

6
WORLD
8
NATION

- Ukraine's divisive mobilization law comes into force
- Singapore seeing new Covid-19 wave, minister advises wearing of masks
- Aurangzeb's soul has crept into Congress: Yogi on inheritance tax
- Modi's, dhakad, govt brought down wall of Article 370: Modi in Ambala



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Himanta offers temple sops to Bihar voters

MUZAFFARPUR/SIWAN (BIHAR), May 18: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said grand temples would be built in Varanasi and Mathura and the Uniform Civil Code would be implemented if the NDA returns to power by winning over 400 Lok Sabha seats.

He said the NDA, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will ensure that Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which is an integral part of India, returns to the country.

Addressing election rallies in Muzaffarpur and Siwan Lok Sabha seats, Sarma said, "We will implement UCC, build a temple on Krishna Janmabhoomi premises in Mathura and establish Kashi Vishwanath temple in place of Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi, besides ensuring that PoK returns to India, after winning over 400 seats."

Hitting out at the Congress and its allies, Sarma said, "Rahul Gandhi and Lalu Prasad did not attend the consecration of Ram Mandir. They want to send Ram Lalla back to the tent. We must not let this happen." He labeled Congress and RJD as "biggest enemies of OBCs" for allegedly trying to introduce religion-based reservations in the country.

"Religion-based reservations should be given to Muslims in Pakistan, not India. Lalu Prasad should go to Pakistan to give reservations to Muslims. The NDA will not allow this at any cost."

"The new India of Modi ji does not need madarssa... we need modern schools and colleges that will pro-



duce doctors and engineers... not maulvis from madarssa," he said.

Asserting that Rahul Gandhi can "never become PM", Sarma said, "He can contest elections in Pakistan and become its PM. He and his party are indulging in politics of appeasement."

"The corrupt Congress-RJD alliance is trying its best to stall development of Bihar... they indulge in fulfilling their own interests whenever they get an opportunity. The NDA is breaking their nexus," he said.

While BJP's Raj Bhushan Nishad is contesting from Muzaffarpur, Vijay Lakshmi Devi Kushwaha is contesting as NDA nominee from Siwan.

Muzaffarpur will go to polls on May 20, while elections will be held in Siwan on May 25. (PTI)

- **Assault on Swati Maliwal: Bibhav Kumar arrested**
- **Raghav Chadha, Atishi BJP's next targets: AAP chief**

Arrest us, Kejriwal challenges as AAP to storm BJP hq today

NEW DELHI, May 18: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday that he and other AAP leaders would go to the BJP headquarters on May 19 "so that the prime minister can send anyone he wants to jail".

The BJP is saying they will send AAP MP Raghav Chadha and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj to jail too, he claimed at a press briefing hours after his aide Bibhav Kumar was arrested in connection with the alleged assault on his party's parliamentarian Swati Maliwal. Kejriwal, who is also the AAP national convener, however, asserted that his party could not be crushed by sending its leaders to jail.

Accusing Prime Minister Naren-



dra Modi of "playing the game" of sending AAP leaders such as Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain, and Sanjay Singh to jail, he said, "I

along with my MLAs and MPs would go to the BJP office at noon tomorrow so that the prime minister can send anyone he wants to

jail." "The AAP is an idea. For as many AAP leaders you jail, the country would produce leaders a hundred times more," Kejriwal said. He claimed that the AAP's "fault" was that its government in Delhi built good schools, set up Mohalla Clinics, provided free treatment and ensured free round-the-clock power supply in the city which the BJP could not do.

Kejriwal, who was arrested in a money laundering case linked to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, has been granted interim bail till June 1 by the Supreme Court to campaign in the Lok Sabha polls. He will have to surrender and go back to jail on June 2, a day after the last phase of polling in the general elections. (PTI)

Cong-AAP opportunistic alliance, one corrupt party covering another: PM

NEW DELHI, May 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said opposition INDIA bloc can go to any extent in pursuing its "vote bank" politics, claiming that the then Congress government during the 2014 elections had handed over 123 properties spread across prime locations in Delhi to the Waqf Board for votes.

In his first rally in the national capital for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Modi slammed the Congress-AAP alliance in

Delhi as opportunistic, saying the world is watching how one corrupt party is covering for another corrupt party.

Modi asserted that if he has any heir, it is the 140 crore Indians for whose bright future he has dedicated himself. His every moment is for the country and his life is dedicated to realising the dreams of its citizens, the prime ministers said while addressing the rally in North-East Delhi. Though he made no direct reference, Modi's remarks (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Why Modi has 'broken' promise on MSP: Cong

NEW DELHI, May 18: The Congress on Saturday asked why Narendra Modi has "broken" his promise of giving legal sanctity to a minimum support price for crops and why he prioritises his politics over the country's daughters, as the prime minister hits the campaign trail in Haryana.

Referring to the protest by women wrestlers from Haryana, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh alleged that the prime minister did not take action against his party's MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who is accused of "molestation" by the women wrestlers.

"Today's questions for the outgoing prime minister in Haryana: Why has the prime minister broken his promise of legal MSP for farmers? Will Prime Minister Modi always prioritise his politics over India's and

Haryana's daughters? Why do atrocities on Dalits pick up in BJP-ruled states like Haryana?" he asked in a post on X. Referring to the farmers' demand for legal guarantee on a minimum support price (MSP) for crops, Ramesh alleged that Haryana's farmers have completely lost trust in the "duplicitous Modi sarkar".

When the farmers' protests were called off in 2021, they left after being reassured by the prime minister and his government that their demands would be met, Ramesh said.

"However, over time, the Modi sarkar's dialogue with farmers' organisations slowed down and the BJP appointed a biased committee to deliberate on the MSP question, from which one independent member had quickly resigned. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Two killed, two injured as train hit them in Assam

GUWAHATI, May 18: Two persons were killed and two others injured on Saturday after being hit by a speeding train in Assam's Kamrup Metropolitan district, police said.

The accident occurred in Chandrapur area, on the outskirts of Guwahati, when the four daily wage labourers were walking on the railway tracks and the train hit them, a senior officer said. They did not notice the train approaching from behind, he said. "Two of them were killed on the spot, and the two injured persons have been sent to the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital," the officer said.

Eyewitnesses said the labourers hailed from Goalpara district and were on their way to the workplace from a rented accommodation nearby. (PTI)

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Markets end special trading session with gains

NSE Nifty advanced 35.90 points or 0.16 per cent to 22,502

MUMBAI, May 18: Equity benchmark indices closed the special trading session on a firm note on Saturday, extending their rally to the third day running amid fresh foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 88.91 points or 0.12 per cent to end at 74,005.94. During the session, it jumped 245.73 points or 0.33 per cent to 74,162.76.

The NSE Nifty advanced 35.90 points or 0.16 per cent to 22,502.

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSE on May 7 said they will conduct a special trading session in the equity and equity derivative segments on May 18 to check their preparedness for handling major disruptions or failures at the primary site.

The special live trading session will have an intra-day switchover from the Primary Site (PR) to the Disaster Recovery (DR) site.

In separate circulars, the two exchanges said there will be two sessions -- the first from 9:15 am to 10 am from the PR, and the second from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm from the DR site.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies reached an



all-time peak of ₹ 4,12,36,791.05 crore in the special trading session.

Among the Sensex components, Nestle, Power Grid, Tata Motors, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Hindustan Unilever and State Bank of India were the major gainers.

JSW Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the laggards.

Wall Street ended mostly higher on Friday. "The Dow Jones Industrial Average has hit 40,000 for the first time, buoyed by optimism from a softer-than-expected April inflation report, which has in-

creased bets on a September rate cut by the Federal Reserve.

"This positive sentiment extends to Indian markets, with the Nifty likely trading between 22,000-22,500, facing resistance at 22,500 and support at 22,000," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Friday after days of unabated outflows. They bought equities worth Rs 1,616.79 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

"Dow Jones closing in record territory above 40,000 will con-

tinue to provide global support for equity markets. A significant trend now is the FIIs turning buyers yesterday, and this takes away the pressure on the markets," said VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist, Geojit Financial Services.

The BSE benchmark climbed 253.31 points or 0.34 per cent to settle at 73,917.03 on Friday. The NSE Nifty rose 62.25 points or 0.28 per cent to 22,466.10.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.77 per cent and the midcap index advanced 0.48 per cent. All the indices ended in the green, with industrials, healthcare, telecommunication, capital goods and realty emerging as the major gainers. On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark climbed 1,341.47 points or 1.84 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 446.8 points or 2 per cent.

Earlier on March 2 (Saturday), the BSE and NSE conducted a special trading session in equity and equity derivative segments.

Typically, switching to the DR site is done to ensure business continuity in the case of a major disruption or failure at the primary site. (PTI)

Debt, equity holders approve merger of IDFC Ltd with IDFC First Bank

NEW DELHI, May 18: Shareholders and non-convertible debenture (NCD) holders of IDFC First Bank have approved a proposal to merge parent IDFC Ltd with the lender.

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) convened a meeting on May 17 through video conferencing and other audio-visual means to consider and approve the composite scheme of amalgamation for IDFC First Bank, the bank said in a regulatory filing.

The board of the bank presented the result of voting on the proposal for amalgamation before the NCLT. "We wish to inform that the resolution approving the Scheme was passed by the overwhelming majority of 99.95 per cent of the equity shareholders, representing

more than three-fourths in value of the equity shareholders of the bank voting through remote e-voting and e-voting during the meeting, in terms of the provisions of Sections 230-232 of the Companies Act, 2013," the lender said.

In a separate filing, it said the proposal was passed by the overwhelming majority of 99.99 per cent of the NCD holders. As part of the composite scheme of amalgamation, IDFC FHCL would first merge with IDFC and then IDFC into IDFC First Bank Ltd.

Under the proposed reverse merger scheme, an IDFC shareholder will get 155 shares for every 100 shares she/he holds in the bank. Both stocks have a face value of ₹ 10 each.

IDFC was an infra lender in the private sector space, and following

its bigger peers like ICICI and IDBI, it also launched a banking subsidiary in 2015 -- IDFC Bank -- but could not make a mark.

Like HDFC Bank, the merged IDFC First Bank will also have no promoter entity but is fully owned by institutional and public shareholders.

IDFC began as an infra lender in 1997. It got in-principle approval from the RBI to set up a bank in April 2014, and in October 2015, it launched IDFC Bank when on-tap licensing began, following which loans and liabilities of IDFC were transferred to the bank.

In December 2018, it took over Capital First, a consumer and MSME-focused non-bank since 2012, and was renamed IDFC First Bank and became a full-service universal bank. (PTI)

Pakistan, IMF to hold talks on fresh bailout package

ISLAMABAD, May 18: Pakistan, seeking a fresh USD 6 billion to USD 8 billion loan package from the IMF, will hold talks with officials from the Washington-based lender to discuss the terms of the fresh bailout for the cash-strapped country, according to a media report on Saturday.

An IMF support team has reached Pakistan to hold talks regarding its request for a fresh bailout package under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

Pakistan has made a formal request for a fresh bailout package of USD 6 to USD 8 billion under the EFF with the possibility to be augmented through climate finance. If successful, it would be the 24th IMF bailout programme for the country.

"Right now, a mission team led by Nathan Porter, our Mission Chief, is meeting with the authorities this week to discuss the next phase of our engagement with Pakistan," International Monetary Funds Communication Director Julie Kozack said on Thursday.

IMF's Resident Representative for Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz said a team, led by Porter, would meet Pakistani authorities "to discuss the next phase of engagement". She had further said that the aim of the negotiations was to "lay the foundation for better governance and stronger, more inclusive, and resilient economic growth that will benefit all Pakistanis", Geo News reported.

The team is expected to stay in the country for more

than 10 days and would receive data from different departments and would also discuss the upcoming budget for the fiscal year 2025 with the Ministry of Finance officials, Geo News reported quoting sources.

Last Tuesday, Pakistan and the IMF started negotiations for a fresh bailout package to address the cash-strapped country's fiscal challenges and implement crucial reforms, media reports said.

Last month, Pakistan completed a short-term USD 3 billion programme with the IMF, which bailed the country out of any default.

It was unclear whether the IMF mission would end with a formal staff-level agreement for the next bailout package, according to The Express Tribune newspaper. The duration, instrument, and size of the next IMF programme were open to discussion, the report said, quoting sources.

Pakistan narrowly averted default last summer, and the economy has stabilised after the completion of the last IMF programme, with inflation coming down to around 17 per cent in April from a record high of 38 per cent last May.

The country is still dealing with a high fiscal shortfall, and while the external account deficit has been controlled through import control mechanisms, it has come at the expense of stagnating growth, which is expected to be around two per cent this year compared to negative growth last year. (PTI)

China rolls out new measures to fix its property crisis, spur growth

WASHINGTON, May 18: China announced a slate of fresh measures Friday to reinvigorate its ailing property industry after the latest data showed housing prices have slumped nearly 10% since the start of the year.

Among other things, the central bank said it would reduce the minimum down payment for mortgages and remove the floor on interest rates for first and second homes.

China's housing market has slumped after a crackdown on excessive borrowing by property developers several years ago, dragging along a wide range of other businesses -- such as home furnishing, appliances and construction -- and slowing growth in the world's No. 2 economy.

