that they are on 'hunger strike', due to which their health condition deteriorated. They are on liquid diet," said an official of AMCH.

As per sources, the 'Waris Punjab De' chief Amritpal Singh and his nine associates, who have been detained under National Security Act (NSA), are said to be in an indefinite hunger strike since February 17 in the Dibrugarh Central Jail.

On March 1, Gurpatwant Singh Pannu of the separatist Sikh for Justice asked to shift Waris Punjab De' chief Amritpal Singh and several of his associates, who are lodged in Dibrugarh jail to Amritsar jail or face the consequences.

In a telephonic message Pannu asked the Assam chief minister to shift Amritpal and his aides to Punjab or he will have to face dire consequences. He also said the organisation will lodge a complaint in the United Nation.

NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from Rasho Sharma to Sumidra Sharma, as all my documents consists of the same name. Therefore, I solemnly declare that Rasho Sharma and Sumidra Sharma are the names of same person i.e me.

Sumidra Sharma
Village:- Baluhandar,
P/O. Laskar Pathar,
P/S Lanka,
District:- Hojai, Assam

NAME CORRECTION

My actual and correct name is Saraswati Dutraj (53) but is wrongly recorded in my husband's pension payment order (PPO) Vide no. 234980501853 as Saraswati Devi, but it should be Saraswati Dutraj and my correct Date of Birth is 25.01.1971 but wrongly recorded as 19.03.1997 in my husband's pension payment order (PPO) Vide no. 234980501853

Therefore my actual and correct name is Saraswati Dutraj and my correct Date of Birth is 25.01.1971

Saraswati Dutraj
W/o - Sri Prem Bahadur
Dutraj
R/o- Dewan Basti
PO & PS - Diphu
District - Karbi Anglong
Assam, 782460

Workshop focuses on product design, interaction design and communication design

Workshop on 'Design Thinking and Innovation' held at Tezpur University

HT Correspondent TEZPUR, March 7: The department of design, of the Tezpur University organised a two-day workshop on 'Design Thinking and Innovation' at the university campus in Tezpur on Thursday.

The workshop is focused on product design, interaction design, and communication design. During the next two days hands on training would revolve around solving contemporary societal challenges faced by the designers. Ravi Mokashi Punekar (Retd.) and Pankaj Upadhyay, assistant professor of the department of design of the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati were present on the occasion as resource persons.

Speaking on the occasion, Shambhu Nath Singh, vice chancellor of the Tezpur University called design thinking more than just a process.

"It is a mindset that encourages us to approach challenges with curiosity and empathy to find a solution. The best solutions



often arise from understanding the needs and experiences of users and customers," said Singh.

Addressing the participants, Ravi Mokashi Punekar said that India needs to create competent professionals capable of

integrating traditional and modern knowledge, concepts and styles for eco-friendly products.

Pankaj Upadhyay urged the students to be innovative in their approach. He said that designers are required in domains of product design, industrial design, furniture and accessories, graphic media, apparel design etc, and therefore one must be innovative in their approach to stay relevant.

Partha Pratim Dutta, head of the department of design highlighted that the Master of Design (M. Des) offered by the department covers specialized courses of product design, communication design and interaction design. He further said that in view of the importance of the discipline the department from the next academic year shall offer Bachelor of Design (B.Des) with a multidisciplinary approach to train students for different industry domains. In the next two days, the workshop will have several interactive sessions, hands-on activities from ideation to prototyping etc.

Ceasefire with NSCN/GPRN (Khango) extended for another year

HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, March 7: The government of India and the NSCN/GPRN (Khango) on Thursday extended the ceasefire agreement for another year with effect from April 18, 2024, to April 17, 2025. The ministry of information and publicity of the outfit, in a release, said in the spirit of seriousness to maintain peace in the state and modalities of resolving issues and for lasting peace in the land of the Nagas with the involvement of the Naga people, the ceasefire agreement between the NSCN/GPRN (Khango) and the government of India has been mutually extended for one year with effect from April 18, 2024, till April 17, 2025, subject to adherence to the ceasefire ground rules.

On behalf of the NSCN/GPRN (Khango), its ceasefire supervisory board supervisor A Imyapangba Ao and secretary Mhoyam Kithan signed the ceasefire extension agreement, the release added.

Nagaland inks MoU with Yes Bank and Sellmetric Pvt Limited

KOHIMA, March 7: The department of industries & commerce, government of Nagaland, the nodal department for promoting and advancing the successful implementation of the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) initiative within the state, entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with YES Bank and Sellmetric Pvt. Limited on Thursday at the directorate of industries & commerce, Kohima.

Open Network For Digital Commerce (ONDC) is a flagship initiative of the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry to democratize e-commerce. The primary aim of this tripartite agreement is to collaborate in facilitating digital sales for small businesses, farmers, entrepreneurs, etc., through the ONDC platform, which is a new initiative backed by the Government of India.

Present at the MoU signing were commissioner & secretary, industries & commerce, Kekhrievor Kevichusa among others. (NNN)

Congress, INDIA bloc's priority interest of families; no concern for Dalits: Nadda

AGRA (UP), March 7: BJP president J P Nadda on Thursday said the priority of the Congress and the INDIA bloc is to promote the interest of families without having any genuine concern for Dalits and weaker sections of the society.

He also said the Congress party, which ruled India for a long period after Independence, considered Dalits as "instruments for getting votes" and had no genuine concern for them and the down-trodden.

Nadda, who was speaking at 'Anushochit Jaati Maha Sammelan' in Agra, was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

"Congress was in power for a long time in the country since Independence. They didn't see our Scheduled Caste (SC) brothers from a humanitarian point of view. They always saw them as an instrument to garner votes," said Nadda.

He hailed his government's decision to remove Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir and said by doing away with the constitutional provision, the people of the SC community in the Union Territory (UT) will derive benefits of reservation, get government jobs and will also get elected to seats reserved for them after delimitation.

Nadda also hit out at the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc and alleged that its aim is to save the



parties of families from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign against corruption.

"This Congress party and INDIA alliance are there to save families from the campaign of Modi against corruption. They are either on bail or in jail," said Nadda.

The BJP chief took names of several political parties right from Jammu and Kashmir to Tamil Nadu and said they are parties of families.

He asked, "Tell me whether Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah's National Conference is a party of family or not, and Mufti Mohammad and Mehbooba Mufti's PDP is a party of family or not? In Punjab, (late) Parkash Singh Badal and Sukhbir Singh

Badal's SAD is a party of family or not?"

"In Haryana, Chautala family's party is a party of family or not? In Uttar Pradesh, Akhilesh, Dimple and (late) Mulayam (Singh Yadav)'s SP is a party of family or not? In Bihar, Lalu, Rabri, Misa, Tejashwi and Tej Pratap's RJD is a party of the family or not?" he said.

Nadda asked whether in Bengal, "bua-bhatija" Abhishek Banerjee and Mamata Banerjee's TMC is a party of family or not. In Telangana, whether KCR, KTR and Kavitha's BRS a party of family or not, he said.

"In Tamil Nadu, (late) Karunanidhi, Stalin and Udhayanidhi Stalin's DMK a party of

family or not? In Maharashtra, Sharad Pawar and Supriya Sule's NCP (Sharad faction) a party of family or not?" he questioned.

Nadda further asked whether Uddhav Thackeray and Aditya Thackeray's Shiv Sena (Uddhav) is a party of family or not. Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Sonia Gandhi's party is a party of family or not, he asked.

"Tell me if Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi are out on bail or not? If there is a case against Akhilesh in the Riverfront case or not, against Lalu Yadav in the fodder scam case or not and if the ministers of Mamata Banerjee are corrupt or not?" he asked. Earlier, in his address Nadda said the BJP, which is an ideological party, believes that the country will not develop till those on the margins of the society are benefitted.

"We had said the country cannot move forward till the 'vanchit, peedit, soshit and Dalit' (deprived, exploited, aggrieved and Scheduled Castes), who are seen as tools for vote bank politics by the INDIA bloc, are developed and made equals. This is why not Congress, but BJP undertook Antyodaya mission to benefit those on the margins of society," said Nadda.

He charged that the Congress's slogans have always been divisive. But the BJP and the Bhartiya Jan Sangh have always tried to unite everyone. "This is why we

said 'Sabka sath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas, sabka prayas'," said Nadda.

He alleged that the architect of Indian Constitution, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, was ignored and sidelined by the Congress. "This is the character and history of Congress, which objected to Babasaheb Ambedkar's appointment to the constituent assembly. It is written in history that Congress had defeated Bhimrao Ambedkar in North Mumbai. So he had to go to Bengal and get elected from there."

