Israel orders new evacuations in the southern Gaza city

Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Salman's visit to Pak postponed: Reports

Cong won't win even 50 LS seats, will not get opposition party status after polls: PM

PoK belongs to India, asserts **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** 

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DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG

# Modi will continue

HYDERABAD, May 11: Top BJP there is no need for you to feel leader Amit Shah on Saturday asserted Prime Minister Narendra Modi will continue to lead the country post 2024 Lok Sabha polls and hit out at Delhi chief minister Arvind

Kejriwal for claiming the PM was seeking votes for making Shah his successor, citing the 75 years age 'rule'

There was nothing written in the BJP's constitution on any such age ceiling, Shah told reporters here. There was no confusion in the BJP over the matter.

Shah was responding to Kejriwal's claim that Modi was asking for votes for the Union Home Minister to make him PM as the prime minister would turn 75 next year.

"I would like to tell Arvind Keiriwal and company and the whole Indi alliance, Modi becomes 75,

happy. It is not written anywhere in BJP's constitution. Modi will complete the term and will continue to lead the country. There is no confusion in BJP on this," Shah told

> reporters here. Kejriwal had charged that Modi is asking for votes for Shah.

"These people ask INDIA bloc about their (PM) face. I ask BJP who will be their PM? Modi ji is turning 75 on September 17 next year. He had made the rule that people aged 75

will be retired. They retired LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Sumitra Mahajan," Kejriwal said. "He (Modi) will retire next year.

He is seeking votes for making Amit Shah the prime minister. Will Shah fulfill Modiji's guarantee?" the CM, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024

PAGES 12 PRICE ₹8

# Assam CM attacks Congress on raising q-mark over PoK to lead: Amit Shah NDA needs over 400 LS seats to execute UCC: Himanta

BEGUSARAI (BIHAR), May 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said the NDA needs to win more than 400 seats in the Lok Sabha polls to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the country and to construct a grand temple at the Kr-

ishna Janmasthan in Mathura. Addressing an election rally in favour of senior BJP leader and Union minister Giriraj Singh in Begusarai, Sarma slammed the Congress and its allies for "raising question mark" on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

He said, "... The NDA under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to win 400 plus seats to implement the UCC in the country, for the construction a grand temple at Krishna Janmasthan in Mathura and also to ensure PoK, which is a part of India, returns to India."

The UCC means having a com-

mon law for all citizens of the

country that is not based on religion. Personal laws and laws related to inheritance, adoption and succession are likely to be covered by a common code.

Hitting out at the Congress and its allies, Sarma said, "Congress Congress of giving religion-based leader Rahul Gandhi and RJD reservation. "They (INDIA al-

supremo, Lalu Prasad, did not attend Pran Pratishtha of the Ram Lalla at Ayodhya. Let me make it very clear that neither Rahul nor Lalu will ever be able to visit Ram temple in Ayodhya ...'

The Assam CM accused the

ment said.

politics of appeasement and raise issues that support Pakistan. Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar recently said that India should not raise the PoK issue and respect Pakistan as it possesses an atom bomb. Even if Pakistan has a nuclear bomb, I am confident that it must have passed its expiry date.

"Our government at the Centre has made it clear that PoK belongs to India and no force can snatch it. We have to give a third term to Modi Ji to ensure that PoK returns to India. Since the NDA government has removed article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, it will ensure PoK returns to India in the coming days," said Sarma.

The NDA needs to win more than 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections to save the quota granted to the OBCs, SCs and STs, he said.

NEW DELHI, May 11: The National Inves-

tigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday con-

ducted searches at six locations across Jammu province in Pakistan-backed conspiracy to

spread terror in the region, an official state-

Extensive searches were conducted in

Doda, Ramban and Kishtwar districts of the

region by the NIA teams in a case relating to

the conspiracy by banned terrorist organisations and their offshoots to carry out violent

attacks with sticky bombs, IEDs and small

arms etc. in Jammu and Kashmir, the state-

The searches have led to the seizure of in-

criminating material, including digital de-

vices, documents etc. from premises linked

with hybrid terrorists, overground workers

(OGWs), sympathisers and cadres linked

with the newly-formed offshoots and affili-

These include Laskhar-e-Toiba (LeT),

Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Hizb-ul-Mu-

jahideen (HM), Al-Badr, Al-Qaeda, etc., said

The NIA had registered a suo moto case on

ates of proscribed terrorist outfits, it said.

the statement issued by the NIA.

"The Congress gave reservation to Muslims by reducing the quota

NIA searches six locations in Jammu in

Pakistan-backed terror conspiracy case

nataka and other states and it now plans to replicate this across the country. Mamata Banerjee... Congress and RJD are the biggest enemy of OBCs... Religion-based reservation should be given to Muslims in Pakistan, not in India. The NDA will not allow this at any cost," he said.

"In Assam, I have made it very clear that Muslims will have to forsake child marriage and polygamy, and encourage women's education. Marrying two or three times is not allowed in Assam. It's very simple...they (Muslims) cannot have three wives. Action has been taken against 6,000 people, belonging to particular community, who indulged in child marriage. We believe in Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas," he said. Union minister Giriraj Singh is seeking re-election from Begusarai Lok Sabha seat as the NDA (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

June 21, 2022 to dismantle the terror network

operated by these outfits as well as their

newly launched offshoots such as The Resist-

ance Front (TRF), United Liberation Front

Jammu & Kashmir (ULFJ&K), Mujahideen

Gazwat-ul-Hind (MGH), Jammu & Kashmir

Freedom Fighters (JKFF), Kashmir Tigers,

PAAF and others, it added. As part of its in-

vestigations into the case, the NIA has been

cracking down on various locations in recent

months. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

#### HTBRIEFS

#### **Felicitated**

**HOWRAGHAT:** At the awareness training camp for farmers in Langhin, Karbi Anglong district Padma Shri Sarbeswar Basumatary was felicitated by various organisations on Saturday. In the meeting chaired by president, Karbi Anglong District Kachari Samaj, Dalsing Basumatary and attended by office bearers of various organisations including Boro Sahitya Sabha, All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), All Bodo Women Welfare Federation (ABWWF), Gaonbura Sanstha, Krishak Sanstha, Kachari Samaj and others, Padma Shree Sabeswar Basumatary were feted. After the facilitation, an agricultural awareness training camp for hundreds of farmers of the area was held.

#### Rainy season

KHERONI: The villagers of Amtuk Apam, a remote village in West Karbi Anglong have to go through lot difficulties during the rainy season which is 32 kms from here. The village falls under the newly created Amri Legislative Assembly and under Amreng Member of Autonomous Council constituency.

#### **Drug trafficking**

KHATKHATI: In a decisive move against drug trafficking, a team led by Sun Inspector Dipak Lahon, under the supervision of SDPO Bokajan, conducted a raid based on confidential intelligence at Dudu Colony, within the jurisdiction of Khatkhati police station. During the operation, which was conducted with meticulous adherence to legal protocols and witnessed by independent observers, a person clad in khaki uniform, riding a scooty with registration number NL 07 EC 2353, was intercepted and subjected to thorough scrutiny. The search yielded a startling discovery: concealed within the individual's backpack were 14 identical plastic soap cases filled with a suspected heroin powder, meticulously packaged in white plastic polythene. The total weight of the confiscated substance amounted to a staggering 166.03 grams. The individual, identified as Mhao Murry (30), hailing from Dimapur's Burmacamp and identified as a constable of Nagaland Govt Railway Police, was promptly taken into custody.



Chapori, Lakhimpur on Saturday. UB photos

#### YSRCP, TDP, Janasena are 'B' team of BJP in Andhra Pradesh: Rahul

KADAPA (ANDHRA PRADESH), May 11: Hitting out at Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy and other opposition parties in the state, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said BJP stands for Babu (TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu), Jagan and Pawan (Janasena founder Pawan Kalyan).

Addressing a poll rally here, the Congress leader alleged the remote control of the three leaders is with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Invoking the name of former chief minister Y S Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR), Rahul Gandhi said the former's marathon political walkathon (padayatra) across Andhra Pradesh was the inspiration for his nationwide Bharat Jodo

"Today, Andhra Pradesh is run by the 'B' team of BJP. The BJP's 'B' team means B for Babu, J for



Jagan and P for Pawan. Remote control of these three people is with Narendra Modi," Gandhi said, taking a dig at the three parties (TDP, YSRCP and Janasena).

He further said these leaders were under Modi's control as the latter has ED, CBI and other enforcement agencies at his disposal. The Gandhi scion said Rajasekhara Reddy was (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# posing risk to Jharkhand tribals'

Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday expressed his concerns about infiltration from Bangladesh, particularly highlighting its impact on the safety of women and daughters in

Addressing a poll rally, Sarma said Bangladeshi infiltrators often acquire land by marrying tribal women and exert control over their

"I've witnessed this firsthand in Assam, where 40 per cent of the population comprises Bangladeshi infiltrators. This situation mirrors that of West Bengal. It's crucial to prevent a similar scenario in Jharkhand to safeguard our future. Additionally, we must speak up against forced conversions in Jharkhand. Electing a BJP government at the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

#### 'B'deshi infiltrators 3 persons held with drugs worth around ₹ 7 seven crore in Cachar

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 11: A total of three persons have been arrested and drugs worth around ₹ seven crore seized in two separate operations in Assam's Cachar district, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday.

As per the Sarma, the contraband was being transported from a neighbouring state.

"In a big boost to Assam's mission of a drugs-free society, @cacharpolice in two separate operations seized over 1.2 kg of heroin worth approximately 7 crore," Sarma wrote on microblogging site X.

He said in both instances, the heroin was being transported from a neighbouring state and three people have been apprehended in this



Cachar Police had arrested three other persons and seized heroin worth about ₹ three crore on Thursday also

The CM, in a post on the microblogging site, had said 572 grams

crore, was recovered during an operation at the interstate bus depot, Silchar.

The drugs were being transported from a neighbouring state and three persons were arrested, he of heroin, costing around ₹ three added. (With PTI inputs)

'They keep changing, But the one witnessed at Ladakh was more stable'

# Severe solar storm triggers rare auroral arc in Ladakh sky

NEW DELHI, May 11: A crimson glow lit up the dark sky in parts of Ladakh in a rare stable auroral red arc event at the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve in the high Himalayas due to the strong solar magnetic storms launched towards Earth.

The solar storms or coronal mass ejections are from the AR13664 region of the sun that has produced several high energy solar flares, some of which are travelling towards Earth at a speed of 800 km/s, scientists at the Centre of Excellence in Space Sciences in India (CESSI), Kolkata, said.

Spectacular auroras or northern lights lit up the skies in the higher latitudes of the northern hemisphere as skywatchers from Austria, Germany, Slovakia, Switzerland, Denmark and Poland shared pictures and short videos of the dancing lights on social media



In Ladakh, astronomers at the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve saw a red glow on the northwest horizon in the sky from about 1 am on Satur-

day that continued till early dawn. 'We were fortunate to witness Aurora activities on our all-sky camera during regular telescope observations," Stanzin Norla, an engi-

neer at the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve, told PTI.

He said a faint red glow was visible to the naked eye along the horizon and the event was captured in much detail by a DSLR camera installed at the Hanle Dark Sky Reserve. "It streaked through the sky from about 1 am till 3:30 am,

Stanzin said, adding that the skies turned red along the horizon and to a pinkish hue later. Dorje Angchuk, an engineer at the Indian Astronomical Observatory in Hanle, described the event as a stable auroral red arc, which was a rare occurrence over the skies at Ladakh.

"Auroras seen near the north or south poles are dynamic events. They keep changing. But the one witnessed at Ladakh was more stable. It is called the stable auroral red arc. The steady glow remained in the sky for a couple of hours," Angchuk said. Such events are rare at Hanle because it is located far south, Dibyendu Nandi, Head, CESSI at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research Kolkata, told PTI. He said the chances of such events being witnessed at places such as Hanle become higher (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Rahul could not contest from Amethi but speaking of forming govt: BJP



NEW DELHI, May 11: The BJP on Saturday made light of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's readiness for a debate with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as it questioned his knowledge of issues and his standing, noting that he is neither the president of his party nor the leader of the opposition.

Addressing a press conference, BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi also took a swipe at Gandhi over his

Sabha polls, saying someone who could not file his nomination from Amethi is speaking about forming government at the Centre.

"Phenomenon thy name is Rahul Gandhi," he said

Gandhi, who lost Amethi to Irani in the 2019 general elections, has this time been fielded by the Congress from Rae Bareli and is contesting against BJP's Dinesh Pratap Singh. Gandhi family aide Kishori Lal Sharma is taking on Irani in Amethi. Trivedi asked that in what capacity is Gandhi looking to debate with Modi as he is merely an MP of his party.

In the Congress, one MP heads a yatra while its leaders in both the Houses of Parliament stand behind him. While Mallikarjun Kharge is its president, Gandhi's posters are visible, he said, jeering at the opposition

Some prominent citizens, including a former Supreme Court judge, had recently written to Modi and Gandhi, urging them to engage in a public debate on the Lok Sabha elections. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Plans to expand its footprint to 100 clinics with an investment of over ₹500 crore

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 11: Birla Fertility & IVF, one of India's leading IVF networks, a part of the USD 2.9bn CK Birla Group, announced its acquisition of ARMC IVF Fertility Centre, marking the network's entry into South India. Currently, Birla Fertility & IVF operates 30 centres and with this acquisition, it will expand its presence across Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu,

THE HILLS TIMES

across the country. The acquisition marks Birla Fertility & IVF's reach as a leading partner, meeting the growing nationwide demand for people looking for a trustworthy and proficient partner to go to for their fertility

now operating a total of 37 centres

With a legacy of over 50 years of delivering high-quality healthcare, the CK Birla Group operates hospitals in Kolkata, Jaipur, Gurugram, and Delhi that are supported by state-of-the-art medical infrastructure and technology. Through Birla Fertility & IVF, in just over three years, the group has established itself as one of India's fastest growing and most trusted fertility care brands. The brand is known for excellence in clinical outcomes, industry-leading IVF success rates, and an exceptional service experience, leveraging its deep medical research and innovation capabili-



by Dr.K.U. Kunjimoideen, a leading fertility expert, and has been committed to providing advanced and comprehensive fertility treatments to patients in the South.

Speaking on the occasion, Avanti Birla, founder, Birla Fertility & IVF.CK Birla Healthcare, said, "At Birla Fertility & IVF, our proposition of 'All Heart. All Science' means bringing care into the science of conception, and we believe in a multi-disciplinary approach where fertility specialists, andrologists, and counselors come together. We have a holistic approach to promote good fertility health and treatment and partner with people on a variety of topics, like fertility preservation, including ovarian tissue freezing for cancer patients. ARMC IVF and its Founder and Medical Director, Dr. K.U. Kunjimoideen, have served the patients in the southern region with the highest level of fertility care, and through this partnership, we will continue to up-

hold this commitment.' Commenting on this strategic move, Akshat Seth, vice chairman, CK Birla Healthcare, said, "With this step, Birla Fertility & IVF moves closer to its vision of building the world's most clinically reliable and renowned institution in reproductive medicine. We aim to raise awareness and provide reliable fertility treatments, and with this acquisition, we will expand and strengthen our presence in the

South, enabling us to address a larger audience and reaffirming our commitment to becoming a leading fertility and IVF provider in India.

With ARMC, we have found a like-minded partner who has a similar care model. We warmly welcome ARMC and its doctors and providers to our family and net-

Speaking on the occasion, Abhishek Aggarwal, Chief Business Officer, Birla Fertility & IVF, said, "We will leverage our global expertise, state-of-the-art equipment, and exceptional success rates to deliver premium reproductive care and advanced fertility treatments that adhere to international standards. In addition to IVF, we offer a comprehensive range of services, including gynecological procedures, male fertility procedures, laparoscopic procedures, genetic screening, diagnostics, and donor services.

Following the acquisition, Dr. K.U. Kunjimoideen and the existing team, including doctors, will continue to oversee operations at these centers along with Birla Fertility & IVF.

India is home to over 28 million couples facing fertility-related challenges, but less than 1% seek assistance. The growth of the IVF segment will be driven by heightened awareness and enhanced accessibility to best-in-class treatment

# Turtle Limited unveils

GUWAHATI, May 11: Turtle Limited, a renowned menswear brand with a legacy of excellence, proudly announces the grand opening of its latest store in Beltola. With a commitment to quality, innovation, and style, Turtle Limited continues to redefine men's fashion across India.

Ritankar Sarkar, head of marketing at Turtle Limited, shared his excitement about the new store, stating, "The opening of our store in Beltola reflects Turtle's ongoing mission to offer superior menswear and exceptional service to our customers. We are thrilled to bring our unique blend of quality and style to the vibrant community of Beltola."

Sarkar emphasised Turtle's commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction, remarking, "Turtle is constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of our discerning clientele. The launch of our Beltola store signifies our dedication to providing men across Assam with clothing that not only

# new store in Beltola

Located at AG Bus Stand, Basistha Road, Beltola, Assam -781028, the new 1000 sqft Turtle store is poised to provide the men of Beltola and surrounding areas with a premium shopping experience. Turtle has had a long association with Guwahati with 10 stores already - the Beltola store will be its 11th store. Known for its timeless designs and unwavering dedication to excellence, Turtle Limited stands as a beacon of sophistication in the world of men's fashion. In addition to its 165+ stores all over India, customers can also explore and purchase Turtle's latest collection online at turtle.in.

# recovery rates. He explained, "Sending a liver trans-

Liver transplant programme in NE



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 11: Wockhardt Hospitals Mumbai Central, in partnership with the South Asian Liver Institute, announces the initiation of a ground-breaking Liver Transplant Programme in Northeast India, addressing the region's healthcare challenges while advocating for organ donation awareness. This initiative marks a significant step towards fostering a culture of health and selflessness in the region.

Northeast India faces a pressing challenge with elevated rates of liver diseases, emphasising the urgent demand for advanced medical interventions. Through a determined partnership, Wockhardt Hospitals Mumbai Central and the South Asian Liver Institute are committed to offering renewed hope and healing to individuals and families grappling with these conditions in the respective region.

Professor Dr Tom Cherian, the director of the transplant program at Wockhardt hospitals Mumbai Central and has a personal experience of over 700 Liver transplants, of which 400 odds were completed in London, UK. He worked in KINGS College Hospital, London and Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham for over 15 years before starting the transplant programs in

Professor Dr Tom Cherian states, "Alcohol related liver diseases pose a significant health challenge in people who consume excessively. Through education and advocacy, we aim to empower individuals to make informed decisions about their health and the possibility of organ donation."

Professor Dr Tom Cherian elaborates further on the technical aspects of the early recovery program's success, highlighting the meticulous planning and ad-

plant patient home on day seven and a donor on day six is no joke. Our success is built on careful and meticulous planning, employing advanced surgical techniques to minimize blood loss and optimize patient outcomes. By integrating innovative approaches in surgery, intensive care, and patient preparation, we aim to set a new standard of excellence in medical

The patients hailing from Arunachal Pradesh from Kameng District, the donor, Mrs. Tina Taku's, inspiring journey represents the transformative potential of organ donation and community support. Despite cultural hesitations surrounding organ donation in Northeast India, Tina's decision to donate her liver to her husband, Mr. Anchu Rimo, demonstrates courage and compassion. "In Northeast India, people are often hesitant to donate organs due to cultural norms and misconceptions," says Tina. "I hope to set an example for the people of this region by showcasing the life-saving impact of organ donation and encouraging others to come forward."

The donor Tina understands the tough situations people in Northeast India face with liver problems. She explained, "In Northeast India, liver problems are not just sickness; they're also connected to our culture and how we live. Many people drink a lot here, and some feel ashamed to talk about liver sickness. They don't always get help when they need it. Through our experience, I've seen how hard it can be for families dealing with these problems. I hope our story helps others see the importance of getting help and talking about organ donation. Let's break the silence and save

Dr Virendra Chauhan, Centre Head at Wockhardt Hospitals, Mumbai Central, underscores the program's commitment to holistic care and community engagement. "Our collaboration with the South Asian Liver Institute reflects our shared commitment to addressing healthcare disparities and promoting wellness. Together, we strive to create a healthier future for Northeast India by raising awareness about liver diseases and the importance of organ donation."

As the Liver Transplant Program gains momentum, Wockhardt Hospitals and the South Asian Liver Institute remain dedicated to advancing healthcare access and promoting organ donation in Northeast India. Through collaboration with local communities and

#### healthcare providers, they aim to create a culture of vanced techniques involved in achieving remarkable health and compassion, one donation at a time RAI hosts North East Retail Summit

Summit serves as a critical platform for networking and exchanging innovative ideas

to enhance region's potential

GUWAHATI, May 11: The Retailers Association of India (RAI) organised the 2nd edition of the North East Retail Summit 2024 (NERS 2024) on Saturday in Guwahati, marking a significant step forward in harnessing the retail sector's potential across the North-Eastern region of India. This event has quickly become a cornerstone for fostering vital industry relationships and catalysing growth by deliberating on unique regional challenges and seizing new opportunities.

The summit serves as a critical platform for networking and exchanging innovative ideas, drawing retail professionals from the seven states of the North-East: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. It highlighted the importance of collaboration among local leaders to strengthen the retail ecosystem.

Speaking about the summit, Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO, Retailers Association of India (RAI), said, "Today's North East Retail



ronment. These efforts aim to transform the region into a dynamic retail hub that meets the sophisticated needs of local shoppers, encouraging growth and innovation throughout the region.' This year's NERS 2024 featured

an impressive line-up of speakers, including top executives and decision-makers from the region's retail sector. Notable speakers included Abhinav Pareek, director, Bhartiya Jalpan; Ankit Poddar, MD & COO, Poddar Group; Anuj

Joshi, Partner, Balaji Udyog; Arnab Das, Director, Kusum LED Lights; Chandan Pareek, CEO, Bhagwati Sales Corporation; Kunal Mordani, director, Tanishkaa Retails; Pawan Khatuwala, Head - Maintenance, Central Mall; Raja Gohain, Director, MG Solutions (Times Square); Ravindar Jain, director, Crown Enterprises; Sourav Agarwal, Proprietor, Scalable Solutions; Vikram Bothra, MD & CEO, Chandan Retail (Askaran Binjraj), among oth-

"In today's dynamic retail environment, the Northeast presents a landscape brimming with potential, thanks to its increasing disposable income and a diverse consumer base. At Chandan Retail, we have seen firsthand the importance of

crafting targeted marketing strategies that resonate with the local culture and preferences. This summit has provided a valuable platform for sharing insights and strategies on adapting to the regional nuances and overcoming the inherent logistical challenges. As we continue to expand our presence in this vibrant market, we are committed to leveraging local insights to offer tailored solutions that meet the unique needs of Northeast consumers, fostering sustainable growth and a stronger retail ecosystem," said Vikram Bothra, MD & CEO, Chandan Retail (Askaran Binjraj)

The North East Retail Summit 2024 was presented by Central Mall (Guwahati) and Co-powered by Turtle. The Gold Partners included Askaran Binjraj, Scalable Solutions, Alpha-e Barcode Solutions, Crown Enterprise, Kusum LED Lights, and Sohum. The Retailers Association of Assam was the Ecosystem Partner, RAI Global Linkers was the business networking partner and TRRAIN was

## Maruti launches Epic New Swift

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 11: Redefining the hatchback segment, Maruti Suzuki India Limited (MSIL), India's largest passenger vehicle maker, proudly presents the Epic NewSwift.Designed for the youthful and spirited, the Epic New Swift is poisedto create new benchmarks and build on its revered legacy, much like its predecessors.

Speaking on this momentous occasion, Hisashi Takeuchi, managing director & CEO, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "Since its launch in 2005, the Swift brand has been a symbol of excellence in the Indian automotive landscape. It pioneered the dynamism in the premium hatchback segment and captured the hearts of millionsof customers. Our vision for the Epic New Swift is to build on its strong

Mobility for Swift lovers and driving enthusiasts alike. The all-new Z-Series engine is a futuristic powertrain that brings about a new dimension of performance and sustainability, making it the most efficient hatchback in its segment. We are committed to meet and exceed our customers' aspirations and will continue to steer the transformation of the Indian automobile industry by introducing advanced technologies for delivering supe-

rior performance.' Commenting on the launch of the Epic New Swift, Partho Banerjee, senior executive officer, marketing & sales, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "With over 29lakh customers in India, the Swift brand name holds a special in the hearts

legacy by redefining the Joy of customers. Each generation of this premium hatchback has been ahead of its time, anticipating and addressing evolving customeraspirations. With the introduction of the Epic New Swift, we are building on the rich legacy and raising the benchmark. The revolutionary Z-Series engine offers the best of both the worlds by combiningperformance with higher fuel-efficiency and lower emissions. Armed with ahost of safety features such as 6 airbags,3-point seatbeltsfor all seats, ESP, ABS with EBD, Hill Hold Assist, the Epic New Swiftunderscores our commitment to constantly offer enhancedoccupant safety. These, in addition to a feature-rich cabin, make the Epic New Swift the most compelling driver-oriented product in its segment.'