Dozens of developers, whose legions of high-rise apartments have transformed urban landscapes across China, have defaulted on their debts. Many projects have just stalled, unfinished.

He Lifeng, a vice premier, said officials would roll out policies to suit each city and "fight the tough battle of dealing with the risk of unfinished commercial housing."

"We will solidly advance key tasks such as guaranteed housing delivery and absorption of existing commercial housing," the official Xinhua News Agency cited He as telling a top level teleconference on property policies.

The effort to entice more families to buy homes has gained momentum after earlier moves such as interest rate cuts and govern-

ment-backed financing failed to lure buyers into the market at a time when developers are struggling to deliver housing already promised and paid for.

Housing is a mainstay of investment for Chinese, given the low level of interest rates paid by banks, and many potential buyers might be waiting for the market to bottom out before considering new purchases. Also, layoffs and other disruptions from the pandemic have left many people wary of spending.

The announcement by the People's Bank of China said that effective Saturday, the interest rate for first-time housing provident fund loans for under 5 years will be cut by 0.25 percentage point to 2.35%. (AP)

Contd. from Page 1...

Cong-AAP opportunistic

came amid repeated claims of Delhi Chief Minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal that he will make way for home minister Amit Shah after he turns 75 next year. He has chosen Shah as his successor. Kejriwal has claimed, an assertion refuted by top BJP leaders who have said Modi will lead the party even after 2029.

Listing several signature projects, including the new Parliament building and the war memorial, Prime Minister Modi asserted that he lives and works hard for democracy. It is Modi in whose heart democracy is alive, he said, noting that his government has built a museum dedicated to all the prime ministers.

This Congress-AAP alliance seems determined to destroy Delhi, he said, adding that its leaders are responsible for fall in political standards and breaking people's faith. Those who arrived to root out corruption are doing the rounds of jail in scams running into thousands of crores of rupees, Modi said in a swipe at chief minister Kejriwal. The Congress, he said, would not tire of taking credit for exposing the AAP government's scams but its Delhi leaders were forced by the Gandhi family to join hands with the city's ruling party.

Keeping up his attack on the opposition alliance for its alleged pro-Muslim politics, Modi said the Congress had joined hands with those advocating for "vote jihad" for its vote bank during the 2014 elections. It was agreed that they would vote for the Congress, and its government in turn handed over the country's properties to the Waqf Board, he said. These properties were spread across prime locations where a yard of land costs many lakh of rupees, Modi said, claiming that the opportunist opposition alliance can incite violence for its appeasement politics. Prime Minister Modi blamed them (opposition) for the 2020 Delhi riots following the enactment of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, and noted that many people, mostly Dalits, who were persecuted in neighbouring countries were recently granted citizenship under the law. The opposition alliance supports reservation on religious ground, restoration of Article 370 and abolition of India's nuclear bombs, he claimed. (PTI)

Why Modi has 'broken'

After this betrayal, farmers' organisations were forced to take the streets once again to make their voices heard," he said. "Instead of listening to them, the Modi sarkar lathi-charged and tear-gassed them. Last year, Haryana's farmers struggled due to unseasonal rains and storms that caused widespread crop damage. Why has the Modi sarkar continued to ignore their plight?" he asked. The Congress leader claimed that the party's Nyay Patra has promised a legal guarantee for MSP, according to recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission, as well as farm loan waivers and the payment of crop insurance within 30 days.

"What is the BJP's vision to ensure that Haryana's farmers can make a stable, decent living?" Ramesh asked. He also alleged that Modi has once again failed India's daughters. Rather than punishing party MP Singh for "his heinous crimes" against India's women wrestlers, the BJP rewarded him with a ticket for his son Karan Bhushan Singh from the Kaiserganj Lok Sabha seat, he charged. "This has come as a slap in the face to all of India's daughters who put their careers at stake and slept on the streets for days, through sun and rain, in their fight for justice," the Congress general secretary said. "It has become clear that in 'Modi ka Parivar', Nari Shakti is just a slogan that is projected while the parivar (family) shelters perpetrators of sexual violence, be it Prajwal Revanna or Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. Will women ever be safe in Modi's India? Will the prime minister's hunger for power always be more important than the safety of India's and Haryana's daughters?" he asked.

Ramesh also alleged that under BJP rule, Haryana has become notorious for violence and discrimination against the Scheduled Caste community. From being prohibited from using village hand-pumps to outright violence and sexual assault, Dalits have faced constant threats to their dignity and safety in the state, he claimed.

"When victims of these crimes approach the courts for justice, they are socially boycotted by dominant castes. Why is it that Scheduled Castes have to increasingly fear for their safety in BJP-ruled states? Does Prime Minister Modi feel no shame for the countless atrocities that Dalits have endured under his watch?" he asked, urging Modi to break his silence on these issues. Modi will on Saturday address poll rallies in Haryana's Ambala and Sonapat as part of his poll campaign. (PTI)

LIC Housing Finance Ltd FY 2023-24 profit at ₹ 4765.41crs

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 18: The Board of Directors of LIC Housing Finance Ltd (BSE:500253;NSE:LICHSGFIN) announced its standalone audited results for the fourth quarter ended on March 31, 2024, following its approval by the Board of Directors in a meeting held in Mumbai on May 15, 2024.

Total disbursements were at ₹ 18232 crs in Q4 FY2024, as against ₹ 16027crs for the corresponding period in FY2023, up by 14%. Out of this, disbursements in the Individual Home Loan segment were at ₹ 14300 crs against ₹ 12406 crs in Q4 FY2023, up by 15%, whereas Project loans were at ₹ 1501crs compared with ₹ 1554crs in Q4FY2023. The company's revenue from operations grew to ₹ 6936.41crs as against ₹ 6415.11 crs in Q4FY2023, a growth of 8%. Net Interest Income (NII) rose by 12% to ₹ 2237.60crs, as against ₹ 1990.30 crs for the

same period the previous year. Net Interest Margin (NIM) for the quarter stood at 3.15% as against 2.93 % for Q4FY2023. Profit Before Tax for the quarter was ₹ 1476.18crs as against ₹ 1444.78crs in Q4FY2023, a growth of 2%. Net Profit After Tax stood at ₹ 1090.82 crs compared with ₹ 1180.28 crs during the same period in the previous year. The Individual Home Loan portfolio stood at ₹ 244205Cr as on March 31, 2024, as against Rs. 228730 cr as on March 31, 2023, up by 7%. The Project loan portfolio stood at ₹ 8036 crs as on March 31, 2024, as against ₹ 11738crs as on March 31, 2023. The total outstanding portfolio grew at 4% to ₹ 286844crs from ₹ 275047 crs in the earlier year.

Speaking on the performance, Tribhuvan Adhikari, managing director & chief executive officer of LIC Housing Finance Limited said, "We have seen a healthy uptick across all home loan seg-

ments, especially during the latter half of the year. Our focus on reduction in NPA and control over cost of funds have enabled us to close the year with a record high margins and profits. In the coming year, we are confident of further improvement in all areas of operations." It can be optly mentioned that LIC Housing Finance Ltd. is the largest housing finance company in India. It has one of the widest networks of offices across the country and representative office in Dubai. In addition, the Company also distributes its products through branches of its subsidiary LIC HFL Financial Services Ltd. LIC Housing Finance Ltd was promoted by Life Insurance Corporation in 1989 and a public issue was made in 1994. It launched its maiden GDR offering in 2004. The company enjoys the highest rating from CRISIL & CARE indicating the highest safety regarding the ability to service interest and repay principal.

Need to reconsider sachetisation of F&O trade to safeguard savings: CEA

NEW DELHI, May 18: Cautioning against household savings getting invested in futures and options trade, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Saturday said there is a need to reconsider sachetisation of F&O trade because it requires different financial literacy.

Speaking at the CII's Annual Business Summit, 2024, Nageswaran said whenever financial sector development precedes national development the story hasn't ended well for other countries as well.

Asian crisis 1997-98 is a very important example, he said.

When we take pride in the fact that we have the world's largest trading volume in futures and options (F&O), we need to ask ourselves is that a sign of progress or a sign of concern, the CEA said.

He said the financial sector has a responsibility to ensure that capital market grows in those areas where we can actually harness Indian household savings for productive purposes.

Many of the people currently engaged in the market do not understand them. The sachetisation of futures and options is something that we need to reconsider because financial literacy that is required

for trading stocks is very different for trading futures and options, Nageswaran said.

Sachetisation refers to process of making financial products and services available in smaller, more manageable packets.

As per government data, the net household savings declined sharply by Rs 9 lakh crore in three years to Rs 14.16 lakh crore at the end of 2022-23 fiscal.

The data showed that the investment in mutual funds almost trebled to Rs 1.79 lakh crore in 2022-23 in three years from Rs 64,084 crore in 2020-21. The household investment in shares and debentures almost doubled to Rs 2.06 lakh crore in 2022-23 from Rs 1.07 lakh crore in three years from 2020-21.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had earlier this week cautioned against an unchecked explosion in retail F&O trading saying it may potentially create problems in household finances.

Household finances have made a generational shift. We want to safeguard them," she said while urging exchanges NSE, BSE and market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to work together and come out with robust compliances and regulatory



standards to safeguard investors' interests, Sitharaman had said.

In November, last year, Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch said she was "confused and surprised" at investor interest in F&O trade despite 90 per cent of individuals losing money in the segment. Buch said there is a need for investors to look at the long term and added that chances of making inflation-beating returns are much brighter through this strategy.

As per research by the capital markets regulator Sebi last year, only 11 per cent of the 45.24 lakh individual traders in the F&O segment made profits. There was an exponential increase in the F&O segment participation during the pandemic, with the total number of unique individual traders increasing by over 500 per cent from 7.1 lakh in FY19. (PTI)

Bandhan Bank's total business crosses 2.5 lakh crore



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 18: Bandhan Bank announced its financial results for the final quarter of the financial year 2023-24. The bank's total business grew by 20%, to close at ₹ 2.60 lakh crore.

The Bank's share of retail to total deposits now stands at nearly 70%. The encouraging growth witnessed in the last quarter has been driven by its expansion in distribution, business efficiency and the favourable operating environment.

During the fourth quarter, the Bank opened 50 branches across the country. The Bank now serves more than 3.35 crore customers through 6,300 banking outlets in India. The total number of employees working at Bandhan Bank is now nearly 76,000.

During Q4 FY24, the Bank's deposit book grew by 25% over the same period in the previous year. The total deposit book now stands at ₹ 1.35 lakh crore while total advances are at ₹ 1.25 lakh crore. The current account and savings account (CASA) ratio is standing above 37% of the overall deposit book. Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR), an indicator of the stability of the Bank, is at 18.3%, much higher than the regulatory requirement.

Speaking on the Bank's performance, Chandra Shekhar Ghosh, MD & CEO, said, "The last quarter of the year is testament to the momentum in business that we have gained. We have shown stability and growth across major parameters. The Bank also strengthened its core leadership in the quarter. Bandhan Bank has been built on the unwavering commitment of its employees and its success has been because of the trust of its customers. These cornerstones along with the focus on tech, people and processes will drive the growth trajectory of Bandhan Bank 2.0."

The Bank continues its focus on asset diversification with a clear intention to increase its retail book. The bank intends to focus on greater digitization for higher productivity and efficiency. This will also lead to an overall enhancement in customer experience.

Manufacturers from Panipat participated in International Trade Corporation's exhibition First North East Textile expo begins at Athgoan Gaushala

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 18: International Trade Corporation (ITC) organises first North East Textile Expo 2024 at Vrindavan Garden premises of Sri Gauhati Gaushala, Athgoan in Guwahati on Saturday.

The Expo was inaugurated by Assam Textile Merchants Association (ATMA) president Shubhakaran Maloo, secretary Naresh Kasliwal, vice p-president Prakash Jain, organizer Mrinal Ganerwal, Vikram Modi, Namish Ganerwal by lighting the lamp.

During the inauguration ceremony many prominent dignitaries were present.

In this regard, organiser Mrinal Ganerwal said that for the first time in the history of the North-east, many manufacturers of Pani-



pat arrived to participate in this North East Textile Expo. The USP of this expo is that blankets, bed-sheets, quilt, bed covers, handloom goods, home furnishing etc will be

available under one roof. In this, all small and big traders of North East including Assam can participate to give more momentum to their business. During the three

days long Expo, B2B meet will also be organized, through which small and big businessmen of North East including Assam will get a golden opportunity to directly interact and do business with the manufacturers of Panipat. Through this Expo, the traders here will not only get a chance to expand their business but they will also get the opportunity to see many unseen products. Mr. Modi said that more than thirty big manufacturers of Panipat are participating. He expressed hope that this North East Textile Expo will benefit all the small and big traders of the North East including Assam. Ganerwal said that tremendous enthusiasm is being seen among the traders regarding this expo being organized for the first time in the North-East.

Bodo Sahitya Sabha and ABSU honour legacy of Bodo medium Bodo Bijwng San celebrated across BTR

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 18: The Bodo community, including the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) and All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), celebrated the 61st Bodo Bijwng San (Bodo Medium Day) across the state with fitting programs scheduled on Saturday to mark the introduction of the Bodo medium in Lower Primary (LP) schools.

Remarkably, the Bodo medium has excelled in its 61 years so far with the Bodo language since 1963 when it was first introduced in Lower Primary Schools to provide education through the mother tongue. The Bodo medium was introduced on May 18, 1963, in Lower Primary Schools in Kokrajhar and Dotma block in the state of Assam under the chief minister of Bimala Prasad Chaliha.