Nadda further said it is written in history that during the Congress regime, there was no place to put up the picture of Ambedkar in Lok Sabha. Even after his death, he was not given Bharat Ratna.

He alleged that Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi gave Bharat Ratna to themselves but did not give Bharat Ratna to Ambedkar. He was given Bharat Ratna when Janata Dal formed the government and it had the support of the BJP, said Nadda.

"I am telling all this before you so that you should remember that the Dalit brothers, who have always been misled by the Congress party, should know that no one cares for them. If someone has cared for them, it is only Narendra Modi who cares for them," said Nadda, and pointed to naming the airport in Ayodhya after Maharishi Valmiki. (PTI)

BJP spreading canards about Sandeshkhali; Bengal safest state for women: Mamata

KOLKATA, March 7: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday accused the BJP of spreading canards about incidents at Sandeshkhali while asserting that the state is the safest place in the country for women.

Banerjee, also the Trinamool Congress supremo, also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "lecturing" the West Bengal government on women's security, alleging that he keeps silence when women are tortured in BJP-ruled states. In an apparent reference to former Calcutta High Court judge Abhijit Gangopadhyay, who joined the BJP during the day, she said, "We will ensure your defeat no matter from where you contest in the Lok Sabha polls."

Addressing people after leading a rally in Kolkata for women's rights, she said, "Many have given fake sandesh (message) on Sandeshkhali. The way a few incidents were shown is reprehensible. Some incidents may have happened and they have not reached us. But when we get to know something, we take action. I don't hesitate to arrest TMC workers if they are at fault."

Without naming the prime minister, the TMC supremo said, "Yesterday you came here and lectured us that atrocities on women are being committed here. In Uttar Pradesh, gruesome rapes are taking place. The BJP should be shameful that our daughters were raped and burnt in Manipur."

"West Bengal is the safest state in the country for women," she

said. Banerjee's comment comes in the backdrop of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remark on Wednesday that the "storm of Sandeshkhali" will sweep Bengal and "Nari Shakti" (woman power) will play a pivotal role in decimating the ruling party in the Lok Sabha polls. Banerjee accused the BJP leaders of "spreading canards about the safety of women in West Bengal but they maintain a stoic silence when women are tortured in BJP-ruled states."

"Hitting out at Gangopadhyay for 'taking away jobs of thousands of youths' across the state through his judgments, Banerjee said, "The youths will not forgive you. All your judgments are under question. We will ensure your defeat."

Banerjee claimed that the BJP is angry with the TMC as the party doesn't allow divisive politics in Bengal.

"As we don't allow their divisive politics here, Pinto Babu ka gussa aata hai (Pinto babu is angry). I refer to BJP as Pinto babu. Why is Pinto Babu angry? They sent over 400 teams to Bengal but none in Manipur where women were assaulted and stripped," she said.

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday led a rally in Kolkata for women's rights. The rally, themed "Mahila Der Adhikaar, Aamader Angikaar" (women's rights are our commitment), was organised by the TMC a day ahead of International Women's Day. (PTI)

Cong links journalist's arrest with his efforts to bring justice to Ankita Bhandari

DEHRADUN, March 7: The Uttarakhand Police has arrested a Pauri-based journalist, prompting the Congress to link the action with his efforts to bring justice to slain receptionist Ankita Bhandari.

Ashutosh Negi was arrested in Pauri on Tuesday on charges of using casteist remarks and issuing death threat to a man who belongs to the Scheduled Caste, police officials in Pauri said. The FIR against Negi includes sections of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, they said.

Negi's arrest sparked a protest at Srinagar in Pauri district where family members of Ankita Bhandari have been sitting on a dharna for the last 10 days demanding justice for her. They burnt an effigy of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Tuesday shouting anti-government slogans. On Tuesday, the sessions court remanded Negi to judicial custody till March 15, said government counsel Pradeep Kumar Bhatt.

Negi raised his voice for justice to Ankita Bhandari, a receptionist at Vanantra resort in Rishikesh whose employer Pulkit Arya had allegedly killed her when she refused to "have sex" with guests at the resort.

The Vanantra resort is owned by a former BJP leader who was expelled from the party after his son's name cropped up as the main accused in the case. Uttarakhand Congress chief Karan Mahara said the state government is trying to "suppress the voice of the common man" through police action against a journalist.

"In Ankita Bhandari murder case, the state government has been trying to shield the culprits who have connections with the BJP," Mahara said.

However, state BJP media in-charge Manveer Chauhan said the arrest of Negi is a purely legal matter which has nothing to do with his involvement in the campaign for justice to Ankita Bhandari. (PTI)

Rahul Gandhi's yatra 19th attempt to launch him: Kiren Rijiju



NEW DELHI, March 7: Union minister Kiren Rijiju advised Rahul Gandhi on Thursday to stop pursuing endeavours that are beyond his capabilities as he claimed that the Congress has failed every time to launch his political innings and his ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is the 19th such attempt.

In a video interview to PTL, Rijiju said had he faced similar failures as the Gandhi scion, he would not have wasted the "precious time" of his party and colleagues in trying to do something that was not doable.

The earth sciences minister also alleged that the amount of hatred Gandhi harbours against Prime Minister Narendra Modi "cannot be measured and described in words" and that the Congress leader also hates the Hindu culture.

The three-term Lok Sabha member from Arunachal Pradesh claimed that the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra is yet another at-

tempt to launch Gandhi and that the former Congress president has failed in that endeavour miserably.

"Elsewhere in the world, you do not get a second chance to be launched. I think he (Gandhi) has now been launched 19 times. How long will you keep on launching one person?" asked Rijiju, who has held diverse portfolios in the central government, including home affairs (minister of state), minority affairs, sports and youth affairs, law and now, earth sciences.

"Normally, suppose I fail to lead my party, neither the party people will keep trying to launch me again and spoil their precious time nor I, myself, will try to waste the precious time of my colleagues," he said.

"It works both ways. Parties should not do something that is not doable and the person concerned should also not try for something that he is not capable of," the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said,

citing the examples of British politicians who bowed out of politics after being unsuccessful.

Rijiju alleged that Gandhi is full of hatred towards Modi and spews venom at him at every given opportunity.

Asked about the Congress leader's comments on the Ram temple in Ayodhya, the Union minister accused Gandhi of harbouring hatred towards the Hindu culture.

"He hates Hinduism or Hindutva. He and his party have stated in the Supreme Court that Ram was a figment of imagination. Their thought process is already known to the world. So whatever statement he gives, it flows out of his hatred for the Hindu culture," he said when asked about the Congress leader's claims about the politicisation of the Ram temple issue.

Rijiju alleged that "sponsored by anti-India groups", Gandhi undermines India's image abroad and criticises the country's culture and constitutional authorities.

"He spews venom at Prime Minister Modi and the Indian culture. Whenever he goes to the United States or England or anywhere, sponsored by those anti-India groups, he attacks India's culture, constitutional organisations and authorities," the minister said.

"He (Gandhi) wants to destroy India's image. How much hatred he has for Modi, it is so visible. Every day, he speaks with hatred. I have never seen a man imbibing so much hatred for another person. The amount of hatred Rahul Gandhi carries for Modi cannot be measured and described in words," the Union minister said. (PTI)



KOLKATA, March 7: BJP women leaders led by party state general secretaries Agnimitra Paul and Locket Chatterjee were stopped by the West Bengal Police at New Town on the outskirts of Kolkata from heading towards Sandeshkhali on Thursday afternoon.

Following a scuffle and a bitter war of words with the police, the team was detained even as the leaders were seen holding a sit-in demonstration at the site they were stopped.

The leaders alleged they were being prevented from heading towards the trouble-torn area on grounds that the prohibitory section of 144 of CrPc remained clamped in certain parts of Sandeshkhali.

"This is absolutely outrageous. How can the police stop us in Kolkata citing movement restrictions in Sandeshkhali?," said Bharati Ghosh, a former IPS officer and a member of the BJP team.

Paul, the Asansol South MLA, said that the team only intended to

visit areas in Sandeshkhali which remained outside the ambit of the prohibitory section. "Is section 144 imposed in Kolkata? On what grounds can the police stop our movement here?," she asked.

The police and the TMC still have a lot to hide in Sandeshkhali even though a lot of the atrocities committed there have already been exposed, Chatterjee, an MP from Hooghly, maintained. BJP leader Falguni Patra was also part of the team.