#### Contd. from Page 1...

#### Modi will continue

out on bail in the Delhi Excise Policy scam, asked. Further, Shah launched a scathing attack on Congress and its leaders, alleging that due to the fear of Pakistan having a nuclear bomb, the grand old party wants to give up India's rights over Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK). On Saturday, Shah addressed election rallies at Vikarabad and Nagarkurnool in Telangana and later a press conference here on the last day of campaigning for the May 13 Lok Sabha polls in the state. He also said if Kejriwal thinks that Supreme Court's interim bail is a clean chit, then his understanding with regard to law is poor.

The home minister also expressed confidence that the BJP would emerge as the largest party in South India in terms of Lok Sabha seats. The BJP is confident of winning more than 10 Lok Sabha seats in Telangana, he said. In his address at a rally at Vikarabad, Shah recalled that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had conducted nuclear tests at Pokhran on this day in 1998 and made the country a nuclear power. The Congress does not have the courage to conduct surgical strike and airstrikes, he alleged. He said PM Modi did surgical strikes and air strikes within 10 days after Pakistan terrorists attacked the country and "finished them".

Referring to the reported comments of Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar and that of National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah on Pakistan having an atom bomb, the home minister said he would like to ask Rahul Gandhi if PoK would be given to the neighbouring country because of it possessing a nuclear bomb. "As long as BJP is there, it cannot happen" and PoK belongs to India and we will take it, he said.

"They don't feel shame. Due to fear of an atom bomb, they want to give up our rights over PoK. But you don't worry, Modi ji is going to be Prime Minister again and Pakistan's bullets will be replied to with cannon," Shah said. On AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's alleged comments as to what Telangana people have to do with Kashmir, Shah said the state's youth can give their life for Kashmir. PM Modi has ended terror and naxalism in the country, he said.

Referring to Telangana chief minister Revanth Reddy's comments on surgical strikes, he asked, "Revanth Reddy, where did you keep your mind? You kept it in Italy?"

Reddy on Friday claimed an intelligence failure in preventing the Pulwama incident of 2019 when a terror strike on Indian troops left about 40 CRPF personnel dead. "Modi ji tried to take political benefit from the surgical strike after Pulwama incident. My question to Modi ji is, what are you doing? Why did the Pulwama incident happen?

Why did you let it happen? What are you doing about internal security?

"Why did you not use agencies like IB, RAW? It is your failure. Nobody knows if a surgical strike actually took place or not," Reddy had said. (PTI)

### NDA needs over 400 LS nominee. Singh is pitted against Communist Party of India (CPI) candidate Awadhesh Rai, who is Maha-

gathbandhan's nominee. Elections will be held in Begusarai, Darbhanga, Ujiarpur, Samastipur, Begusarai,

### Munger Lok Sabha seats of Bihar in the fourth phase on May 13. (PTI) YSRCP, TDP, Janasena are

like a brother to his father Rajiv Gandhi and both leaders shared a personal relationship also. As and when the INDIA bloc comes to power at the Centre after the Lok Sabha elections, he claimed it will accord a 10-year special category status to Andhra Pradesh and fulfil other promises such as completing the Polavaram project, Kadapa steel plant and others. Canvassing for party candidates for the Assembly polls in the state, he promised to waive select farm loans, free education from kindergarten to post-graduation, Rs 5 lakh housing loan for poor people and others. Also, on assuming power at the Centre, Rahul Gandhi promised two revolutionary steps, which include making a list of all the poor in India and a woman from each of those families will be credited with Rs 1 lakh per annum.

He also promised to raise the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) wages from Rs 250 to Rs 400 per day.

Further, he promised minimum support price (MSP) for farmers, 30 lakh government jobs and doubling the income of Anganwadi and Asha workers, among others. He called on the people of Kadapa and Andhra Pradesh to send his 'sister' and Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president Y S Sharmila to the Lok Sabha so that she can voice the values of YSR. (PTI)

#### 'B'deshi infiltrators posing

Centre is necessary to address these challenges effectively," he said. Sarma, who was scheduled to reach Tamar under Khunti assembly constituency to campaign for Union Minister and BJP candidate Arjun Muda, could not reach the venue due to bad weather and later addressed people via his mobile phone

Criticising the JMM-led government, Sarma said, "The amount of cash being recovered in Jharkhand reflects how much corruption is here. When Rs 35 crore can be recovered from the domestic help of a personal secretary to a minister, it indicates the scale of corruption. I appeal to you to vote for the BJP to root out corruption from here." Biswa said.

Khunti is scheduled for polls on May 13. In 2019, Munda had won the seat by a narrow margin of 1,445 votes, defeating Kalicharan Munda of the Congress, who is once again his opponent. (PTI)

#### NIA searches six locations

"Today's searches were aimed at dismantling the terror network in Jammu province and scuttling the plans of the banned terrorist organisations to disturb the peace and communal harmony in J&K by radicalising local youth and mobilising overground workers," the statement said. (PTI)

#### Rahul could not contest

The former Congress president said he was ready for such a debate and claimed that the prime minister would not agree to it. Targeting Gandhi, Trivedi told reporters that he recently dragged the issue of upper castes and Dalit representation while speaking about IITs, which, the BJP leader said, were set up by Jawaharlal Nehru in collaboration with different foreign countries.

Whether one can debate with him can be understood with the level of his knowledge on different issues, he said, adding that many people have challenged Gandhi for a debate as well. Trivedi also had a go at Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal over jubilation in the Aam Aadmi Party following his interim bail, saying he has joined a elite club of politicians who have returned from jail.

Earlier Anna Hazare was his guru and now it is Lalu Prasad Yadav, the RJD president who has been convicted in multiple corruption cases, and its impact is clearly visible, he said. One can see how the so-called new politics Kejriwal claimed to launch has become the same old politics in the company of the Congress, Trivedi said. At the press conference, the BJP leader alleged that Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole had insulted President Droupadi Murmu, who comes from a tribal community, with his comments that the Ram mandir will be purified once the opposition comes to power.

Patole had accused Modi of violating religious protocol in the temple's inauguration. Trivedi said his comments have come soon after Murmu has visited the temple. It is a deep insult of Murmu and has brought forth the malice the Congress has for the deprived community, he alleged. With Patole referring to the critical remarks of some shankaracharyas about the inauguration ceremony, Trivedi said all religious leaders drawn from across the country had supported the demand for a Ram temple at a "Dharam Sansad" in 1989 and that one of the persons chosen for the "shilanyas" ceremony was a Dalit. The Congress opposed these developments, he added.

It is organisations with similar ideological bent as the BJP which worked to promote and preserve the culture and traditions of the disadvantaged communities, Trivedi said. He cited alleged critical comments about the temple from opposition leaders like Ram Gopal Yadav and Congress members like Sam Pitroda besides past remarks of DMK functionaries flaying Sanatan Dharma to hit out at these parties.

It is clear that their claim about eradicating Sanatan Dharma is not merely confined to words but is visible in action as well, he said. (PTI)

#### Severe solar storm triggers

during intense disturbances triggered by solar storms. "These auroral red arcs are likely caused by heating of the atmosphere by electric currents that are circulating between Earth and outer space," Nandi said. "These ring currents get enhanced during geomagnetic disturbances induced by solar storms and thus the likelihood of observing the red auroral arcs is higher at times when we are in the midst of a severe geomagnetic storm," he said.

The CESSI said the sun produced strong solar flares beginning Wednesday, resulting in five outbursts of plasma capable of disrupting satellites in orbit and power grids here on Earth.

'We are witnessing severe Space Weather at levels we have not seen in the last two decades. It might get worse as more solar storms are expected to impact Earth or maybe just more spectacular auroras for all," Nandi said. The US' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is calling this an unusual event, pointing out that the flares seem to be associated with a sunspot that's 16 times the diameter of Earth. An extreme geomagnetic storm in 2003 took out power in Sweden and damaged power transformers in South Africa. (PTI)

**SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024** 

## **Yuvamanthan Model United Nations** organised at Dibrugarh University

**HT Correspondent** 

DIBRUGARH, May 11: The Dibrugarh University has organised a Model United Nations in collaboration with Yuvamanthan and the United Nations Development Programme on the theme 'Lifestyle for Environment' at the Indira Miri Conference Hall of the university

The inaugural ceremony kicked off at around 10 am with a felicitation ceremony followed by speeches from the vice-chancellor, Jiten Hazarika, dean of student affairs, Surajit Borkotokey, dean of the faculty of social sciences, Dev Kumar Chakraborty, and faculty coordinator of the event, Kaustabh Kumar Deka, The audience comprised of the executive board, the organizing committee, caricaturists and delegates.

The secretary general then explained the technicalities regarding the commencing of the Model United Nations and introduced the executive board.

In the first session the delegate from the USA proposed the sub-agenda 'Enhancing nationally determined contributions for ambitious climate targets', which was passed by a simple majority. The delegates representing their respective nations presented their speeches comprising their contributions and commitments regarding the agenda.

In the second session delegate from Russia proposed the sub-agenda 'Scaling up climate finance for better resilience and adaptation in vulnerable regions', which was again passed by a simple majority. The second session proceeded like the previous

During the last session, the delegate from Egypt proposed the sub-agenda 'Innovative approaches to climate education and public awareness', which was not passed due to a lack of majority.

The delegate from Japan then proposed another sub-agenda, 'Importance of transitioning to renewable energy sources', which was passed by a simple majority. The session ended on a similar note. The delegates then drafted a resolution entitled 'Comprehensive Action for Climate Mitigation and Adaptation', which was passed by a simple major-

with a valedictory session. The valedictory speech was delivered by the Dean of student affairs. A prize distribution ceremony was conducted with Russia bagging the best delegate award, followed by the USA and France. Moreover, certificates were

The Model United Nations simulation concluded

# Cachar admin reviews preparedness to combat floods

5 women relief camps, model relief camps to be set up in five revenue circles of Cachar, where training teachers, health workers would be trained



HT Bureau

REGION

SILCHAR, May 11: In a bid to check the flood situation during the monsoons in Cachar district, the district administration in association with district disaster management authority (DDMA) held a review meeting on preparedness to combat the flood situation

Therefore, the preparatory meeting was held

and district disaster management authorities at the Old Conference Hall of the deputy commissioners' office here on Friday.

The meeting was presided over by the chief executive officer of DDMA of Cachar, Yubaraj Borthakur in presence of other officials of line

CEO Borthakur reviewed the district level

level flood preparedness, reports and discussed at length about the departmental preparation of flood preparedness etc. with officials of various departments concerned.

Borthakur said that depending on the experience of the past flood situation each department should prepare for floods and also directed all to take department wise plan.

'This time five women relief camps and model relief camps will be set up in five revenue circles of Cachar district, where training should be arranged for teachers, health workers. All the arrangements like sanitation, drinking water, electricity etc. should be made available in these relief camps. Arrangements should be made to keep relief materials and cattle feed etc. in two or three strategic locations so that the people sheltered in the relief camp do not face any problem. Every department under the district should remain vigilant," Borthakur said.

He also emphasised on the progress of flood protection works in the district and asked the authorities concerned to ensure proper functioning of the sluice gates in the district.

Borthakur also urged the department of food and civil supplies to ensure the availability of food items in the wake of a calamity.

Earlier, DPO, DDMA, Cachar, Shamim disaster preparedness plan for 2024-25, block Ahmed Laskar presented the guidelines.

#### Liquor seized in Margherita

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, May 11: and 15 cases of beer cans containing 180 BL were seized in

Acting on a tip off, a team of officials from the excise department intercepted a four-wheeler bearing the registration number 'AS 23 U 9947' in Ledo in Tinsukia district. They also recovered 15 cases of Tuborg Beer cans, which contains 180 BL(for sale in Arunachal Pradesh only).

The accused have been booked under 53(1)(a) of the Assam Excise Act, 2000. They were produced before the court of the sub-divisional judicial magistrate, who remanded them to judicial custody.

# Awareness program on cyber fraud held at Mangaldai



HT Correspondent MANGALDAI, May 11: The State Bank of India's Mangaldai branch has conducted an awareness programme on cyber fraud at the Mangaldai Banik

Santha meeting hall here. Cybercrime or cyber fraud is the illegal use of the internet to deceive people into parting with money,

being conducted digitally is leading to an increase in cybercrimes and cyber frauds. Resource person Abul Kalam Azad advises customers to exercise extreme caution while doing transactions digitally in the presence of noguests and well-known businessmen. Jaydeep Kar, branch manager of SBI, Mangaldai, Anindit Bora, deputy branch manager of SBI, Mangaldai, office bearers of the branch and customers of the branch were present during the programme.

ume of daily business transactions

During his speech, Azad urged the audience to reject requests and offers from unidentified sources or people. Additionally, he suggested creating secure passwords for computers, tablets, and smartphones. Jaydeep Kar gave a brief explanation of cybercrime and its rising trends. A vote of gratitude was given by bank employee, Surajit Deka.

#### Workshop on vermicomposting held at Dhing College

**HT Correspondent** NAGAON, May 11: A day

long workshop on vermicomposting has taken place at the Dhing College here.

The workshop was organized on Friday by the Assam Science Technology and Environment in collaboration with the Eco Club, Dhing College and supported by Union ministry of environment, forest and climate

The primary aim of the workshop was to educate the participants on how to transform waste to wealth. The participants were impartedtheoretical as well as practical knowledge to develop skills to implement vermicomposting as an ecofriendly way to manage waste and create valuable resources

ing, demonstrations and informative sessions, attendees got the opportunity to learn about the benefits of vermicomposting and its role in organic farming etc. The workshop also emphasized the importance of biodiversity, highlighting the role of

local earthworms in the

A plantation drive was also carried out on the occasion in the college campus. Biman Hazarika, principal of the college inaugurated the workshop and highlighted on the need of vermicomposting and its advantage. Sanjeeb Kumar Nath, co-ordinator of Eco Club elucidated the objectives of the workshop. During the inaugural session, Hazarika also ceremonially re-

vermicomposting penned by Nath. Following the inaugural session, students from over 14 high and middle English schools, Eco-Club coordinators participated in a technical session.

Over 125 participants, comprising of teachers, faculty members, resource persons and students actively engaged in the comprehen-

Anju Mala Deka, senior scientist of Agronomy, AAU-ZRS, Shillongani, Nagaon, Tridisha Deka, teaching associate of Daffodil College of Horticulture,

Sorongsa, teaching associate of the department of plant pathology at Daffodil College of Horticulture and Purnima Das, head of the zoology department attended the event as the resource persons.

### Birds' paradise Jurgaon witnesses steady flow of nature enthusiasts

MORIGAON, May 11: Jurgaon in Azarbari in Morigaon district is witnessing a steady flow of bird watchers and nature en-

Jurgaon, situated at a distance of about 8 kilometers from Morigaon town, has gained popularity via various social media platforms for being home to varied species of birds. One can easily catch sight of birds like eagles, woodpeckers, water crows, parrots and sparrows that nest and breed safely in the

The village has been home to more than 50,000 white egrets and various species of birds. There are many nests of crocodiles in the village. On the other hand, thousands of bats can also be seen hanging from trees such as Ahat, Shimalu and Dimaru.

The villagers of Jurgaon have nurtured these birds by planting bamboos and different other to protect these birds and provide them with habitats. The villagers burn incense sticks in their homes to get rid of the stench of birds' faeces. For the past 20 years the locals have been relentlessly trying to protect the different species of birds, which have made the village their home.

### LGBRIMH organises national workshop on implementation of NMHP

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 11: The Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health (LGBRIMH organised a national level workshop on 'Key Issues in the Implementation of National Mental Health Programme and Future Directions' in Tezpur on Saturday

Various mental health experts from different regions of the country participated in the programme. S K Deuri, director of LGBRIMH initiated the event with the inaugural speech and formally inaugurated the workshop, while Hemanta Dutta, OSD, deputy directorof LGBRIMH delivered the welcome address.

This was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Aruniyoti Baruah, professor and head of the department of psychiatric nursing of LGBRIMH. Neha Garg, director of the National Health Mission and Mental Health, Union ministry of health and family welfare, Rajesh Sagar, professor of the department of psychiatry of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences and Rajesh Kumar, associate professor of the College of Nursing, All India Insti-



tute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh joined the session virtually. Two of the speakers, Suresh Chakravarty, professor of the department of psychiatry of the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital and E. Aravind Raj, additional professor of psychiatric social work department of NIMHANS were present on the

The discussion was an enriching one with the views shared by the panellists from their experiences of working with the National Mental Health Programme. They shared their views on the progress made till date in the programme, issues faced from the grassroot to the policy making level while implementing the programme. They also shared their insights on the policy making level and regional. They emphasized on the future courses that can be taken up to further strengthen the programme and increase its impact.

This was followed by a scientific session by R Sreevani, professor of the Dharwad Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences on the topic 'Our Nurses Our Future- Current Scenario and Future Directions for Nurses in relation to NMHP.'

She highlighted the responsibilities of the nurses in relation to NMHP and DMHP. The workshop concluded with the 'Nurses Day' celebrations, where the students and nurses from LGBRIMH took part in a cultural pro-



breathed her last at a hospital in Dibrugarh on Saturday.

90-year-old Phukan was a residents of Peoli Nagar in Moran in Dibrugarh district. She died of old age ailments.

Married to Bhuram Phukan, a pharmacist, the couple opened their own pharmacy Ruhini Medicose, which was later converted into a mini-nursing home and served the people in the area for a long time.

She leaves behind three sons and two daughters and a host of other relatives. Various people paid their last tributes to the lady through a condolence meeting held at her residence, which was presided over by journalist Troilukya

# Gargya Mahindra launches New XUV 3XO

Priced at ₹ 7.49 Lacs, XUV 3XO caters to those upgrading from hatchback to first SUV, offers high end features at competitive price



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 11: In a glittering event on Saturday, popular Assamese actor Utpal Das unveiled the exciting new Mahindra XUV 3XO at the Gargya Mahindra Showroom in Bharalumukh in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Utpal Das said that he was proud to have been the one to unveil this exciting new product from Mahindra. He also expressed his pleasure to have launched this product in the showroom of an indigenous Assamese automobile dealership brand of the

The new Mahindra XUV 3XO was conceptualised at the Mahindra India Design Studio (MIDS) in Mumbai and engineered and developed at the Mahindra Research Valley (MRV) near Chennai. The XUV 3XO represents the

world class capabilities of Mahindras global design and engineering team. Built at Mahindras state of the art facility in Nasik using advanced manufacturing processes, it offers customers a high quality SUV that is robust and engineered

Addressing the gathering, the MD of Gargya Mahindra, Rahul Dev Sharma expressed his and Gargya Mahindra team's excitement about this new vehicle, the Mahindra XUV 3XO.

Sarma said, "This car offers everything a customer could want and more. The XUV 3XO is designed to appeal to a broad spectrum of customers. Launched at an attractive starting price of 7.49 Lacs, it is expected to cater to those upgrading from a hatchback to their first SUV, to luxury seekers looking for high end features at a competitive price. The XUV 3XO shares its safety and production genetics with the highly acclaimed XUV 700.

Incidentally, Gargya Mahindra has been the recipient of an award for providing best customer experience to Mahindra customers. Gargya's 25 years of excellence in customer service coupled with Mahindra's exciting unique and competitive offering in the form of the new XUV 3XO provides a win-win proposition to customers looking for a stylish, value for money SUV backed by excellent after sales

**HT Correspondent** 

MORIGAON, May 11: A team from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has visited Moirabari College to reaccredit the institution.

The team comprised of Vilas Sheshrao Kharat, senior professor of the Savitribai Phule University as the chairperson, Rizwanur Rahman, professor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University as member coordinator and Visakhonu Hibo, principal of the Japfu Christian College as member.

On the first day, the team reviewed the presentations prepared by 10 departments of the college showcasing their activities, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. It also inter-

acted with the principal, the IQAC coordinator, governing body president, Jamal Uddin Ahmed and other members, students, alumni, and guardians. Then the team visited the central library of the college, indoor stadium, gymnasium, women's hostel, KKHOU office of the college, the fishery and the Assamese and Geography departments. The team also attended a colourful cultural programme organised by the college to honour them. On the second day, the team visited the departments of English, Education, Political Science, Economics, History, Hindi, Arabic and the faculty of commerce and interacted with different cells and committees in the college. The team

also visited the principal's office,

NAAC team visits Moirabari College

adopted by the college.

Vilas Sheshrao Kharat, the chairperson of the team appreciated the diverse initiatives taken up by the college towards creating and maintaining an ideal teachinglearning atmosphere. He also advised the college authority to provide more facilities to female students, increase the number of teachers pursuing doctoral research and invite educationists and experts from other parts of the country to enhance the quality of education in the college.

Rizwanur Rahman specifically advised the English department of the college to frame some innovative courses for the benefit of the students and added that a teacher's job is different from other jobs as he or she has to do many other duties besides teaching.

Visakhonu Hibo in her speech appreciated the women's education scenario in the college. Dalil Uddin Ahmed, in his remarks, expressed his gratitude to all concerned in the long process of evaluation. Rehana Ahmed smoothly anchored the programme and Riazul Hoque, the principal offered a vote of thanks. The programme was attended by a large number of teachers, students, staff and members of the governing body, informed Sadiqul Islam, convenor of the Publication Cell.



# A man of many facets: The journey of Himanta Biswa Sarma

By: Dipak Kurmi

4 THE HILLS TIMES

dorning the walls of Himanta Biswa Sarma's office are portraits that symbolize his dual commitment one of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, embodying his dedication to realizing Modi's vision of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat,' and the other of Gopinath Bordoloi, the first chief minister of Assam and a Bharat Ratna awardee, whom Sarma aspires to emulate. These images capture the essence of Sarma's journey, a narrative woven through the threads of history and contemporary aspirations.

Born to a dedicated schoolteacher father, Kailash Nath Sarma, young Himanta's realization of his destined path struck him early, in the fifth grade. Contemplating the absence of Assam among the topranking states of India, he harbored ambitious dreams of bringing recognition to his home state on the national stage. This early yearning propelled him into the heart of the students' agitation, fueled by a desire to safeguard Assam's distinctive identity amidst the turbulent era The signing of the Assam Accord in 1985 marked a watershed moment, yet it proved to be the prologue to a protracted cycle of violence spanning three decades. The genesis of this turbulence lay in the formation of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) in 1979, advocating for an independent state. Recruiting and training Assamese youth for an armed struggle, ULFA gained strength, and the repercussions manifested in a dark chapter of violent insurgency, enveloping Assam and its neighboring regions.

of this conflict-ridden society, closely scrutinized by both citizens and outlaws since his foray into electoral politics in 1996. While his initial attempt as a Congress candidate faced defeat, it proved to be the sole setback in his political journey. In 2001, he secured a resounding victory, propelling him into the spotlight and assuming key ministerial responsibilities.

Transitioning to the BJP on August 23, 2015, Sarma took charge as the convenor of the election management committee of the anti-foreigners' move- for the 2016 assembly elections,

orchestrating the party's victory. Along this transformative path, he acknowledges earning both critics and admirers, emphasizing that he has never lost a friend – a testament to his ability to maintain personal relationships across diverse realms.

Fusing a keen political acu-

men with a profound compreinsurgency dynamics, Sarma has played a pivotal role in shaping the BJP's internal security strategy in Assam. Recognizing the potential influence of suspected foreigners in certain constituencies, he initiated the 2023 delimita-Sarma emerged as a product tion exercise, aiming to mitigate the repercussions of illegal migration and counter potential threats from Islamic radicalization emanating from foreign

Given Assam's strategic location as the gateway to the northeast, Sarma shoulders the responsibility of securing Lok Sabha seats not only for Assam but for the entire region on behalf of the BJP. His ambitious target is to clinch victory in at least 22 out of the 25 Lok Sabha seats, conceding the three seats in Assam dominated by Muslim

Sarma's reputation as a reliable problem-solver extends beyond regional boundaries, solidifying his standing as a key asset for the BJP's strategic endeavors. His versatility in crisis management was showcased in his swift response to the unrest in Punjab triggered by the arrest of extremist Amritpal Singh last April, leading to Singh's confinement in Dibrugarh central jail. Another testament to his strategic influence unfolded a year earlier when his adept handling of the Eknath Shinde-led revolt against the Shiv Sena culminated in the toppling of the Uddhav Thackeray government in Maharashtra.