In Kokrajhar, the district unit of Bodo Sahitya Sabha and All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) jointly celebrated the Bodo Bijwng San day at Simbarogang HS School playground in Kokrajhar to mark the glorious 61-year journey of the Bodo medium in the state. Bijel Kumar Basumaty, president of the Kokrajhar district unit of Bodo Sahitya Sabha, hoisted the Sabha flag on the occasion followed by floral tributes to the martyrs. Bodo Sahitya Sabha secretary, Sahen



Brahma, and ex-vice president, Gopinath Borgoyary, were guests of honour on the occasion.

Coinciding with the Bodo Bijwng San celebration, a felicitation program for the passing out students of HSLC and HS final examinations was organised at the main campus of UN Academy, Kokrajhar. The chief executive member (CEM) of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro, graced the occasion as the chief guest, which was organised by UN Academy, Kokrajhar.

CEM Boro extended warm con-

gratulations to all passing out students of both HSLC and HS final examinations, stating that today's students are the future of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). He mentioned that the government of BTR is working dedicatedly towards the welfare and upliftment of the educational environment across the region since its inception in BTR government.

On the occasion of Bodo Bijwng San, CEM Boro remarked that the Bodo medium has excelled in its 61-year journey, providing Bodo medium background students with

opportunities to receive education in their mother tongue.

Assam cabinet and Sahitya Akademi award winner, Urkhao Gwra Brahma, ABSU president Dipen Boro, also extended warm congratulations on the occasion of Bodo Bijwng San.

In Chirang, the primary committees of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha celebrated the Bodo Bijwng San across the district with fitting programs. The district committees of Baksa, Tamulpur, and Udalguri also organised the Bodo Bijwng San with various programs.

Parag Kumar Das commemorated on 29th death anniversary

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, May 18: Journalist martyr Parag Kumar Das was remembered on his 29th death anniversary by the newly formed Sivasagar Conscious Citizen's Forum through a public meeting held on Friday. Paying homage to the slain journalist, teacher-writer Samsul Barik suggested that Parag Kumar Das's insightful writings should be included in school textbooks.

Pranjal Rajguru, correspondent for Asom Aditya, spoke about the objectives of the forum and emphasised that the life of the deceased journalist serves as a message for free-thinking journalists. The meeting also felicitated senior journalist MI Bora and subject teacher Abanti Borgohain. MI Bora shared his experiences, recalling the challenges faced during the birth of newspapers such as

'Agaan' and 'Budhbar', and highlighted the immense hardships endured by Parag Kumar Das. Writer Assad Ullah, journalist Khairuddin Ahmed, Ansaruddin Bora, Farid Ali, and Surendranath Mohan reminisced about the tragic day when Parag Kumar Das was fatally shot by unidentified assailants, sending shock waves throughout the media world.

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: The 'Nagaon Nagarik Sabha' observed the death anniversary of the noted journalist of the state, Parag Kr Das, as 'Kalamor Din' at Motiram Bora Memorial Park near Nowgong College on Friday.

On this occasion, the organisers felicitated several scribes as well as other noted dignitaries of the district. Gunindra Gayan, president of 'Nagaon Nagarik Sabha', delivered the welcome address, while

former journalist and Lok Sabha MP Ajit Kumar Bhuyan attended the program as the chief guest.

Addressing the gathering, MP Ajit Kumar Bhuyan highlighted his association with the late Parag Kr Das and emphasised how both of them raised their voices against the terrorism sponsored by the nation itself during those days. Bhuyan expressed concern about the growing grip of dictatorship rule in various parts of the country and the simultaneous drastic change in the character of society. He urged people to come together in an organised manner to fight against such dictatorship, warning that failure to do so would lead to trouble for everyone soon.

The program was jointly mentored by Birinchi Bora and Dulal Bora, the secretary and vice president of 'Nagaon Nagarik Sabha'.

Directorate of Tea Tribe & Adivasi Welfare launches awareness campaigns

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 18: The Directorate of Tea Tribe & Adivasi Welfare, Government of Assam, has initiated a series of awareness programs aimed at the tea tribe people of Assam. These programs cover topics such as child and human trafficking, family planning, legal awareness, and health issues. Fifteen prominent voluntary organisations in Assam have been entrusted with the responsibility of conducting these awareness programs.

As part of this initiative, the Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society, Sonitpur, organised a series of awareness programs, including a district-level stakeholders meeting on child and human trafficking, family planning, legal awareness, and health awareness among the tea tribes and Adivasi people of Sonitpur and Biswanath districts. The event took place on Friday at the Tezpur Sahitya Sabha Bhawan auditorium.

The meeting was graced by Bhimananda Tanti, secretary of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha, Borchala Branch, Sonitpur, as the chief guest, who addressed the issues of child and human trafficking and emphasised the importance of family plan-



ning and legal awareness.

Other attendees included Dildar Hussain, junior assistant at the Sub Divisional Welfare Office, Sunil Tuti, secretary of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha, Misimi Dhan, president of Assam Tea Tribe Women Association, Mohan Tanti, central executive member of Assam Tea Tribe Students Association, and Sonali Das, secretary of Mahila Samiti, as guest speakers. Parag Das, secretary of Eight Brothers Social Welfare Society, and treasurer Pradeep Bora were also present, along with other members of the organisation.

During the meeting, Eight Brothers

Social Welfare Society announced that the district-level meeting would be followed by awareness meetings on child and human trafficking, family planning, legal awareness, and health issues in 10 different tea gardens in Sonitpur and Biswanath districts in the coming days. The organisation also mentioned that as per the directive of the Directorate of Tea Tribes & Adivasi Welfare, government of Assam, the program would include awareness meetings, street plays, cultural programs, school programs, and the formation of mother groups. The entire event was hosted by Shyamalima Baruah.

Opium and heroin seized



HT Correspondent
BOKAJAN, May 18: Dillai Police in Karbi Anglong seized opium from a car bearing registration number AS01BU 4555 at Dillai

lai Check Gate. The car, coming from Dimapur and destined for Rajasthan, was found to contain opium packed in four packages weighing 3.5 kg.

Nowgong College hosts workshop

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 18: Nowgong College (Autonomous) conducted a day-long workshop on vermiculture, under the auspices of the Eco Club Unit and Department of Zoology.

Over 150 students from higher secondary and high schools in Nagaon district participated in the workshop. Dr Lalit Mohan Goswami, program coordinator and head of the department of Zoology, initiated the proceedings of the meeting, emphasising the importance of conserving natural resources. He highlighted various initiatives under Mission Life Assam aimed at sensitising people regarding environmental issues. The workshop was organised by the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council and sponsored by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Government of India.

Footballer dies of suspected heart attack

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, May 18: Rishiraj Bora, a 21-year-old footballer from Borbhetta, died of a suspected heart attack while playing football in the playground inside the AAU campus on Friday evening. He was rushed to JMCH but was declared dead by doctors. Rishiraj was a resident of NEFA Gate at Rowrah here. He represented the district in football at the junior level twice and was an A Division football player representing A Star Club until 2022.

Tankeswar Barua remembered

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARALI, May 18: Tankeswar Barua, a resident of Bejorhola, Pub Nagsankar, and a retired LP school teacher, was remembered in a memorial meeting organised by Pub Nagsankar CRCC at his residence on Saturday. Barua was born on January 1, 1964, at Bejorhola village. He passed away on May 13 in Chennai while undergoing medical treatment. He had joined Solahola LPS as an assistant teacher in 1999 and retired from Janata LPS on January 31, 2024. He was closely associated with many socio-cultural organisations, including All Assam Tai-Ahom Association, Bejorhola VDC, Uttar Sootea Jubak Sangha, among others. A memorial meeting in memory of late Tankeswar Barua was held with Jiten Pator in the chair.

Book on youthful living & emotional resilience launched

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 18: 'BORNTOFIT' serves as a guiding light, offering insights to reverse one's biological age and maintain youthfulness throughout life's journey. With practical strategies outlined within its pages, this book acts as a roadmap, empowering individuals to take charge of their lives, one healthy habit at a time.

The inspiration behind this book stems from personal experiences, particularly the loss of the author's mother and many others across the country who succumbed to lifestyle-related diseases due to a lack of awareness and neglect of healthy living practices. More than just a literary work, 'BORNTOFIT' emerges as a movement against such ailments, advocating for a meaningful and healthy lifestyle among the mid-generation populace nationwide.

Awareness meeting on drug abuse held

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, May 18: An awareness meeting on the ill effects of drug abuse and its impact on the new generation was held on Saturday at Dibong Phakial Primary School under the Margherita subdivision of Tinsukia district.

The awareness meeting was organised by the All Assam Gorkha Students Union (AAGSU) Ketetong, Powai Bongaon Regional

Committee, and the 2nd Dibong Phakial Village Development Party.

The meeting was presided over by Prabhat Rai, the president of All Assam Gorkha Student Union (AAGSU) Ketetong Powai Bongaon Regional Committee.

A number of people participated in the awareness meeting on the ill effects of drug abuse and its impact on the new generation.

Woman and son arrested

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, May 18: A woman from Murmura tea estate under Cinnamara police outpost, along with her minor son, was arrested on charges of murdering her husband on Friday night. A case No 284/2024 has been registered by the police in this connection.

A police source disclosed that the son, being a minor, was sent to the juvenile observation home, while the woman, Dipanjali Karmakar, was sent to jail on Saturday.

The source further added that Dipanjali Karmakar confessed to murdering her husband, Paluwan Suren, who worked as a mason and daily wage, due to frequent altercations that had been ongoing for several years.

Morigaon DC cracks down on construction irregularities

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, May 18: The Morigaon district commissioner (DC), Devashish Sharma, visited several schools in Morigaon, offering on the third day on Saturday, after he himself detected massive irregularities in the installation of digital libraries and smart classrooms provided by Samagra Siksha, Assam for the mental development and welfare of students. He visited Solmari Higher Secondary School on Saturday and took stock of the installation of digital libraries and smart classrooms. The district commissioner has already made it clear that all schools must complete the work within the next seven days and install the three television sets allocated by the government in appropriate places. He warned that strict action would be taken against schools that violate the directive. He also stated that the district administration officers will continue to conduct random inspections of the schools allocated for the construction of digital libraries.

Inordinate delay in Bhuban Chandra Gogoi Path reconstruction decried

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, May 18: The prolonged delay in reconstructing the 18.41 km Sivasagar-Sumoni road, named after the esteemed educationist Bhuban Chandra Gogoi, has sparked agitation among various organisations in Sivasagar. This delay has caused significant inconvenience to the residents of the Nazira-Sivasagar area and the hundreds of vehicles that traverse the road daily. In response to this issue, AASU Sivasagar organised a road blockade at ONGC Tiniali, urging for expedited construction efforts by the company responsible and condemning the government's perceived indifference to the people's plight.

Led by AASU assistant secretary Samiran Phukan, district president Manas Pratim Baruah, and district secretary Dipankar Saikia, the protesters voiced their concerns, demanding strict monitoring by authorities and alleging the use of substandard materials in the construction. Executive Magistrate Sugata Siddhartha Goswami and executive engineer Anupam Hazarika assured the demonstrators of swift action against any negligent company officials. Despite the AASU unit submitting a memorandum to the district commissioner on April 30, they claim to have received no response from the authorities.

The project, allocated to SGCL-Shiva JV Company at a cost of Rs 121.09 crore, commenced on March 11, 2022, with a contractual end date of April 18, 2024. However, with the completion period having elapsed by over a month, less than half of the work has been completed. Concerns have been raised over the apparent lack of technical staff and essential equipment by the contractor company, including Paver Finisher Hydrostatic with Sensor Control, Pneumatic Tyred Rollers, Vibratory Rollers, Motor Grader, and Bitumen Emulsion Pressure Distributor. Additionally, the footpath cum drainage works along the B.C. road have been criticised for their haphazard execution.

Moreover, the incomplete minor bridge near Hanchora and the controversial removal of the rotary at Station Chariali by vested interests have further compounded the frustrations of the citizens, detracting from their longstanding aspiration for a rotary junction.

Tezpur University celebrates International Museum Day

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 18: To highlight the significance of museums, the department of Cultural Studies, Tezpur University, organised weeklong activities on the occasion of International Museum Day, celebrated worldwide on May 18. International Museum Day is coordinated by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a non-governmental organisation dedicated to museums. This year's theme, declared by ICOM, was 'Museums for Education and Research', focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 - Quality Education and SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure of the United Nations. The weeklong activities were organised from May 13-18, 2024.

During the inauguration of the event on May 13, Prof. Shambhu

Nath Singh, vice chancellor of Tezpur University, emphasised the crucial role of museums in education and cultural preservation. "Museums serve as vital bridges between the past and the present, offering a study into history that enriches our understanding of contemporary life," Prof Singh said. Recalling his visit to the Smithsonian, the world's largest museum, Prof Singh added that museums not only safeguard the past but also inspire present and future generations to learn from it. Speaking on the occasion, Prof Farheena Danta, dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, highlighted the pivotal role museums play in education and research. "Museums are vibrant spaces that cultivate learning, inspire curiosity, and contribute to groundbreaking research," the Dean said.