"We merely wanted to be on the side of the tormented women in Sandeshkhali who are still reeling under fear since musclemen of Shahjahan Sheikh are still at large and police are doing little to address their concerns," she added.

When Chatterjee was asked to board a police van along with other women leaders, she entered into an altercation with the police officer present there.

"Look at the way they are treating a woman MP," Chatterjee said, before being whisked away in the van to the state police headquarters at Lalbazar.

Last week too, she was stopped at Bhojherhat while heading towards Sandeshkhali.

TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said BJP leaders were trying to instigate people in the area and not allowing normalcy to return. "Police are doing their job. The situation is normal at Sandeshkhali," he said. (PTI)

ED raids SP MLA Irfan Solanki's premises in Kanpur

KANPUR/LUCKNOW, March 7: The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday conducted searches at the premises of Samajwadi Party MLA Irfan Solanki and his family members in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, as part of a money laundering investigation, official sources said.

Solanki (44) is currently lodged in the Maharajganj prison and is a four-time MLA from Sisamau assembly seat in Kanpur district.

About five premises of Solanki including his residence in defence colony Jajmou, a linked property in Becon Ganj area that of his jailed brother Rizwan are being covered by ED teams from the Lucknow zonal office, the sources said.

The premises of Shaukat Ali, builder Hazi Wasi and party leader Noori Shaukat apart from some others in Kanpur and a premises in Mumbai in Maharashtra were also raided early morning along with a security escort of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel, they said.

Some documents and electronic gadgets have been recovered by the agency officials.

The search action was launched by the ED after it filed a criminal case against Solanki and others under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) taking cognisance of multiple FIRs filed against them by the Uttar Pradesh Police, they said. (PTI)

Experts laud e-cigarettes seizure, highlights threat of new-age 'gateway' devices



NEW DELHI, March 7: In the wake of a successful seizure of Chinese-made e-cigarettes by Noida Police, Mothers Against Vaping, a united front of proactive and concerned mothers and experts, emphasised on the need for sustained vigilance against the threat of e-cigarettes. The Noida Police recently arrested smugglers and seized a significant quantity of Made in China e-cigarettes which were sourced from Nepal.

The consignment was allegedly destined for sale in Rohini, Delhi and surrounding areas.

"We commend the government's efforts to restrict the spread of new-age gateway devices like e-cigarettes, vapes, etc, through a slew of seizures on banned products. We hope these sustained heightened vigilance initiatives by enforcement agencies continue as it is necessary to safeguard children and youth of

our country from these banned products," the collective said in a statement.

In November 2023, a large consignment of e-cigarettes worth Rs 50 lakh coming from China was nabbed on the Khutar-Puranpur highway in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

Similarly, a seizure at Chennai airport in November last year involved the confiscation of 11,700 e-cigarettes worth Rs 3.5 crore coming from China.

The easy accessibility and glamorisation of these new-age gateway devices are luring youngsters into the trap of addictive behaviours, Dr Rajesh Gupta, Addictive Director, Pulmonology and Critical Care, Fortis Healthcare, Noida, said.

"The actions taken by the police and the government are praiseworthy in terms of seizures and increased vigilance but at the same time, more needs to be

done. While continued seizures are essential, there is an equally crucial need to raise awareness and emphasise the detrimental health effects of vaping," he said.

"Manufacturers of these devices are specifically targeting our youth, making it imperative to spread awareness that vaping is not cool and extremely harmful. This message needs to permeate popular culture and one effective way to achieve this is by involving youth icons, celebrities and influencers as the faces of an anti-vaping movement," he added.

According to the World Health Organization, the region is home to 280 million smokeless tobacco users, constituting nearly 77 per cent of the global smokeless tobacco user population.

To curb the use of these new-age devices, efforts should address both the demand and supply sides, said Dr Bhavana Barmi, Clinical Psychologist and Founder, Happiness Studio.

She said the seizures target the supply side, but the government should also explore penalties for the use of these new-age gateway devices.

Implementing penalties under the PECA law for vaping and use of e-cigarettes can instil fear among users and their parents, contributing to a reduction in the usage of these devices, said Dr Barmi.

The Indian government has been proactive in banning e-cigarettes and has taken decisive action by prohibiting e-cigarettes and similar new-age gateway devices through the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarette Act (PECA) 2019. (PTI)



অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ
ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

No.27PSC/DR-55/1/2023-2024

NOTIFICATION

It is for Information to all concerned that the Assam Public Service Commission will hold the Screening Test (OMR Based) for recruitment to the post of **Conservation Officer (Gr.II)** in the Directorate of Archaeology, Assam under Indigenous and Tribal Faith and Cultural Department on **04-04-2024 (Thursday)** as per programme given below (Advt. No. 24 /2023, dated: 25 /08/2023).

Name of Post	Date & Day	Time	Subject
Conservation Officer (Gr.II) in the Directorate of Archaeology, Assam under Indigenous and Tribal Faith and Cultural Department	04-04-2024 (Thursday)	10:00 AM TO 12 NOON	Civil Engineering & General Awareness

The Commission has decided to allow all the candidates to appear in the **Screening test (OMR based) to be held on 04-04-2024**. The Commission would like to clarify that it reserves the right to cancel the candidature of any candidate on verification/Scrutiny of their application form at any time or any stage after the Screening Test, if it is found that they do not fulfill any of the eligibility conditions as per term of **Advt. No. 24 /2023, dated: 25 /08/2023**.

No intimation letter to the candidates shall be sent separately by post. The list of candidates shall be uploaded on **22-03-2024** and intimation letters shall be uploaded on **28-03-2024** in the APSC's official website (www.apsc.nic.in). The candidates shall have to download their own intimation letter from the aforesaid website.

Candidates, willing to apply for scribe for the said Screening test, may inform in written with supporting documents to the Commission or send mail to apsc-asm@nic.in before 25-03-2024.

Sd/
Secretary,
Assam Public Service Commission
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati - 22

Janasanyog/D/19012/23/8-Mar-24

Kerala CM launches India's first state-owned OTT platform

CSPACE is a novel initiative that seeks to help producers to get back their investment through crowd-funding route

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, March 7: Kerala on Thursday launched India's first government-owned OTT platform 'CSPACE' with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan terming it as a decisive step in the onward journey of Malayalam Cinema.

Inaugurating CSPACE, managed by the Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSFDC), at a function at Kairali Theatre here, the chief minister said this is a pioneering initiative that gives prominence to films with artistic and cultural value without hurting the mainstream film industry.

Noting that earning profit is the prime motive of the private-sector OTT platforms that mostly go for commercial movies, CSPACE is set to make a mark as a medium that brings home quality films, he said. "Private OTT platforms give prominence to films in the most widely spoken language since their prime motive is to maximise profit. The priority of CSPACE, on the other hand, is to onboard and stream contents with artistic and cultural values. This will also help the promotion of the Malayalam language and culture," Vijayan said.

The launch of CSPACE also signifies leveraging of the cutting-



edge technologies which will define Malayalam Cinema in the future, he said.

The decision that CSPACE will only stream films that are already released in theatres signifies that this is not a move that will harm the interests of the film industry. Its aim is to promote good cinema without hurting the interests of the producers and exhibitors, the chief minister said.

Presiding over the function, Culture Minister Saji Cheriyan said the launch of CSPACE aligned well with the government's policy of supporting art and artists representing diverse traditions, he said.

The films that win state, national

and international awards will be streamed on the platform, he said.

General Education Minister V Sivankutty, Food and Civil Supplies Minister G R Anil, Antony Raju, MLA, and Mayor Arya Rajendran were also present at the function.

KSFDC Chairman and eminent director Shaji N Karun said CSPACE is a novel initiative that seeks to help producers to get back their investment through crowd-funding route.

Total transparency in profit it earns and the number of viewers it attracts are the distinguishing features of the platform, he said.

KSFDC is a state-owned com-

pany entrusted with the promotion of Malayalam Cinema and industry, under the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Kerala.

For selection of the content, KSFDC has constituted a 60-member curator panel including eminent cultural personalities like Benyamin, OV Usha, Santhosh Sivan, Shyamaprasad, Sunny Joseph, and Jeo Baby.

Every content that is submitted will be evaluated by the curators considering its artistic, cultural and infotainment merit, before showcasing it on the platform.

A total of 42 films have been selected in the first phase for streaming on CSPACE, including 35 feature films, six documentaries, and one short film. Films that have won national or state awards and those exhibited at major film festivals will also be streamed.

Another distinctive feature of CSPACE is transparency in its operations and the overall earnings and the revenue share.