In Tripura, Sarma's strategic moves during the assembly polls ensured the BJP's continued dominance, orchestrating the division of opposition votes and relegating the once-formidable left front to the third position. His well-known friendship with Pradyot Kishore Manikya, the head of the Tripura royal family, adds layers to the intricate political landscape of the region.

Since parting ways with the Congress, Sarma has been ardently pursuing a mission to dismantle the party's longstanding presence in the northeast. He emphasizes his respect and influence within the BJP, underscoring his position as a leader from Assam who wields the ability to connect with key figures in Delhi, including the pres-

an unprecedented feat in ister should not come at the ex-Assam's political landscape.

Recognizing Sarma's strategic acumen, the BJP swiftly welcomed him into its ranks, and under his leadership, the party secured victory in the 2016 assembly elections. Despite this success, the role of chief minister was initially bestowed upon Sarbananda Sonowal, a BJP member since 2011. Demonstrating patience and dedication. Sarma waited for five years before realizing his aspiration of assuming the chief minister's office in Assam, underscoring his growing prominence within the

Insiders affirm that Sarma shares a close and harmonious relationship with the influential Union Home Minister, Amit Shah. In a noteworthy gesture of camaraderie in 2021, Sarma took on the task of translating a book titled "Amit Shah and the March of BJP" into Assamese, showcasing his commitment to bridging linguistic and cultural gaps while further strengthening his connection with Shah.

Amidst the demands of public service, Sarma maintains a sense of groundedness, firmly believ-

pense of failure as a father. Balancing the roles of a devoted father, dutiful son, and astute statesman, he rejects the notion that holding the position of chief minister requires neglecting one's family.

Contemplating the concept of worship, Sarma reflects, "We often wonder where God resides. I believe the closest embodiment of God is found in one's parents. By honoring their hard work and embracing their value systems, a sense of security unfolds." Drawing strength from the simplicity instilled by his father, the fundamental lesson of being a humble human being serves as a steadfast source of resilience for Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Undoubtedly, there is much more to unravel about this multifaceted leader – this appears to be just the initial chapter in the unfolding narrative of Himanta Biswa Sarma, a man who has woven his way through the intricate tapestry of Assam's political landscape, leaving an indelible mark on the region's history and aspirations. (The writer can be reached at diident and the prime minister - ing that success as a chief min- pakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)

#### Tagore Award for Ratan Bhattacharjee: Tagore seen as a lover of man

By: Dr. Daniela Rogeobete

ll his life being an admirer of Tagore and of his poetry and philosophy as a World Poet, Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee himself is a globetrotting academician who won both International Tagore Award 2024 and Bhanu Singh Award 2024 and saw Tagore mainly as a Lover of Humanity and World Peace. Dr. Bhattacharjee focused on these aspects of Tagore in the Special lecture delivered in Fairleigh Dickinson University on 'Love Poetry of Tagore and Whiman' which was much appreciated in the Pre-Covid days. Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee read Tagore's Red Oleander but he himself wrote more than 150 love poems only on Oleander, a floral image he chose as a postcolonial alternative image and for this The Statesman in a review described him as 'Oleander poet'.

However he loved fiction no less, Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee mused deeply on Tagore's ideal of Education in 'West Bengal' and Yuba Manas' and also in the Dainik Basumati paper. His book on Tagore's love poetry is coming soon from Patridge in 2025. His nearly 2000 poems of love both published and unpublished bear some influence of Tagore and Neruda and no less so of Lorca. Dr. Ratan believed in Tagore's concept of love. At present a senior columnist and Affiliate Faculty of English, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond USA. Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee has been selected for the International Tagore Award by DRDC, approved by the Ministry of India.

DRDC is the first Inter-Government Organisation and world's first organization which is promoting entrepreneurship, Research & innovation, worldwide in a new way. Dr Bhattacharjee also won the Bhanu Singh Award 2024 from The Global Nation media house from Bangladesh. Poems of Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee are being published for decades in Germany, Philippines, Italy, USA and many African and Arab countries poems are translated into Lebanese Italian French. His first poem appears as early as 2005 in online sites of the social media and blogs and over there he started writing pictorial poems on Love and Nature.

Later he compiled some of them in Melody and Maladies. Cyberwit Allahabad inspired him to publish his first book of poem, The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles which was translated into Assamese as Raktakta Burburanir Malita jointly by Utpal Datta, famous writer and film director cum Deputy Director Guwahati Akashvani and Prof Karabi Hazarika of Naharkatia College Assam That was a huge inspiration for being connected to Assamese writers and poets.

Legendary poet Jayanta Mahapatra released his book in Pondicherry. Later Akademi Awardee poet and Editor Anuradha Sarma Pujari also published his Assamese poems in Sadin. Legendary Homen Borgohain actually inspired him over the phone to contribute to Niyamiya Barta. He started writing in Amar Asom, Dainik Janambhoomi, and Sadin. Sandeep Sarma of Eastern Chronicle and Rameswar Chouhan made me a regular contributor to The Hills

Moreover, Patricia Mukhim persuaded him to write for Shillong Times and PJ Baruah published number of articles in The Assam Tribune and now inspired by Smita Bhattacharya, he has become a regular writer of The Sentinel Saturday



adies of Love

(Cyberwit, Al-

lahabad),

Oleander

Blooms: A

Bouquet of

Oleander

Poems of

Love (Au-

New Delhi),

Theodore

Dreiser Going Be-

Naturalism

ter, Our Princess (Authorspress,

New Delhi). He edited journals Lit-

erary Confluence and Voice of In-

dian English Writers. He pioneered

some ideas of Fourth World Litera-

ture in India and worked as resource

person in a number of International

Conferences on Gender Studies.

Post Colonial and American litera-

ture in the country and abroad. His

Collected works Vol I (Patridge) and

Our Time Revisited: a Collection of

Essays on Man Literature and Soci-

ety (Patridge), My American Davs

are in press to be published in 2025.

Internationally acclaimed Hon'ble

Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu

of Andhra Pradesh awarded Dr.

Ratan Bhattacharjee in the Interna-

tional Meet of Multilingual Poets at

Vijaywada Cultural Centre; he even

served as a part time and guest in

Vidyasagar University and Rabindra

he passed in the idvllic environment

listening to the songs of innocence

all around him in the first decade of

the Post-Independence days. His

grandfather as an employee organ-

ized labour movement in the Met-

calfe Press and later Metcalfe was

acting governor-general of India

who particularly promulgated laws

for freedom of the press. His grand-

father was elected Member of Leg-

islative Council in 1935. His

grandmother was married at the age

of 9 but she used to teach the village

girls and later she was appointed

teacher in her own house and got a

salary of 16 rupees in those days. It

was a huge amount. This story was

an inspiring one as it shows an at-

mosphere where service to the peo-

ple was the motto and the house was

During 1942 Famine huge

amount of Kichdi was cooked for

the poor hungry people of the local-

ity. His leading of a very simple life

was a story of inspiration for all. His

father Chandranath Bhattacharjee

was a teacher and a man of poetic

mind and mother was a pious lady a

worshipper of Durga Maa and a

lover of music. His wife too was a

wonderful woman dutiful and com-

passionate. His wife Anjali accepted

his maverick mood and gave him in-

spiring support each moment for the

last 40 years of their conjugal life.

His daughter's literary excellence is

crowded by common people.

Since his childhood days which

Bharati University too.

(INSC) Renee Rudhagnee (Au-

Press,

thors

Fare and their Sunday supplement called Melange. All these developed his love for Assam and its literature besides writing for Bengali Aajkal Puber Kalom and Dainik Statesman

Travelling is his cherished hobby and now universities in India and USA are inviting him for lectures on Promotion of Indian and American literature nearly every fortnight. Tagore's poetry always inspired Dr. Ratan as a poet and educationist. Tagore's poetry primarily deals with love – love for humanity, love for divinity and love for nature. His early poetry concerned with man's love for woman but his later poetry mainly focuses on man's love and longing for God's beauty and love. Dr. Ratan subscribes to this poetic philosophy of Tagore and the award goes to him in this year. Tagore's Red Oleander inspired him though his best seller Oleander Blooms is uniquely different from Tagore's writings. He used the floral image of Oleander with a postcolonial motif and as a new alternative to Rose.

Anthony Johae, Shakespeare Professor of Essex university wrote in his Preface to the book that Oleander reveals the dialectics of joy and sorrow associated with love. The trajectory of love as blissful and love as poisonous is focused in the bouquet of love poems on Oleander. Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee is fond of Keats's worship of Beauty and Tagore too mentions Keatsian worship of Beauty. Like Shelley and Tagore, for Dr. Ratan love is a basic principle of the universe. His poems on this theme are published regularly in Saturno from Italy Global Nation and Kavya Kishore International from Bangladesh Raven Cage from Germany. His poems on Nature are published in Friendship of People from Tajikistan Anthology from Italy Summer Nights from Ohio and Orpheus. He is nominated as international judge in Passion of Poetry from Philippines.

All through a poet, Dr. Bhattachariee's forte however is his academic potentiality. Dr. Ratan is a voracious reader and loved to teach Shelley and Keats, Lorca and Neruda in his long 40 year teaching career. Che Guevara also inspired him. Picasso and Beethoven are his good pastime. He loved to read ghost and detective books of Byomkesh, Swapan Kumar, Satyajit Roy and Nihar Ranjan. Basically a student of Calcutta University he passed from Scottish Church College and then in University of Kolkata. He was formerly an Associate Professor & Chair Post Graduate in the Dept of English Dum Dum Motifheel College and also simultaneously a Trilingual Columnist cum

He is the author of Six Feet Distance: Looking Back to Lockdown (AuthorHouse Bloomington, USA), Francis Scott Fitzgerald: His Art and Vision (Patridge, Singapore), The Ballad of the Bleeding Bubbles:

also inspiration for him. The little five year old daughter inspires him everyday to write stories for her; already one book of poems on her was published.

In his boyhood days he used to bring out a hand written magazine where his school friends and family members used to contribute. He compared Charles Dickens's Great Expectation and F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby in M.Phil dissertation when few opted in India for American literature.

Later, he was the executive member of Indian Association of American Studies IAAS in Mysore University. Finally he did his

Ph.D on American Literature under Professor Laxmi Parasuram who renowned

professor in American literature and his book on Theodore Dreiser and F. Scott Fitzgerald highly praised by Emeritus Professor of VCU and a great Fitzgerald Scholar Dr.

thorspress, New Delhi) Our Daugh- Bryant Mangum in VCU Richmond. For his research interest he specialized on Theodore Dreiser Studies, he got offer for doing post doctoral from the USA. But for his family problems he did not accept the offers. His guide was unsatisfied with him. Inspired by Dr. Bhabatosh Chatteriee Sir Gurudas Baneriee Professr of Calcutta University he developed a love for ASRC Hyderabad and he was selected Scholar in residence twice for three months.

He along with Dr. Jill Blondin Associate Vice Provost Global Education Services of VCU opened a new Society KIAS (Kaleidoscopic Indian American Society) and they are now opening regional centers all over Indian Higher education institutions in Nagpur, Dharbhanga. Delhi, Meerut, Jaipur, Kanpur, Madurai Annamalai Unviersity and Manipal University and others. He got inspiration from his Principals Late Sukumar Gupta, Late Ranaji Bagh and Dr. Pradeepta Gupta Roy, the later one being a writer and re-

searcher of international height. However, love from his readers on social media and his popularity in the universities in all over India and abroad are his real award. They all are now happy when he bagged the International Tagore Award and the Bhanu Singh Award at the same time this year. Other awards he got make a pretty long list which includes, APJ Abdul Kalam Education Excellence Award as Dynamic Professor of the Year 2021, Certificate of Commitment World Book of Records Switzerland 2021, Winner of International Award 2020, Literamo Golden Star Awards 2020, INS Research Excellence Award 2020, Best Professor of the Year 2020 Award, International Research Scholar Reviewer (Lifetime), International Educational Excellence Award Dynamic Professor of the

Year 2021 etc. Still Dr. Ratan remains humble and down to earth in his approach to life. His message is simple but profound, "Like Tagore I want to say, Love for humanity is my motto and Promotion of global peace is my mission." (The author is an Associate Professor of American Literature and English University of Craiova, Romania. She can be reached

dani.rogobete@yahoo.com)

# Patriarch subjugation on women: It is gradually diminishing though in slow pace

By: Ch. Priscilla Thiumai

**▼** lobal empowerment on women

The United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs has already recognized the importance of women to play a vital role for the success of The United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be attained by the year, 2030. According to the report, 193 member countries, in 2015 September, including India, signed in support of these goals, considering that those goals are the urgent call for action by all the countries. The United Nations itself has empowered the women community in fulfilling the set targets on the consideration that, the role of women is inseparable with men. The Sustainable Development Goals No. 5, Gender Equality

Reduced Inequalities (including women and men inequality) clearly indicate that women should not be subjugated in their social life and activities towards revolutionizing society. In response to these challenges, many women are translating these targets into reality by implementing and enforcing the adopted agenda according to their own capacitance. Gradually, the importance of women is recognizing in tribal society but still have to be persistently assert to bring balancing and equilibrium status between male and female genders in striving towards greater change.

One of the prime objectives of the United Nations is to empower both men and women for the sustainability of the human race and other resources.

Need to recognize efficacy

of women It is obvious that women efficacies are very high once they are equipped. In tribal society, in spite of the pressing need of women's involvement in saving the earth and sustainability of the human race for many generations hereafter, the restricted opportunities for women participation in decision making and developing policy is still magnified in some societies. Many people fail to recognize that women have analytical thinking capacity rather than what people consider as emotional beings. Women have distinct qualities that significantly enhance organizational success. They can see things minutely, the minute, which is useful for the success of big things.

What is gender subjugation?

In simple terms, "Gender Subjugation is either a group of male or female dominating upon another by taking away their freedom." It is a type of suppression based on gender. In general, women are the victims of subjugation of their male counterparts. (The degree or severity of subjugation may vary in civilized and non-civilized society)

There are two types of subjugation

1. Subjugation of needs: Example; She has to wake up and

prepare breakfast even though she wants to sleep longer than usual due to unsound health.

2. Subjugation of emotions. Example; women may not comfort with the male led meeting resolution but to pretend they are fine

These examples are the realities, an abstract reality that most women are facing today.

Challenges of structural pa-

triarchy in women leadership: Patriarchal egoism is ingrained in our society. Therefore, how hard it is tried to reduce or free from this deeply rooted structure, it is still found as a challenging factor in taking up leadership positions. The man has been seen to dominate o v e r

women, dictating 'Let her fly! ' that man rior to women and their decision is supefinal This trait is especially seen in those who are below the educated class and

egoism even though educated. May be, it is the perception of man that their power over women is obtained from the norms within the given culture. Whereas, the female is considered a relational agent. The patriarchal based social structure is a great hindrance to women leaders in spite of their potentiality and efficacy that can influence to a large positive

a man of

Today, there is an undeniable fact that there are times when men feel the importance of women during agitation and confrontation. This shows the interdependence between man and woman that is bound to create an asymmetric relationship, which enhances the dependency of both the genders.

According to the UN Women press release 18 July 2023 globally, women are empowered to achieve an average of only 60 percent of their full potential as measured by the Woman Empowerment Index (WEI)

This set up structure does not give a viable place for exercising their leading skills. The stereotyping, which has been ascribed from the beginning, is finding difficulty to blot out until today. This hinders women from participating in most aspects of our society.

Women of dynamism face a challenge of gender subjugation in their role even at this present day though it is reduced considerably. Their efforts are undermined and, the feedback of women is considered as rebellion. To overcome this male dominant perception, one has to be tough if need arises.

Gender subjugation, accord-

ing to my view, is more hurting than gender discrimination. The former one is applied in women's professional life and beyond the domestic domain, in which women are considered as inferior to men. And, the later is applied that women are treated unequally or disadvantageously based on gender.

Need of space for women

The ideation of the importance of women incorporation with men has been recognized many years back. Now, it is already the time that the society has to give a space for women to act themselves in societal issues, solving social problems, economic venture, political participation, educational pursuance.

> conflict resolution, conmanagement, etc. And.

women representaking major decisions. hightalks, political process and an inclusion of women in

women organization level will leap the entire women community directly or indirectly. For, the empowerment deficits and disparity practices are harmful for human progress.

There are professionally elite women in the high tech workforce, global agencies, governance, etc. There is no place where women are unrepresented. Still then, women are less represented not due to lack of efficacy or expertization, but due to subjugation.

Today, the dogmatic attitude and behavior of monopolism of men towards women is a matter of tolerance. Many women are maintaining a tolerant approach to all types of subjugation inspite of their wide range of potentiality. On the contrary of belief, the competency of some men is sometimes limited in its range, power and it cannot comprehend the nature of reality in its totality.

Conclusion: There is no prescribed formula of equality and equity for women to rise above the normalcy. But, society has to accommodate and arrive at consensus and ideological preference by slowly breaking the man-made ascribed cultures. Conditionalities on women render society unpopular and illegitimate and reduce stability.

The Global Agency, United Nations has empowered women in changing the world. This is the fact that, "No local can suppress global empowerment of women." For, a woman has the qualities of guiding the destiny of a nation. (The author is a Social Activist who can be reached at chpriscillathiumai123@gmail.com)



# Talking Points: Northeastern Sick of pep talk on Elephants face cruelty

By: Narvijay Yadav

ara, a 60-year-old female elephant hailing from the Northeastern state of Tripura, endured unspeakable cruelty and abuse at the hands of her illegal owners. Despite being five months pregnant and elderly, she was coerced into strenuous field work, resulting in unimaginable suffering. Struggling with a fractured leg, deprivation, numerous wounds, visible injuries, and a damaged eye, Tara's plight was heartwrenching. The perpetrators of this heinous crime from Irani village in Unokoti district are yet to be booked. They kept the elephants illegally without a valid license. A distressing video capturing Tara's forced journey on foot alongside her 22-month-old calf, Vanny, circulated widely on social media, igniting public outrage.

The High Court, after examining the petition filed by Agartala-based animal welfare activist and advocate, Paramita Sen, issued notices to the forest and animal resource development departments. 'Go Green & Help Stray Animals', a local NGO, also played a pivotal role in shedding light on the distressed elephants. In response, Maneka Gandhi, MP, promptly contacted forest officials. Responding swiftly to an urgent plea from the 'Go Green' NGO, a medical team from Vantara, Gujarat, rushed to the spot to treat the ailing elephant.

Tara's injuries were severe, necessitating intensive medical care. Consequently, the mother and calf were transported to Vantara in Jamnagar, where comprehensive treatment and compassionate care await them. Vantara, spearheaded by



of hope for animal welfare, boasting exceptional facilities for the rehabilitation and world-class treatment of over 4,000 animals spanning 134 species, including 300 elephants. Tara and Vanny will find solace and sanctuary within its

Notably, 23 other elderly and distressed elephants from Tripura have and under private ownership.

already found refuge at Vantara sanctuary. Approximately 150 elephants have been transferred to Vantara f r o m

North-East, revealing atrocities inflicted upon these gentle giants Northeastof forests ern India in the last few months. The plight of elephants is dire, as

evidenced by their dwindling numbers, leading to their classification as Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Further safeguarding their status, elephants are protected under

Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, irrespective of their habitat. Official data indicates India harbors 27,000 elephants, with approximately 2,675 in captivity. These captive elephants find themselves in various settings, from forest department-managed camps and rescue centers to zoos, temples,

Elephants embody the divine ever, despite legal essence of Lord Ganesha and hold protecthe revered status of protected tions, elewildlife. Nonetheless, encounter distressing reports surface from formidable chalstates like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and lenges. The diminishing expanse

> deprives elephants of crucial resources such as food, water, and shelter, compelling them to venture into villages. This incursion often triggers conflict with humans, exacerbating an already precarious situ-

The conditions faced by captive

These majestic beings endure overwork, isolation, captivity, starvation, and rampant cruelty, both physical and psychological. Reports of maltreatment in temples, particularly in southern states like Kerala, highlight the pervasive nature of this issue.

Moreover, in the name of tourism, elephants endure further exploitation and cruelty, with Rajasthan among the states implicated in such practices. Indian elephants confront many pressing threats, including habitat loss, poaching, and perilous encounters with electric wires and railways, all compounded by human conflicts. Disturbingly, between 2014 and 2020, the Ministry of Environment and Forests recorded staggering 474 elephant fatalities due to electrocution.

Essential to their survival, elephants require vast quantities of green fodder daily. Yet, as their natural habitats diminish, they are forced to seek sustenance in agricultural fields, triggering conflicts with farmers and exacerbating human-elephant tensions. The construction of highways, expressways, railways, and canals further encroaches upon elephant habitats, highlighting the critical need to safeguard their migratory routes. Moreover, extensive deforestation and urbanization have encroached upon significant swathes of forested land, leaving insufficient space for elephants to roam freely. This dire situation extends beyond individual states, reflecting a nationwide challenge in preserving elephant habitats and ensuring long-term survival. (The author is a senior journalist & columnist who can be reached

narvijayindia@gmail.com)

# poll day

By: Kamal Baruah

t was raining cats and dogs out there but nothing could dampen our energy and enthusiasm for vote. The most awaited poll day is special, whilst it is a paid holiday for us. So after a good shower, we drove away towards the polling booth. Shockingly, it was a few miles away from our residence. However, the Election Commission of India wrongly listed our electoral roll at a distance. I started to count polling booths one after another as I moved on down the Hatigaon-Sijubari

We already crossed two booths but our polling station had not yet arrived. Meanwhile, I saw the road through the windshield that submerged by the incessant rain. There was no traffic other than a few magic vans plying. At one point I realized, I couldn't go over the waterlogged area as the entire road was flooded.

A cautionary long stick for hazardous driving was stood at the middle of the road, guiding trafficaway from the danger point. We moved through the water and didn't stop, just kept a steady momentum over the kneed-deep muddy water.

Should I vote for this kind of development to my constituency? At least, the municipality could have provided a stress free road before a poll day. Adding to the inconvenience is the fact that the way the minority area is beingneglected by the successive state government.

The locality is thickly populated with narrow lanes of Not-



boma, while residents suffer due to poor infrastructure of the

Our car had to park on the road, whilst we waited in queue for an hour surrounded by stank of urine. The booth at a public school needed a little care by administration, so did with the school authority. There was the usual long wait as polling officials delayed the progression of voting tasks that made things worse. There was still drizzling outside. We came up the stairs in two overfull rows and finally pressed the ballot box to strengthen the democratic roots.

It was quirky, old-fashioned but such an experience, when today's citizen move their daily lives with technology at ease. I stopped at a moment before pressing the ballot. Is that I get inked in hope of a better future when the citizen deprived off the basic amenities like road infra-

structure. There was none to air our grievances even the media people were not seen to report such inconvenience. The road for development is really in need. Hope the concerned authority is

With the parliamentary election round the corner, the ruling party publishes it works widely andthe oppositions make promises one after another for better cities, better lives for citizens. Whom can I trust? We are sick of pep talk about development duringthis timebutat the same time don't expect such poor infrastructure near a polling booth.

When administration could not even arrange a seat to the voters, doI suppose, the absentee voters are the next best option. Youths are probably disheartened by the result of the poor set-up. So the causes of voter turnout gradually dimin-

Albeit all, we must honor the right of voting given by the constitution of India. It is a sense of pride moment indeed and should motivate people to vote to contribute to the nation building process and bring about a

Political parties often referred to a loyal bloc of voters from a single community and win election one after another. Democracy would be successful once all their citizens participate. So you can tell there is an election in the air and its citizens have undergone the paradox of these false promises, year after year,

# 'Broken dreams: Honesty in Kashmir's story'



By: Aubaid Ahmad Akhoon

n the complex and nuanced tapestry of Kashmir's historical narrative, a Lstark revelation surfaces - the relentless pursuit of personal gain has too frequently eclipsed the collective well-being of the community. The ascension of an elite class, propelled by conscienceless motives, adeptly orchestrated the narrative through diverse channels, including mass media broadcast platforms and various tools within the state machinery.