50 wheelchairs distributed to individuals with disabilities

Riniki Bhuyan Sharma applauds the humanitarian efforts, extends support for future projects

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 18: The Rotary Club of Guwahati Luit and its associate, the Rotary Luit Trust, have been serving the community in various capacities over the years.

Both entities embarked on an ambitious project of distributing 50 wheelchairs to 50 individuals with disabilities. The event took place at Shradhdhanjali Kanan, RG Baruah Road, Guwahati, on Saturday.

Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, CMD of Pride East Entertainment Pvt Ltd., graced the event as chief guest. She commended the diverse activities and projects of Rotary Luit & Luit Trust, expressing admiration for Rotary International's global humanitarian efforts. She conveyed her



best wishes to the Rotary Club of Guwahati Luit for their future endeavours and assured her best possible support.

The chief guest personally handed over wheelchairs to the beneficiaries who had come from various places to collect them. It was heartwarming to see the smiling faces of the beneficiaries and

their family members.

Speaking on the occasion, Rotary Luit president Amit Ajitsaria highlighted the Club and Trust's regular organisation of free eye check-up camps in Guwahati and nearby rural areas, providing free cataract operations for the needy. Another significant focus is on renovating/building girls' toilets in

schools and improving school facilities under the 'Happy School' project. To date, five schools in Guwahati have been transformed into Happy Schools, equipped with new desks, benches, drinking water facilities, toilet blocks for male and female students, classroom painting, playground equipment, and libraries.

A large number of Rotarians from different clubs of Guwahati and contributors to the project also attended the event.

Ajitsaria further emphasised the Rotary Club of Guwahati Luit's commitment to extending helping hands to the needy members of the community. Several upcoming projects, such as additional Happy Schools and ladies' toilets constructed in buses, are on the horizon and will be launched soon.

Rising from the margins: The triumph of the Eastern Naga spirit-observations & lessons

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar

I am firmly convinced that the passionate will for justice and truth has done more to improve man's condition than calculating political shrewdness which in the long run only breeds general distrust ~ Albert Einstein

"Let justice flow freely, reaching every corner, embracing the helpless with compassion and fairness, ensuring that no voice goes unheard or ignored. In this pursuit, we find the true essence of humanity and the path to a more just and equitable world."

In the vast and intricate fabric of India's social landscape, few movements resonate as deeply as the Frontier Nagaland Territory movement. It is not merely a demand for justice through the creation of "Frontier Nagaland Territory"; it is a cry for self-respect, human dignity, and constitutional justice. The Eastern Naga people, through this movement, have embarked on a journey that echoes the principles of Mahatma Gandhi's "Ahimsa" and "Satyagraha." They have strongly embraced the principles of non-violence and truth as their guiding lights, demonstrating a profound commitment to peaceful movement and moral integrity. At the heart of this movement lies a quest for recognition and empowerment, as the Eastern Naga people strive to assert their existence and rights within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision for inclusive justice resonates profoundly within the framework of this movement. The call for constitutional and democratic processes to address historical injustices and ensure equitable treatment for all is a clear manifestation of Ambedkar's enduring belief in the transformative power of "law and governance". His teachings and principles have continued to inspire generations, emphasizing the importance of social justice, equality, and the rule of law in building a just society. The Frontier Nagaland Territory movement is not only a local phenomenon but also a reflection of broader aspirations for justice, equality, and constitutional liberty. It underscores the enduring relevance of Ambedkar's ideals in today's complex socio-political landscape in the context of Eastern Nagaland, serving as a beacon of hope and a reminder of the ongoing struggle for social and constitutional reform.

Within the Frontier Nagaland Territory movement, the luminous spirit of Prophet Moses shines brightly, echoing his call for justice, liberation, and a promised land. Much like Prophet Moses led his people out of bondage towards a future of dignity, the Frontier Nagaland Territory movement seeks a similar path of self-respect, human dignity, and constitutional justice for the Eastern Naga people. This movement embodies a deep-rooted quest for constitutional spirit and constitutional empowerment, drawing parallels with the biblical journey of liberation and hope. The enduring resilience and unshakable

commitment of the movement resonate with Moses's timeless message of hope, perseverance, and the pursuit of a better future for all.

Also, deep within the Frontier Nagaland Territory movement, the teachings of Jesus Christ resonate profoundly in the actions and aspirations of the Eastern Naga people. Christ's teachings of compassion, forgiveness, and love thy neighbour are intricately woven into the fabric of the movement's pursuit of self-respect, human dignity, and constitutional justice through peaceful means. The Eastern Nagas exemplify Christ's message of compassion and loving-kindness through their resilience and commitment to non-violence, embodying principles of peace, justice and solidarity as they forge a path towards reconciliation and unity in their quest for a more just, equitable, and harmonious future for all in the state of Nagaland.

In the Frontier Nagaland Territory Movement, the principles advocated by Swami Vivekananda for self-reliance and self-realization are unmistakably evident. The movement's ethos emphasizes the empowerment of the Eastern Naga people to take charge of their own Constitutional destiny through Constitutional & legal means and methods, striving for self-sufficiency and asserting their inherent rights and capabilities. Much like Vivekananda's call for individuals to awaken to their true potential and pursue their spiritual and material well-being, the movement embodies a spirit of self-assertion and Constitutional determination, inspiring its participants to chart their own course towards an 'inclusive' future of dignity and fulfillment.

Furthermore, the spirit of oneness, embodied by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, reverberates through the heart of this movement. Bose's unwavering belief in the unity of all Indians, regardless of their background, finds a powerful echo in the aspirations of the Eastern Naga people. They seek not just a restoration of their Constitutional rights through the creation and rise of "Frontier Nagaland Territory" but also a sense of belonging and unity that transcends geographical boundaries. "Yes, we do exist in India. We may be invisible, but we do exist..." says each and every Eastern Naga-young and old.

The Eastern Naga people's voluntary abstention from engaging in election-related activities and voting, observed on April 19th, 2024, during the Lok Sabha Election, 2024, stands out as a significant reflection of their dedication to democratic principles, non-violence, peace, and social justice within the legal framework of the nation. This action resonates deeply with the teachings and philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Jesus Christ, Moses, Swami Vivekananda, and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Reflecting upon Mahatma Gandhi's Satyagraha philosophy, they embrace non-violence as a fundamental pillar in their pursuit of justice and equality.

Ambedkar's vision of justice and equality is echoed powerfully in Eastern

Nagas's quest for constitutional justice, challenging entrenched systems of power and privilege. The teachings of Jesus Christ and Moses, which emphasize compassion, forgiveness, love thy neighbour, and justice, serve as enduring moral compasses, guiding their actions and decisions as they strive for equality and dignity. Vivekananda's advocacy for self-reliance, self-realization, and unity further reflects in their collective empowerment and efforts in building solidarity within the Frontier Nagaland Territory movement. Additionally, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's philosophy of nationalism and the spirit of oneness make their presence felt in their determination to assert their rights and carve a path toward a more inclusive and equitable future.

At the heart of the voluntary abstention lies a fundamental question of constitutional justice, representation and economic as well as political inclusivity in Nagaland's democratic framework. For the residents of the six districts in Eastern Nagaland, the decision to abstain from voting was a symbolic assertion of their right to be heard and their demand for meaningful representation in the corridors of power. Moreover, the voluntary abstention serves as a stark reminder of the challenges that democracy has been facing in Nagaland. Despite being an integral part of the country's democratic fabric, the Eastern Nagaland region continues to grapple with issues of governance and development that remain unresolved and often marginalized in the developmental discourse in the state. The voluntary abstention of the Eastern Naga people represents a manifestation of these simmering tensions and the urgent need for dialogue, reconciliation, and redressal. For the Eastern Nagas the decision to abstain from voting was not merely a political gesture but a reaffirmation of their historical grievances and aspiration for justice, equality and liberty- as guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Over the years key-figures have emerged and faded within the Frontier Nagaland movement however the essence, the spirit, the character, and the trajectory of the movement have remained steadfast. This resilience can be attributed to the fact that this movement was never leader-centric or organization-centric; it has always been a common people's movement-deeply rooted in the heart and conscience of Eastern Nagas. It is a movement driven by the forgotten and the voiceless, those who have silently endured the dictates of power structures in the state of Nagaland that have kept them economically backward, politically dependent, socially invisible, geographically distant, constitutionally marginalized and emotionally voiceless.

The Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT) movement serves as a poignant reminder of the power of collective action inspired by the spirit of constitutionalism and the indomitable spirit of those people who, against all odds, have legally and constitutionally empowered themselves to chal-

lenge the prevailing status quo. Through legal, constitutional, democratic, and peaceful means and methods, they have tirelessly pursued Constitutional justice and sought to uphold the basic human dignity as guaranteed under the Constitution of India. This grassroots movement of Eastern Naga people embodies the transformative potential of unity, resilience, and unshakable commitment to justice and equality, showcasing the profound impact that a united front can have in challenging entrenched power structures, advocating for change, and fostering a society where every individual is treated with respect and afforded equal opportunities.

The FNT movement stands evident to the enduring belief of Eastern Naga people in the principles of justice, equality, and democracy, inspiring countless individuals all over India to stand up and be counted in the quest for a more equitable society. It serves as a rallying cry for those who have been marginalized. The movement's commitment to peaceful and constitutional methods through democratic process highlights the importance of upholding the rule of law and respecting the democratic institutions that form the bedrock of any free and fair society. Eastern Naga people can assert their rights and reclaim their rightful place within the broader framework of Indian democracy. The FNT movement serves as a beacon of hope for marginalized Eastern Naga communities, offering a path towards empowerment and justice.

Through their demand for Frontier Nagaland Territory-a Constitutional mechanism that recognizes their genuine concerns and aspirations, the Eastern Naga people are advocating for a future where they can fully participate in and contribute to the social, political, and economic life of the state of Nagaland and the nation. In challenging the status quo and advocating for their rights, they are not only shaping their own destiny but also contributing to the global narrative of justice, equality and constitutional transformation. As the movement continues to gain momentum, it sends a powerful message to policymakers and society at large: that the voices of the marginalized cannot be ignored, and that true progress can only be achieved when all citizens are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness under the law.

The Frontier Nagaland Territory movement emerges as a grassroots endeavor commanding our collective attention, compassion, and steadfast backing. Upon introspection of its profound impact, we are prompted to acknowledge our individual responsibilities in sculpting a society that is truly inclusive, fair, and empathetic. The Eastern Naga community illuminates the path forward; it is incumbent upon us to stand in solidarity with them as we embark on this transformative voyage towards a future that is both luminous and equitable for every resident of the state of Nagaland. *(The author is a Senior Faculty, Dept. Of Political Science, Tetsu College & Director, Project Constitutional Justice, Tuensang)*

Science and religion are the two rulers of the world

By: Privanka Saurabh

The relationship between religion and science can be considered one of the most debated topics in the world. Some argue over the relationship between science and religion, creating conflict, while others think that they are two separate entities that deal with two different human experiences. Some religious and scientific organizations say that there is no need for such a conflict between religious faith and scientific viewpoint.

Religion and science are complex social topics that can vary according to different cultures and traditions. This article lets us see the different concepts of science and religion and how they relate to each other. The relationship between science and religion is characterized by 'harmony', 'complexity', and conflict. The role of science and religion is important in shaping the thoughts of an individual in society.

Religion is a collection of beliefs, customs, and traditions. It is also called worship towards the controlling power. Religion cannot always center on God. It can be surrendered to any kind of power. Like science, the word religion also did not have any proper meaning in the medieval period.

It gained its current purpose through the literary works of anthropologist EB Taylor. He is said to have used the term to represent religion throughout the world. Religion makes an important contribution to the activities of a society and an individual. It also affects the physical and mental health of the person.

Science is defined as the discovery and application of knowledge and understanding of the world through experiments, observations, and appropriate evidence. In ancient times, science meant natural philosophy or experimental philosophy. Its exact reference came into use in the nineteenth century.

William Whewell standardized the term scientist as those who are practitioners of science. In short, science can be considered as curiosity about the world and its behavior. Science is always a mystery. Every examination and discovery gives rise to more questions in science.

The relationship between science and religion can be studied by analyzing the natural world, history, philosophy, and theology. Science examines and analyzes the natural world, while religion analyzes the world from a spiritual or supernatural perspective. Many scientists, theologians, philosophers, etc. have said that there is interdependence between science and religion.

It is also true that religious facts influence many scientific facts. The best

example is that some people still reject the theory of evolution by natural process and believe in the religious belief of human existence. The discussion on the relationship between science and religion ends in a conflict.

As already mentioned, the terms science and religion emerged in the 19th century and were considered internal qualities of a person and did not refer to practices or knowledge. Religion and science have different roles in shaping our understanding, ideas, and even our future. While religion contributes to emotions that the human mind cannot grasp, science explores through the mind's limitless thoughts and experiments.

The role of religion and science in society is influential. An important difference between science and religion is that the former is concerned with the natural world while the latter is concerned with both natural and supernatural entities. Science explains facts with proper evidence and proof. It always offers logical explanations to answer questions. Religion makes people dependent on power and this power can be natural or supernatural. It always depends on beliefs and convictions.

According to religion, everything happens due to the influence of unknown power. Whereas science always depends on logical facts and evidence. When religion paved the way for different cultures and traditions, science paved the way for discoveries.