The platform, which operates on a pay per view basis, allows viewers to watch a feature film for Rs 75 and shorter contents for a much lesser price. Exactly half of the amount charged goes to the content provider. (PTI)

SC orders creation of panel to go into ecological damage in Corbett Tiger Reserve

NEW DELHI, March 7: Observing that the presence of a tiger in a forest is an indicator of the well-being of the ecosystem, the Supreme Court has ordered setting up of a committee to suggest measures for addressing the damage caused by illegal construction and felling of trees inside the Corbett Tiger Reserve.

The top court said the committee, to be formed by the Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, will assess the environmental damage caused to the reserve and quantify the cost for restoration.

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justices BR Gavai, Prashant Kumar Mishra and Sandeep Mehta said the committee shall consider the question as to whether tiger safaris can be permitted in the buffer or fringe area.

If such safaris can be permitted, what should be the guidelines for it? the court said.

The committee will recommend measures for restoration of the reserve to the state in which it was before the damage was done, it said.

"Identify the persons/officials responsible for such a damage. Needless to state that the State

shall recover the cost so quantified from the persons/delinquent officers found responsible for the same.

The cost so recovered shall be exclusively used for the purpose of restoration of the damage caused to the environment," the bench said.

The apex court said the committee will consist of a representative each from the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Wildlife Institute of India, Central Empowered Committee and an officer of the environment ministry not below the rank of joint secretary as its member secretary.

Highlighting the importance of tigers in the ecosystem, the top court quoted from the epic 'Mahabharata' to say, "The tiger perishes without the forest and the forest perishes without its tigers."

Therefore, the tiger should stand guard over the forest and the forest should protect all its tigers." The SC said unless steps are taken for the protection of tigers, the ecosystem revolving around them cannot be protected. It also directed that the committee would recommend the type of activities that should be permitted and prohibited in the buffer zone and fringe areas of the reserve.

"While doing so, if tourism is to be promoted, it has to be ecotourism," it said. The type of construction that should be permissible in such places would have to be in tune with the natural environment.

The committee, it said, shall suggest the number and type of resorts that should be permitted within the close proximity of the protected areas, besides restrictions to be imposed on resorts so that they are managed in tune with the object of protecting and maintaining the ecosystem.

The committee shall also make recommendations about noise restrictions, it said.

"The measures that are required to be taken for effective management and protection of Tiger Reserves which shall be applicable on a Pan India basis," the court said of the tasks of the proposed panel.

The court's judgement came on a petition filed by environmental activist and lawyer Gaurav Bansal alleging destruction of the tiger habitat and a decline in tiger density in the Lansdowne Forest Division owing to illegal constructions in the Pakhro Tiger Safari as well as unlawful felling of thousands of trees. (PTI)

Central Secretariat Service officers takes out protest march

NEW DELHI, March 7: A large number of Central Secretariat Service (CSS) officers on Thursday carried out a protest march outside the Shastri Bhawan here against the "delay" in the submission of report by a cadre review committee which has hampered their promotions. The protest march was held during lunchtime.

"As far as today's peace march in Shastri Bhawan is concerned, more than 2,500 officers participated in it," said Udit Arya, President of CSS Forum -- an association of the CSS officers.

He said the next march would be held on March 11th on Nirman Bhawan premises. "We are expecting a gathering of approximately 5,000 officers there," Arya said.

The central government had constituted a high-level cadre review committee (CRC) on October 27, 2022 to assess the rising demand for manpower across various ministries/departments, keeping in view the increasing number of schemes and projects of government.

It was asked to suggest the steps for better cadre management and smooth career progression of the staff members of the central secretariat, the CSS Forum had said in a recent letter to the Secretary of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

Arya said that the CSS officers are only demanding that the submission and implementation of the report of the CRC be expedited. "We still have hope that the Hon'ble Prime Minister will intervene in the matter and direct the concerned officials for immediate submission and implementation of the CRC report," he added.

The association's letter to the DoPT Secretary had said that "if the government does not wake up from its deep slumber on the cadre review matter, a full-fledged non-cooperation movement will be started".

The sanctioned strength of the CSS officers, considered as the backbone of the central government working, is 13,016, according to the latest data.

"As per information available with us, at least 20 departments of the government of India have sent requisition of more than 2,500 additional posts. The number will be huge if the data of all the departments is considered," the letter said.

Due to the delay in submission of the report of the cadre review committee, these departments are facing a crippling shortage of manpower, which is also hampering official work, it claimed. (PTI)

Armed forces ready to give befitting reply if anyone casts evil eye on India: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, March 7: The armed forces are well equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply if anyone casts an evil eye on India, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday against the backdrop of the nearly four-year border row with China in eastern Ladakh and concerns over Chinese military forays into the Indian Ocean.

Singh emphasised that the country's defence system has been "induced with a new energy" by the government in line with people's vision and it has resulted in India emerging as a powerful nation on the global stage with a strong and self-reliant military.

In an address at a defence summit hosted by the NDTV, he also said that India's defence apparatus is today stronger than ever as the Modi government has been focusing on bolstering it with the "sentiment of Indian-ness".

He termed 'perspective' as the major difference between the current and the previous dispensations, stating that the present government ardently

believes in the capabilities of the people of India, while those in power earlier were somewhat sceptical about their potential.

"Today, our forces possess a strong willpower due to a powerful leadership at the centre. We are working continuously towards keeping the morale of the soldiers high," Singh said.

"They are equipped, capable and ready to give a befitting reply to anyone who casts an evil eye on India," he said.

The Indian and Chinese troops are locked in an over three-and-half-year confrontation in certain friction points in eastern Ladakh even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and military talks.

Singh described promoting 'Aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in defence manufacturing as the biggest change brought about by the government, saying it is giving a new shape to India's defence sector.

He also highlighted various measures rolled out by the defence ministry for achieving self-reliance in the defence sec-

tor, including setting up of defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, reserving 75 per cent of the capital procurement budget for domestic industry and corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board among others.

"The annual defence production, which was around ₹ 40,000 crore in 2014, has now crossed a record ₹ 1.10 lakh crore," he said.

"The defence exports today have touched ₹ 16,000 crore from a meagre ₹ 1,000 crore nine-ten years ago. We have set a target to achieve ₹ 50,000 crore of exports by 2028-29," he said.

The defence minister asserted that when it comes to technology, developing countries have two options -- innovation and imitation -- and New Delhi is laying special emphasis on making the country a technology creator rather than a follower.

"Imitating technology from developed countries is not wrong for those whose innovation capacity and human resources have not reached the

level required to produce new technologies," he said.

"If a country imitates technology from other nations, it still moves ahead from old technology, however, the problem is that one becomes addicted to imitation and gets used to second-class technology," he said.

This forces them to fall 20-30 years behind a developed country, he said.

"Losing national self-confidence is a bigger problem as one always remains a technology follower. This mentality comes into your culture, ideology, literature, lifestyle and philosophy," Singh said.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi calls this follower mentality as the mindset of slavery," he said.

The defence minister described it as the duty of the government, media as well as intelligentsia to guide the nation out of the mindset of slavery.

"We should possess knowledge about others, but we must be aware of our national heritage too, and feel proud of it," the defence minister said. (PTI)

Father of gang-rape victim found hanging from tree in UP village

HAMIRPUR (UP), March 7: A week after two girls were found hanging from a tree in a field after they were allegedly gang-raped, the father of one of the victims was also found dead here, police said on Thursday. Superintendent of Police (SP) Deeksha Sharma said, "The body of a 45-year-old man, resident of a village under the Sisolar police station area, was found hanging from a tree on Wednesday under unknown circumstances."

Hamirpur police are yet to register an FIR regarding the alleged suicide. The deceased is the father of one of the girls who were found hanging in a village in Kanpur district on February 28. The victims and accused hailed from the same village in adjoining Hamirpur district, the police said.

According to the deceased father's kin, he died allegedly by suicide as the accused's family members were threatening them to compromise on the rape case. SP Sharma, however, declined to comment on the allegations of the deceased's family.

"Further action regarding the incident will be taken based on the complaint filed by the family members," the SP said.

The gang-rape matter came to light when two girls aged 16 and 14 went missing on February 28 and hours later in the evening, their bodies were found hanging from a tree, 400 metres from a brick kiln in Kanpur, according to the police.

The girls' family members had earlier alleged that the minors were gang-raped a few days before their deaths by the contractor of the brick kiln, Ramroop Nishad, (48), his son Raju (18) and nephew Sanjay (19).