This historical deception, orchestrated by those who would later form the elite, celebrated plunderers and blunderers, perpetuating a distorted legacy. The underlying issue lies in the acknowledgment that glorifying such figures betrays society and deviates its trajectory. What unfolded was not merely a breach of trust but a deliberate manipulation of narratives to serve vested interests.

Central to this narrative is the imperative for conscientious reflection before action. In a society where personal gains frequently overshadow collective welfare, the Kashmiri elite's fixation on personal reputation misled the populace, perpetuating self-serving motives and hindering genuine societal progress.

The downward filtration theory becomes apparent - the elite's actions influencing the broader population. As the elite prioritized reputation over authentic conscience, the common people were led astray, perpetuating a cycle of self-serving motives at the expense of societal advancement.

Navigating this historical landscape requires individuals, particularly Kashmiris, to liberate themselves from the shackles of personal gain. Both past and present elites must be held accountable for choices that have shaped Kashmir's

In the broader context, the Kashmiri tale serves as a cautionary reminder of the dangers when personal gain overshadows collective well-being. The call to question one's conscience isn't merely philosophical; it's a practical imperative for a society prioritizing humanity over individual interests. Only through conscientious introspection can a community break free from the chains of historical fraud, paving the way for an authentic and just future.

This reflection extends beyond Kash-

mir, resonating with the timeless wisdom of Mark Twain, the American writer, humorist, and lecturer: "Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect." In a world fixated on external judgments, this insight urges individuals to prioritize the inner compass over fleeting perceptions.

Mark Twain's wisdom centers on the idea that conscience is an unwavering guide to our actions, reflecting our moral and ethical principles. Unlike reputation, influenced by external factors, our conscience serves as a steadfast compass, pointing toward authenticity and moral integrity.

Reputation, often shaped by public opinion, is a fickle entity. Subject to change and influenced by external circumstances, it may not always align with our true character. While it can open doors, the cost of compromising principles for external validation should be carefully considered. A delicate balance exists between

maintaining a positive reputation and staying true to our authentic selves. Mark Twain's counsel encourages us to evaluate the cost of compromising principles for external validation, recognizing the inherent paradox in societal expectations.

A robust conscience is built on selfawareness and a commitment to moral principles. Reflecting on our values allows us to align our actions with convictions, cultivating a reputation grounded in authenticity.

Prioritizing conscience over reputation provides resilience against external judgment. Recognizing that we cannot control others' perceptions liberates us from self-imposed expectations, shifting focus from seeking approval to staying true to our principles.

Tailpiece: the Kashmiri parable and Mark Twain's wisdom converge, offering a profound lesson for navigating societal narratives. The essence lies in conscientious reflection, prioritizing authenticity over fleeting reputations. Whether in the historical context of Kashmir or the broader spectrum of human experience, embracing the call to question one's conscience becomes paramount for a society aspiring to forge an authentic and just future. (The author is a renowned Educational Columnist & Motivational Speaker and an Associate Editor of the Weekly Publication 'Education Quill.')

### 'Instruments of Torture': These stories show us what we do in the shadows

**BOOK REVIEW** 

By: Sayari Debnath

ach story in Aparna Sanyal's debut work of fiction – Instru-ments of Torture, a collection of short stories - is named after a medieval instrument of torture. Namely, the rack, the pillory, the Judas cradle, the Spanish boot, the iron maiden, the Phalaris bull, the scold's bridle, and the chastity belt. As a prologue, every story starts with a paragraph-long description of the construction of the instruments, their uses, and the most common victims. It's hard to say which instrument is more shocking or savage - the idea was not just to humiliate the victims but also to kill them in the most excruciating way possible. Sanyal's eight stories unfold in a similar manner. Something feels unnerving from the beginning but you can't quite say what the final reveal will be. The slow and steady uneasiness is suddenly hurtled into a frantically paced unravelling that is irreversible and often fatal. The pursuit of unhappiness

In "The Rack", a child with growth

issues – possibly dwarfism – is shunned by his parents. They fiddle with his hormones and physiology in hopes of making him a boy of normal proportions. A child, more so an abused one, isn't blind to his suffering. He realises there's only one way to put an end to everyone's misery. Similarly, in "The Phalaris Bull', the disabled older son of a couple quickly realises he'll always be the second-fiddle to his healthy, good-looking, normal-limbed brother. Overcome with envy - and perhaps self-preservation – the child finds a way to become the centre of his parents' worlds again. Through these two stories, Sanyal imagines the extreme outcomes of child neglect and abuse. These might be rare occurrences

but who's to say what pushes an impressionable child over the edge?

Unrequited love is perhaps one of the most common tortures that each of us experiences at least once in our lives. But does that warrant taking love with force, or manipulating the beloved to have your way? And what would we do if our beloved were suddenly at our mercy? "The Pillory" asks these chilling questions. A young man who has been obsessed with his fe-

male classmate since he was a child finally finds a way to be with her using lies and falsehood. A book about the instruments of tor-

ture would not be complete without examining perhaps what is a person's most complicated relationship with themselves - their sexual self and its urges. Two Christian gay boys discover their queerness at the

church and their first sexual counter comes to a disastrous climax in "The Judas Cradle". In "The Iron Maiden", body dysmorphia triggered by gynecomastia severely affects a young man from forming friendships with boys. This is worsened by his sexual abuse by a female classmate – besides humiliation, he is aroused by her violation and seeks similar excitement in other sexual encounters.

Confused by these conflicting feelings, a memory from his youth will finally free him of the sexual frigidness he experiences with his new bride. This story surprised me in many ways.

It's rare to read about men's body image issues and I appreciate how empathetically Sanyal wrote about it. The confusion that victims of sexual abuse feel towards their violator and their long associations with the experiences and memories are also sensitively dealt

Meanwhile, contradicting its title, Amba, the protagonist of "The Chastity Belt" is unashamed - and

> even proud - of her sexual appetite. A free spirit feared by the villagers, she lives in the forests and is loyal to no one except her own needs. She takes a new lover every night. Her nights (and days) pass joyously till she spots a Peeping Tom at her window. Not the one to be deterred by minor inconveniences, she starts holding exclusive shows for him.

Greatly entertaining and funny, this story imagines the radical outcome of a woman (quite liter-

ally) looking into a man's eyes. Any woman will tell you that her body is a site of pain. From an early age girls are taught to prize their looks and not overdo themselves mentally, emotionally, and intellectually. "The Spanish Boot" chronicles the journey of one such woman whose world exists in her vanity bag. Prevented from cultivating any skills or hobbies, she's confined to her own body in the most torturous way possible. Though a thing of impeccable beauty, she fails to win the affection of her husband who is made of more liberal temperament than men around him who like a woman only for her physical charms. If physical cages are stifling, so are the

In "The Scold's Bridle", Sanyal's protagonist is a rarely-speaking wife who takes pills for her "sadness disease". Offended by her medication, her husband puts them out of reach resulting in the wife's unpredictable mood swings and ravenous lust. Rejected by her own mind and losing control of her impulses leads her down the path of finality that is unfortunately quite common for Indian wives

Tortures and torturers

Taking off on one instrument of torture at a time, Sanyal's stories offer a fresh perspective on our hidden desires. Especially, those that have to do with harming ourselves or others in order to have the final say. We are all given to cruelty and even though these medieval torture instruments might feel prehistoric and barbaric to us, we continue to propagate slow-killing cruelty in innumerable ways. These instruments aimed to finish off the task in perhaps no more than a few days but the evolved, modern human beings have finessed emotional torture methods that refuse to spare the victim till their last breath. Searing and quickwitted, the endings of each story land like a whip against the bare skin. The reader is left to ruminate on uncomfortable possibilities - what if someone had lent a patient ear? What if our first instinct was not to degrade another human being? What if every child was treated with the abundant love that they deserve? Perhaps then none of us - including warmongers and toddlers wouldn't resort to the unbelievable cruelty we witness every day. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

#### **Enemy Of Society**

By: Khemu Parashar

Only the fortunate ones get the, sacrament of marriage, this is where our true love begins and is an unbreakable bond. to compare it is a great folly, no one else could be like this,

if there is a third one, then the question of marriage ends marriage takes the family's generations forward. there is a lot of activity in the house,

This dowry has made marriage a probthis demon is swallowing millions of families, boycott it soon,

the house is decorated with colours

this time listen to the call of the poor, end this demon, do this much favour to the poor.

### **Looking Ahead**

By: Priyalakshmi Gogoi

A gentle breeze caressed her cheeks As if to whisper a secret While she sat there looking up at the twirling orange leaves Falling onto the ground before smiling at her.

She looked pretty with a heart so pure Still wondering what went wrong

Yet with love embedded deep within She knew that was a phase now gone.

A lone soul on a forgotten bench A spot where once dreams were woven

Yet amidst nature she finds herself The last swirling leaves giving rays of hope of a life anew.

#### My River!!

Original in Assamese by: Mowsam Hazarika

Sometimes I cry! For many a reasons! Sometimes I laugh! For many a reasons!

Translated by: Tasdiq

Ghaznavi

Whether I cry .. Or laugh.. My river flows..

Day and night! I come to her banks.. To talk to myself.. Offloading some burden

**POETRY** 

To flow away.. To retrieve some inspirations From her flow!

> And she flows on.. Sunrise to sunset.. Sunset to sunrise.





#### A renewed Russian offensive on Ukraine's Kharkiv forces about 1700 civilians to evacuate

KYIV, May 11: Russian forces began a renewed ground assault on Ukraine's northeast, killing and injuring several and forcing more than 1,700 civilians to evacuate from the Kharkiv region, local officials said on Satur-

Artillery, mortar, and aerial bombardments hit more than 30 different towns and villages. leaving at least three people dead and five others injured, said Kharkiv governor, Oleh Syniehubov.

Ukraine rushed reinforcements to the Kharkiv region on Friday to hold off a Russian attempt to breach local defences, authorities

Russian forces stepped up their bombardment of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, in late March. Friday's attack signalled a tactical switch in the war by Moscow that Ukrainian officials had been expecting for

Russian military bloggers said the assault could mark the start of a Russian attempt to carve out a "buffer zone" that President Vladimir Putin vowed to create earlier this year to halt frequent Ukrainian attacks on Belgorod and other Russian border regions.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy confirmed on Friday evening that Russian forces were expanding their operations. He also called on the country's Western allies to ensure that promised deliveries of military aid would swiftly reach the country's frontlines.

"It is critical that partners support our warriors and Ukrainian resilience with timely deliveries. Truly timely ones," he said in a video statement on X. "A package that truly helps is the actual delivery of weapons to Ukraine, rather than just the announcement of a pack-

The Kremlin's forces have repeatedly sought to exploit Ukraine's shortages of ammunition and manpower as the flow of Western military aid to Kyiv has tapered off in recent months, with promised new support still vet to arrive.

Ukraine previously said it was aware that Russia was assembling thousands of troops along the northeastern border, close to the Kharkiv and Sumy regions. Intelligence officials also said they had expected an attack there though Russia's most recent ground offensive had been focused on parts of eastern Ukraine farther south,

While Russia's gains in the region have so far been limited, analysts at the US think tank Institute of the Study of War (ISW) described them Friday as "tactically significant".

They said Russia had only "committed relatively limited manpower to their initial assaults" but that the offensive in Kharkiv "is meant to ... (draw) Ukrainian manpower and materiel from other critical sectors of the front in eastern Ukraine".

The Russian military could also try to cut key supply routes in the area and try to blockade Kharkiv, home to roughly 1.1 million people and only about 30 kilometers (about 20 miles) south of the border.

In the war's early days, Russia made a botched attempt to quickly storm Kharkiv but retreated from its outskirts after about a month. In the fall of 2022, seven months later, Ukraine's army pushed them out of Kharkiv. The bold counterattack helped persuade Western countries that Ukraine could defeat Russia on the battlefield and merited military support.

Fighting is escalating across the enclave with heavy clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinian militants on the outskirts of Rafah

# Israel orders new evacuations in the southern Gaza city of Rafah as it prepares to expand operations

evacuations in Gaza's southern city of Rafah on Saturday, forcing tens of thousands more people to move as it prepares to expand its operation and adding that it is also moving into an area in northern Gaza where Hamas has regrouped.

Israel has now evacuated the eastern third of Rafah, pushing the operation to the edges of the heavily populated central area, although Israel's move into the city has so far been short of the full-scale invasion that it planned.

The order comes in the face of heavy international opposition and criticism. US President Joe Biden has already said he will not provide offensive weapons to Israel for Rafah, and on Friday the US said there was "reasonable" evidence that Israel had breached international law protecting civilians in the way it conducted its war against Hamas — the strongest statement that the Biden administration has yet made on the matter.

The United Nations and other agencies have warned for weeks that an Israeli assault on Rafah, which borders Egypt near the main aid entry points, would cripple humanitarian operations and cause a disastrous surge in civilian casualties.

More than 1.4 million Palestinians half of Gaza's population — have been sheltering in Rafah, most after fleeing Israel's offensives elsewhere. Considered the last refuge in the strip, the evacuations are forcing people to return north where areas are devastated by previous Israeli attacks. Aid agencies estimate that



110,000 had done so before Saturday's order that adds a further 40,000 to that

People have been displaced multiple times and there are few places left in the embattled strip to move to. Those fleeing fighting earlier this week erected new tent camps in the city of Khan Younis which was half destroyed in an earlier Israeli offensive — and the city of Deir al-Balah, straining infrastructure.

Georgios Petropoulos, an official with the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Rafah, said humanitarian workers had no supplies to help them set up in new locations. "We simply have no tents, we have no blankets, no bedding, none of the items that you would expect a population on the move to be able to get from the humanitarian system," he said.

side of the Rafah crossing with Egypt, forcing it to shut down. Rafah was the main point of entry for fuel.

Israeli troops have captured the Gaza

The World Food Program has warned that it will run out of food for distribution in southern Gaza by Saturday, Petropoulos said. Aid groups have said fuel will also be depleted soon, forcing hospitals to shut down critical operations and bringing to a halt trucks delivering aid

Heavy fighting is also underway in northern Gaza, where Hamas appeared to have once again regrouped in an area where Israel has already launched punishing assaults. Israeli Army spokesman Avichay Adraee told Palestinians in Jabaliya and Beit Lahiya cities and the surrounding areas to leave their homes and head to shelters in the west of Gaza City, warning that people were in "a dangerous combat zone" and that Israel was going to strike with "great force."

across south and central Gaza.

Battles erupted this week in the Zeitoun area on the outskirts of Gaza City. Northern Gaza was the first target of the ground offensive. Israel said late last year that it had mostly dismantled

The United Nations agency supporting people in Gaza, known as UNRWA, said that some 300,000 people have been affected by evacuation orders in Rafah and Jabaliya, but the numbers could likely be more as these are very built-up areas.

"We're extremely concerned that these evacuation orders have come both towards central Rafah and Jabaliya,' Louise Wateridge, UNRWA spokesperson in Rafah, told The Associated Press.

In Rafah's Shaboura neighbourhood, Palestinians were busy packing their belongings, readying to the flee the area. Palestinians are being sent to what Israel has called humanitarian safe zones along the Muwasi coastal strip in Gaza. But the zone is already packed with some 450,000 people and conditions there are squalid with the garbage-strewn camp lacking basic facilities.

Meanwhile, strikes are continuing across Gaza. At least 19 people, including eight women and eight children, were killed overnight in central Gaza in strikes that hit the areas of Zawaida, Maghazi and Deir al Balah, according to Al Agsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al Balah and an Associated Press journalist who counted the bodies.

Israel's bombardment and ground offensives in Gaza have killed more than 34,800 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its fig-

#### Maldives says 76 Indian military personnel replaced by civilians to operate 3 aviation platforms gifted by India

MALE, May 11: Maldives Minister of Foreign Affairs Moosa Zameer on Saturday said 76 Indian military personnel were replaced by civilian employees of the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited which manufactured the helicopters gifted by India, thus also ending the suspense over the exact number of those repatriated.

The Indian military personnel, stationed in the Maldives to operate two platforms for helicopters and a Dornier aircraft used primarily for medical evacuations, were repatriated by Friday, as per the May 10 deadline set following an agreement between the two countries in February in New Delhi

That agreement was a result of the demand of pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu made within hours of his assuming office in November. Local media reports on Saturday quoted Zameer addressing a press conference a day after he returned from his first official visit to India, detailing the presence of Indian soldiers stationed in Hanimaadhoo, Kadhd-

"As many as 26 soldiers withdrew from Gan between March 7 and March 9, while another 25 soldiers withdrew from Hanimaadhoo between April 7 and April 9, and 12 withdrew from Kadhdhoo on Tuesday. The final batch of 13 soldiers withdrew from Kadhdhoo on Thursday.' news portal Sun.mv reported, quoting Za-

WARSAW, May 11: Polish

Prime Minister Donald Tusk on

Saturday traveled to the the

country's border with Belarus,

which is also the European

Union's external border with

the autocratic state, and

pledged to do more to

strengthen security along its en-

sia's ally, of intensifying what

he called a "hybrid war"

against the West by encourag-

ing migrants to try to cross into

the EU. He vowed that Poland

Tusk accused Belarus, Rus-

tire eastern frontier.



meer as saying. The Maldivian government had previously said that documents show there are 89 Indian soldiers in the Maldives, to operate two military helicopters and a Dornier aircraft, it added.

Zameer said that it is the civilian employees of the company that manufactured the Indian-gifted helicopters, the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) that have come to replace the Indian military personnel.

Edition.mv, another news portal, said that the minister while addressing the concerns raised by many alleging that the military personnel still remained in Maldives but in civilian clothes, said: "Indian military was not here under any deception, were they? So there is no reason for us to have doubts when the Government of India has stated that these are civil-

Minister of Defence Mohamed Ghassan Maumoon, who also addressed the

Poland's prime minister vows to strengthen

security at EU border with Belarus

press conference, confirmed that the Maldives government had ensured that the people who had arrived to replace the Indian military personnel were, in fact,

"The command and control of the aircraft are now officially under the Defence Ministry and Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF)," Ghassan was quoted as saying by the Edition.mv.

Relations between India and Maldives deteriorated since Muizzu came to power in November last year even while the archipelagic nation maintained closer ties with China. He also travelled to China in January and met top Chinese leaders, including President Xi Jinping.

When Zameer was in India on Thursday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar conveyed to him that the development of India-Maldives ties is based on "mutual interests" and "reciprocal sensitivity."

The Maldivian foreign ministry said Jaishankar and Zameer discussed all aspects of the India-Maldives partnership to forge opportunities for future collaboration. The Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and occupies a special place in its initiatives like 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the 'Neighbourhood First Policy' of the Indian government. (PTI)

"This is not only Poland's in-

ternal border, but also the bor-

der of the European Union.

Therefore, I have no doubt that

all of Europe will have to —

and I know that we will achieve

this — invest in its security by

investing in Poland's eastern

border and in the security of

laration to the commanders of

the Polish Army and the Border

Guard that "there are no limits

on resources when it comes to

He added that he made a dec-

our border," Tusk said.

Poland's security." (AP)

## flash floods in northern Afghanistan, killing at least 50 people

Heavy rains set off



ISLAMABAD, May 11: Flash floods from seasonal rains in Baghlan province in northern Afghanistan killed at least 50 people on Friday, a Taliban official said.

The floods also caused losses to homes and property in several districts, according to Edayatullah Hamdard, the provincial director of Natural Disaster Management in Baghlan. He said that the death toll was preliminary and that it "might rise as many people are missing.

The flash floods also hit the capital, Kabul, said Abdullah Janan Saiq, the Taliban's spokesman for the State Ministry for Natural Disaster Management. He said that rescue teams bringing food and other aid have been dispatched to the affected areas.

Saiq said that the rescue operation is the main focus of authorities at the moment, and that he later might be able to provide more precise figures on casualties and damage.

In April, at least 70 people died from heavy rains and flash flooding in the country. About 2,000 homes, three mosques, and four schools were damaged last month. Thousands of people require humanitarian assistance. The flooding also damaged agriculture land and 2,500 animals died in the deluges, according to Saiq. (AP)

#### Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Salman's visit to Pakistan postponed: Reports attracting Saudi investments

**ISLAMABAD**, May 11: that the high-profile visit had Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's much-anticipated visit to Pakistan has been deferred for unspecified reasons, according to media reports on Saturday.

He was earlier expected to

the Saudi crown prince, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zehra Baloch on Friday clarified that details of the visit will be made public as soon as a schedule is worked out between Islamabad and Riyadh.

Baloch was confident that the visit would take place soon and surely be valuable as the people of Pakistan were anxiously waiting for the leader from the brotherly country. Officials in Riyadh and Islamabad are holding consultations on Saudi Crown Mohammad visit to cashstrapped Pakistan, official sources said on Saturday.

The clarification from the sued after reports emerged

According to the sources.

arrive in Islamabad on May 19 on a two-day visit, Geo News reported. Commenting on the visit of

government sources was is-

been delayed due to unspecified reasons.

the final date for Muhammad bin Salman's visit has not been decided yet and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar is in contact with the Saudi author-

The high-level visit was likely to take place after the recent diplomatic and traderelated engagements between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were at their peak in recent weeks following Prime Min-

ister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to the Kingdom in March.

The ex-

pected visit of the top dignitary, which has now been possesses vital importance to Pakistan eyeing big investment from Saudi Arabia in di-

verse fields. It would also materialise worth USD 5 billion in Pakistan in the coming days. It would be the first visit of

Mohammad Bin Salman to Pakistan in five years as he last visited the country in February 2019 during the rule of former prime minister Imran Khan. He was due to visit Pakistan in 2022 as part of his visit to the region but the visit was called off at the 11th

The visit will see the third in-person meeting between Pakistan's Prime Minister

> Shehbaz Sharif and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in a period span-

weeks. Pakistan

Arabia enjoy strong trade, defence, and cultural ties. The Kingdom is home to over 2.7 million Pakistani expatriates and serves as a top source of remittances to the cashstrapped country. (PTI)

#### Pakistan's Deputy PM Dar to visit China next week

the understanding between

both countries in Makkah for

ISLAMABAD, May 11: Pakistan's newlyappointed Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar will embark on a three-day official visit to China on May 13, during which he will meet top Chinese leaders and comprehensively review bilateral relations, including the upgradation of the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

Dar, who is also the foreign minister, will co-chair the 5th Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Satur-

day.

"The two sides will comprehensively review Pakistan-China bilateral relations including economic and trade cooperation;

high-level exchanges and visits; upgradation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and future connectivity initiatives," the statement

The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is opposed by India as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Dar and Wang will also exchange views on the unfolding regional geopolitical landscape and bilateral cooperation at the multilateral forum. During his visit from May 13-16, Dar is also expected to meet Chinese leaders, senior ministers and leading corporate executives, the statement said. Dar's visit to Beijing comes amid reports that Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is expected to visit China in

#### Panama's next president says he'll try to shut down one of the world's busiest migration routes

"I know that there are more

and more illegal crossings

every day," Tusk told reporters

at the border, where he met

with Polish Army soldiers, Bor-

der Guard officers and police.

The visit to the border.

Tusk's first since he took office

in December, comes after a

Polish judge defected to Be-

larus this month. He claimed he

was facing persecution in

Poland, a democracy, but offi-

cials have denounced him as a

traitor and he is being investi-

gated on suspicion of espi-

PANAMA CITY, May 11: Panama is on the verge of a dramatic change to its immigration policy that could reverberate from the dense Darien jungle to the U.S. border. President-elect José Raúl Mulino says he will shut down a migration route used by more than 500,000 people last year. Until now, Panama has helped speedily bus the migrants across its territory so

they can continue their journey north. Whether Mulino is able to reduce migration through a sparsely populated region with little government presence remains to be seen, experts

"Panama and our Darien are not a transit route. It is our border," Mulino said after his victory with 34% of the vote in Sunday's election was formalized Thursday evening. As he had suggested during his

campaign, the 64-year-old lawyer and former security minister said he would try to end "the Darien odyssey that does not have a reason to exist." The migrant route through the narrow isthmus grew exponentially in popularity in recent years with the help of organized crime in Colombia, making it an affordable, if dangerous, land route for hundreds of thousands. It grew as countries like Mexico, under pressure from the U.S. government, imposed visa restrictions on various nationalities including Venezuelans and just this week Peruvians in an attempt to stop migrants flying into the country just to continue on to the U.S. border. But masses of people took the challenge and set out on foot through the jungle-clad Colombian-Panamanian border. A crossing that initially could take a week or more eventually was whittled down to two or three days as the path became more

Tusk replaced a national

conservative party at odds with

the EU over rule of law issues.