Being a scientific believer does not mean that one cannot be spiritual. There are many scientists and religious people who believe in religion and science respectively. No one can deny that science and religion are two essential aspects of human life.

The discussion of the relationship between science and religion is extensive but will ultimately remain incomplete. We can say that science and religion can be both complementary and dynamic at the same time. Science is considered more systematic and logical than religion.

Science is an objective idea, whereas religion is a subjective idea. Science and religion are very closely related in different aspects. Science always depends on facts and logic to demonstrate its statements, whereas religion depends on the faith and power of people. Science focuses on developing experiments and observations to solve an answer.

Religion addresses questions that cannot be answered with accurate data. Science and religion can be called the two ruling factors of the world. The phrase 'science and religion' was first structured together in the 19th century. Both of these terms originated as different conceptions of reality.

Media relations: Its role and everything to know

By: Er. Prabhat Kishore

Media involves not just publications, but Akashvani, Doordarshan & other private electronic channels. When an organisation or government is 'in the news', the objective of press relations may be simply to ensure that what is published is favourable or at least accurate. But for promotional purposes, the problem is more often to stimulate media interest in publishing information about specific subjects.

"Mass Media" includes Doordarshan, Akashvani, Private electronic channels, Newspaper, and large circulation magazines, as well as many more specialised publications. One's press relation work will be with the press itself, often the business press in particular.

In every industrialised country there are dozens, hundreds or even thousands of business publications, serving virtually every industry, trade or profession. The people who read these publications are seeking information useful to them in their jobs or business. A single reader often is directly responsible for, or influences, very sizeable purposes.

Because trade and industrial publications are so specialised, their circulations are smaller, choose the right ones, trade and industrial journals regularly publish news and other information that general publication would not consider. If we are trying to reach trade, we also find out several different publications to reach the right people at various levels and in different kinds of operations. One way to identify the right business publication for our purposes is to ask people who fit into the business categories you are trying to reach which publication they read.

Although the business press can be our most promising publicity channel, it is rarely adequate as the sole medium for a

publicity campaign, trade magazines do not reach everyone in every trade; small shop owners, for example, do not read them and top executives often read general business publications in preference to many of the specialised journals serving their industries. Moreover, if we are promoting consumer goods, in many cases obviously would want to reach consumers, not just the trade.

Daily newspapers, can achieve greater audience coverage than business journals. Newspapers also have a degree of selectivity which can be very useful, particularly in terms of geographical coverage. Newspapers usually serve individual cities or rural and sub-urban areas.

Consumer magazines are another medium, one should not overlook. Women's magazines, for example, often carry articles and news items on products in the food, clothing and home furnishing areas. Travel articles are another favourite subject.

The essence of good press relations is of understanding what kind of material publications and other media want, and then supplying it to the extent possible. In all probability these will be a smaller group of publications that will be especially important for you.

Study these publications more carefully. Do they publish articles about specific companies or products? What seems to interest them about products? Are they interested in foreign statistics and trends, in personalities? Do they publish feature articles about whole industries, including those of foreign countries? Do their articles seem to be based on reporting (by their own staff or by outsiders) or on press releases? How is the publication divided up according to subject matter? Do they use photographs and if so of what subjects, and how do they treat them?

For the smaller number of

magazines most important to us, it will pay to go a step further and get to know some of the editors and reporters.

An even better reason for developing personal relations with appropriate journalists is they will thereby get to know us. Editors of good publications do not decide what to print on the basis of friendship or in return for hospitality; their livelihood depends on publishing material their readers want.

However, if an editor knows us and has been impressed with us as a serious source of useful information, he might well pause a bit longer over a press release coming from our organisation.

To engage in press relations on personal level successfully, one must bring two particularly important qualities to the job: Knowledge and honesty.

Be candid with journalists. If we have information which we are really not free to reveal, say so frankly and do not attempt to avoid the fact with evasive replies. Do not deny a story that is correct. Make a point of becoming a source of useful information for reporters. Be scrupulous about being fair with reporters. If we have a piece of news, release it simultaneously to all journals.

The most common and practical way of disseminating a news-story is by sending it to the news media in the form of a press release. Publications rely heavily on press releases, sometimes like 80% or 90% of the press releases received by the better publications are almost immediately thrown into the wastepaper basket.

The main reason so many press releases are rejected is what they contain is no news at all or no news of interest and that are badly prepared. Preparations of press releases should be entrusted to a professional publicity man.

To stand chance of being published, a press release must con-

tain news. Concentrate on preparing releases that interests of a limited number of publications which are especially important to us, rather than to send out generalised releases indiscriminately.

A daily newspaper, for example, might run a short story about the visit of a high-level trade delegation but it would not be interested in the arrival of an individual businessman or the signing of a single agency agreement.

For some trade magazines, printable 'news' may be nothing more than an announcement about availability of a news supplier, a large sale, a change in prices, the appointment of a news agency or sales manager or the launching of a new promotion campaign. Whether the publication is general or specialised, the one thing it will insist on is hard facts. Vogue generalities won't do.

One technique in developing successful press releases is to give some background and interpretation to the immediate news.

The way a press release is written and set up can determine whether or not it is used by the publication. Top the release with brief headline that identifies the subject and, if possible, gives the gist of the story. Then summarise the entire story, with all the vital details, in the first short paragraph; what happened, or will happen; the names of the organisation or firm, the people and the products involved, date and time if relevant, the place.

Also suggest in this lead paragraph the significance of the news. Then with simple sentences and brief paragraphs, fill out the story. Use facts and factual comparisons to impress. If possible, keep the story on one page.

Always indicate where and from whom the editor can get additional information. Include also the telephone number. Physical presentation is also im-

portant, observing the following points:-

(1) Use paper with a headline especially printed for your press releases. The name of your organisation should also be prominent. The paper should be full typing-page size. The long 'A4' or full scale size is best.

(2) Use only one side of the sheet.

(3) Whatever reproduction system is used, copies should be clean and legible.

(4) Double scape, with wide margins on either side.

(5) Always place the date of story at the top.

(6) No underlining.

(7) Indent all paragraphs except the first.

(8) No full stops between initials.

(9) Use quotations sparingly.

(10) If the story runs over, put 'MORE' at the bottom of each page.

(11) At the end of story indicate source for information (name, telephone, telex, cable address, post address, email address).

Photographs can make a story, or at least give it more prominence and interest. In fact, a good news picture published with a suitable caption can be of more publicity value than 1000-word story.

So consider sending photographs with press release when appropriate. Typical subjects include news products, events at a trade show, people in the news, a visiting mission. It is important to identify and caption pictures properly.

Photographs should never be clipped or stapled to their captions or to the accompanying release. Photographs are expensive to prepare and mail. You can reduce wastage by not sending them with release; instead indicate on the release that they are available. However, publications are more likely to use photographs when they arrive with the release.

Maintain a photographic li-

brary with an index system. Keep one point of each photograph, but periodically weed out those you have obviously out dated. Aim to reduce as much as possible the waste involved in sending releases to inappropriate publications. To minimize wastage, develop mailing lists according to subject matter. It is always better to address releases to specific individuals on publications.

In some countries there are public relations wire services. For an annual fee, they will transmit your releases by telex directly to publications. This is especially convenient for general releases, and can save a lot of work and even postage and preparation costs. Critically a public relations agency, to take over all the work associated with preparing and mailing out press releases.

Of necessity, disseminating press releases will be your primary means of communicating with the press. However, when the circumstances are right, staging a press conference or reception is likely to produce more published material.

Basically a press conference is a meeting of reporters at which they receive news. Refreshments may or may not be served. A reception is a more elaborate affair, a meal may be included several events, such as talks, a film showing, and the presentation of an exhibit. The distinction is mainly one of the degrees. Press receptions are sometimes put on with nothing more specific in mind than to create goodwill with the press. At best this is a questionable use of funds.

From the publicity point of view, staging press gatherings can be more effective than merely dispatching press releases. But you have to offer journalists a reason to take the time to come to a press event. Food or drink is not sufficient. There must be news of real in-

terest to the publication involved, and not merely news that could have been sent in a press release. The people whom the journalists are called to meet should be willing and able to answer questions. A press reception should be a standard part of publicity for trade missions and exhibitions.

The programme for a press conference can be quite simple, a brief introduction by the host, a prepared announcement or statement by the main speaker (or speakers), question period, and perhaps a fairly brief referencing, the period during which the reporters can chat informally with the speakers. Always remember that reporters are busy. Start promptly, and keep talks fairly brief.

You should brief the speakers and other participants on the purpose, the programme, which publications are expected to be represented, their interest and the likely direction of questions. The timing of press meet can affect the resulting coverage. You will have the best chance of drawing the journalists you want if you stage the affair during business hours (including the lunch hour) and perhaps upto one hour later.

For the morning newspapers, the best time of day is around mid-day, and for the weekly and monthly journals, late afternoon. It is best to keep press reception for the press and not to invite others as well.

Invitations should be extended to individual journalists, not simply to their publications. Be sure to include the following information on the invitations: (a) The host, (b) Purpose, (c) Day and date, time and place, (d) The nature of the hospitality, (e) Signify, as with 'RSVP' that you would like a reply, and the name, telephone number and address, to be used for replying. *(The author is a technocrat and educationist. He studied Journalism and Mass Communication at Patna University)*

Namghar: Lifeline of Assamese society

By: Arup Saikia

The Namghar is the only public place in rural Assamese society, where a person gets the first opportunity to present him or her in public. It is just like the first rehearsal house for generating human resources. Namghar basically grooms people in their respective fields from culture, spirituality, to political leadership in the early period of life. It has the shadow of tribal houses—Dekachang, Morang Ghar etc. So naturally it has inherited the functions of the said tribal houses.

Village Panchayat:

The introduction of the “Panchayati raj” system is also unable to take over the role of Namghar in total. It may be because of its non political permanent institutional nature. The disputes and discordances among villagers are much better settled in Namghar than any other else.

Rural club:

The Namghar is the only venue in rural areas of Assam, where people acquaint themselves with each other in a cordial manner. Nowadays many libraries are also constructed adjacent to the Namghar. Even many indoor games are also played in extended shed of Namghar. The Assamese Namghar serves as in all aspects – auditorium, playground, religious discourse, political meeting, trial court etc.

Spiritual guardianship:

The most important and effective feature of Namghar is its spirituality. The power of Namghar originates from common religious beliefs or weakness to spirituality or religion. It is like a church in medieval Europe. The Namghar enjoys the status of an unquestioned judge among the innocent people because of its religious tag. So sometimes its judgment authority is more than that of government approved legal institution.

Expansion of Namghar and

Satra:

No kingdom of Assam had ruled the entire Assam. But Saint Sankardeva reached and preached everywhere. During the long lifespan, Mahapurush Sankardeva was wandering and frequently changed his locations. Sankardeva earned the wrath of respective monarchs for initiation of new religious order. His main foe or enemy remained among the kingdoms of Kachari, Ahom and Koch.

Sankardeva started his religious preaching from Borduwa and Alipukhuri. The family of Sankardeva was independent landlord. But the powerful Kachari was their neighbour. Once quarrel erupted between them. Sankardeva was compelled to move from middle Assam to Ahom kingdom via Singori and Routh (approximately in 1516/1517).

Finally, settled in Gangmou (1527) Sankardeva stayed there almost five years and wrote Ankiya naat “Patni Prasad”. The position of Ahom kingdom was destabilized for the attack of Koch monarch Biswa Singha. Again Mahapurush migrated to Dhuwaha, presently within Majuli area. Sankardeva at Dhuwaha somehow expressed himself as mass preacher. He converted many people to “Ek Sarana” and a vast group of his religious sect successfully emerged. This had rung alarm bell for the priestly Brahmins. The Brahmins started to antagonized Sankardeva and wrong message reached against him in the ears of Ahom monarchs. Hostility arose unabated. The most remarkable event of his stay in Dhuwaha is meeting of another great saint Madhavdeva.

Koch king Nara Narayan rose to the throne (1540). Sankardeva got comfortable royal patronage there. Even king Nara Narayan became his follower. Mahapurush Sankardeva finally settled in Patbaushi of Tantikuchi (Barpetta). But



frequented Koch Bihar and his residing place Bheladonga.

The most formative period of Sankardeva started after his migration to Koch kingdom of lower Assam. The most of his prominent Ankiya Naats, devotional songs – Borgeet were created in Patbaushi. Moreover Patbaushi or Koch Bihar are the revered place that established Sankardeva as religious icon. The disciples from various ethnic backgrounds are converted to “Ek Sarana”. They’re – Damodardeva (Brahmin), Govinda (Garo), Jayaram (Bhutia), Muri (Koch), Chand Sai (Muslim) etc.

Overview:

We can conclude from the above discussion that the subjects of Koch kingdom are ardently or easily converted to Sankari cult (Bhakti). This is only apparently true. The dominant socio-cultural ethos of Assam originated from tribal society. Even the first aryanized dynasty – the Varman were of Mleccha origin. The people of Assam are aryanized through assimilation only. Not by birth.