The accused had also made a video of the act to blackmail the girls, which was recovered during the investigation, the police had earlier said. The bodies were recovered on February 29 and all the three accused were arrested and sent to jail by Kanpur police the same day, they had said. (PTI)

'Govt declares Mohammad Qasim Gujjar designated terrorist'

NEW DELHI, March 7: The Narendra Modi government on Thursday declared Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operative Mohammad Qasim Gujjar, the mastermind of several terror attacks, a designated terrorist.

Announcing the government's decision, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said LeT operative Gujjar has caused numerous deaths and injuries with terror attacks and is involved in planning a war against India.

"Anyone found involved in activities against the unity and integrity of the nation will be dealt with ruthlessly," Shah posted on X.

Gujjar alias Salman alias Suleman with the intention to wage

war against the country has been involved in carrying out a wide-range of terrorist activities, including coordinating, supplying, identifying locations for drones for dropping arms, ammunition, improvised explosive devices and cash, and delivering and managing consignments from across the border, according to an official notification.

He has also been involved in creating new terror modules through recruitment and radicalisation by various means, including social media and other online encrypted communication applications, it said.

The home ministry said the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, has been enacted to

provide for more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations, for dealing with terrorist activities and for matters connected therewith.

The central government believes that 32-year-old Gujjar, who hails from Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district and is currently residing in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, belongs to the LeT, a banned organisation, the notification said.

He has been involved in various terror attacks and bomb blasts, and is responsible for the death and injury of a number of people in these terror incidents. This led to the decision to designate Gujjar a terrorist, it said. (PTI)

Indian warship rescues 21 crew members of drone-hit vessel in Gulf of Aden

NEW DELHI, March 7: Indian warship INS Kolkata rescued 21 crew members, including an Indian national, after three of their colleagues in a Barbados-flagged cargo vessel were killed following a Houthi missile strike on the bulk carrier in the Gulf of Aden on Wednesday.

The deaths were the first since the Houthi militants began attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea and adjoining shipping lanes in response to Israel's military offensive in Gaza.

The crew abandoned the vessel True Confidence after the attack, military officials said.

INS Kolkata, deployed for maritime security operations in the Gulf of Aden, arrived at the scene of action at 4.45 pm on Wednesday and rescued 21 crew members, including one Indian national, from a life raft using its integral helicopter and boats, Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said.

The US Central Command reported "three fatalities, at least four injuries, of which three are in critical condition, as well as significant damage to the ship".

According to reports, two of the sailors killed in the missile strike were Filipinos and the other one was from Vietnam.

The Barbados-flagged vessel was reportedly hit by a drone approximately 55 nm south west of Aden resulting in the fire on board and critical injuries to some of the crew members forcing the crew to abandon the ship, Madhwal said.

Critical medical aid was provided to the injured

crew by the ship's medical team, he said in a written statement.

The rescued crew, including the critically injured personnel, have been evacuated to Djibouti by INS Kolkata.

The Indian Navy warship swiftly responded to the maritime incident in Gulf of Aden, Madhwal said.

It is learnt that two crew members died on board True Confidence as they could not leave the ship while the third one was declared dead following the rescue operation.

The fresh incident came amid increasing global concerns over attacks on various commercial vessels in the Red Sea by the Houthi militants.

In the last few weeks, the Indian Navy has extended assistance to a number of merchant vessels in the Western Indian Ocean following attacks on them.

In a statement, the US Central Command said an anti-ship ballistic missile was launched from "Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-controlled areas of Yemen toward M/V True Confidence, a Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier, while transiting the Gulf of Aden".

"The missile struck the vessel, and the multinational crew reports three fatalities, at least four injuries, of which three are in critical condition, and significant damage to the ship," it said.

"The crew abandoned the ship and coalition warships responded and are assessing the situation," it said. (PTI)

Invest in women's health to accelerate progress: WHO regional director Saima Wazed

NEW DELHI, March 7: On the eve of International Women's Day, WHO regional director for Southeast Asia Saima Wazed Thursday stressed on the need for investing in women's health to accelerate progress in achieving gender equality.

Investing in the health and wellbeing of women and girls first requires adequate investment in health overall, she said.

"On this count, our region is lagging. Countries in our region allocate only about 2.9 per cent of GDP, against 4 per cent globally. This means that out-of-pocket expenditure, as a share of current health spending, is unacceptably high," she said.

"When families have to pay out of pocket, they will often delay or forgo much needed care. How does this impact women? As we know, much of the burden of caring for the sick or older family members falls on women and girls," Wazed said.

Women and girls already perform most of the unpaid work in households, "spending two to five times more each day doing such work when compared to men. This highly unequal situation holds women back



from fully participating in economic and political life, she underlined.

"We know we need to accelerate progress towards gender equality and health for all. We've made some gains, but inequalities persist," Wazed emphasised.

She said gains have been made in three distinct areas -- the proportion of women receiving antenatal care from skilled providers, those satisfied with modern methods of family planning, and those receiving skilled attendance for their deliveries. But

these gains are not being equally distributed. Inequities in these gains exist based on women's location, educational levels and household incomes.

Another area where improvement is needed is that currently policies do not fully recognize a woman's autonomy in sexual and reproductive health decisions, she said adding gender inequalities also affect some risk factors of noncommunicable diseases, Wazed stated.

Women in our region also face var-

ious barriers to access to services, such as lack of a female health provider. They also face constraints of a lack of access to household resources and transport, long distances to health facilities and weak decision-making powers, she said.

"Violence against women and girls remains unacceptably pervasive. This is nothing less than a violation of their human rights, and a priority public health issue," she pointed out.

Evidence-informed gender-responsive health policies and programmes can help reduce these gender gaps in health. Most countries in the region have adopted such national plans. However, their capacity to implement them needs strengthening, she underlined.

"I am pleased to inform that we are currently designing one of my priority programmes, specifically focusing on women and children," Wazed stated.

Focusing on women's health has multigenerational impacts on public health, on early childhood development, and even on societal and economic development. This is something the SDG framework also recognizes, she said. (PTI)

PUBLIC NOTICE

No. SSA/Esstt/Engagement/PE/239/2024/10870

In pursuant to the advertisement published vide No. SSA / Esstt / Engagement / SMO / 151 / 2023/ 8524 dated 12.12.2023, it is for general information of all concerned that the interview for the post of Project Engineer under Samagra Shiksha Axom will be held on 11.03.2024 from 9.30 am onwards in the State Mission Office, Samagra Shiksha Axom, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19.

The date-wise list of short-listed candidate is uploaded in the official website of Samagra Shiksha Axom at <https://ssa.assam.gov.in>

The short-listed candidates are requested to attend in the interview as per the scheduled date in the State Mission Office, Samagra Shiksha Axom, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 with the original testimonial relating to Educational Qualification, Experience and other documents, etc.



Sd/-Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha Axom
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/DF/3000/23/8-March-2024



Both will do well: Ajay Devgn on BO clash between 'Maidaan' and 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan'

MUMBAI, March 7: Bollywood star Ajay Devgn is not worried about his upcoming film "Maidaan" and Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff-led "Bade Miyan Chote Miyan" clashing at the box office as he believes there is audience for both the movies. "Maidaan", a period sports drama, while "Bade Miyan Chote Miyan", is an action thriller. They will hit the screens on April 10 on the day of Eid.

Devgn said he does not look at both movies releasing on the same day as a clash.

"I would not call it a clash. If you call it clash, then it means that two films should not be released on the same day. But there are times when you have to

do this.

"Both films are of different genres. We are all like a family, we are friends. We are not

looking at it like a clash, we are looking at it like a big weekend and both the films will do well," the actor said at the trailer launch of

the film. "Maidaan" tackles the true story of Syed Abdul Rahim (played by Devgn), who served as a coach and manager of the

Indian football team from 1950 until his death in 1963. Devgn said he wasn't aware about the golden years of Indian football and when he heard a brief about the film from producer Boney Kapoor, he instantly agreed to do it.

He also said the film challenged him as an actor. "After 1983 (referring to India's win in the cricket world cup), football was lost somewhere. I was amazed that this happened in our country. We had Amit Sharma (director), who did extensive research," he said.

"I would not call it just a sports film. It has got so much drama. As an actor, it was a film with so many layers. It is very strong in its emotional drama, apart from sports. After a long time, I had fun doing a film like this. I thoroughly enjoyed it," Devgn added.

The movie marks Devgn's first sports biopic and the actor said he was thrilled to have this opportunity.