That party, Law and Justice,

took a strong stance against mi-

gration in a way that set it at

odds with other European allies

when it first took power in

Since then, though, the gen-

eral mood against migration

across Europe has toughened.

While Tusk does not use some

of the harsh anti-migrant rheto-

ric of his predecessors, his anti-

migrant stance is really not that

established and entrepreneurial locals established a range of support services.

It remains a risky route, however. Reports of sexual assaults have coninued to rise, some migrants are killed by bandits in robberies and others drown trying to cross rushing rivers. Even so, some 147,000 migrants have already entered Panama through Darien this year. Previous attempts to close routes around the

world have simply shifted traffic to riskier paths. "People migrate for many reasons and frequently don't have safe, orderly and legal ways to do it," said Giuseppe Loprete, chief of mission in Panama for the U.N.'s International Organization for Immigration. "When the legal routes are not accessible, migrants run the risk of turning to criminal networks, traffickers and dangerous routes, tricked by disinformation." (AP)

#### Strong solar storm hits Earth, could disrupt communications and produce northern lights in US CAPE CANAVERAL, May 11: An unusually

strong solar storm hitting Earth could produce northern lights in the US this weekend and potentially disrupt power and communications.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a rare severe geomagnetic storm warning when a solar outburst reached Earth on Friday afternoon, hours sooner than anticipated. The effects were due to last through the weekend and possibly into next week.

NOAA alerted operators of power plants and spacecraft in orbit to take precautions, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"For most people here on planet Earth, they won't have to do anything," said Rob Steenburgh, a scientist with NOAA's Space Weather Prediction Centre. The storm could produce northern lights as far south in the US as Alabama and Northern California, according to NOAA. But it was hard to predict and experts stressed it would not be the dramatic curtains of colour normally associated with the northern lights, but more like splashes of greenish hues.

"That's really the gift from space weather the aurora," said Steenburgh. He and his colleagues said the best aurora views may come from phone cameras, which are better at captur-



ing light than the naked eye.

Snap a picture of the sky and "there might be actually a nice little treat there for you," said Mike Bettwy, operations chief for the prediction centre. The most intense solar storm in recorded history, in 1859, prompted auroras in central America and possibly even Hawaii. "We are not anticipating that" but it could come close, said NOAA space weather forecaster Shawn Dahl.

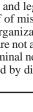
This storm poses a risk for high-voltage transmission lines for power grids, not the electrical lines ordinarily found in people's homes, Dahl told reporters. Satellites also could be affected, which in turn could disrupt navigation and communication services here on Earth.

Even when the storm is over, signals between GPS satellites and ground receivers could be scrambled or lost, according to NOAA. But there are so many navigation satellites that any outages should not last long, Steenburgh noted The sun has produced strong solar flares since Wednesday, resulting in at least seven outbursts of plasma. Each eruption — known as a coronal mass ejection — can contain billions of tons of plasma and magnetic field from the sun's outer atmosphere, or corona. The flares seem to be associated with a sunspot that's 16 times the diameter of Earth, according to NOAA. It's all part of the solar activity that's ramping up as the sun approaches the peak of its 11-year cycle.

NASA said the storm posed no serious threat to the seven astronauts aboard the International Space Station. The biggest concern is the increased radiation levels, and the crew could move to a better shielded part of the station if necessary, according to Steenburgh.

Increased radiation also could threaten some of NASA's science satellites. Extremely sensitive instruments will be turned off, if necessary, to avoid damage, said Antti Pulkkinen, director of the space agency's heliophysics science division. Several sun-focused spacecraft are monitoring all the action. "This is exactly the kinds of things we want to observe," Pulkkinen said.









'Nagas believe that this Framework Agreement will certainly bring a durable peace in the land'



Governmentof India proposed a

cease-fire agreement to the then

Federal Government of Nagaland

In 1964 for political talks at the

Prime Minister level. The negotia-

tions however, ended in dead-lock

on account of colonial policy of the

Government of India. In it's another

attempt to subdue the Nagas, the

Government of India imposed the

infamous Shillong Accord in 1975

within the ambit of Indian constitu-

tion," it further added. The accord

was rejected outright by the Naga

National Assembly. Indeed, that

historic decision saved the future of

the Naga nation once again, the

It then said the Nagas are also a

sovereign people by right. They

have been living in their own coun-

try for centuries under their political

system of sovereign village-states.

They are one people who come

from a common historical root.

They practise common culture and

profess the same faith. They are one

in a common political will. There is

no Indian Nagas or Burmese Nagas.

There are no Nagaland Nagas, Ma-

nipur Nagas, Assam Nagas,

Arunachal Nagas as propagated by

the enemies. They are one because

God created the Nagas with Naga

materials and that no Naga can stay

apart from his/her national iden-

tity. The Nagas have never accepted

the Indian constitution and Union of

The declaration of Naga inde-

pendence on the August 14, 1947

and plebiscite conducted on the

May 16 1951 where 99.9% Naga

people voted in favour of sovereign

independent Nagalim are strong

cases in point, the statement further

many sympathiser countries have

acknowledged the fact that the issue

of the Nagas Is a legitimate case

that demands no further question

other than that of national inde-

pendence, not that of secession.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of

India said, 'The Nagas have every

right to be independent.' Many

prominent Indian leaders had

stated: 'We don't believe in forced

union or forced marriage.

Jayaprakash Narayan, a member of

the Indian Parliament had said, 'It

is far better to have friendly Nagas

on our frontier rather than un-

friendly and discontented kept

forcibly within India," the NSCN-

IM statement said. It then said that,

above all, the name of the Lord is

with the Naga people. The state-

ment further said the word of the Lord is the foundation of Naga na-

tionhood that inspires and guides

the Nagas and has brought them

thus far. "It is their source of

strength they can never part with.

The Nagas are national issue-ori-

ented people. They have been fight-

ing for their cause with full

conviction and commitment since

the movement started. They know

they will surely perish the day they

give up their national right and de-

part from the Lord. After decades of

confrontations, the Government of

India (GoI) and the National Social-

ist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) fi-

nally resumed political talks in

1997 culminating in the signing of

the historic 'Framework Agree-

ment' on August 3, 2015. (NNN)

"The world community and

India at any point in time.

added.

NSCN-IM statement further said.

**DIMAPUR, May 11:** NSCN-IM has made a fervent appeal to "all churches to pray for the Indo-Naga political talks and also for the peace of Nagalim", while stating that "in the event of failure of the current talks, we are apprehensive that horrible human rights situation will return in Nagalim". In a statement made available to Newmai News Network recently NSCN-IM said the Naga people are convinced that this prolonged Indo-Naga political talks should be concluded hon-

Before coming to this point of its statement, NSCN-IM gave a short historical background of the Nagas saying that history has it that the Nagas have been a free people from time immemorial. "Of course, there were sporadic fightings between the Nagas and their neighbouring peoples and nations.But at no point of time has the Nagas ever been subjugated by any regional power.Free Nagalim is the history and foundation of the Naga politics", it also The NSCN-IM statement also

mentioned British imperialist forces

intruded into Naga territory in 1832, to which the Naga people put up resistance for fifty years. Subsequently, the British forces could occupy only a part of the Naga territories leaving the rest part, which they called 'Free Nagaarea' remains as free as ever. In the meantime, American Missionaries namely Rev Dr E W Clark brought the good news to the Nagas in 1872; Rev C.D. King established Kohima Baptist Church in 1883 and Rev William Pettigrew, brought the message of good news to the Tangkhul Nagas In 1896. The word of God opened the eyes of the Nagas spiritually and intellectually that they took a U-turn from their old perception of life to the new one and from darkness to light. Indeed, the word of God transformed them into new beings. It was followed by social and political enlightenments. On the eve of the British departure From the Indian subcontinent, the Nagas in the British occupied area declared their independence on August 14, 1947 on the basis of their national right and principle,the statement added. "After the lapse of British power, the Indian Constituent Assembly invited the Naga people in 1950 to join the Union of India, but the Naga people said no to it. The Nagas Are not a party to the Union of Burma, nor to the Union of India. That historic decision saved the future of the Nagas", the NSCN-IM statement also said.

"From 1946 to 1955, Nagas had done their utmost to solve the Indo-Naga political issue through peaceful negotiation across the table, but the Government of India sent thousands of its armed forces for forcible occupation of Nagalim, where tens of thousands Nagas including innocent children and old people were butchered; women were raped and some others were burnt alive.In 1963, the Government of India offered an autonomous Nagaland state within the parameter of Indian constitution with an eye to hook the Nagas with that bait, but it was rejected by the Naga People. Realizing the futility of seeking military solution, the

### IPS officer Nongrang becomes M'laya's first woman police chief

SHILLONG, May 11: Senior IPS officer Idashisha Nongrang has been appointed as Meghalaya's first woman DGP, officials said on Sat-

Nongrang will replace LR Bishnoi who will retire on May 19, they

The Meghalaya Security Commission, chaired by Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, selected Nongrang out of the three officers approved by the UPSC last month for the role of police chief, a senior home department official informed

The other two officers recommended by the UPSC were RP Meena and Deepak Kumar, after two others, GP Singh (1991 batch) and Harmeet Singh (1992 batch) declined the top job, officially intimating the commission of their unwillingness to take up the task. (PTI)

# Tripura facing fuel crisis as goods train services not yet restored: Official State government started rationing petrol and diesel for two-wheelers, cars and commercial vehicles from April 30

AGARTALA, May 11: Tripura is facing a fuel crisis as goods train services to the northeastern state have not yet been restored, an official of the Food and Civil Supplies department said on Saturday.

The goods train service to the state stopped on April 26 after derailment of a goods train in Assam's Jatinga area but the passenger train service remains unaffected.

"The fuel crisis remains as it was earlier. The petrol crisis is severe as goods trains are not coming to the state since April 26. We don't know when the track will be ready for resumption of goods train service fully," Director of Food and Civil Supplies department, Nirmal Adhikari said.

The state government started rationing petrol and diesel for two-wheelers, cars and commercial vehicles from April 30.

A notification issued by the state government said two-wheelers and three-wheelers would get petrol amounting to ₹ 200 per day, while for four-wheelers it is ₹ 500 per day. For buses and minibuses, it is 60 litres and 40 litres per day. For 12 wheel, 10 wheel and six wheel trucks it is 80 litres, 60 litres and 45 litres per day respectively.



Adhikari said the department has taken steps to increase oil tankers to bring more petrol from Guwahati and Silchar to tide over the crisis.

"Now, we are bringing 60 per cent of the state's total fuel demand by using oil tankers. If the railway line is not fully operational by next week, there will be shortage of essential items including rice", he said.

Adhikari said the department has sought police vigil at petrol pumps for proper distribution of petrol at petrol pumps. The cops had to resort to lathi charge after some motorcyclists became violent after they failed to get petrol at a city-based fuel outlet on

Meanwhile, transport department additional secretary Subrata Chowdhury on Saturday said a goods train carrying 30 wagons of petrol and 19 wagons of diesel has crossed Jatinga successfully as informed by NFR authority and the consignment is expected to reach Agartala by

Chief Public Relations Officer of North-East Frontier (NFR) Sabvasachi Dev said that "goods train service has not been restored on Friday as assured by the officials working on the ground. Two goods trains carrying sugar passed Jatinga but we are not running oil tanker because it may cause problems due to 'weight distribution' while crossing the damaged track."

Dey said, "The restoration work is on war footing manner but we can't give any particular time when the service will be restored."

Chief minister Manik Saha had written Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw for restoration of goods train service immediately as the state is facing a fuel crisis. (PTI)

# Meghalaya ECD module 2 training concludes

Objective of the training programme is to strengthen and build the capacity of the department officials



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 11: The Module 2 for key trainers on the 'Importance of Early Years' concluded in Meghalaya.

It recognized the importance of parental involvement and the role of frontline functionaries have in disseminating the training and knowledge within communities.

The Meghalaya Early Childhood Development (ECD) Mission, in collaboration with Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Sevagram, the Aarambh project and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Maharashtra successfully wrapped up the comprehensive training programme, signifying the conclusion of Module 2 for key trainers on the "Importance of Early Years". The key trainers are block and cluster level officials from collaborating departments working on ECD interventions namely, social welfare department, health and family welfare and community & rural development. The training commenced on May 7 and concluded on May 10. There were simultaneous sessions running arallelly for the different depar ments with joint sessions on the

The objective of the training programme is to strengthen and build the capacity of the department officials with emphasis on how they can take forth the training to their peers and field level workers. The training was activity based and experiential in nature and took a very hands-on approach to help partici-

first day.

pants grasp concepts on ECD.

Following this training module, the key trainers are expected to disseminate their knowledge by training to ensure that all Supervisory staff are proficient in training Frontline Workers (FLWs) within their respective departments and districts. These trainers were selected from the first 15 blocks from different districts who were identified during the Phase 1 of the Meghalaya ECD Mission project rollout.

The first two days of the Module 2 training saw veteran neonatologist Dr Simin F Irani, founder member of the National Neonatology Forum & Senior Advisor and Consultant, UNICEF, conducting special sessions on "Why ECD?" and "Developmental Milestones in the Womb.' She also engaged with the District Early Intervention Center (DEIC) staff to support the state in identifying existing gaps. Covering different aspects of early childhood development, ranging from recognizing developmental milestones to understanding cognitive, language, social, and emotional domains. Dr. Irani also emphasized a holistic approach, stating, "The ages of 0-2 compassing physical, psychosocial, and emotional growth."

Discussing development phases, she also spoke on how the preschool period is pivotal for holistic development as this is the period where children are the most inquisitive; it is during this stage where emphasis needs to be put on learning through play. Dr Irani views development as an interaction

between biology and the environment, including parental and community influences. "The brain starts developing in the first trimester," she points out.

Her thought-provoking questions prompted attendees to reflect on the challenges and opportunities in child development. Dr. Irani's presentation also highlighted a sobering statistic that says, "over 250 million children worldwide have yet to reach their full potential, with 40-42% in India facing similar set-

The session was also attended by development commissioner & principal secretary Sampath Kumar, IAS, government of Meghalaya.

Kumar emphasised the critical significance of such training initiatives, emphasizing that it is imperative for children to attain their maximum potential through early interventions like the ECD mission. He also mentioned the need for enhanced training for AYUSH practitioners in Meghalaya, suggesting a dedicated program for Community Health Officers (CHOs) lasting approximately six months. He further proposed initiating in-service training for Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) Medical Officers to enhance their capacity.

Kumar stressed, "There's a pressing need to develop software that can predict health issues and effectively address them. Additionally, we must address birth registration challenges by including home births in the registration process." He also recommended a policy shift tality as a benchmark to better understand maternal health and enable timely interventions, such as providing folic acid supplements.

An interactive breakout session further enhanced learning, focusing on the roles and responsibilities of trainers, engaging group activities, and crafting effective training plans. Participants also gained invaluable knowledge from discussions on the Importance of Early Years to the domains of Development including the Brain wiring game, and insights from the Jamaican Study. The study further evaluates the long-term benefits of early psychosocial stimulation and nutritional supplements for children who are stunted between the ages of 9 months and 24 months. The longitudinal Jamaican Study for Early Child Development reaffirmed the profound impact of early stimulation interventions. It revealed that children who received these interventions not only demonstrated higher IQ scores and better academic performance but also exhibited fewer behavioral problems. This emphasizes the enduring benefits of investing in early childhood development programs, underscoring their significance in shaping

long-term outcomes

On the 2nd and 3rd day, accredited social health activists (ASHAs) & Anganwadi Workers (AWWs), alongside trainees, conducted home visits and parents meeting to demonstrate and promote best practices, joined by MOs, CDPOs. Nursing tutors, Lady Supervisors (ICDS), alongwith the Aarambh Mawdiangdiang, Mawkasiang, Saisiej, and Umroh. These gatherings addressed the specific needs of children across various age groups, including pregnant mothers, adolescents, infants aged 6 months to 2 years plus adolescents, toddlers aged 2 to 4 years plus adolescents, and preschoolers aged 4 to 6 years plus adolescents. Additionally, the importance of utilizing Mother and Child Protection (MCP) cards as readily accessible Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials was emphasised. Encouraging parents and caregivers to incorporate them into their daily routines at home, training topics also delved upon the significance of early years, responsive feeding and caregiving, conducting effective home visits, and organizing parent meetings.

#### French ambassador praises heritage village at Mawphlang

SHILLONG, May 11: The Ambassador of France to India, Thierry Mathou, in his maiden visit to Meghalaya, visited sacred groves, monoliths, and heritage village of Mawphlang, East Khasi Hills.

The ambassador trekked for more than 3 kms and visited Mawphlang Sacred Grove in its entirety, where he was guided by the head of the Lyngdoh clan of Hima Mawphlang, Tambor Lyngdoh Mawphlang. The ambassador was very enthusiastic about learning the ethnographic (flora) composition of the sacred

The clan head explained that the forest (Mawphlang sacred grove) is sanctified by deities who are the custodians who safeguard the forests, therefore any immoral activities are not allowed to be carried out. The sacred groves also consist of ceremonial sites where rituals were carried out by ancient Khasi kings and the practice continues till date particularly on special occasions. The Sacred Groves have also attracted tourists and researchers alike, who come to explore and study the unique ecosystem in the groves.

During the visit, the Ambassador Thierry Mathou said, "I had the pleasure to visit the sacred forests. We have to learn from you, on how to protect the environment and biodiversity. This first visit is to better understand the state and see your needs and how we are going to interact."

The Mawphlang Sacred Groves, have been revered and protected by the Khasi community for centuries, offering a unique glimpse into the harmonious relationship with the enonment and the natural world State government has implemented multiple initiatives in Mawphlang like development of heritage villages, tourism infrastructures and organising festivals like Monolith Festival. The rise in tourist footfall to this destination has not only enriched the local economy but has also provided sustainable livelihood opportunities for the communities. (NNN)

[See Regulation-15 (1)(a)] / 16(3

#### International Nurses Day celebrated by PIMC & UHAN at USTM

<u>HT Bureau</u> GUWAHATI, May 11: In honor of International Nurses Day and to commemorate the birth anniversary of the iconic Florence Nightingale, the upcoming PA Sangma International Medical College & Hospital (PIMC) and the University Hospital of Ayurveda and Naturopathy (UHAN) at the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) recently came together for a celebratory event on the University campus.

The event was graced by Mahbubul Hoque, chancellor USTM, Prof GD Sharma, vice chancellor of UST as the chief guest. Dr RK

Sharma, advisor to USTM, and Dr Rashna Dass Hazarika, medical superintendent of the upcoming PA Sangma International Medical College and Hospital, apart from other doctors and nurses attended the cel-

ebration making it a success. Addressing the gathering, Mahbubul Hoque said that nurses are the backbone of healthcare, tirelessly working to provide comfort, care, and healing to patients in need. "Their dedication, compassion, and resilience inspire us all. We express our gratitude and support for these everyday heroes who make a difference in our lives and communities every single day", he added. Prof GD Sharma delivered an

enlightening speech on the indispensable role of nurses in the healthcare field, paying homage to the legacy of Florence Nightingale and her iconic representation as the "lady with the lamp". He said that the Chancellor of USTM has a great vision to provide healthcare to the unreached people of the region and take both the Ayurvedic Medical College and Hospital and the upcoming PIMC to the national and international level so that people from neighboring countries can

Suwarna Bhawan, House No. 12, New Town Path, Near Hanuman Mandir G.S. Road, Ulubari, Guwahti- 781007 (Assam) Case No.: 0A/30/2024 nons under sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993. Exh. No.: 4232 YES BANK LTD MD ANOWAR HUSSAIN AND Anr

**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL GUWAHATI** 

MD ANOWAR HUSSAIN C/o Late Buida Mullah Dhapolia Jyotikuchi Lalganesh Guwahati Kamrup (m)

Md Anowar Hussain C/o Late Buida Mullah Dhapolia Jyotikuchi Road Saukuchi

MRS HELENA BEGUM C/o Anowar Hussain Dhapolia Jyotikuchi Lalganesh Guwahati Kamrup (m)

Mrs Helena Begum C/o Anowar Hussain Dhapolia Jyotikuchi Saukuchi Guwahati Kamrup (m) Assam 781034

**SUMMONS** 

WHEREAS, **0A/30/2024** was listed before Hon'ble Presiding Officer/Registrar or 30/04/2024. WHEREAS this Hon'ble Tribunal is pleased to issue summons/ notice on the said

Application under section 19(4) of the Act. (OA) filed against you for recovery o debts of Rs.6536081.71/- (application along with copies of documents etc. annexed). n accordance with sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you, the defendants are directed as under:to show cause within thirty days of the service of summons Publication

there of as to why relief prayed for should not be granted.

to disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and asset specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original application: i) you are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original applicatio

pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties; y) you shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinar course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is create and / or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial numb 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal:

y) you shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realised by sale of secure assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank o  $financial\ institutions\ holding\ security\ interest\ over\ such\ assets.$ 

ou are also directed to file the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to he applicant and to appear before Registrar on 10/06/2024 at 10:30 A.M. failin which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence



'Tara: The Lost Star' selected for screening at Cannes festival Sikkimese director Samten Bhutia's creation attracting applause GANGTOK, May 11: Sikkimese

director Samten Bhutia's feature film 'Tara: the Lost Star' has been selected for market screening at the Cannes International Film Festival. The film directed by Bhutia is pro-

duced by Sabitri Chettri, under the banner of SaDa Productions in association with Passang Mintok Films. "With its compelling narrative,

'Tara: The Lost Star' is a feature film in Nepali Language which offers a window into the beliefs of Himalayas and Sikkim's vibrant culture. It is a social drama film, starring local artists Shyama Shree Sherpa and Kiran Dahal, with the primary cast being Deoraj Sherpa, Loonibha Tuladhar, Shashikala Pradhan, Sushmita Bhujel, Basant Sharma, Anand Gurung and Timothy Rai," the filmmakers said.

The film's selection for market screening at 'Marché Du Film,



Cannes de Festival2024' highlights the growing acclaim of regional cin-

ema worldwide, they added. "This achievement celebrates the talent and perseverance of the talent from the Himalayas. As the excitement builds for its Cannes debut, 'Tara: The Lost Star' promises to shine a spotlight on Sikkim's burgeoning film industry like never before," they said.

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Sing Tamang wrote on X, "I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the entire team behind the creation of film 'Tara: The Lost Star,' a remarkable achievement for Sikkim as it makes its debut at the prestigious Cannes

International Film Festival 2024." "My sincere applause goes to the director, producer, and every individual involved in bringing this cinematic masterpiece to life. I commend SaDa Productions in collaboration with Passang Mintok Films for their perseverance, dedication, and vi-

sion," he said. This milestone not only marks a significant moment in our region's history but also showcases our vibrant culture and the rich narratives of the Himalayas. 'Tara: The Lost Star,' a Nepali-language social drama, promises to captivate audiences worldwide with its compelling

story, he said. Tamang added that,"The selection of our film for the market screening at the Marche Du Film, Cannes de Festival 2024, highlights the increasing recognition of regional cinema on the global stage." (PTI)

# Congress won't win even 50 LS seats, will not get opposition party status after polls: PM Modi also alleged that BJD leaders are involved in the 'loot' of tribal lands, and promised

that action will be taken against them if the BJP comes to power in the state

GARH (ODISHA), May 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday claimed that the Congress will not win even 50 seats in the Lok Sabha elections and will not be able to get the opposition party status after the polls.

Addressing election rallies in Kandhamal, Bolangir and Bargarh Lok Sabha seats, Modi claimed that Odisha's 'asmita' (pride) is in danger and the BJP will protect it, while asserting that a "double engine" government of the saffron party will be formed in the state and a "son or daughter of the soil who understands Odia language and culture" will be made the chief minister.

Attacking the BJD, he called for ousting from power "those responsible for keeping people poor despite the state having bountiful natural resources".

"Congress will not be able to get 10 per cent seats to become principal opposition in the Lok Sabha. They will not win even 50 seats," Modi claimed.

Taking a dig at Rahul Gandhi, without taking his name, the PM said, "The Congress 'shehzade' has been reading out the same script since the 2014 polls... mark my words, NDA will break all records and will win over 400 seats this time." The 'shehzade' tearing a document of the Manmohan Singh cabinet was an insult to the Constitution, Modi said, referring to the 2013 incident.