The people of western Assam are more aryanized than that of eastern part. Because the western part of Assam is easily connected to mainland Indian Territory. The Bhakti movement of Sankardeva is as such revolt against aryanized casteism. The parochial attitude of Brahmanism never cordially embrace casteless Bhakti cult. It became inimical

to their existence. So the seeds of Satra and Namghar definitely germinated under Koch kingdom, but grown with fruits in Ahom kingdom. The rulers can inculcate a faith in their subjects to a limited extent only. The subjects of Ahom kingdom never endorsed the animosity between Sankardeva and their monarchy. The tribal people of upper Assam under Ahom Empire are not totally acquainted with the casteism or professional classification.

So they wholeheartedly accepted Namghar or Satra centric religion of Sankardeva. This is one of the prime reasons for unhindered expansion of Namghar within Ahom kingdom. The flow was so intense that the preacher of classless society, the Kala Sanghati Satra got dominant foothold in upper Assam only.

Later, Shaktism of Bengal posed a conflicting environment. The Moamoria rebellion is a product of that conflict which immensely contributed to the fall of Ahom dynasty.

On the other hand the rulers of Koch Bihar are more akin to the rulers or culture of western and northern part of India (Undivided Bengal, Delhi etc.)

More than hundred Satras are created in undivided greater Kamrupa until the second decade of the nineteenth century. These are flourished basing on the ideal of Barpetta Satra. But the Assamese Namghar

couldn't become mass culture in Kamrupa. The Ahom's administrative system was conducive to formative Assamese society.

The pedestal strata of Assam people were built in Ahom kingdom. Namghar is born out of that. The small kingdoms under Koch Empire also couldn't develop Bhakti cult very deeply. The Darrangi kingdom originally established under Koch Empire. Even Darrang was subordinate kingdom under Ahom for nearly hundred years. But the influence of Bhakti religion in socio-cultural life of Darrang was not conspicuous.

Gradually the Koch kings after Nara Narayan and Lakshmi Narayan, disconnected their ties with the Brahmaputra valley. Their close affinity with Delhi based Mughals and British alienate the people of Brahmaputra valley. The culture of Bengal overshadowed the Assamese customs. Where is there room for Namghari culture? The peaceful co-existence of many “shakti peethas” like Kamakhya hadn't obstructed the rise of Bhakti movement. But the North Indian and Bengal influence are shaking the very essence of Assamese culture.

After many upheavals Satra, Namghar remain as pillars of Assamese society. The people of Assam should be careful enough to comprehend the differences between Namghars and temples. Nowadays some structures of Namghar look similar to that of temples. The “Monikut” or the facade of some Namghars are built in temple shape polluting Assamese indigenous architecture. If it continues, it will be like aryanized hegemonic interference of North India.

Changes in Namghar

The Namghar is an institution created about five hundred fifty years ago. Naturally it won't remain intact. Change is inevitable with time. The religious rites and rituals

are also changed in all institutions. But the influence of religion in Namghar is paramount. It has been observed that the basic spirituality of Namghar hasn't been changed. The various cultural programmes are held in Namghar, but generally with religious undertones. The power of Namghar as village panchayat or mediator is on decaying.

Now qualified people expect to be tried depending on circumstantial evidence for all the disputes. The morality of Namghar matters less in serious cases. The transition of feudalism to democracy resulted in acquiring personal freedom. Even common people are involved in politics for voting rights. This wasn't the same in colonial era.

The beginning of industrial revolution ended the agrarian economy. The commodity products occupy the economic set up of a society. These are done under direct political administration or government. So government and relevant modern institution like judiciary, police are slowly replacing the age-old social authority of Namghar. The voting, evidence, democratic majority are not adjustable with socio-religious institution.

The basic architectural look of the Namghar remains the same. But for non availability of indigenous materials—bamboo, straw, timber, cane, the original scenario of Namghar disappeared. Now all the above mentioned materials are replaced by concrete. So the look and design are also changed. The masons are mostly outsiders. They can't distinguish the differences between the Namghar and temple. So the triangular roof, facade, monikut, extended shed are sometimes resemble Hindu temples.

Detailed parts of Namghar in brief:

The inner premises of Namghar are divided into nine parts with meaningful significance. The eastern part near “Monikut” where

“Guru Asana” is kept is regarded as the first room or “Head”. Serially towards the west, the Second one is “Heart”.

Third one is “Stomach”
Fourth one is “Navel”
Fifth one is “Thigh”
Sixth one is “Feet”

The second, third and fourth parts are used generally for congregational purposes. The remaining two sections fifth and sixth remain vacant or utilized to receive devotees and guests.

Moreover the entire Namghar is demarcated into three imaginary divisions. The “Head” is called Archana Sthana. The “Heart” and “Stomach” are called Bandana Sthana. The area from fourth to sixth is called Padasevana Sthana where devotees sit for prayer.

Roofing:

As stated earlier some Vaishnava scholars consider the structure of Namghar as the feet of Lord Vishnu. The shape starts from the hip of Lord. The roof should be as the back of an elephant. According to Vaishnavite scholars, the Namghar should have three roofs. One on the top and others are east and west side connected to the top.

The head or horn of this elephant is the Monikut. The tail starts from the top; the triangular skin on the top is the thigh and hip. The rest of the area has two stomachs. There should not be division on the roof for the porch. The sloping roof is revered as female roof. The Namghar is considered – “Nature”. This “Nature” covers inner “Male”. The combined “Nature -Male” (Prakriti and Purush) is creator of the world-Almighty.

Let Namghar, born out of marvelous tribal architectural aspects, flourish in the heart of every Assamese. (The author is a noted cultural enthusiast, writer and alumnus of the University of Delhi. He can be reached at arup-saikia07@gmail.com)

POETRY

Your pictures

By: Arti Rai

Your pictures, captured by my eyes,
Etched across my soul and body,
Not an inch without their imprint,
Like deities of belief, imposing,
I bow before them each morning,
Before sinking into daily chores.

I seek happiness from your faint smile,
Ascending like numbers in order.
In the first, a wiped smile,
A rude human, devoid of jollity.
In the second, learning to smile,
Lips rigidly broadened, cheeks plumed.
How joyous you looked, just as I said.

Let's look at the later ones,
Perfect in the art of smiling,
Yet, I feel you're a miser,
Not smiling as much as you should.
I've started to see the reflection,
How you've painted all my smiles,
How love can change.

Then I ask, is it even love?
You smile faintly once more.

Taxation

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Taxes are imposed everywhere
Do it in the breath, do it in the heartbeat

Do it in life, do it in death
Do it in laughter, do it in tears
Tax on food, tax on non-food
Tax in righteousness, tax in iniquity

Do it in faith, do it in deception
Taxes on earnings
Taxes on expenses
When they scream

Then pay some more taxes
Pay taxes for sickness
Pay taxes for treatment
Pay taxes for the cemetery
Pay taxes for cemeteries
Pay taxes for cheetahs
Pay taxes for the coffin
Don't relax

Pay taxes for inheritances as well
Do see it every time you wake up

All around you
Waiting for taxes
Taxes are imposed everywhere
So pay taxes

They are supposed to be
There is a great need for taxes

Taxes are needed to make rules
Taxes are needed to change the rules

Taxes are needed to spread hatred

You have to change your clothes

They are supposed to be

There is a great need for taxes

To die smoothly

Taxes must be paid

Trying not to pay taxes

It's just futility

running after the wind

Close your eyes

Close your ears

Just pay the taxes

There are some taxes

Cannot be paid with money

They should be taxed

Remaining silent

By criticizing

Don't be a traitor

Without asking questions

Be patriotic

Please support

Become a beneficiary

Close your eyes

Close your ears

Just pay the taxes

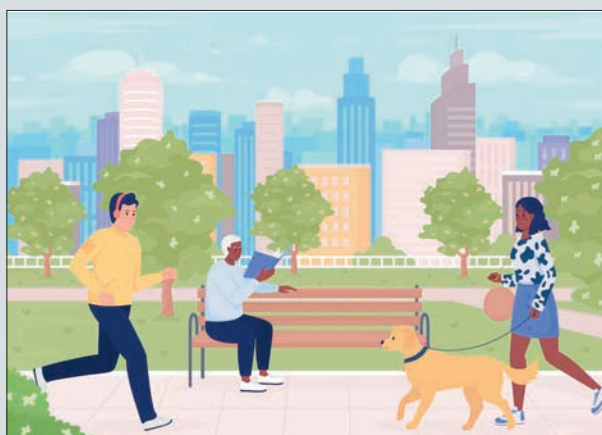
They are supposed to be

There is a great need for taxes.

Feelings of a Labour

By: Maharshi Dubey

I am a labour,
I do hard work,
I make luxury hotels, buildings large, But my life is simple, my home is small,
I make large dams, tall bridges, expensive roads,
I eat cheapest food and sleep on floor.
I work in workshops, factories, on construction sites,
Everyday face troubles and do fight.
I work below hot sun, in freezing cold, pouring rain,
After that I get minimum wage,
But hard work is my duty,
I perform it honestly,
Hard work is my life,
I do it happily.
I work day and night
And construct world,
I am a labour,
I do hard work.



Morning Walk

By: Khemu Parashar

Morning walk is very unique,
it always gets applause for health,
refreshes the body,

it eradicates diseases in a moment,
on seeing it, the chaos created in troubles,
gets cleared up,

the mind becomes pure with morning walk,
there is no place for tiredness,
only gets immense love

Scientists have also praised morning walk,
it has been considered necessary for humans,
there are many reasons for it,
pure air in morning walk,

environment remains calm,
there is sweet chirping of birds.

Work-life balance: Strategies, insights, and social capital

By: Dipak Kurmi

In today's fast-paced world, achieving work-life balance is essential for our overall well-being. It's not just about juggling professional duties and personal passions; it's about knowing when to prioritize each aspect. Striking this balance allows us to thrive amidst the demands of modern life, ensuring both our professional success and personal fulfillment.

In an era where peace should prevail over stress, we find ourselves confronted with the opposite reality. Take technology, for instance; it has revolutionized remote work and scheduling flexibility. However, while it offers convenience, it also blurs the lines between work and personal life.

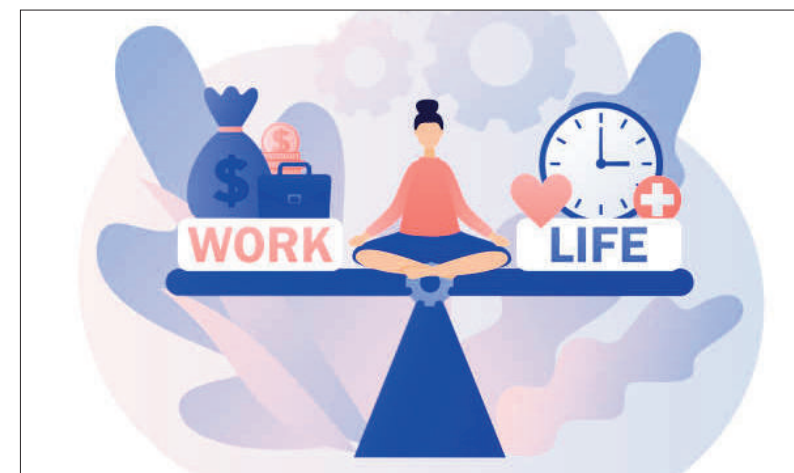
Thus, it becomes imperative to establish clear boundaries between the two. This involves defining set work hours, disconnecting from work-related communication after hours, and prioritizing personal activities and relationships. By doing so, we reclaim control over our lives and restore the balance necessary for well-being.

While it's easy to preach about achieving work-life balance, the reality is that organizations and employers hold the key to making it a reality. By implementing policies like flexible hours, parental leave, and wellness programs, they create an environment where employees can thrive both personally and professionally.

But it's not just about perks; it's about fostering a culture where open communication about workload and personal commitments is encouraged. This not only manages expectations but also alleviates stress. Seeking support from colleagues, mentors, or professional networks can also offer valuable guidance on navigating the complexities of work-life balance.

Extensive research has delved into the concept of work-life balance, examining its effects on individuals, organizations, and society at large. These studies encompass a wide range of sectors, from structured corporate environments to more informal work settings. They shed light on the significance of achieving harmony between professional responsibilities and personal well-being, offering insights applicable across diverse professional landscapes.

One study investigates the work-life balance struggles of women entrepreneurs in Pune, offering insights into how they navigate the challenges of running a business while fulfilling caregiving duties. Meanwhile, another study examines the gendered aspects of work-life balance among street vendors in Delhi. It sheds light on how women vendors juggle their work and family obligations, high-



lighting the obstacles they face in accessing support services and resources.

In a recent publication in the Journal of Development Studies, researchers delve into the connection between work-life balance among self-employed women in urban India's informal sector. This study investigates how achieving equilibrium between work and personal life influences women's economic independence, autonomy in decision-making, and overall welfare.

The studies underscore the significance of coping mechanisms in navigating life's hurdles, particularly for those from marginalized backgrounds. In the face of daily hardships, these strategies become vital for survival. They encompass a range of practices, from resource-sharing like food and clothing to pooling finances for communal savings.

Additionally, offering emotional support and solidarity during tough times plays a crucial role. Informal savings and credit groups are common in many communities, where regular contributions provide a safety net for emergencies or opportunities for income generation.

In the midst of poverty, people exhibit remarkable ingenuity and adaptability, maximizing their scant resources with creativity and innovation. They may explore unconventional income streams, repurpose materials ingeniously, or invent novel solutions to daily obstacles. Additionally, for many, faith and spirituality serve as pillars of strength in times of adversity. Relying on religious or spiritual convictions offers solace, instills hope, and imbues life with purpose amid struggles.