"It feels very exciting when

you watch any match at home (on TV) or if you are playing anywhere, suddenly you feel younger. It gets very exciting. Amit trained all the boys for a year, and they all play (football) so well. I haven't played (football) on screen. I just have one sequence," he added. Also featuring Priyamani, Gajraj Rao, and Rudranil Ghosh, the film is presented by Zee Studios. Priyamani thanked the makers for casting her in the film opposite Devgn.

"All thanks to Boney sir. I met Amit Sharma, I did a look test and within ten days, I was in the film, shooting with the man (Devgn). I was so intimidated at the beginning as I was sharing screen space with Ajay Devgn. Initially, I was very intimidated but he made me feel comfortable on set. It was an honour to share the screen with him. I hope I've lived upto the expectations of Amit." Boney said shooting the film during the pandemic was challenging. (PTI)

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The movie marks Devgn's first sports biopic and the actor said he was thrilled to have this opportunity.

"It feels very exciting when

you watch any match at home (on TV) or if you are playing anywhere, suddenly you feel younger. It gets very exciting. Amit trained all the boys for a year, and they all play (football) so well. I haven't played (football) on screen. I just have one sequence," he added. Also featuring Priyamani, Gajraj Rao, and Rudranil Ghosh, the film is presented by Zee Studios. Priyamani thanked the makers for casting her in the film opposite Devgn.

"All thanks to Boney sir. I met Amit Sharma, I did a look test and within ten days, I was in the film, shooting with the man (Devgn). I was so intimidated at the beginning as I was sharing screen space with Ajay Devgn. Initially, I was very intimidated but he made me feel comfortable on set. It was an honour to share the screen with him. I hope I've lived upto the expectations of Amit." Boney said shooting the film during the pandemic was challenging. (PTI)

"I would not call it just a sports film. It has got so much drama. As an actor, it was a film with so many layers. It is very strong in its emotional drama, apart from sports. After a long time, I had fun doing a film like this. I thoroughly enjoyed it," Devgn added.

The movie marks Devgn's first sports biopic and the actor said he was thrilled to have this opportunity.

"It feels very exciting when

Anupam Kher announces new film as director 'Tanvi the Great', shooting to begin today

MUMBAI, March 7: Actor-filmmaker Anupam Kher on Thursday announced his upcoming directorial effort "Tanvi the Great".

Kher, who made his debut as director with 2002's "Om Jai Jagadish", shared the news on the occasion of his 69th birthday.

The actor said he had been working on "Tanvi the Great", which he described as a musical story, for the past three years.

"Tanvi the Great: Today, on my birthday I proudly announce the name of the film I have decided to direct. Some stories find their path and compel you to share it with the world!"

"And the best way I thought to start is by taking the blessings of my mother #Dulari in her temple with my father's pic blessing me too. Have been working on this musical story of #Passion #Courage #Innocence and #Joy for the last three years," Kher captioned a video on X.

In the post, the actor said the shooting of the film will begin on Friday.

"And finally starting shooting tomorrow on the auspicious day of #Mahashivratri. Birthday is the best day to CHALLENGE yourself! Please send me your love, best wishes and blessings! Om Namah Shivay," he added.

Kher has featured in over 540 films, including "Saaransh", "Chaalbaaz", "Khosla Ka Ghosla", "A Wednesday!", and "The Kashmir Files", in his acting career spanning 40 years. He was last seen in "Kaagaz 2", which also starred Satish Kaushik, Darshan Kumar and Neena Gupta. (PTI)



Want to work with Aamir Khan and Hrithik Roshan: Turkish star Hande Ercel

MUMBAI, March 7: Turkish TV star Hande Ercel, currently on her maiden visit to India, says she has always been fascinated with everything Indian and would like to work with Bollywood superstars Aamir Khan and Hrithik Roshan in future. Ercel, who gained international recognition for shows such as Ask Laftan Anlamaz, Gunesin Kizlari, and Sen Cal Kapimi, is set to attend a session at the FICCI Frames on Thursday.

A "new door is opening" for her with the participation at the event, said the 30-year-old actor.

"I've been interested in learning about (different) cultures since I was young. I was already interested in this (Indian) culture and I wanted to see India. I told one of my friends that I want to go to India... I like how people

do something here," Ercel told PTI in an interview here.

The actor believes she was destined to visit India one day. "My agent asked me if I would like to go to India for FICCI Frames this year. I instantly said yes as I was thinking of coming here. I feel this is a universal plan, she said through an interpreter.

Owing to her packed schedule and Mumbai's traffic snarls, Ercel said she wouldn't be able to explore the city.

"I want to see the Ganesha temple (Siddhivinayak), we have thought of going to the ISKCON temple. I love these kinds of things. (But) I know about the traffic issues here," she said, adding that she also wants to visit the Taj Mahal in Agra.

Speaking about Hindi movies, Ercel said some of her all-time favourite films are PK and 3 Idiots and she also likes actors Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and Dev Patel. Among the directors I like, Sanjay (Leela Bhansali), he was there at Cannes. We don't have Hindi movies releasing theatrically (in Turkey), so I saw them all online," she said.

At FICCI Frames, the actor will be part of the session From Bollywood to Turkish Drama: Acting across Borders along with Ayushmann Khurrana. (PTI)



follow the culture here... I wanted to wear a traditional sari. But, I don't have much time here.

"I would like to work with Hrithik Roshan, Aamir Khan, and Sidharth Malhotra. This is the right time for me to be here. A new door is opening for me to

do something here," Ercel told PTI in an interview here.

The actor believes she was destined to visit India one day. "My agent asked me if I would like to go to India for FICCI Frames this year. I instantly said yes as I was thinking of coming here. I feel this is a universal plan, she said through an interpreter.

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At FICCI Frames, the actor will be part of the session From Bollywood to Turkish Drama: Acting across Borders along with Ayushmann Khurrana. (PTI)

Need to develop laws related to artificial intelligence, says Ayushmann Khurrana

MUMBAI, March 7: Actor Ayushmann Khurrana on Thursday said while filmmaking and technology go hand-in-hand, there is a need to regulate the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Khurrana was speaking on the third day of FICCI Frames 2024 here at the session titled "From Bollywood to Turkish Drama: Acting across borders" along with actor-MP

Khushbu Sundar and Turkish star Hande Ercel. "Filmmaking and technology... We can't do without it, but my core job as an artist is to emote and bring out stories which are unique and add certain value to people's life. Having said that, we have great technology whether it is AI, editing and it's a great collaboration with the technology," Khurrana said. (PTI)



Biggest challenge to live up to expectations with 'Maharani 3': Director Saurabh Bhave

NEW DELHI, March 7: Writer Saurabh Bhave, who has made his series directorial debut with the third season of "Maharani 3", says the biggest challenge in directing the Bihar-set political drama was to live up to audiences' expectations. The series, starring Huma Qureshi as an accidental chief minister who has to fight political rivals, her own husband, caste and gender dynamics to stay in power, is currently streaming on Sony LIV. In the new season, Qureshi's Rani Bharti is in jail for three years while her political rival, Navin (Amit Sial) is the chief minister. "The biggest challenge was to live up to expectations because previous seasons were so successful. It's the second most watched series on Sony plat-

form," Bhave told PTI in an interview. The filmmaker admitted that he was nervous when the project came to him initially but show creator and writer Subhash Kapoor held his hand throughout. "Primarily it was 'How am I going to live to the success of its first two seasons'. But we had a great team so I was pretty confident about it and Subhash sir gave me a free hand to express," he added. Bhave, who has directed Marathi film "Bonus" and has written films such as "Hapus", "Hrudayantar", "Unaad" and "Surajya", said the third season was shot in different locations and on a bigger scale. "Entire purpose behind it was to have more interesting locations than previous ones. We

have added Chanderi, we have shot extensively in Jammu, we shot in Kashmir. We add more flavour to it. We completely changed the look, the technical aspects and other details to make it different from the seasons before. "We have very distinct worlds -- the first one is of Navin. He is enjoying his CM shift for the last three years now and Rani has been in jail for three years. So you have two characters poles apart right now. One is caged, one is free so how to design both their worlds specifically," he said. Having worked on both films and now a series, Bhave said working on a series is more time consuming compared to movies where one has to deal with one plot.