Recalling the achievements of the previous BJP government at the Centre under Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he said that



on this day 26 years ago, Pokhran tests were conducted (in 1998), and it enhanced the image of the country across

The Congress always tries to scare the people of India... due to this tendency, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed terrorism for so many years. Instead of giving befitting reply to terrorists, Congress used to hold talks with them to protect the party's vote bank," he alleged.

"The Vajpayee government, on the other hand, showed to the world how India can ensure its security. Non-resident Indians felt proud of the moment (Pokhran tests)... that day India showed its capability to the world," he said.

Modi claimed that Congress always

warns of taking action cautiously as Pakistan also has nuclear weapons. "These scared people (Congress) have

killed the zeal of the people of our country. Today, Pakistan is in such a situation that it cannot handle the bombs it has. They are now trying to sell their bombs but are not getting buyers as people know their bombs are of poor quality,' Modi claimed. He also asserted that his government ended 500 years of people's wait by building Ram temple in Ayod-

"Everyone feels proud after visiting the Ram temple. We have blessings of Ram Lalla on one side and those of Lord Jagannath on the other," he asserted. Modi asserted that the BJP is fully de-

guage and culture. "I am here to invite you to the swearing in ceremony of the BJP chief minister in Bhubaneswar on June 10. A son or daughter of the soil who understands the state's culture, language and tradition will be made the CM," he said, in an indirect reference to BJD leader V K Pandian's assertion that he is the natural successor to all great values of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. Further attacking Pandian, who hails from Tamil Nadu, without taking his name, Modi alleged that Patnaik has outsourced the Odisha government and the state is being run by outsiders.

voted to the development of Odia lan-

"There is a super CM, who wields more power than the chief minister chosen by elected MLAs. Are sons and daughters of Odisha not capable of running the government? Are people born here not capable of ensuring development?" he questioned.

Referring to the sensitive issue of Lord Jagannath's 'Ratna Bhandar' (temple treasury), he said the last inventory of the valuables was made 40 years ago and key of inner chambers has been missing since the last six years.

The state government constituted a judicial commission to probe the missing key incident but the report was not made public, he said.

"I promise to the people of Odisha that the lost glory of 'Ratna Bhandar' will be restored once the BJP forms the government in the state. This is Modi's guaran-

The PM claimed that after President Droupadi Murmu offered prayers at the Ram temple in Ayodhya, a senior Congress leader held a press conference and ought purification of the temple.

This is an insult to the President, tribals, women and the country as a whole. The Congress has no right to remain in politics. All Congress candidates must lose their deposits," he said.

Modi asserted that on the other hand, the BJP made a tribal daughter of Odisha the President of India.

The PM came down heavily on the BJD government for not implementing the Ayushman Bharat scheme, "as a result of which people from Odisha working in other states were deprived of its benefits". Although the state has a huge tourism potential, the state government failed to promote it, he alleged.

Modi also alleged that BJD leaders are involved in the "loot" of tribal lands, and promised that action will be taken against them if the BJP comes to power in the state. Launching a scathing attack on Patnaik, the PM alleged that the CM is unable to name all 30 districts of the state from memory.

"A CM, who is unable to name all the districts and headquarters cannot understand the issues faced by the people. Can you leave the future of your children in the hands of such a person?" Modi said.

"Give me a chance for five years. I will make Odisha the number one state in the country, given its abundant natural resources," he said. (PTI)

PoK belongs to India, asserts Union Home Minister Amit Shah



HYDERABAD, May 11: In a scathing attack on Congress and its leaders, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said due to the fear of Pakistan having an atom bomb, the grand old party wants to give up India's rights over Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

Shah, who addressed election rallies at Vikarabad and Nagarkurnool in Telangana on the last day of campaigning for Lok Sabha polls in the state, recalled that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had conducted nuclear tests at Pokhran on this day in 1998 and made the country a nuclear power.

The Congress does not have the courage to conduct surgical strike and airstrikes, he alleged.

Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook surgical strikes and air strikes within 10 days after Pakistan terrorists attacked the coutnry and finished them.

Referring to the reported comments of Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar and National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah on Pakistan having an atom bomb, the home minister said he would like to ask Rahul Gandhi if Pak-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) would be given to the neighbouring country because of it having atom bomb.

"As long as BJP is there, it cannot happen" and PoK belongs to India and we will take it, he said.

"They don't feel shame. Due to fear of an atom bomb, they want to give up our rights over PoK. But you don't worry, Modi ji is going to be Prime Minister again and Pakistan's bullets will be replied to with cannon," Shah said.

On AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's alleged comments as to what Telangana people have to do with Kashmir, Shah said the Telangana youth can give their life for Kashmir

PM Modi has ended terror and naxalism in the country, he said.

Referring to Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's comments on surgical strikes, he asked, "Revanth Reddy, where did you keep your mind? You kept it in Italy?". Reddy on Friday claimed an intel-

ligence failure in preventing the Pulwama incident.

"Modi ji tried to take political benefit from the surgical strike after Pulwama incident. My question to Modi ji is, what are you doing? Why did the Pulwama incident happen? Why did you let it happen? What are you doing about internal security?

"Why did you not use agencies like IB, RAW? It is your failure. Nobody knows if a surgical strike actu-

Closing out G20 Summit most In tribal-dominated Ratlam, Cong strongman Bhuria takes on MP BJP minister's wife

> INDORE, May 11: The fight between Congress leader Kantilal Bhuria and Madhya Pradesh Forest Minister Nagar Singh Chauhan's wife Anita Chauhan is as much for the Ratlam Lok Sabha seat as it is for supremacy in the tribal-dominated region between their families.

The two families are leaving nothing to

Bhuria's son Vikrant quit as Madhya Pradesh Youth Congress chief on April 8. In his resignation letter to Indian Youth Congress president Srinivas BV, he said he needed to devote maximum time in Ratlam to help his father.

On the other hand, Nagar Singh Chauhan has taken most aspects of his wife's campaign into

The Ratlam Lok Sabha constituency, which has 20.94 lakh eligible voters, will go to polls on Bhil and Bhilala tribals play a decisive role in

deciding the election results. Bhuria (73), who was a minister in the Congress-led UPA government, has won from Ratlam five times. He was, however, defeated in

Targeting the BJP, Bhuria told PTI, "Forest Minister Nagar Singh Chauhan's wife Anita has no contribution to the development of the region. The BJP governments at the Centre and in the

state have neglected Ratlam." "Roads, ponds and dams in this tribal-domi-



"Due to the lack of employment, tribals of the Ratlam region are still forced to go to Gujarat and Rajasthan for work," he said, adding that government recruitment has been stagnant for a

The Ratlam constituency has 1,014 women for every 1,000 men and this may have been the reason why the BJP chose to field Anita Chauhan, 39, who holds a master's degree in law and is the Alirajpur district panchayat president, in place of sitting MP Guman Singh Damor, according to political analysts.

Anita Chauhan dismisses any challenge from

"Bhuria is not a challenge. We are talking to tribal labourers who have migrated from the Rat-

lam Lok Sabha constituency to other states to find out what kind of employment can be arranged in their home area. We will create new employment opportunities for them here after the elections," she said.

With campaigning intensifying, the Bhuria and Chauhan families have been engaged in a war of

"Even though Anita Chauhan is the candidate, it is Forest Minister Nagar Singh Chauhan who is actually contesting. The BJP decries dynastic politics but then gives a minister's wife a Lok Sabha ticket," said Bhuria's son Vikrant.

Hitting back, Nagar Singh Chauhan said, "It is not right to think Anita has been given a BJP ticket just because she is my wife. She has been an active party worker for the last 20 years. It is the Congress that practices dynastic

The Ratlam Lok Sabha seat comprises eight assembly seats spread across Ratlam, Jhabua and Alirajpur districts. It is home to a large number of tribals, many of them living in 'falias' or scattered settlements in the valleys.

Most of these places are remote and lack basic amenities like electricity, water and roads, forcing a large number of the tribals to migrate to neighbouring Gujarat and other states for livelihood

According to analysts, this is the reason why employment and basic amenities continue to be the main poll issues. (PTI)

ally took place or not," Reddy had said. (PTI) TMC seeks to apprise President about Sandeshkhali incidents

"These relationships have really changed tremendously in the last five years, last decade. And, the growth of the Quad, again that is something that we tried a decade and a half ago, not succeeded, did it a second time. This time it actually, really worked," Jaishankar told PTI in an exclusive interview

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** If closing

out the G20 Summit was the most

satisfying moment of his career.

the most significant was being as-

in some crucial relationships"

such as the US, Australia, UAE

and Japan during the last five

years, Foreign Minister S Jais-

hankar savs

at the news agency's headquarters. Jaishankar spoke on a range of issues in the nearly hour-long interview including his view of the world in 10 years from now, the challenges faced by India, and the rising profile of the country in the international arena under his watch.

Hosting the G20 Summit last year "wasn't just the hard work", because in many ways the "prestige of the country" was riding on it, he said.

"I think the most satisfying moment was when we, actually closed out the G20 Summit, the joint declaration... It was a very difficult process. Till that morning, people, a lot of people actually thought we won't be able to actually get everybody to agree on it. So, as a minister, I think, I would say that certainly would be one, which for me would be professionally very satisfying," he said.

On September 9, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the adoption of the New Delhi Leaders Declaration, a significant victory for India's G20 presidency, which came amid increasing tensions and divergent views over the Ukraine conflict. The announcement about the

consensus on the declaration and its subsequent adoption came hours after India circulated a new text to the G20 countries to describe the Ukraine conflict. "It was the biggest diplomatic responsibility we had taken up in

our history. And, the manner in which we conducted it was also very unique. I have been in this business for a long time. I haven't seen any foreign policy event with which the Indian public was so associated and vested in." Jaishankar

satisfying: EAM Jaishankar

India held the chair of the influential bloc for a year starting December 1, 2022 with the tagline of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam -- 'One Earth, One Family, One Future" as it also sought to make its G20 agenda inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive.

"We managed it at a very difficult time, and made sure that it actually came out of a very stressful period much stronger. Imagine if we had not. I think there was a lot riding on it, both for the country, obviously the government in office, but I would say for the world as well," the minister said while answering a question on what was the most satisfying moment of his

After mentioning G20, Jaishankar said: "You didn't ask me what was the most significant. In my tenure as a minister and (in that) period being associated with enormous changes in some very crucial relationships" has been the most significant. "The US, I would say, the UAE, Australia, to some extent even Japan."

Jaishankar, one of the most well-known foreign ministers with nearly 50 years of experience in diplomacy, has previously been an ambassador to China and the United States, and India's Foreign Secretary.

He has been instrumental in rasing the profile of the foreign ministry, the work that the foreign ministry does, domestically.

Asked if he felt a sense of that recognition from the people, he said, "I certainly see a much stronger interest in the country in foreign policy".

"In fact, I look at my own party manifesto, the space that BJP manifesto has devoted to foreign policy is much more than it has done before. But, I would say, it reflects two-three things, one it reflects the globalisation of India that actually there is a demand in the public, interest in the public, they are much more connected to what is happening in the world,"

He said people also take great pride in the "position which Prime Minister Modi has carved out on the international stage. I think, the country takes great pride in it. I see, particularly, but not only, I see particularly young people, very very moved" by India's growing international stature. (PTI)

#### nated area were built during Congress rule," he Sex videos: Devaraje Gowda arrested in Chitradurga

CHITRADURGA (KARNATAKA), May 11: BJP leader and advocate G Devaraje Gowda was arrested in connection with the release of an explicit sex video allegedly involving Hassan JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna.

According to police, Devaraje Gowda was arrested at Gulihal tollgate by the Hirivur police in this district on Friday night for leaking the video in a pen drive. He was arrested on a tip-off received by the Hassan police, which wanted his presence for the case.

Several explicit videos involving Prajwal started making the rounds ahead of the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka, which took place on April 26. The MP, a grandson of former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, is absconding and a 'blue corner' notice has been issued against him by Interpol. Three FIRs, including charges of rape, molestation, intimidation, blackmailing and threatening, have been registered against Prajwal.

Devaraje Gowda is accused of leaking these videos, which he has categorically rejected. He contested in the 2023 Assembly elections against JD(S) MLA from Holenarasipura H D Revanna.

Revanna, father of Prajwal, is at present in jail on charges of kidnapping a woman, a mother of three. (PTI)

KOLKATA, May 11: The Trinamool Congress on Saturday said it has become imperative for the party to apprise President Droupadi Murmu of the true unfolding of inci-

dents at Sandeshkhali which had led to narratives and counter-narratives between the ruling party and the BJP. West Bengal minister and TMC leader Shashi told re-

porters here that it is surprising that the BJP had taken a team from Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district and gave a "false portrayal" to none other than the President of the country. "I feel there is a need to take a team from Sandeshkhali on our behalf and apprise the President of what had happened actually on the ground. We will seek the go-ahead from our top leadership for this", she said. "The BJP team which had met the President had misguided her. The saffron camp is resorting to lies every now and then. Now we have to follow the right protocol to meet the President if our top leadership gives its approval in this regard", she said. The BJP had levelled allegations against local Trinamool Congress leaders of Sandeshkhali that they had committed sexual harassment of women in the region. This had been refuted by the Trinamool Congress saying that this was a false narrative of the BJP and the saffron camp had allegedly paid money to women of Sandeshkhali to make "these false allegations"

A purported sting video, the authenticity of which was not verified by PTI, surfaced recently which showed the local BJP leader Gangadhar Koyal admitting that BJP had paid money to women of Sandeshkhali to make false allegations of sexual harassment. "The BJP has stooped so low that the party has demeaned the prestige of women. They will get a befitting reply in the elections", Panja said.

She also alleged that the chairperson of the National Commission for Women (NCW) was also "involved in the conspiracy of the BJP at Sandeshkhali" and the Trinamool Congress will register a complaint against her with the Election Commission. (PTI)

Many political leaders, actors and singers, including Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, expressed grief over the demise of Patar and said it is a big loss for the Punjabi literary community

# Punjabi poet, writer Surjit Patar passes away at 79

LUDHIANA, May 11: Padma Shri recipient Punjabi poet Suriit Patar passed away on Saturday morning at his residence near the Barewal Colony here. He was 79.

Patar died in his sleep, his family members said. His wife Bhupinder Kaur tried to wake him up around 6:30 am but he did not respond. He was declared dead by a doctor, they said.

Patar is survived by his wife and two sons -- one of them lives in Australia. Gurbhajan Gill, a close associate of Patar, said cremation is likely to be performed on Monday after Patar's son arrives

Many political leaders, actors and singers, including Puniab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, expressed grief over the demise of Patar and said it is a big loss for the Punjabi literary community.

from Australia.

Patar's poetic works include 'Hawa Vich Likhe Harf', 'Hanere Vich Sulagdi Varanmala', 'Patjhar Di Pazeb', 'Lafzaan Di Dargah' and 'Surzameen'.

He received the Padma Shri in the field of literature and education in 2012. Patar was the president of the Punjab Arts Council. He had also been the president of the Punjabi Sahit

The poet and writer has been awarded with the Sahitya

Akademi Award, Panchnad Puruskar, Saraswati Samman



and the Kusumagraj Literary Award. From Patar village in Jalandhar district, he did his graduation from Randhir college in Kapurthala and Ph.D on "Transformation of Folklore in Guru Nanak Vani" from the

Guru Nanak Dev University.

He retired as a professor of Punjabi from the Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana.

Patar has also translated the three tragedies of Federico

Garcia Lorca, Girish Karnad's play Nagmandala, and poems of Bertolt Brecht and Pablo Neruda into Punjabi.

In a post on X, Chief Minister Mann said he was deeply saddened by the passing away of Patar. Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring called it an irreparable loss for Punjabi literature.

He said he was saddened over the demise of Patar who served the Punjabi language and made it shine on the world

Former Punjab chief minister and BJP leader Amarinder Singh on X said, "End of an era, as famous Punjabi writer and poet Padma Shri Surjit Patar Sahib has passed away today. My heartfelt condolences to his family and millions of fans worldwide. Puniab has lost an icon today.

Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal said the

death of Patar has left a void in the world of literature. "After Shiv Batalvi, Patar Sahib was the most popular and beloved poet of Punjabis. I express my heartfelt condolences to his family and his well-wishers," Badal said.

Punjabi actor Gurpreet Ghuggi while expressing grief over Patar's death said, "Alvida :Padam Shri Surjit Patar ji you will remain in our hearts forever."

Singer Harbhajan Mann said, "The world of Punjabi literature has lost a gem today. Rest in peace Surjit Patar



# Sitharaman bonds with southern students over lunch at Andhra Bhavan, talks politics before key polls

nance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made a surprise visit to the iconic Andhra Bhavan in the heart of Delhi on Saturday, two days before polling in the Telugu states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, interacting with some students of Delhi University.

**SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024** 

Speaking to around 20-odd students from the two Telugu-speaking states as well as Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka, Sitharaman discussed issues ranging from education and politics to the economic situation, in what appeared to be an attempt at outreach ahead of the May 13 elections in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, where the BJP aims to expand its base.

Polling for Andhra Pradesh's 25 Lok Sabha and 175 assembly seats will be held simultaneously on May 13. Telangana's 17 Lok Sabha seats will also go to the polls on the same

As the students savoured their lunch, Sitharaman seamlessly transitioned into the role of a caring mother figure, ensuring they were eating properly.

"I am listening, you please eat," she gently reminded them, her eyes scanning the plates for any neglected

Throughout the hour-long interac-

#### Man enters ground to meet Dhoni during IPL match in Gujarat, arrested

AHMEDABAD, May 11: A 21year-old man has been arrested for criminal trespass after he breached the tight security cordon to enter the field to meet cricketer MS Dhoni during an Indian Premier League (IPL) match at the Narendra Modi stadium in Gujarat, police said on Saturday.

The incident occurred during the match between the Chennai Super Kings and Gujarat Titans at the stadium in the Motera area of the city on Friday night, an official said.

Jaykumar Jani, a native of Rabarika village in Bhavnagar district, has been arrested under section 447 (criminal trespass) of the IPC, Assistant Commissioner of Police DV Rana said.

Jani informed the police that he was Dhoni's fan and wanted to meet him, he said.

He jumped the barricades and ran towards the cricketer who was batting, the official said.

In a video of the incident that surfaced on social media, Jani is seen bowing at Dhoni's feet near the pitch and hugging him before security personnel take him away.

'Janı and hıs brother Parth travelled from Bhavnagar to watch the match. During a DRS (decision review system) break, Jani first jumped the metal barricades near the black screen and ran towards the pitch. He was quickly apprehended and taken to Chandkheda police station," Rana said.

He was formally arrested on Saturday after a first information report (FIR) was registered against him, the official said.

This is the second such incident at Narendra Modi stadium in six months.

In November 2023, Wayne Johnson, an Australian national of Chinese-Filipino origin, breached the security cordon to enter the field to hug Virat Kohli during the World Cup final between India and Australia. (PTI)



tion, the finance minister struck a warm and approachable tone, candidly sharing anecdotes from her

When a curious student asked about her life after completing her undergraduate degree in Madurai, Sitharaman recounted her solitary journey to Delhi to appear for the entrance exam at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus.

"It was truly an experience. I appeared for three subjects and finally chose MA economics. Thereafter, I did MBA and pursued PhD but could not complete it," she said, taking the students back in time.

The discussion took a political turn when Kushal, a student from Kadapa district in Andhra Pradesh and pursuing BA in political science, sought advice on starting a political

Sitharaman's response was prag-

"First complete your studies. It is absolutely wrong to pursue politics by giving up your studies. You should take up politics as an alternative career," she said. "I joined politics very late and the party gave me Sitharaman addressed various concerns raised by the students.

NATION

When Priyam, a law student, voiced apprehension about discrimination faced by Tamil students in Delhi while discussing Tamil politics, the finance minister sought to reassure him.

"There is no difference in politics done in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere. We should be proud of our origin and the state. We should not let ourselves down," she said.

On the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies, a contentious topic for southern states, Sitharaman emphasised the constitutional process.

"It is not a BJP body but a constitutional body that will decide it after due consultation with the states," she explained, adding, "A trusted body will decide. Before anything is decided, we should not worry that southern states will lose out.'

Sitharaman also weighed in on the debate over freebies, stating that the Centre advises the states to use taxpayer money responsibly.

"We tell them during formal interactions that it is the taxpavers money that is spent on welfare schemes. You should use taxpayer money responsibly. We can tell once, of employment opportunities, the finance minister pointed to the ongoing churn in different sectors.

'There is demand for those honing new skills and, accordingly, students should get ready for the future needs," she said

As the interaction drew to a close, Sitharaman rose and took selfies with the students, apologising for extending their "half-hour lunch" to an

Before leaving, she stopped to check seasonal mangoes at a south Indian grocery shop outside the Andhra Bhavan, posing for a photo with the shopkeeper and addressing the media.

Expressing optimism about the BJP's prospects in the two Teluguspeaking states, Sitharaman said, There is a positive response to the BJP alliance in the two southern states. Revenue-surplus Telangana has turned into a debt state due to corruption and false promises. I believe people will support the BJP."

She also hoped for good support for the party in Andhra Pradesh.

The BJP is contesting the elections in Andhra Pradesh in an alliance with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Pawan Kalyan's

### **Punjab Police busts interstate** drugs smuggling gang, 7 held



CHANDIGARH, May 11: Seven drug suppliers, including their gang's mastermind, were arrested as the Punjab Police busted an interstate network of making illegal psychotropic substances substances and supply units in Himachal Pradesh, officials said on Saturday.

During the entire operation spread across five states -- Puniab. Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra -- the police also seized ₹ 70.42 lakh worth intoxicant tablets or capsules, 725.5 kg intoxicant tramadol powder and ₹ 2.37 lakh in cash, Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said in a post on X.

"In a big blow to pharma opioids, Special Task Force(#STF) busts an interstate network of manufacturing illegal psychotropic substances and supply units running from a pharma factory in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh," the DGP said, adding that seven drug smugglers/suppliers, including the mastermind, have been

The development came after three-month-long investigations of backward and forward linkages carried out by the STF, Border Range, Amritsar into the arrest of two drug smugglers -- Sukhwinder Singh alias Dhami of village Kot Muhammad Khan in Tarn Taran and Jaspreet Singh alias Jass of Govind Nagar in Amritsar, the officials said.

Sukhwinder and Jaspreet were arrested after the recovery of ₹ 4.24 lakh worth narcotic tablets and capsules from Beas in February this year, the police said.

DGP Yadav said the arrest of this duo helped the police arrest the kingpin of the racket, identified as Alex Paliwal from Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh.

recovered from Paliwal's possession, he said. Following Paliwal's arrest, the

tablets and ₹ 1.37 lakh in cash were

police extended its investigation to Himachal Pradesh, where in the presence of drug control officers Sukhdeep Singh and Ramneek Singh they scrutinised Biogenetic Drug Private Limited and seized the records that showed that the company had manufactured over 20 crore Alprazolam tablets in just eight months, Yadav said.

These records traced the supply chain to Aster Pharma in Maharashtra, where further investigations led the police to Biogenetic Drug Private Limited's sister pharma manufacturing company Smilex Pharmachem Drug Industries based in Baddi in Himachal Pradesh, DGP Yadav said in a statement.

He added that the subsequent operation targeting Smilex Pharmachem Drug Industries yielded a substantial seizure of ₹ 47.32 lakh worth intoxicant capsules and 725.5 kg of intoxicant tramadol powder, sufficient to manufacture 1.5 crore capsules.

The records revealed that Smilex Pharmachem Drug Industries purchased 6,500 kg of intoxicant tramadol powder within a year, the police officer said.

DGP Yadav said the concurrent investigations into transportation and distribution led to the apprehension of accused Intezar Salmani, Prince Salmani, Baljinder Singh and Suba Singh, unravelling the intricate web of interstate drug traf-

The police have also recovered another stock of ₹ 9.80 lakh worth intoxicant tablets from a transportation vehicle near the Chandigarh

### Naxalites changed out of uniform, mixed among villagers during encounter in Bijapur: Police

BIJAPUR, May 11: Some Naxalites changed into civilian clothes to pose as villagers and mislead the police after the first exchange of fire with the security personnel during Friday's encounter in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, an official said

According to the police, 12 Naxalites were gunned down by security personnel in a 12hour operation in the forest near Pidia village under the Gangloor police station limits on Friday. Their bodies were brought to Bijapur district headquarters on Saturday morning.