Individuals in more structured environments and those with ample resources often employ distinct coping strategies compared to those facing extreme poverty. They excel at task prioritization and time management, effectively juggling work, personal commitments, and other obligations. This entails setting clear objectives, crafting schedules, and delegating tasks to optimize productivity and at-

tain work-life equilibrium.

Moreover, they are adept at financial planning and investment, securing their financial future and accruing wealth gradually. Accessing various support services, such as childcare and wellness programs, further eases caregiving burdens and enhances overall wellness.

Rather than mere balance, many in this demographic pursue work-life integration, aligning their professional endeavors with their passions and values. For them, work becomes an extension of personal fulfillment, intertwining livelihood with hobbies and aspirations.

In addition to personal strategies, nurturing “social capital” proves invaluable. This encompasses the networks and relationships individuals cultivate within their communities and social spheres. For instance, mutual aid networks facilitate reciprocal support during times of need, extending childcare or eldercare assistance. Similarly, participation in informal savings and lending groups grants access to financial resources while fostering solidarity and trust among members. Engaging with community-based organizations or grassroots initiatives not only addresses local issues but also strengthens social bonds, instilling a sense of belonging and empowerment. Moreover, involvement in professional associations or networking events related to one's field offers avenues for knowledge exchange, career growth, mentorship, and collaboration with peers.

Harnessing social capital across diverse avenues empowers individuals to tap into a wealth of support, resources, and opportunities, enriching their resilience, overall well-being, and life satisfaction.

These coping mechanisms not only benefit individuals personally but also enable them to navigate the intricacies of contemporary life, driving success in both their personal and professional pursuits and ultimately attaining work-life harmony! (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Thousands of Ukrainians have fled the country to avoid the draft since Russia's all-out invasion in Feb 2022

Ukraine's divisive mobilization law comes into force as a new Russian push strains front-line troops

KYIV, May 18: A divisive mobilization law in Ukraine came into force on Saturday, as Kyiv struggles to boost troop numbers after Russia launched a new offensive that some fear could close in on Ukraine's second-largest city.

The legislation, which was watered down from its original draft, will make it easier to identify every conscript in the country. It also provides incentives to soldiers, such as cash bonuses or money toward buying a house or car, that some analysts say Ukraine cannot afford.



Lawmakers dragged their feet for months and only passed the law in mid-April, a week after Ukraine lowered the age for men who can be drafted from 27 to 25.

The measures reflect the growing strain that more than two years of war with Russia has had on Ukraine's forces, who are trying to hold the front lines in fighting that has

sapped the country's ranks and stores of weapons and ammunition.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also signed two other laws Friday, allowing prisoners to join the army and increasing fines for draft dodgers fivefold. Russia enlisted its prisoners early on in the war, and personnel shortages compelled Ukraine to adopt the new measures.

Russian troops, meanwhile, are pushing ahead with a ground offensive that opened

Ukraine's second-largest city.

Still, Moscow's forces have pummeled Kharkiv with strikes in recent weeks, hitting civilian and energy infrastructure and prompting angry accusations from Zelenskyy that the Russian leadership sought to reduce the city to rubble.

On Friday, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said that Russian guided bombs killed at least three residents and injured 28 others that day.

Moscow denies deliberately targeting civilians, but thousands have died or suffered injuries in the more than 27 months of fighting.

The US last week announced a new USD 400 million package of military aid for Ukraine, and President Joe Biden has promised that he would rush badly needed weaponry to the country to help it stave off Russian advances.

Still, only small batches of US military aid have started to

trickle into the front line, according to Ukrainian military commanders, who said it will take at least two months before supplies meet Kyiv's needs to hold the line.

Thousands of Ukrainians have fled the country to avoid the draft since Russia's all-out invasion in February 2022, some risking their lives as they tried to swim across a river separating Ukraine from neighbouring Romania and Hungary.

Late on Friday, Ukraine's border service said that at least 30 people have died trying to cross the Tisza River since the full-scale invasion.

Romanian border guards days earlier retrieved the near-naked, disfigured body of a man that appeared to have been floating in the Tisza for days, and is the 30th known casualty, the Ukrainian agency said in an online statement. It said the man has not yet been identified. (AP)

Yemen's Houthi rebels claim shooting down US MQ-9 Reaper drone as footage shows wreckage

DUBAI, May 18: Yemen's Houthi rebels on Friday claimed to have shot down an American drone, hours after footage circulated online of what appeared to be the wreckage of an MQ-9 Reaper drone.

Early on Saturday, a vessel also came under attack in the Red Sea. The two incidents likely represent just the latest attacks by the Houthis as they press their campaign over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed that rebels shot down the Reaper on Thursday with a surface-to-air missile. He described the drone as "carrying out hostile actions" in Yemen's Marib province, which remains held by allies of Yemen's exiled, internationally recognised government.

The Houthis later released footage they claimed showed the surface-to-air-missile being launched at night, along with night-vision footage of the missile hitting the drone. A man, whose voice had been digitally altered to apparently prevent identification, chanted the Houthi slogan: "God is the greatest; death to America; death to Israel; curse the Jews; victory to Islam."

Online video showed wreckage resembling the pieces of the Reaper on the ground, as well as footage of that wreckage on fire. The US military did not respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press over the Houthi claim.

While the rebels have made claims about attacks that turned out later not to be true, they have a history of shooting down US drones and have been armed by their main benefactor,

Iran, with weapons capable of high-altitude attack. Since the Houthis seized the country's north and its capital, Sanaa, in 2014, the US military has previously lost at least five drones to the rebels.

Reapers, which cost around USD 30 million apiece, can fly at altitudes up to 50,000 feet and have an endurance of up to 24 hours before needing to land.

The drone shootdown comes as the Houthis launch attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, demanding Israel ends the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration. Early Saturday, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said a ship came under attack off the coast of Yemen's port city of Hodeida.

The captain "has confirmed sustaining slight damage after being struck by an unknown object on his port quarter," the UKMTO said. "The vessel and crew are safe and continuing to its next port of call."

The private security firm Ambrey said it believed the vessel struck was a Panama-flagged crude oil tanker. Radio traffic suggested the ship was "hit by a missile and that there was a fire in the steering gear flat," Ambrey said. (AP)



Singapore seeing new COVID-19 wave, minister advises wearing of masks



SINGAPORE, May 18: Singapore is seeing a new COVID-19 wave as the authorities recorded more than 25,900 cases from May 5 to 11 even as Health Minister Ong Ye Kung on Saturday advised the wearing of masks again.

"We are at the beginning part of the wave where it is steadily rising," said Ong. "So, I would say the wave should peak in the next two to four weeks, which means between mid-end of June," The Straits Times newspaper quoted the minister as saying.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) said the estimated number of COVID-19 cases in the week of May 5 to 11 rose to 25,900 cases, compared with 13,700 cases in the previous week. The average daily COVID-19 hospitalisations rose to about 250 from 181 the week before.

The average daily intensive care unit (ICU) cases remained low at three cases, compared with two cases in the previous week.

The MOH said that to protect hospital bed capacity, public hospitals have been asked to reduce their non-urgent elective surgery cases and move suitable patients to transitional care facilities or back home through Mobile Inpatient Care@Home, an alternative inpatient care delivery model that offers

clinically suitable patients the option of being hospitalised in their own homes instead of a hospital ward.

Ong urged those who are at greatest risk of severe disease, including individuals aged 60 years and above, medically vulnerable individuals and residents of aged care facilities, to receive an additional dose of the COVID-19 vaccine if they have not done so in the last 12 months.

Ong said that if the number of COVID-19 cases doubles one time, Singapore will have 500 patients in its healthcare system, which is what Singapore can handle. However, if the number of cases doubles a second time, there will be 1,000 patients, and "that will be a considerable burden on the hospital system", he pointed out.

"One thousand beds is equivalent to one regional hospital," Ong said. "So, I think the healthcare system has to brace ourselves for what is to come."

There are no plans for any form of social restrictions or any other mandatory kind of measures for now, as COVID-19 is treated as an endemic disease in Singapore, he said, adding that imposing additional measures would be a last resort.

Ong said that with Singapore

being a transport and communications hub, it will be one of the cities to get a wave of COVID-19 earlier than others.

"So, COVID-19 is just something that we have to live with. Every year, we should expect one or two waves," he said.

Globally, the predominant COVID-19 variants are still JN.1 and its sub-lineages, including KP.1 and KP.2. Currently, KP.1 and KP.2 account for over two-thirds of cases in Singapore.

As of May 3, the World Health Organisation has classified KP.2 as a variant under monitoring. There are currently no indications, globally or locally, that KP.1 and KP.2 are more transmissible or cause more severe disease than other circulating variants, the MOH said.

However, members of the public are urged to stay updated with vaccinations to protect themselves against current and emerging virus strains. The MOH said that to date, about 80 per cent of the local population have completed their initial or additional dose, but have not received a dose within the last year.

The ministry added that since COVID-19 vaccination started in 2020 to 2021, the vaccines have consistently been proven to be safe and effective in protecting individuals from severe illness.

Billions of doses have been administered globally, and safety monitoring internationally has shown that the vaccine is safe, it said. There have also been no long-term safety concerns with COVID-19 vaccination, and adverse effects from vaccines, including the mRNA vaccines, have all been observed to occur shortly after vaccination, the ministry added. (PTT)

Flash floods due to unusually heavy seasonal rains kill at least 68 in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, May 18: Flash floods from heavy seasonal rains have killed at least 68 people in Afghanistan, Taliban officials said on Saturday, adding the death toll was based on preliminary reports.

Afghanistan has been witnessing unusually heavy seasonal rains.

In the hard-hit western province of Ghor, 50 people were reported dead, said Abdul Wahid Hamas, spokesman for the provincial governor. He also said the province has suffered significant financial losses after thousands of homes and properties were damaged and hundreds of hectares of agricultural land destroyed following Friday's floods, including the capital city Feroz Koh.

Meanwhile, 18 people in the northern province of Farayab were killed and two others injured on Friday, according to Esmatullah Moradi, the provincial governor's spokesman. Damages to property and land were reported across four districts and over 300 animals were killed, he added.

The UN food agency posted on social media platform X, saying Ghor was the most affected by the floods where 2500 families were impacted. WFP assessment teams are on the ground to deploy assistance, the post said.

The Taliban's government chief spokesman mourned "the loss of our fellow Afghans," and urged "responsible authorities ... to provide all necessary support to alleviate the suffering," in a post on X. He also called on "our benevolent donors" to help and humanitarian organisations to provide the affected communities with aid.

Last week, WFP said the exceptionally heavy rains in Afghanistan have killed more than 300 people and destroyed thousands of houses, mostly in the northern province of Baghlan, which bore the brunt of floods on May 10th.

Survivors have been left with no home, no land, and no source of livelihood, the World Food Organisation said. Most of Baghlan is "inaccessible by trucks," said WFP, adding that it is resorting to every alternative it can think of to deliver food to the survivors. (AP)

Slovak prime minister is stable after 'miracles' in the hospital as suspect appears in court

PEZINOK, May 18: Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's condition was serious but stable on Saturday as the man accused of trying to assassinate him faced his first court appearance.

Two hours of surgery on Friday to remove dead tissue from Fico's multiple gunshot wounds led to a good prognosis for his recovery but he was still not well enough to travel to a hospital in the capital, Bratislava, government ministers said outside University F. D. Roosevelt Hospital in Banská Bystrica, where Fico was taken by helicopter after the shooting.

"Several miracles have occurred in Banská Bystrica in recent days coming from the hands of doctors, nurses and the personnel at the Roosevelt Hospital," Defense Minister Robert Kalinak said.

Fico, 59, was attacked as he greeted supporters following a government meeting Wednesday in the former coal mining town of Handlova. The suspect was tackled to the ground and arrested.

The update on Fico's health was issued as the man accused of attempting to assassinate him made his first court appearance, according to Slovak state media.

Prosecutors were seeking an order from Slovakia's Specialized Criminal Court to detain the suspect. Prosecutors told

police not to publicly identify the man or release other details about the case, but unconfirmed media reports said he was a 71-year-old retiree known as an amateur poet who may have once worked as a mail security guard in the country's southwest.

Government authorities gave details that matched that description. They said the suspect didn't belong to any political groups, though the attack itself was politically motivated.

The courthouse in Pezinok, a small town outside the capital, Bratislava, was guarded by officers wearing balaclavas and carrying rifles. News media were not allowed in and reporters were kept behind a gate outside.

Police on Friday had taken the suspect to his home in the town of Levice and seized a computer and some documents, Markiza, a Slovak television station reported. Police didn't comment.

With police remaining largely silent about the case, it was not clear how the suspect came to possess a firearm. Slovakia has strict rules on firearms and gun owners must have a good reason to possess one and are required to pass a test.

As a consequence, Slovakia has one of the lowest gun ownership rates in Europe. It was ranked 23rd out of 27 Euro-

pean Union countries with a gun ownership rate of 6.5 per 100 people, according to the Association of Accredited Public Policy Advocates to the EU.

World leaders have condemned the attack and offered support for Fico and Slovakia. Fico has long been a divisive figure in Slovakia and beyond. His return to power last year on a pro-Russia, anti-American platform led to worries among fellow European Union and NATO members that he would abandon his country's pro-Western course, particularly on Ukraine.