"You can grasp an entire story of one film in your mind at one particular time. For example, you know exactly what the beginning is, what the start is, you know exactly where it is going to end and you have limited subplots. In a series, there are too many subplots, too many tracks. You know there there is a possibility of another season so you do not have a very particular end like you have in movies," he said. The story of "Maharani" may be fictional but certain elements in the story have been taken from events that have actually happened. "Season one itself was a great blend of what is happening around, what we read, what has happened to the past and the politics, not just of Bihar, but in

the country. The first season made people think of it as taken from real life instances but as it has progressed, it has become clear that it is the work of fiction," he further added. Praising his lead actors, Bhave said they both were dedicated and quick to grasp character nuances. "What struck the most, especially about Huma, was how she made that character her own. When the first two seasons were shot, I was not involved. I watched both the seasons just as an audience. I am so surprised by the fact that she is not from a rural part of India, not from Bihar. She picked the language, those mannerism so well and off camera she is again Huma Qureshi. It was lovely to work with both of them." (PTI)



KULDEEP-LED INDIAN BOWLERS LEAVE ENGLAND IN TAILSPIN

DHARAMSALA, March 7: The fragility of England batters against high-quality spin was exposed once again before India showed them how to bat on a flat track by cruising to 135 for one at stumps on day one of the fifth and final Test here on Thursday.

Opting to bat, England were all at sea against the mastery of left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav whose fourth five-wicket haul in Tests allowed India to bowl out the visitors for 218 in their first innings shortly after tea.

Playing his 100th Test, R Ashwin cleaned up the tail with four wickets while Ravindra Jadeja took one. Contrary to expectations, all 10 wickets went to the spinners at the scenic HPCA Stadium and the last seven batsmen fell while adding only 43 runs.

India came out to bat in bright sunshine and Rohit Sharma (52 batting off 83 balls) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (57 off 58b) put the hosts in firm control with a 104-run stand. India reached 135 for one in 30 overs at close. Shubman Gill (26 off 39b) was batting alongside Rohit.

It was the highest opening stand of this series for India and was broken when Jaiswal got a bit carried away to be stumped off Shoaib Bashir after collecting back-to-back boundaries.

The southpaw's pre-mediated charge down the ground came soon after he became only the second Indian to amass 700 runs in a series after the legendary Sunil Gavaskar, who achieved the feat twice against the West Indies in 1971 and 1978-79.

The ball did not do much for the England pacers and spinners compared to their Indian counter-



parts. Jaiswal was watchful to start with and waited for the spinners to be in operation. He put Bashir to sword in his very first over by dispatching him for three sixes into the stands, two of them over extra cover.

The Indian skipper, at the other end, too played confidently. He made his intentions clear by pulling a 150kmph rising delivery off Mark Wood over fine leg for six in the fourth over of the innings. His second maximum came off spinner Tom Hartley in the cow corner region.

However, India's march to command started in the second session when they reduced the visitors to 194 for eight at tea as Kuldeep engineered a middle-

order collapse that saw England lose three wickets for no run. All of a sudden England found themselves reeling at 175 for six from three down on the same score.

England lost six wickets in the middle session for 94 runs. Kuldeep could have got rid of Zak Crawley (79 off 108) on the second ball after lunch break but India opted against DRS for a catch.

But the 29-year-old spinner did not have to wait long thereafter as he got one to turn massively from the imaginary fifth stump to shatter the England opener's leg-stump. Both the inward drift and the sharp turn led to Crawley's dismissal.

Jonny Bairstow (29 off 19b), who is also playing his 100th Test, showed plenty of intent in his innings but could not last long. Like the other batters, he could not read Kuldeep from his hands and got a faint outside edge off a googly.

He went for a review but ended up wasting it, exactly what Joe Root (26) and Ben Stokes (0) did on the same score of 175. Jadeja trapped Root in front with a straighter one after beating the English batter's outside edge on the previous ball.

Stokes was the fifth victim of Kuldeep who had the opposition skipper plumb in front with a googly. Kuldeep ended up bowling 15 overs straight on either

side of the lunch and afternoon session.

Ashwin sent back Hartley and Wood in quick session to join the spinners' party.

In the morning, Crawley made a classy unbeaten half-century after surviving an extended opening spell from the Indian pacers before Kuldeep struck twice to leave the visitors at 100 for two at lunch.

On expected lines, the skillful duo of Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj made the ball talk but Ben Duckett (27 off 58) and Crawley were able to see off the first 14 overs of fast bowling after being beaten multiple times.

Crawley, who has been England's stand-out batter in this series, was meticulous with his shot selection and played some delightful cover drives off pacers on way to his half-century.

Siraj ended up bowling eight overs in the morning session and Bumrah seven with both conceding 24 runs.

Kuldeep came to bowl in the 18th over and struck instantly.

Despite being hit for two fours off his first five balls, Kuldeep was not afraid to flight the ball and was rewarded when Duckett's mistimed hit was pounced by Gill, who took a spectacular catch running backwards from cover.

Like Duckett, Crawley too was beaten by the pacers in the first hour of play but he picked the right balls to flaunt his cover drives.

He reached his fourth half-century of the series with a boundary down the ground but that remained the only bright spot for England this day. (PTI)

Karthik to end IPL career after 2024 edition, to decide on int'l retirement soon

DHARAMSALA, March 7: India wicketkeeper batter Dinesh Karthik is all set to make his last IPL appearance in the 2024 edition beginning on March 22, and he will decide on his international retirement after the lucrative T20 league.

The 38-year-old, who is currently contracted with the Royal Challengers Bangalore, has played in all the 16 editions of the IPL since 2008 and has only missed two matches across 16 seasons. "This 2024 edition will be his (Dinesh Karthik's) last IPL. He will decide his international retirement after the IPL," a BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

One of the most experienced wicket-keeper batters in the IPL, Karthik has represented six teams in the league. He started off with Delhi Daredevils (now Capitals) in 2008 before moving to Kings XI Punjab in 2011. He spent the following two seasons with Mumbai Indians before going back to Delhi in 2014 for a price tag of a whopping Rs 12.5 crore.

Royal Challengers signed him in 2015 for Rs 10.5 crore and he then played for Gujarat Lions in 2016 and 2017 before spending four seasons with the Kolkata Knight Riders.

He has led the Kolkata side to IPL playoffs in 2018 and they finished fifth in the points table in 2019. Ahead of the IPL 2022, Karthik was released by KKR

and was bought by RCB for the second time for Rs 5.5 crore. He had a stellar 2022 for RCB while mainly playing the role of a finisher. Karthik made 330 runs in 16 matches at an average of 55 and an explosive strike-rate of 183.33 that year, a guiding force in RCB's march to the play-offs.

That run earned Karthik a berth in the India squad for the ICC T20 World Cup 2022 held in Australia but he could not shine as expected as Virat Kohli's side bowed out of semifinals after a defeat against eventual champions England.

But by then, Karthik had also made a name for himself as a commentator with his sprightly, technique-laden approach.

The Tamil Nadu man has a reasonable stint at international career too, considering his career clashed with that of MS Dhoni as a wicketkeeper batsman.

He has played 26 Tests after making debut in 2004 against Australia, scoring 1025 runs and effecting 57 catches and 6 stumpings. He played his last Test in 2018. In the ODIs, he scored 1752 runs in 94 matches between 2004 and 2019, and managed 64 catches and 7 stumpings.

Karthik's last match for India was the T20I against Bangladesh in 2022 after making his debut in the shortest format in 2006. He scored 686 runs from 60 T20Is and effected 30 catches and 8 stumpings. (PTI)

Aim is to upgrade our Tokyo bronze to gold in Paris: Harmanpreet

NEW DELHI, March 7: Having clinched a bronze medal in Tokyo Olympics, Indian men's hockey team will look to upgrade to gold in the upcoming Paris Games, said skipper Harmanpreet Singh.

The record eight-time gold medalists had fought hard from a 1-3 deficit to beat Germany 5-4 in the bronze play-off at Tokyo in 2021, ending their 41-year wait for an Olympic medal.

Prior to that, India's last Olympic medal was a gold in the Moscow Games in 1980.

"Tokyo was a monumental moment, and we're determined to carry that momentum into Paris. Our goal is straightforward -- to upgrade the colour of the medal by aiming for gold," Harmanpreet said in a Hockey India release, reacting to India's draw in Paris.

"Taking it one step at a time, our initial focus is on advancing through the group stage and securing a spot in the quarterfinals."

"With our experience and

skill set, we believe we're strong contenders for a podium finish," he said.

World No. 4 India will kickstart their campaign against lower-ranked New Zealand on July 27, and then they will face No. 7 Argentina (July 29), No. 12 Ireland (July 30) and No. 2 Belgium (August 1).

They will play their last group stage game against No. 5 Australians on August 2.

Expressing his thoughts on the fixtures, Harmanpreet conveyed his enthusiasm and determination: "Competing in Pool B is going to be challenging, given the undeniable potential of every team to emerge victorious on any given day."