"The identity of the deceased has been ascertained. They were carrying a cumulative reward of Rs 31 lakh on their heads," Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav told re-

Budhu Oyam and Kallu Punem, both members of military company no. 2, were carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh each on their head, while Gangaloor area committee member of Maoists Lakhe Kuniam and member of military platoon no. 12 Bhima Karam were carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh each on their heads, he said.

two people were killed and 23 in-

strong winds uprooted trees, elec-

tricity poles and led to portions of

many areas as the dust storm swept

the national capital late Friday

In west Delhi's Vikaspuri, a per-

son on a two-wheeler died after a

branch of a tree fell on him near

Police said the branch was re-

moved with the help of cranes and

the victim, Jaiprakash, was rushed

to the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hos-

pital, where he was declared dead

A car was also damaged in the

In the other incident, a labourer

got trapped under a tree which fell

on him near IB Block at KN Katju

incident but its occupants were un-

hurt, a police officer said.

Janakpuri flyover.

on arrival.

Power was also disrupted in

walls collapsing across Delhi.

Two dead, 23 injured in

storm-related incidents in Delhi

jured in storm-related incidents as hospital but the doctors said he was

already dead.

and hoardings.

the officials said.

Hariom was taken to a nearby

The police officer said in this in-

According to officials, they re-

ceived 152 calls, including 130

made to the Delhi Fire Service

(DFS), regarding incidents of up-

rooting of trees, electricity poles

They said 55 calls were also re-

ceived about collapse of portions

of buildings and structures in the

Additionally, the officials said

that 202 calls were received re-

garding power disruptions during

the storms in the national capital,

Nine flights were also diverted

at the Delhi airport late Friday

evening due to bad weather, an of-

cident also a car was damaged but

its occupants were safe.

**NEW DELHI, May 11:** At least Marg around 11 PM.

The other deceased, militia platoon commander Sannu Lakom and vice head of Janata Sarkar (people's government) Avlam, were carrying a bounty of Rs 2 lakh each, the SP said, adding that six others were lower-run members of the outlawed outfit.

Some Maoists also tried to surround the security forces by laying ambushes at three places, but the attempts were foiled, he said. "A peculiar thing we noticed for the first time

during this operation was that after the first exchange of fire, some Naxalites changed into civil clothes and mixed with villagers to mislead the police," he said. Hence, the police have taken several people

into custody from the area, and their identities are being ascertained, the official said. The operation was launched based on the inputs about the presence of special zonal committee members Chaitu, Lengu and Papa Rao,

commander of PLGA company no. 2 of Maoists Vella and Gagaloor area committee secretary Dinesh Modiyam and 100-150 cadres, in the

Personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard (DRG) from Bijapur, Dantewada and Sukma districts, Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force (STF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and its elite unit CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) were involved in the operation, he said.

Yadav said the encounter broke out at 6 am on Friday, and the face-off took place about nine to 10 times at regular intervals till 6 pm. Apart from the bodies, a cache of arms, am-

munition and explosives were recovered from the encounter site, he said. "Three Naxalites who sustained injuries in the gunfight were also apprehended from the spot. A civilian was also injured in the cross-

fire," the SP said. The injured were administered preliminary treatment and admitted to the district hospital, and their condition was stated to be out of danger, he said. Several Maoists were either injured or killed during the operation, but their colleagues managed to drag them into the forest,

# NC's Srinagar pick Ruhullah's roadmap for restoration of Article 370

SRINAGAR, May 11: Create a political space, mobilise people, find forces in the country who can ally with us and unite -? This is National Confer-Lok Sabha seat Aga Syed Ruhullah

Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir "We need to fight it politically, we need to mobilise people," Mehdi told PTI in an interview.

Mehdi's roadmap for restoration of

"First encourage our people to express their opinion and then mobilise that opinion and create that political space where people can speak about it and stand for their rights," Mehdi, an influential Shia leader, said.

The NC leader, a three-time former MLA from Budgam assembly segment, is the party's candidate from Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency which has been represented by three generations of the Abdullahs.

He said the leadership needs to reach out to the entire population of Jammu and Kashmir to mobilise them and drum up support for the restoration of the special status which was revoked by the Centre on August 5,

"It is not about the party cadre only, about entire Jammu and Kashmir. "We need to reach out to them, we

need to give them that energy and that strength and with that mobilisation, we need to take our cause to the government of India with the strength like other campaigns in the rest of the nation," he added. Mehdi said the leadership then needs to take the political mobilisation and opinion of the people to the rest of India and find allies.

"We need to find like-minded parties like those in south who want a federal India, who want stronger states. We need to find like-minded parties and forces with whom we can join forces and one day, find ways for our dignity to be returned.

'Who knows, in the course of restoring or making India a greater or stronger federal structure, we may get our dignity, our rights back because

what south India espouses for is no different than from what we had and what Bengal and the northeast espouse for is no different from what we had." he said. He said the op of the restoration of Article 370 needs to be brought up from the grassroots to the national level to "get our dignity and rights back".

Mehdi, who has been a strong votary of unity among the political leadership in Jammu and Kashmir, said electoral competitions aside, it is imperative to stand united for the "bigger cause". He had expressed displeasure after the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD),? an amalgam of various political parties seeking restoration of special status,? broke apart as NC and PDP could not come to a seat-sharing arrangement for the polls and announced to contest separately

"PAGD or any other nomenclature that you want to have, the people of Jammu and Kashmir need unity," he

He said "we have a bigger cause, which is bigger than these electoral competitions" "We need to stand and unite our-

tive. So, PAGD has to unite again. If all the constituents of the PAGD are honest towards that cause, towards the people of J-K, we can forget whatever happened in this election. "We had electoral competition,

nothing lost. We can reunite and focus ourselves towards the cause that we have and that cause is bigger, it is larger than these objectives, electoral objectives," Mehdi said.

The former minister said he envisions the PAGD getting together in the

"PAGD or any other name, unity among the people of J-K is incumbent upon us. We cannot avoid it if we want to espouse for that cause," he added. Asked if the alliance among PAGD

parties could be cobbled up for the assembly elections then, he said "if everything goes well, maybe". (PTI)

### Delhi HC grants bail to alleged Indian Mujahideen operative in terror case

NEW DELHI, May 11: The Delhi High Court has granted bail to Abdul Subhan Qureshi, cofounder of banned terror organisation Indian Mujahideen (IM), in a terror case.

A bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Manoj Jain considered the period of incarceration undergone by him, which was around five years, and directed that the terms and conditions of the bail would be decided by the trial

"In case there is any violation of any condition imposed by the trial court or appellant (Qureshi) attempts to threaten or influence any witness, directly or indirectly, or attempts to delay the trial, it would be open to prosecution to seek cancellation of bail, without any reference to this cour," the bench said.

The high court passed the order while allowing an appeal by Qureshi challenging a trial court's December 2023 order, in which his plea seeking bail in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) case was dismissed.

He sought bail under section 436-A of the CrPC which states that an under trial prisoner (UTP) has the right to seek bail on serving more than one-half of the maximum possible sentence on their personal bond.

Advocates Prashant Prakash and Quasar Khan, representing Qureshi, urged the court to grant bail to the accused on the ground of prolonged under-trial detention and submitted that he has been in custody for nearly five years awaiting trial, constituting half of the pre-



scribed punishment period for the alleged of-

fence, which is seven years. The lawyers said charges have already been framed against the accused for the alleged offences under section 153A (promoting enmity between classes), 153B (punishment for the offence), 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal and under section 10 (penalty for being a member of banned association) and 13 (punishment for unlawful activities) of the

According to the prosecution, Qureshi remained an active member of IM and Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI).

The case of prosecution was that on September 27, 2001, the SIMI was banned by the Central government and on the same night, the Delhi Police got information regarding a press

conference being held by the organisation in

It said a raid was conducted at the office of SIMI in Zakir Nagar where the press conference was going on and the members of the organisation were raising slogans against the Indian government for banning it.

Some members of the organisation were arrested from the spot and some others, including Qureshi, fled and several incriminating items were seized there, the prosecution said.

He was arrested by Delhi Police in the case on June 1, 2019.

The prosecutor opposed the plea saying that the accused was earlier declared a proclaimed offender and was arrested in this case only after being apprehended in another case.

He claimed that there are four other matters

in which Qureshi continues to be in judicial The court said merely because the allegations against the accused are serious in nature, cannot be taken as sole ground for declining

the relief provided under Section 436-A CrPC. "We are also conscious of the fact that all his co-accused in the present case are already on bail and the case is at the stage of recording of prosecution evidence in which 8 witnesses

have been examined. "There are 53 cited prosecution witnesses and therefore, it cannot be said that trial is likely to be concluded in near future," the bench said. (PTI)

# World Migratory Bird Day: Citizens hold protest to save Navi Mumbai's DPS flamingo lake



THANE, May 11: Nature lovers and to blocking of tidal water by vested inenvironmentalists in Navi Mumbai terests in violation of a Bombay High marked World Migratory Bird Day on Court judgment. Saturday by holding a human chain protest to get authorities to increase ef-

forts to protect wetlands used by

#SaveDPSFlamingoLake emblazoned

on them, participants in the protest said

the 30-acre waterbody in Nerul, which

attracts thousands of migratory flamin-

gos every year, was getting "killed" due

huge banners with

flamingos.

Holding

The main channel on the south side of the lake has been buried due to the construction of the Nerul jetty as part of the state government's water transport project, alleged NatConnect Foundation's director BN Kumar.

"Over a period of time 10 flamingos died and five were injured after getting disoriented due to such developments. We have been raising this issue for the

restore the lake," he said.

In response to a letter sent by Nat-Connect Foundation, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) and the Maharashtra CMO had ordered a probe into the blocking of water to the lake but no action is being seen on the ground, Kumar claimed.

Officials from Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation, CIDCO and state forest department have visited the area and it is hoped rectification measures will be taken quickly, said Anjali Agrawal of Save Flamingos and Mangroves Forum.

Sandip Sareen from Navi Mumbai Environment Preservation Society (NMEPS) said his organisation was consulting legal teams since the developments related to the lake are "a clear

cut case of contempt of court". Activists Vishnu Joshi and Hemant Katkar also condemned the authorities for their attitude on the issue and said they are duty bound to protect the area, which is part of Navi Mumbai's envi-

ronmental heritage. World Migratory Bird Day is a global campaign to promote conservation efforts for migratory birds as they journey across borders. (PTI)

#### 10 THE HILLS TIMES

# Kunal Kemmu's 'Madgaon Express' clocks 50 days in theatres

**MUMBAI, May 11:** Actor Kunal Kemmu's directorial debut "Madgaon Express" has completed 50 days in cinema halls across the country, the makers said on Saturday.

The comedy, produced by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani's Excel Entertainment, was released in theatres countrywide on March 22.

Upon its debut, "Madgaon Express" had received positive reviews and has so far earned over Rs 40 crores at the box office.

"50 din, it's a win. Celebrating 50 days of madness, fun and chaos in cinemas. Catch it in theatres now," Excel Entertainment posted on Instagram

In a press note, the production banner said the good word-of-mouth has "definitely come into play for 'Madgaon Express' and has made a large chunk of the audience flock to theatres." "Madgaon Express" follows the journey of three childhood friends — played by Pratik Gandhi, Divyenndu and Avinash Tiwary — who embark on a trip to Goa that goes wrong

Kemmu, whose acting credits include "Kalyug", "Go Goa Gone" and "Lootcase", has also penned the story of "Madgaon Express". The movie features Nora Fatehi, Upendra Limaye and Chhaya Kadam as well. (PTI)

# Arif Zakaria, Ira Dubey join Nikkhil Advani's 'Freedom at Midnight' series



MUMBAI, Mau 11: Seasoned actor Arif Zakaria and Ira Dubey have joined the cast of Nikkhil Advani's political thriller series "Freedom at Midnight", the makers announced on Saturday. Zakaria has been cast as Mohammad Ali Jinnah in the SonyLIV series, which is co-produced by StudioNext and Advani's Emmay Entertainment. It is based on the book of the same name by Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins.

Dubey will essay the role of Jinnah's sister Fatima.

According to the makers, "Freedom at Midnight" is an epic political thriller drama that highlights "several incidents from the year of India's independence and interconnected stories about crucial events and personalities who played a significant role in writing the country's history as

"Jubilee" star Sidhant Gupta, Chirag Vohra of "Scam 1992" fame and popular TV actor Rajendra Chawla are playing Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, respectively, in the series.

"When casting for the roles of Jinnah and Fatima in the series, I was immediately drawn to Arif Zakaria for his striking physical presence - gaunt, towering, with piercing eyes and a commanding voice that exuded authenticity. His baritone and clipped British accent embodied the essence of Jinnah. In a similar vein, I chose Ira Dubey for her ability to embody the grace and strength of Fatima," Advani said in a statement.

"Both actors effortlessly brought these characters to life, capturing the essence of their personalities and historical significance. Working with Arif and Ira was a testament to their talent and dedication, solidifying my belief that they were the perfect choices for these roles," he added. Advani is attached as the showrunner and director on the series. The story is penned by Abhinandan Gupta, Adwitiya Kareng Das, Gundeep Kaur, Divya Nidhi Sharma, Revanta Sarabhai, and Ethan Taylor. (PTI)

# It is a golden period for actors like me: Ashutosh Rana

**MUMBAI, May 11:** Actor Ashutosh Rana believes his acting career is still in the early stages, even though he has been a part of the industry for over three decades.

Rana, who has received recognition for his work in films like "Dushman", "Sarfarosh", "Mulk", "Sonchiriya", "Pathaan" and "Fighter", said he is happy that the lines between mainstream and off-beat cinema has blurred today.

"I feel there is a lot left in Ashutosh Rana. The actor in Ashutosh Rana is like a child who has just started walking and is taking baby steps. There is a lot to come. Why I think this way is because I started with films which were called off-beat cinema and that has become mainstream cinema now.

"For the actors like me, it is a golden period," the actor, who is headlining the latest OTT show "Murder in Mahim", told PTI in an interview

The 56-year-old actor said he would love to play a variety of characters on screen, whether they are heroic or villainous

whether they are heroic or villainous.

"I definitely hope to get lots of work and play different characters. I want to play

Chanakya on screen, Raavan, Vivekanand and Krishna. There are so many characters who are engraved in our mind like Gabbar (from 'Sholay')," he added.

Rana believes that he has been able to receive appreciation from audiences because he played each character with the utmost honesty.

As an actor, he said, his primary goal is to "capture the thought process and persona" of a character.

"I don't believe in doing good work, I believe in being honest with my work. The appreciation that I've got from the audience and media is for the honest portrayal of roles. For instance, how can you like my characters Gokul Pandit and Lajja Shankar Pandey from 'Dushman' and 'Sangharsh', respectively?

"You felt the character was honest in terms of its portrayal and hence you liked my work. Besides, I try not to repeat the characters and ensure that there's diversity in what I do. I'm the actor made by the audience, they've made me and promoted me after watching my work."

"Murder in Mahim", an investigative

drama series, is adapted from a criticallyacclaimed book of the same name by author

The show is a social commentary that explores the chilling murder mystery and the underbelly of Mumbai, highlighting the reconciliation of a lost friendship between Peter (Rana) and Jende (Vijay

Rana said he wasn't nervous about headlining a show and instead calls it a "plea-

"I don't take pressure, I'm a responsible person, and I've acted with utmost responsibility," he said adding that he hasn't read the book as he didn't want to corrupt his imagination as an actor.

"Whenever a series or film is made from a book, the actors who are acting in it shouldn't read it because it restricts your imagination as an artist. When you haven't read it, then you can add things on your own," he added.

The show, which is helmed by Raj Acharya, hails from Tipping Point Films and Jigsaw Pictures. It was released on JioCinema on Friday. (PTI)

#### Jeff Bridges, Dave Bautista, Bryan Cranston join cast of monster movie 'Grendel'

LOS ANGELES, May 11: The makers of the live-action monster film 'Grendel' have finalised its cast, with Jeff Bridges taking on the role of Grendel, alongside Dave Bautista as Beowulf and Bryan Cranston as King Hrothgar.

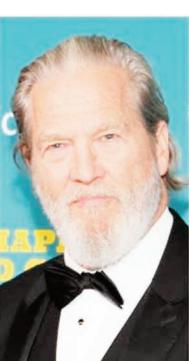
Also joining the cast are Thomasin McKenzie as Queen Wealhtheow, Aidan Turner as Unferth, and T Bone Burnett as the Shaper, who will also provide original songs for the film, reports 'Variety'. Robert D. Krzykowski is set to helm the film from the screenplay he adapted from John Gardner's novel.

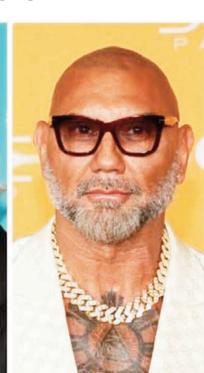
Palisades Park Pictures, led by CEO Tamara Birkemoe, is launching international sales ahead of Cannes for the story of the legendary monster at the heart of the Beowulf epic poem, who steps forward to tell his side of the tale.

As per 'Variety', production is set to begin later this year in Europe. Jim Henson's Creature Shop will handle practical creature work and design.

'Grendel' is produced by Brian Henson and Vince Raisa for the Jim Henson Company, Krzykowski and Jay Glazer, who acquired the rights to the novel in 2020, Dennis Berardi, and Jon D. Wagner.

Executive producers include Bridges, John Sayles, Birkemoe, and Joe Jenckes of Ashland Media Finance. (AGENCIES)





# Aamir Khan says he was unsure about censor board passing 'Sarfarosh' over mentions of Pak, ISI



MUMBAI, May 11; Aamir Khan has revealed the team of "Sarfarosh" had concerns about the film getting cleared by the Central Board of Film Certification due to its references to Pak-

istan and the ISI.

Khan and his "Sarfarosh" colleagues on Friday night celebrated the 25th anniversary of the cult classic movie, which dealt with cross-border terrorisms with a precial corporation.

ism, with a special screening.
The John Matthew Matthandirected movie was released in theatres on April 30, 1999, at the time of the Kargil conflict when tensions between India and Pakistan were high.

"In those days, there was a rule that you cannot name the country. We would say 'neighbouring country' or 'friendly country'. So we were taking a risk, and whether the Censor board would pass the film or not because we had taken the name of Pakistan and the ISI. It had never happened before.

"There was some back and forth happening but our point was that if Advani ji can say in the parliament, then why can't we say it in cinema halls. Fortunately, the film passed with no changes," Khan said before the screening of the film.

"Sarfarosh" revolved around an honest police officer Ajay Singh Rathod, who meets and befriends a famous Pakistani ghazal singer, Gulfam Hassan. Rathod's life takes a turn when he uncovers a huge conspiracy while investigating arms smuggling in Rajasthan.

Upon its release, the film received wide critical acclaim and commercial success. It also won the National Film Award for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment.

Veteran actor Shah recalled the adulation that he received from the audience, especially from people of Pakistan, for playing the role of ghazal singer Hassan.

"I get notifications on Facebook saying, 'I'm the original Gulfam Hassan'. This film was liked more in Pakistan. I haven't been there in the last few years but whenever I went there, people always talked about 'Sarfarosh'. They liked my work, even though I thought they would beat me up," Shah The veteran said he was gripped by the script "Sarfarosh" after reading it.

"I felt this is going to be an important film. It is an intelligent thriller. I loved the revelation of the character and the fact that I'll get to enjoy singing in Jagjit bhai's voice. I felt the film would succeed," he added.

Shah, 73, also talked about one of the scenes where his character chops off the ear of a young goat in "Sarfarosh".

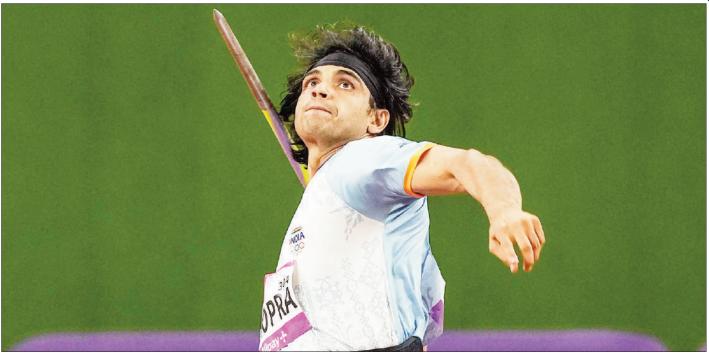
young goat in "Sarfarosh".

"I had no problem doing that but the censor had a problem. They were like, 'do action but don't show it.' I don't understand this hypocrisy. So they actually cut out the shot where I bit the goat. It was a fake one. They said keep it out of frame. It was still very effective in

Page 11 May 12\_Normal Pages 5/11/2024 8:33 PM Page 1

# Olympic champion Chopra to compete

before home fans after three years Manu, who had finished sixth in



BHUBANESWAR, May 11: Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra's presence will turn the National Federation Cup, starting Sunday, into a high-profile domestic competition though several top athletes have decided to skip the four-day Senior Champi-

The 26-year-old Chopra will be competing in a domestic event for the first time in three years, after featuring in the 2021 edition

Chopra will compete in India after winning a historic gold in Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

Chopra last took part in a domestic competition at the same Federation Cup in March 2021, when he won a gold with a throw

Since then, he has mostly been training and competing abroad, accumulating silverwares and titles. He became a world champion, won three individual Diamond League titles, one DL champion's trophy and defended his Asian Games gold in China. The superstar Indian, who is

hoping to defend his Olympic gold during the Paris Games, is heading to India from Doha where he began his season with a second-place finish in the Diamond League with an impressive final round throw of 88.36m on Friday. "For me more important is my sport. It's good for my profile if I play in India," Chopra said. "Before Tokyo (Olympics), I always trained in India but right

game. I will train in India later," he added.

Some of the top athletes, including the likes of shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor, would also be looking to either breach the Paris Olympics qualifying mark or gain valuable ranking

Asian Games silver medallist Kishore Jena, whose Diamond League debut in Doha on Friday ended in disappointment with a ninth-place finish, will also comnow I just want to focus on my pete in the event, and so as DP meet. (PTI)

dium will be on the javelin throw event. As per the schedule, the men's javelin qualifying round will be held on May 14 and the final will take place on May 15. Asian Games medallists

the 2023 World Championships.

All eyes at the Kalinga Sta-

Avinash Sable (men's 3000m steeplechase), Jyothi Yarraji (women's 100m hurdles), Parul Chaudhary (women's 3000m steeplechase), Annu Rani (women's javelin throw) and Harmilan Bains (women's 800m and 1500m) are among top athletes who are skipping the event as they are training abroad.

Also missing from the lost are national record holder 100m sprinter Manikanta Hoblidhar and Amlan Borgohain (200m) as they are training and competing abroad.

In the men's 400m, Amoj Jacob, Muhammed Ajmal and Rajesh Ramesh, who were part of the Indian 4x400m squad that qualified for the Paris Olympics during the World Relays in Bahamas recently, have entered the fray. The participation of Ramesh, though, could be doubtful after he sustained muscle cramps in Bahamas.

Asian record holder shot putter Toor would be looking to breach the Olympic qualifying mark of 21.50m after he began his outdoor season with 19.82m

# *Nadal overpowered by* Hurkacz at Italian Open in his 1st meeting with a top-10 player in 1½ years



ROME, May 11: There was no doubting Rafael Nadal's commitment and desire during his first meeting with a top-10 player in 11/2 years. Nadal's surgically repaired hip and his 37-year-old legs just didn't provide him with the necessary means to be competitive enough on Saturday as ninth-ranked Hubert Hurkacz overpowered the 22-time Grand Slam champion on the Spaniard's beloved clay for a 6-1, 6-3 victory in the third round of the Italian Open. Nadal, who is still regaining his fitness after missing nearly all of 2023 with a hip injury that required surgery, appeared slow at times and lacked the lucidness to finish off points.

Twice in the first set, Nadal missed drop shot attempts to hand Hurkacz breaks of his serve. Then early in the second set, Nadal lacked oomph on a backhand volley, allowing Hurkacz to reply with a forehand up the line that clipped the net and landed in for another break.

On the changeovers, Nadal sat hunched over, sweat dripping from his headband and deep in thought for solutions that he couldn't find

Now, Nadal will need to dig deeper on the practice court if wants to be competitive one last time at the French Open, where he is the record 14-time champion. Roland Garros starts on

will be his final season on tour and fans inside Campo Centrale tried to encourage the record 10time Rome champion with chants of "Ole Ole, Ra-fa, Ra-fa."

Nadal hadn't faced a top-10 player since beating No. 4 Casper Ruud at the 2022 ATP Finals.