"But we stand steadfast, mentally and physically prepared for every challenge that paves our journey at the Paris Olympics."

"As a collective force, our mindset is unwaveringly focussed on our own strengths, as we believe that by harnessing our full potential, we can beat anyone," he added. (PTI)

IPL is hugely popular, but Test cricket is what life is: Ashwin

DHARAMSALA, March 7: "Test cricket is the closest synergy that you can find to life," Ravichandran Ashwin's voice trembled with emotion and pride during the gratitude-speech after receiving his special 100th Test cap from India head coach Rahul Dravid here on Thursday.

But Ashwin did not restrict that landmark moment, which came during the fifth and final Test against England, to himself but he championed the cause of Test cricket amidst money-spinning T20 leagues.

"IPL has been a hugely popular tournament; a lot of kids want to play T20 and get into the IPL. I really do wish that they get there. But remember one thing, this format (Test)... it is in a lot of things that life wouldn't teach you," Ashwin said.

"I think Test cricket is what life is. It is the closest synergy that you can find to life. It will teach you to adapt, dealing with pressures."

The 37-year-old Ashwin, who made his Test debut in 2011, also paid handsome tribute to



his father -- Ravichandran -- for believing in him and supporting his journey.

"It's quite an emotional moment. Not just not just for me. I'm not one who would be shaken by emotions a lot. But today is a hugely emotional moment for a man who is sitting back in Chennai. Unfortunately, he couldn't make it here."

Ashwin began before making a quick recollection of early days.

"The first day (as a kid cricketer), I still remember it very clearly, I would put my kit in front of the petrol tank, and then he would put me on the bike and take me to the coaching camp."

"A government employee (his dad) wanted to take his son all the way miles ahead in life, somewhere he imagined I would ever get. He got me here because of the help of my mom and, of course, my granddad,"

he added.

His wife Preeti has been a big pillar of support for him in periods of struggles.

"My wife didn't know what she was getting into. She's gotten into it and she's standing next to me today. I have got two lovely kids who are also enjoying my journey over the last few years," Ashwin said.

After handing Ashwin the cap, Dravid said it was a well-deserved moment for the Tamil Nadu cricketer.

"You have given everything faithfully to the team and today is your 100th Test. It was a journey that started from the streets of Chennai. It's been a long and eventful journey. It wouldn't have been possible without your family. Congratulations to them as well."

"This is a well-deserved moment. It's been a privilege speaking with you. It's been a privilege to work with you as a coach. And of course, it's a privilege to hand this cap to you."

Dravid said amidst applause from Ashwin's teammates, who gave him a guard of honour while entering the field. (PTI)

Devdutt Padikkal: From overcoming health complications to landing a dream Test debut

BENGALURU, March 7: Devdutt Padikkal beamed broadly while receiving his India Test cap from Ravichandran Ashwin on Thursday but the happy exterior masked the struggles the 23-year-old had to go through over the last two years to reach this dream moment.

After making his India debut in 2021 during a T20I against Sri Lanka, Devdutt's career graph did not go up as expected due to a COVID-19 infection and a stomach-related health complication. "Those two years (2021 to early 2023), he was struggling to stay fit and healthy. He suffered from loss of weight too. It was a constant stomach bug that was troubling him," Irfan Sait, who coached Devdutt through his formative years, told PTI.

"We kept talking to each other over phone, and incidentally, I was also having the same condition and we were consulting the same doctor in the Jain Hospital without each other knowing."

"Mohammed Naseeruddin, an-

other coach here, too has been close to him and kept in touch with him during those low-mood phases."

However, Devdutt has this in-built streak of determination to hurdle over obstacles.

"I have known Devdutt from the age of 11 when he relocated to Bangalore from Hyderabad to pursue a career in cricket. He was a determined kid and the illness did not change anything," said Sait, the founder of Karnataka Institute of Cricket (KIOC).

"He worked really hard on his fitness and diet ahead of the 2023 season because he wanted to get back to the place where he was in 2020-21."

The hard work did not go in vain. The graceful left-hander had a fine 2023-24 season for Karnataka across the formats.

He opened the season scoring 119 runs in five T20s while striking at 118 in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy but bettered those stats in the ensuing Vijay Hazare Trophy.



Devdutt was the highest run-getter for Karnataka with 465 runs from five matches with two hundreds and three fifties. He averaged a mind-boggling 155 in that tournament and struck runs at 120.46.

But he slipped into his real self in the Ranji Trophy. Devdutt could play only four matches, courtesy his national duties, but emerged as the leading run-scorer for the state with 556 runs.

He averaged 92.66 and registered three hundreds, including a season-topping 193 against Punjab.

But his 105 for India A against England Lions at Ahmedabad and 151 against Tamil Nadu at Chennai turned the tide for him, as the latter innings was seen in person by chief selector Ajit Agarkar.

"Once KL Rahul did not pass the fitness test (ahead of the third Test against England), India needed a replacement."

"Rahul Dravid and Ajit Agarkar held a brief discussion

and the latter was mighty impressed with Devdutt after that Chennai innings and recommended his name," said a BCCI official on conditions of anonymity.

Sait was confident that Devdutt would exploit this opening to the hilt.

"There is absolutely nothing in his life apart from cricket. I know him as a child and he has been a topper in the U14, U16 and U19 levels. He worked very hard to add batting skills after starting as an off-spinner."

"Now, the way he battled past his health complications is a tribute to his character and determination. There would not have been a happier person than me when I got a message from him about his impending first Test," he added.

Other debutants like Dhruv Jurel, Akash Deep and Sarfaraz Khan have had their moments in this series against England. Now, it's the turn of Devdutt to add a page to that flipbook. (PTI)

Karbi Anglong girls to play Under-19 State Football finals against Dibrugarh

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 7: The Karbi Anglong girls will play their final against Dibrugarh in the Under-19 Girls Khel Maharan State Level Football Tournament at the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium on Friday.

The Karbi Anglong girls defeated Golaghat by 2-0 in their semi-final match played here at KASA stadium.

The Karbi Anglong Under-19 girls are one of the teams from 35 districts of Assam participating in the tournament, with Horen Engti Kathar as the team manager. The Karbi Anglong girls have smoothly sailed through from day one to the semi-final.

In the 60-minute match, both sides displayed an entertaining game played under floodlights. In the first half, both sides failed to break the deadlock with a scoreline of 0-0.

Resuming in the second half, both sides displayed strong attacking prowess.

It was the Karbi Anglong girls who gained the upper hand when, in the 33rd minute, Serbirika Terangpi, through an assist from Sari Falhrein, opened the account for her team.

The visitors from Golaghat made several attempts to equalize the score, but their chances were thwarted.

The Karbi Anglong team sealed the fate of the visitors when Janali Basumatary, in the 59th minute, with a corner shot, landed the ball on Jirmili Kram-sapi's leg, and she pushed the ball into the net. The Karbi Anglong girls finally won the match with a score of 2-0 to reach the finals.

In the first semi-final match played between Dibrugarh and Kamrup Metro, Dibrugarh emerged victorious with a scoreline of 3-0.

The final match and the colorful closing ceremony of the Under-19 Girls Khel Maharan State Level Football Tournament will be held at KASA stadium on Friday.



🕒 2 pm
 📅 9 March 2024
 📍 Meleng Meteli, Jorhat, Assam

A step towards realising the **Prime Minister's Vision**
Infusing new life into Assam's healthcare sector

Chief Guest
Shri Narendra Modi
 Prime Minister

— In august presence of —
Shri Gulab Chand Kataria
 Governor, Assam
Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
 Chief Minister, Assam

Inauguration

Medical College and Hospital at Tinsukia, Assam

Under AIFA, Govt of Assam

Project cost **₹615 crore**

Area **51 acres**

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Teaching Hospital
 (G+4 & G+3) - 588 Beds (472 General, 46 ICU, 24 paying cabins, 32 Emergency & Burn, 14 Beds in OT Complex)

Radio-diagnosis facility
 (5 Modular+2 Non Modular + 3 Minor OT)

Medical College
 (G+3) with 100 annual admissions

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 Separate hostels for Boys and Girls, Resident Doctors, Nurses

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12 Departments

- General Medicine | General Surgery | Obstetrics & Gynaecology
- Paediatrics | Psychiatry | Dermatology | Respiratory Medicine
- Orthopedics | ENT | Ophthalmology | Anaesthesiology | Dentistry

Foundation Stone

Haematolymphoid and Paediatric Oncology Centre

(at Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute, Guwahati)
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Project cost **₹300 crore**

- To serve as a referral centre for the whole of North East
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