Meanwhile, top-ranked Novak Djokovic said he was "fine" after accidentally getting knocked on the head by a water bottle while signing autographs after his opening win on Friday.

But Djokovic wasn't taking any further chances when he showed up at the Foro Italico for practice on Saturday, putting on a biking helmet when he met with fans again.

Second-ranked Jannik Sinner and third-ranked Carlos Alcaraz both withdrew before the tournament because of injuries.

In the women's tournament, top-ranked Iga Swiatek beat Yulia Putintseva 6-3, 6-4 for her eighth consecutive win.

Swiatek trailed 4-1 in the second set but then won five straight games after saving four break points to hold for 2-4.

"I needed to get my focus together," Swiatek said. "I know that I can play good tennis because I did it in the first set. So I just wanted to come back to being solid and really work for the points, because, she's really changing the rhythm, so it's not

# High calibre batting from Gill, Sudharsan disrupted our plans: CSK coach Fleming

AHMEDABAD, May 11: Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming said the defending champions were undone by the "high calibre" batting effort of Gujarat Titans' openers -- skipper Shubman Gill and B Sai Sudharsan -- during their 35-run defeat in an IPL match here.

Gill (104 off 55b) and Sudharsan (103 off 51b) notched up destructive centuries in an opening stand of 210 runs to propel GT to 231/3 and then restricted the defending champions to 196/8 to stay alive in the play-off race.

The win lifted GT from the bottom of the table to the eighth spot. They have 10 points from 12 games, while CSK remained fourth with 12 points.

"It was a good onslaught and the batting was of the highest calibre. Right from the first over they disrupted our plans. It wasn't till the latter stages we got some control," Fleming said at the post-match press conference on Friday night.

'We didn't execute as well as we could but the other part was the sublime batting from two very good players.'

The former New Zealand captain

"We were a little bit handicapped by the absence of some players. The players who

were playing today did really well in the

"Sometimes you do all the right things but good batting can put you under pressure. It was some high calibre hitting, just the pressure of that onslaught made us a bit sloppy," he said.

can't look at just one game. We were put bit behind mentally." (PTI)

# Domestic cricket restructuring: Ranji Trophy likely to be played in two halves in 2024-25 season

is likely to split the prestigious Ranji Trophy into two halves not give players adequate time with white-ball tournaments Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy being held in between for the 2024-25 sea-

It is learnt that a draft proposal for the restructuring of domestic cricket calendar for the 2024-25 season has been sent to the the Board's apex council.

The proposal has been made after consultation with BCCI secretary Jay Shah, India captain Rohit Sharma, chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar, head coach Rahul Dravid and National Cricket Academy head VVS Laxman.

Another proposal is the doing away with the toss for the CK Nayudu Trophy, which will also be organised with a new points system.

As per the new proposed format, five Ranji Trophy league matches will be followed by white ball tournaments -- Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and Vijay Hazare Trophy.

The remaining two Ranji league matches as well as the knockout stage games will then be held after the conclusion of the two white-ball tournaments.

This has been done in order to meet the challenges posed by inclement weather in the northern part of the country in winter months as well as to ensure gaps between matches.

The BCCI has also taken into account the fact that last season's Ranji Trophy was organised with games having only cluding travelling, which did to rest and recover.

"There will be an increased gap between matches to allow players sufficient time for recovery and to maintain peak performance throughout the season," Shah informed the media on Saturday.

As per the proposal, the domestic season will begin with Duleep Trophy, which will feature four teams to be picked by the national selectors.

The Irani Cup will follow the Duleep Trophy after which the Ranji Trophy will be held in two

In the CK Nayudu Trophy which won't feature the toss of coin, the visiting team will have the right to decide whether to bat or bowl first.

"The CK Nayudu Trophy will implement a new points system aimed at promoting balanced performances. This includes awarding points for batting and bowling performances in the first innings, in addition to points for the first innings lead or outright win," said Shah.

The Board will also be assessing the effectiveness of the new point system employed for CK Nayudu Trophy at the end of the season and a decision would be taken if the same has to be implemented for the Ranji Trophy as well for the following season.

In women's cricket, all interzonal tournaments, including one-day, T20 and multi-day format competitions, will have the teams selected by the national selectors. (PTI)

praised Sudharsan for his effort.

"In the final last year, he (Sudharsan) played beautifully, he got 96. I have watched him closely, he has got good connections around the Chennai area. He is a wonderful player and today he proved that." Fleming said CSK were put under immense pressure by the onslaught of GT openers, resulting in errors in bowling and

last game, so the confidence was high.

"Fielding has been really good, you under pressure today. Both bowling and fielding can often be on the backfoot under pressure. Today, we probably fell a little

# Bayern depleted by injuries after Real Madrid loss, implications for Germany's Euro 2024 squad



MUNICH, May 11: Bayern Munich's Champions League semifinal loss to Real Madrid has taken a big toll on the fitness of the team with implications for Germany's European

Championship squad. Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel said Saturday that Serge Gnabry's participation in the tournament is "super tight" after he was diagnosed Friday with what the club said was a torn muscle bundle at the back of his left thigh.

"And Leroy Sane — I don't think we'll see him on the pitch in the last two beyond the end of the seagames," Tuchel said. son. "He's currently back in pain treatment. Jamal Mu-

siala has also signaled to us that he has problems. His knee is very painful. There's no way he'll be involved tomorrow and probably not in the last game either.'

Bayern hosts Wolfsburg on Sunday before visiting Hoffenheim for its final game of the season next weekend. It will be Tuchel's last in charge. He and the club agreed in February not to continue final second leg in

"I'll take my time," Tuchel said Saturday. "There's been no discussions with other clubs." In February, Tuchel had suggested that he no

longer needed to take a longterm view to players' fitness, but could opt to play them in big games instead of giving them more time to recover from previous injuries.

That was clearly the case for Wednesday's Champions League semiMadrid, where Tuchel acknowledged that several players were not fully fit and that they would have to bite through pain to

Harry Kane will also miss Sunday's match with a back problem sustained while he was warming up in Madrid.

Kane has 36 goals from his debut Bundesliga season and will need to score five against Hoffenheim next week if he is to tie Robert Lewandowski's record of 41 from the 2020-21 season. (AP)

# Pant's absence is a loss, but Axar geared up to lead DC: Ricky Ponting

Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting said on Saturday that Axar Patel will lead the side against Royal Challengers Bengaluru after the suspension of Rishabh Pant, whose absence the Australian termed a "loss". The Capitals' regular skipper

Pant was on Saturday handed a one-match suspension for maintaining a slow over-rate for the third time in this IPL. Pant was also fined Rs 30 lakh for the Code of Conduct breach that took place during

jasthan Royals on May 7 in New Delhi. tain for tomorrow. He's obviously been vice-captain for the

DC's 20-run win against Ra-

and international player, understands the game really well. He's really excited about it and is always involved and in tune with the game," said Ponting in

"Axar Patel will be our caplast couple of seasons. "He is a very experienced IPL

the pre-match press meet here. Ponting said the Capitals

**BENGALURU**, **May** 11: were aware of the possibility of Pant getting banned a few days ago, and were preparing for that eventuality. "We started talking about it a couple of days ago when there was a possibility that Rishabh might be banned. We've obviously known that he's been on two strikes. "We could have actually stood him down from the captaincy to potentially stop this happening, but at the end of the day, the time that's taken out on the field is the captain's responsibility," he said. The former Australian captain said if Khaleel Ahmed bowled a regulation over in the match against RR, things could have been different for Pant. "Circumstantially, he was

probably a little bit unlucky in the last game. Going into Khaleel's last over, we were only three minutes behind. So, if Khaleel bowled a regulation over without those extra balls (after three wides) and then in Kuldeep's next over we got a wicket, we would have got all of



over went for nine minutes, we went further behind the time, and there's no way you can drag your time back," Ponting ex-

The Tasmanian said the only remedy to avoid such incidents in the past is to go through the front 10 quickly to get that extra few minutes in the death overs where usually the proceedings

"Look, if you're behind at the

halfway mark, four or five minutes down in a tight game, you're never going to pick your time up. "That's one thing we've been talking to all the boys about is just ensure that the first 10 overs we get through as quick as we can, especially if you're not taking wickets."

Ponting admitted that not having Pant for a crucial match was a big miss but he said the team was ready for the grind.

"Rishabh's not there. One of

the best players, you know, in this particular IPL. I think he is our leading run-scorer, and not to have him there is a loss for us. "But it's also a great challenge for everybody else. We have to work that little bit harder to make sure that they get the job done for the team, he added.

Ponting said David Warner, who suffered a nasty hit on his wrist last month, is recovering and his availability for the match against RCB will be determined after assessing him at nets. RCB batter Rajat Patidar, who regained his form in the second half of this IPL making three fifties after a low-key beginning, said he has mentally adjusted to the new role of play-

ing in the middle-order. 'This season I got a new role in batting in the middle-order. I had done too much batting in the top-order. So, I spoke to Virat bhai and DK bhai and try and learn from their experience (of batting in the middleorder)," said Patidar. (PTI)

a row against Pant-less DC

BENGALURU, May 11: Pushed into a tight corner, Royal Challengers Bengaluru rose above their frailties to notch four wins on the trot to stay alive in the race to playoffs, but Delhi Capitals even sans their suspended skipper Rishabh Pant offer them a different challenge in the IPL match here

12 THE HILLS TIMES

Pant was suspended for one match and handed a fine of Rs 30 lakh for maintaining slow over rate against Rajasthan Royals at Delhi on May 7.

It was DC's third offence of the season; hence the suspension came in vogue immediately leading to Pant missing the match against RCB

While the absence of Pant will certainly give RCB an edge, they can't get themselves lulled into a comfort zone.

In the run-up to this match, RCB defeated Gujarat Titans twice, Punjab Kings and Sunrisers Hyderabad once each.

While the victory over SRH was valiant, RCB did not face much challenge from the floundering Titans and Kings.

But the Capitals are a team unlike any other as they have oscillated between brilliant and ordinary in the span of a few days. On April 27, the Pant-led side posted a hefty 257/4 in their 10-run win over Mum-

bai Indians and on April 29, they made a lowly 153/9 while capitulating against Kolkata Knight Riders. The RCB, currently seventh with 10 points from 12 matches, will desperately hope not to run into that brilliant Capitals

as a defeat can undo their good work in the last four matches. But their confidence will be high, courtesy strong and consistent batting effort led

by talisman Virat Kohli. Kohli is the leading run-getter in this IPL



with 634 runs but, more importantly, those have gone under 10 for the first time this runs have come at a brisk rate of 153, giving RCB early momentum while setting or chasing targets.

Along with Kohli, additional runs from skipper Faf du Plessis, Rajat Patidar, Cameron Green and Dinesh Karthik have provided their bowlers, who have responded to the call splendidly, with a cush-

The transformation of RCB bowlers in the last four matches have been nothing short of remarkable.

Mohammed Siraj has found his mojo after a 10-day break, and he has received excellent backing from fellow pacer Yash Dayal and left-arm spinner Swapnil Singh. After the match against PBKS, the over-

adding more consistency to his game. Pant and Tristan Stubbs too have been all run-rate of Siraj (9.4) and Dayal (9) among runs made at a fair clip but now without the skipper the DC middle-order will further lean on Stubbs for momentum. But in the bowling department, DC will feel that they might have a slight edge.

Spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel have been thrifty while sharing 24 wickets among them as they have maintained economy rates of 8.2 and 7.3 respectively – gold dust while others have gone above 10.

Their combined eight overs will have a massive say in the match, as the wrist-spinner and his left-arm comrade will have to contain the free-flowing RCB batters in the middle phase.

If pacers Khaleel Ahmed (14 wickets, 9.68) and Mukesh Kumar (15 wickets, 10.94) can inflict some blows upfront, DC can hope to contain the home side.

Roval Challengers Bengaluru: Faf du Plessis (c), Glenn Maxwell, Virat Kohli, Rajat Patidar, Anuj Rawat, Dinesh Karthik (wk), Suyash Prabhudessai, Will Jacks, Mahipal Lomror, Karn Sharma, Manoj Bhandage, Mayank Dagar, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Akash Deep, Mohammed Siraj, Reece Topley, Himanshu Sharma, Rajan Kumar, Cameron Green, Alzarri Joseph, Yash Dayal, Tom Curran, Lockie Ferguson, Swapnil Singh, Saurav Chauhan.

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abishek Porel, Shai Hope, Rishabh Pant (wk/c, suspended and unavailable), Sumit Kumar, Tristan Stubbs, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mukesh Kumar, Ishant Sharma, Khaleel Ahmed, Kumar Kushagra, Praveen Dubey, Lalit Yadav, Lizaad Williams, David Warner, Jhye Richardson, Anrich Nortje, Yash Dhull, Mitchell Marsh, Ricky Bhui, Rasikh Dar Salam, Vicky Ostwal, Swastik Chikara.

# **CSK** look to rekindle playoffs hopes against a strong but hurt RR



CHENNAI, May 11: In need of a win to firm-up their position in the IPL playoff race, Chennai Super Kings have the heavy task of nullifying a deeply hurt and frustrated Rajasthan Royals here

on Sunday. Let's take a quick assessment of the two protagonists' situations. The Super Kings are currently fourth in the standings with 12 points from as many games but the defeat against Gujarat Titans on Friday has added dollops of pressure on them, and now they need victory in their remaining two matches.

The Royals, on the other hand, are second with 16 points but they are smarting from two successive defeats against Sunrisers Hyderabad, which was by just a run, and Delhi Capitals.

They are in no real danger of missing the playoff spot, but the Sanju Samson-led side will be eager to return to the winning ways at the earliest and enter the knockouts.

What had hurt CSK against GT was the malfunction of their toporder consisting Ajinkya Rahane, Rachin Ravindra and skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and they would be desperate to regain the momentum in Chepauk

Ravindra might be given another go against Royals, but it could be a make-or-break situation for him.

Although it was pleasing to see Daryl Mitchell and Moeen Ali among runs, Shivam Dube, who has been CSK's bulwark this season, has gone silent ever since he was selected to the Indian team for the upcoming T20 World Cup.

Having scored a 13-ball 21 against GT, he has twin causes to fire -- to justify his selection for the World Cup and carry his team closer to the playoffs.

As for the CSK's bowling, Tushar Deshpande once again fired against GT while Shardul Thakur surprised all with his economical outing.

However, the Chennai bowlers are expected to buckle up and do well in this fixture at home, their

The low amount of dew in this

afternoon clash might help CSK

On the other hand, desperate to end the losing streak, Rajasthan could not have asked for a more suitable opponent than an unsteady CSK.

Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, who has not been at his best this season, will be desperate to prove his mettle before travelling to the Americas for the T20 World Cup.

Skipper Samson will have several eyes on him, given the fact that he too is World Cup-bound, and he would seek more support from the likes of Riyan Parag, Shubham Dubey and Rovman Powell.

Veteran spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who took three wickets in the last tie against DC, will fancy his chances on his home track and the presence of experi-

Yuzvendra Chahal will add more strength to RR bowling

However, Avesh Khan was not so impressive against Delhi but might still get another chance as he needs to gain some confidence before travelling for the World Cup as a reserve.

Squads:

CSK: Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni (wk), Aravelly Avanish, Ajinkya Rahane, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell Rachin Rayindra Mitchell Santner, Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana, Sameer Rizvi.

RR: Sanju Samson (c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Avesh Khan, Rovman Powell, Shubham Dubey, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Abid Mushtaq, Nandre Burger, Tanush Kotian, Keshay Maharai.

Match starts: 3.30 pm IST (PTI)

#### GT can make it to play-offs, miracles do happen: Skipper Gill



AHMEDABAD, May 11:Gujarat Titans skipper Shubman Gill is optimistic about sneaking into the IPL play-offs, even though odds are heavily against them despite the 35-run win over Chennai Super

Kings here Gill (104 off 55b) and B Sai Sudharsan (103 off 51b) notched up destructive centuries to propel GT to 231/3 and then restricted the defending champions to 196/8 to

stay alive in the play-off race. tom of the table to the eighth spot. They have 10 points from 12 games, while CSK remained fourth with 12 points.

"The chances of us qualifying was 0.1 or 1 per cent. I think all of us, all 25-30 of us, believe that we can still make it into the play-offs.

"Because I have seen miracles happen with this team in the past couple of years and we all do believe in that," Gill said in the postmatch press conference on Friday

Gill, however, felt that GT were some runs short despite piling up a huge total

"When I got out, I was a bit frustrated. I thought as a batting unit, we left 10-25 runs out there. At one point we were 195/0 in 15 overs, so I thought that 250 was a pretty gettable score and I was thinking about that.

"It is as satisfactory as any hundred. We lost our last three games and it was important for us to win this one and that is what me and Sai were discussing. We were trying to maximise every opportunity and every challenge that was thrown at us.'

The young skipper also had words of appreciation for his opening partner Sudharsan.

"Last year he (Sudharsan) missed a hundred in the final, having come back and the way he played in the middle overs is exceptional.

"He is someone who works very hard on his game and for someone like him to be able to execute those shots was just magnificent," Gill

Talking about the talismanic Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who played a 11-ball 26-run cameo with three sixes, and his fan following, Gill said, "Wherever Mahi bhai plays, it is their (CSK) home ground, so nothing different with

"But at least, when we were scoring, people were cheering for us and when we visited Chepauk, it was complete silence when we hit boundaries or took a wicket." he concluded. (PTI)

# Anderson to retire after Lord's Test against West Indies

season, not a mean feat in a tournament

where runs were scored at a breakneck

Fraser-McGurk, who has teed off to make

309 runs from seven matches at an impres-

sive strike-rate of 235.87.

of the veteran felt even once.

Their skills will be tested first by Jack

McGurk took the opener's slot once

David Warner – 167 runs from 7 matches

at a strike rate of 135 – had to sit out with

an injury, and he has not made the absence

His opening partner Abhishek Porel too

has made runs at 157 strike rate, though the

DC management will be happier to see him

LONDON, May 11: Legendary pacer James Anderson on Saturday announced that the first Test against the West Indies this summer will be his final appearance for England, bringing down the curtains on an illustrious career spanning over 20 years.

Regarded as one of the greatest bowlers of all times, the 41-year-old is England's leading wicket-takers and is one of only three bowlers to take over 700 Test scalps.

"Hi everyone. Just a note to say that the first Test of the summer at Lord's will be my last Test," Anderson wrote on his Instagram. "It's been an incredible 20 years representing

my country, playing the game I've loved since I was a kid. I'm going to miss walking out for England so much.

"But I know the time is right to step aside and let others realise their dreams just like I got to, because there is no greater feeling," he added.

Anderson's announcement comes after England red-ball coach Brendon McCullum conveyed to the seamer that they are looking at the future, with an eye on the Ashes 2025-26 in Australia.

Anderson made his Test debut back in 2003 and has since claimed a remarkable 700 wickets in a record 187 Test matches. His 700th wicket against India in Dharamsala in March.

He currently ranks third on the all-time list of Test wicket-takers, trailing behind spinners Muttiah Muralitharan of Sri Lanka and Australia's Shane Warne

Affectionately nicknamed 'Jimmy', Anderson holds the record for playing the most Test matches by any England cricketer.

He ranks second on the all-time list of Test



appearances, with only India's legendary Sachin

Tendulkar (200) ahead of him. He was also part of a record-breaking bowling partnership for England alongside Stuart Broad, who retired last year.

However, whether Anderson will continue playing for his county side Lancashire remains

"I couldn't have done it without the love and support of Daniella, Lola, Ruby and my parents. A huge thank you to them. Also, thank you to the players and coaches who have made this the

best job in the world.'

He has also picked up 269 ODI wickets from 194 outings and 18 scalps from 19 T20Is. He was part of the T20 World Cup winning English

"Thank you to everyone who has supported me over the years, it's always meant a lot, even if my face often doesn't show it. See you at the Test, Go well Jimmy x," Anderson wrote.

England are set to play a three-Test series against the West Indies, starting with the opener at Lord's on July 10. (PTI)

strong area.

## We are prepared, can easily compete with other contenders: Anurag Thakur on 2036 Olympic bid

HAMIRPUR, May 11: Bullish about India's chances of securing the 2036 Olympic hosting rights, Sports Minister Anurag Thakur said the country has the wherewithal to compete with other contenders in the bidding war and rejected criticism that the money would be better spent on welfare schemes.

The host of the Games will be decided by the International Olympic Committee's future host commission not before 2026 or 2027 as the IOC is due to elect a new president next year. India's ambitious interest has found support from current IOC head Thomas Bach, who believes the country has a "strong case"

"We are fully prepared. Very easily we can," Thakur asserted in an interview to PTI when asked whether India has what it takes to withstand the aggressive bidding war that is likely to ensue given that several countries like Poland, Indonesia, Mexico, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have either declared interest or are likely to join

"Last year our capital expenditure was ₹ 10 lakh crore, and a year before, it was ₹ 7.5 lakh crore. This year it is ₹ 11,11,111 crore. Sports infrastructure is hardly ₹ 5,000 crore. Even if it goes up to ₹ 20,000 crore, it can done," he said down-playing the cost fac-

The government of India has started its preparations and it wants to make its case stronger by winning the hosting rights of the 2030 Youth Olympics. Plans are afoot to prepare Ahmedabad as the host city for both the showpieces.

Thakur, who took over the sports ministry from Kiren Rijiju in 2021, will be contesting the ongoing Lok Sabha polls from his family bastion Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh.

The 49-year-old said his confidence in India's bid comes from the rapid pace of growth in the country. He went on to list his government's achievements in infrastructure development.

"Today's India is ambitious and aspirational. Our road, rail infrastructure is growing by the day. We had 74 airports in 2014 and today we have 150. We had



96,000km of road and now we have 1,50,000km. Rural

roads were 3,20,000km and now it is 7,06,000km. "Railway lines have doubled to 40,000km. There are 706 medical colleges. We are also almost fully electrified There are now 1117 universities, up from 740. We had 16 IITs and the number has gone up to 24. We have 24 AIIMS, up from earlier seven.

"Look at these statistics. What Congress could not do in 60 years, Mr Modi has done in 10 years, so imagine where India would be by 2036," he pointed out. The organisers of the Rio Games spent about USD 11.1 billion in conducting the 2016 edition while

Tokyo ended up spending USD 12.9 billion for the

2020 Games. When Thakur was asked about the view that the money can be better-utilised on welfare schemes, he said hosting the Games will have its own benefits for

the poor and marginalised.

"I will give you an example. When IPL starts, it offered employment to so many people in these one-two months, not thousands but lakhs. It adds money to our economy. A country like India will benefit by hosting the Games.

"The Modi government is already doing a lot for the poor. It has already lifted 25 crore from multi dimensional poverty line. More facilities will be given to them to make them prosperous.'

The minister also expressed high hopes from the country's athletes for the upcoming Paris Games in July-August, saying, "We should get medals in double

"The way we have prepared, I believe we should get medals in double digits," he reiterated when asked whether India would be able to match or better its best ever tally of seven achieved in the Tokyo edition. Thakur said a part of the credit for India's improving sporting performances goes to the government's flagship Khelo India initiative, which was launched in

2017 and gets a lion's share of budgetary allocation.

"Pehle kehte the padhoge likhoge banoge nawab, aur kheloge kudoge toh banoge kharab. Ab kehte hain padhoge likhoge banoge nawab, aur kheloge kudoge toh banoge laajawab (The old saying that getting into sports would spoil you has now been rephrased to say that playing sports will make you matchless)," he said.

"And Khelo India has created this pro sports environment. People now see career for their children in sports. The sports budget has gone up by three times. There are 1000 Khelo India centres now.

"There are 23 Centres of Excellence. TOPS scheme takes care of boarding lodging and training of athletes in the country as well as abroad. Rs 6 lakh is given as out of pocket allowance," he added.

However, Thakur, who is also a minister for Information and Broadcasting, is also well aware of the challenges facing Indian sports, a major one being doping. India is among the top dope offenders in the world.

The country was declared the second worst in a 10year World Anti Doping Agency global study of dope violations by minors. Also, India registered the highest percentage of failed dope tests among countries which tested more than 2,000 samples in the 2022 Testing

Thakur put the onus on coaches and national federations to steer the athletes towards the correct path.

"We test way more now, more samples are tested and that is why there are more positive tests. Both offline and online exposure and awareness has been car-

"Federations and coaches have to change their mindset. If they look at shortcuts for winning medals, it will only causes harm, athletes can lose their entire careers. They will have to look at proper ways," he asserted. (PTI)

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