At the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, Slovakia was one of Ukraine's staunchest supporters, but Fico halted arms deliveries to Ukraine when he returned to power, his fourth time serving as prime minister.

Fico's government has also made efforts to overhaul public broadcasting — a move critics said would give the government full control of public television and radio.

That, coupled with his plans to amend the penal code to eliminate a special anti-graft prosecutor, have led opponents to worry that Fico will lead Slovakia down a more autocratic path.

Thousands of demonstrators have repeatedly rallied in the capital and around the country of 5.4 million to protest his policies. (AP)

French authorities report a sixth fatality in New Caledonia violence

PARIS, May 18: French security forces reported another death on Saturday in armed clashes in the French Pacific territory of New Caledonia, the sixth fatality in a nearly a week of violent unrest scorching the archipelago whose indigenous population has long sought independence.

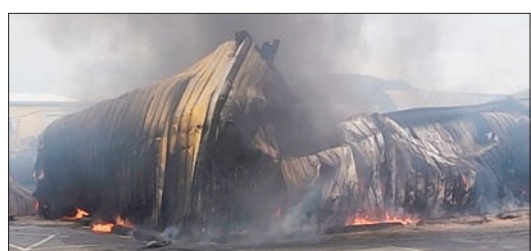
The person was killed in an exchange of fire at one of the many impromptu barricades blocking roads on the island, said a security official speaking on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the situation publicly.

Two other people were seriously injured in the clash, the official said, confirming French media reports.

The official said the firefight erupted at a blockade in the north of the main island, at Kaala-Gomen.

Le Monde and other French news outlets said the person killed was a man and that his son was among the injured.

This week's violence erupted Monday following protests over voting reforms opposed by pro-independence supporters



who have long pushed to break free from France.

Armed clashes, looting, arson and other mayhem have turned parts of the capital, Noumea, into no-go zones and left a vast trail of destruction. Charred hulks of burned-out cars litter roads, businesses and shops have been ransacked and buildings turned into smoking ruins, with fires sending billowing clouds of smoke into the South Pacific skies.

Despite a state of emergency imposed on the archipelago by the government in Paris and hundreds of reinforcements for security services that lost control of some neighborhoods, residents say violence continues to make venturing out perilous.

Protesters have blocked roads with barricades, as have residents banding together to pro-

tect their homes, neighborhoods and livelihoods.

Noumea's mayor, Sonia Lagarde, said Saturday that while overnight violence has eased somewhat, with a 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew in effect, "we are far from a return to normal."

"The damage is incredible," she said, speaking to broadcaster BFM-TV. "It's a spectacle of desolation."

"The situation is not improving - quite the contrary - despite all the appeals for calm," she said, describing Noumea as "under siege."

The state of emergency gives authorities greater powers to tackle violent protesters, including the possibility of house detention for people deemed a threat to public order and expanded powers to conduct searches, seize weapons and restrict movements, with possible

jail time for violators.

The last time France imposed such measures on one of its overseas territories was in 1985, also in New Caledonia, the Interior Ministry said.

There have been decades of tensions on the archipelago between Indigenous Kanaks seeking independence and descendants of colonizers who want to remain part of France.

The unrest erupted as the French legislature in Paris debated amending the French constitution to make changes to voter lists in New Caledonia. The National Assembly on Wednesday approved a bill that will, among other changes, allow residents who have lived in New Caledonia for 10 years to cast ballots in provincial elections.

Opponents say the measure will benefit pro-France politicians in New Caledonia and further marginalize indigenous Kanak people. They once suffered from strict segregation policies and widespread discrimination.

The vast archipelago of about 270,000 people east of Australia is 10 time zones ahead of Paris. (AP)

Sri Lankan Tamils observe 15th anniversary of armed conflict end



COLOMBO, May 18: Sri Lanka on Saturday marked the 15th anniversary of the end of the armed separatist campaign with Tamils holding a series of events throughout the former conflict zone in the north and east regions to remember their dear ones killed in the clashes.

However, in many areas, police and the government troops were accused of attempting to disrupt the memorial events.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had run a military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces of the island nation for nearly 30 years before its collapse in 2009. On May 18, 2009, Sri Lankan army declared victory with the discovery of the body of the dreaded LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.

Agnes Callamard, the Secretary General of the Amnesty International, visited the final battle site at Mullaitivu in the north-eastern Mullaitivu district to attend the commemoration.

"Today's anniversary is a grim reminder of the collective failure of the Sri Lankan authorities and the international community to deliver justice to the many victims of Sri Lanka's three decade-long internal armed conflict," Callamard said.

She said the UN investigations have found credible evidence of crimes committed by both sides to the conflict - "yet there has been little by the way of an independent or impartial national inquiry."

The police and the government troops were accused of attempting to disrupt the memorials leading to the day's event in different parts. The troops maintained that in the guise of remembering the 'conflict dead', permission cannot be given for the events that celebrate the LTTE, a banned organisation.

The troops came under fire for arresting several Tamils, including women, for organising memorials. In Colombo, police thwarted an attempt to disrupt a ceremony commemorating those killed in conflict. One person was arrested as he argued with police saying he was against the LTTE being commemorated, police said. Meanwhile, the government's celebration of the victory in the war is to take place on Sunday with the participation of Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena at the war memorial near parliament here.

The defence ministry has announced promotions to over 3,100 sailor and 1,300 soldiers to mark the victory over the LTTE ending the separatist campaign. (PTT)

Police conclude investigation into suicide of Boeing whistleblower

CHARLESTON, May 18: A former Boeing manager who raised safety questions about the aircraft maker and was found dead after several days of depositions in South Carolina took his own life, police said on Friday after concluding their investigation.

John Barnett, 62, of Louisiana, was found dead March 9, and police had said earlier that his injuries were self-inflicted.

Barnett was a longtime Boeing employee and worked as a quality-control manager before he retired in 2017. In the years after that, he shared his concerns with journalists.

Barnett said he saw discarded metal shavings near wiring for the flight controls that could have cut the wiring and caused a catastrophe.

He also noted problems with up to a quarter of the oxygen systems on Boeing's 787 planes.

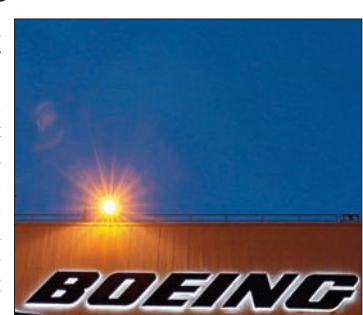
"Information and records reviewed during the investigation uncovered Mr Barnett's longstanding mental health challenges, which had intensified in connection with ongoing legal proceedings related to his whistleblower case," police said in a statement.

Barnett was in Charleston answering questions for depositions for his whistleblower complaint, and a hearing on the matter was scheduled for June.

"John was deeply concerned about the safety of the aircraft and flying public, and had identified some serious defects that he felt were not adequately addressed," Barnett's brother, Rodney, said in a family statement shortly after his death.

"He said that Boeing had a culture of concealment and was putting profits over safety."

Boeing said in a statement, "We are saddened by Mr Barnett's passing, and our thoughts continue to be with his family and friends." (AP)



ASU refuses cooperation with Indian armed forces



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 18: The Angami Students' Union (ASU) firmly reiterated its support for the Naga Students' Federation's directive to refuse cooperation with Indian armed and paramilitary forces as long as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 is in operation in the Naga homeland.

Stating that the Indian armed forces have tormented peace loving Nagas for decades under the guise of the 'draconian' law, the ASU demanded that the government of India repeal the Act, and called on the "highest Court of the Republic India to immediately restore human rights of the Nagas by repealing the inhuman Act."

The ASU also issued strict directives to its units and members.

"No individual/union under Angami jurisdiction shall accept any form of aids from the Indian Armed Forces," it said.

Further, no individual or union shall be allowed to invite the Indian Armed Forces to any event organised in its jurisdiction, neither shall they partake in any official events of the Armed Forces, it asserted. The ASU also cautioned all the Indian armed forces stationed in the Angami inhabited areas to "abstain from provoking any situation in contravention to the directive."

"Henceforth, the union will activate all its networks to ensure that no individual/group/armed forces violates the popular resolution of the Naga Students' Federation and the Angami Students' Union," it said.

Mizoram: 7 people died of dengue in 2 years

AIZAWL, May 18: Seven people have died due to dengue in Mizoram in the last two years, according to officials of the State Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (SVBDCP).

Mizoram reported the first dengue case in 2013 and the first fatality due to the mosquito-borne disease was recorded in 2022, they said. Five people died of dengue in 2022, while two others succumbed to the disease last year, they added.

All the seven victims were from the Aizawl district, officials said. Since 2013, more than 5,100 people have been diagnosed with dengue. Of them, 132 people were diagnosed between January 1 and April 30 this year, they said.

The maximum number of dengue cases were detected in 2023 when 2,060 people were found to be infected out of 12,949 samples tested. A total of 1,868 dengue cases were detected in the state out of 5,252 samples tested in 2022.

Dengue is a viral disease transmitted by female mosquitoes mainly of the species *Aedes aegypti* and, to a lesser extent, *Aedes albopictus*. According to WHO, there is no specific treatment for dengue or severe dengue, and early detection and access to proper medical care greatly lower fatality rates. (PTI)

Maitri Setu, Agartala-Akhaura rail link to be made operational soon: Tripura CM

Connectivity facilities are yet to be made operational



AGARTALA, May 18: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha said the Maitri Setu in South Tripura and Agartala-Akhaura (Bangladesh) rail link will become operational very soon.

The Maitri Setu built over river Feni connecting South Tripura's Sabroom with Bangladesh's Ramgarh was jointly inaugurated on March 9, 2021 and Agartala-Nischintapur (Indian part of Agartala-

Akhaura rail link) was inaugurated on November 1, 2023 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina.

But both connectivity facilities are yet to be made operational.

"Election is almost over, and a new government will be formed. Under the leadership of PM Modi, who has always emphasized the Act East Policy and pro-

vided us with the HIRA (highway, i-way, railway, airway) model, the Maitri Setu will become operational soon", the chief minister told reporters on Friday.

"The trial in Agartala-Akhaura railway link has already been completed, and it will also be made operational soon," Saha said, adding that many investors are coming to the northeastern state to invest.

"The future of Tripura is bright. After the rail connectivity is established, we will be able to reach Kolkata in a short period," he said. Anil Kumar Khandelwal, Member Infrastructure, Railway Board inspected Nischintapur railyard (Indian part of Agartala-Akhaura) on May 15 to check the ongoing work.

"The construction work in Agartala-Akhaura railway project has almost been completed. Now, the train service will be made operational after discussion between both sides," he said.

Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) Manager, Agartala, Debasish Nandi on Saturday told PTI, "We are ready to open the Maitri Setu by introducing passenger movement in the first phase. All necessary facilities including immigration have been put in place at Sabroom Land Custom Station (LCS). The goods movement can be flagged off later. The final date of the beginning of passenger movement will be taken by Delhi and Dhaka." (PTI)

Shillong medical college to open by September 2025



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 18: The Shillong medical college in Meghalaya is expected to become operational by September 2025, and the Tura Medical College by 2026-2027, according to state health minister Ampareen Lyngdoh.

This announcement followed a review meeting chaired by Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma on Friday (May 17), focusing on the establishment of medical colleges in the state.

Meghalaya health minister Ampareen Lyngdoh plans to visit Uttar Pradesh to study a model where the Indian government assisted in setting up six medical colleges, which could inform similar initiatives in Meghalaya.

Meghalaya health minister Ampareen Lyngdoh provided updates on the Tura Medical College, projecting its operational status by 2026-2027.

"We are addressing significant infrastructure development requirements. Construction is progressing well, though we faced some delays.

CM Conrad Sangma has resolved issues with departments like PHE, power, and PWD," she said.

On the Shillong Medical College, Lyngdoh stated, "We are

ahead of schedule and progressing rapidly. If all goes well, the college should be functional by September 2025."

She emphasized the need to expedite various technical aspects, such as faculty building, service rules for doctors, and aligning with models for teaching and non-teaching staff.

The Meghalaya health minister highlighted the importance of building a qualified faculty and updating service rules to allow doctors to function as educators.

The National Medical Commission (NMC) still needs to inspect the proposed Shillong Medical College, and affiliation issues are being addressed.

"We are considering affiliation with the Captain Williamson Sangma State University instead of NEHU due to delays," she noted.

Regarding the proposed medical college at USTM in Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya, Lyngdoh mentioned significant progress on the PA Sangma International Hospital, a public-private partnership (PPP) model. "The technical signing of MoUs and other arrangements are underway.

This project has a high probability of becoming operational soon, benefiting the local student community," she said.

Tripura preparing to implement CAA, says CM Manik Saha

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 18: The BJP government in Tripura is set to implement the citizenship amendment act (CAA), chief minister Manik Saha announced on Friday (May 17).

This decision comes amid strong opposition from other political parties, who fear the new law could ignite communal tensions in Tripura.

Speaking to the media at a blood donation camp at a mosque, Saha stated that following directives from the Centre, the Tripura government is gearing up to enforce the CAA in the state.

On March 11, the Centre notified the citizenship amendment rules 2024, facilitating the implementation of the CAA, which aims to grant Indian citizenship to persecuted Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians who arrived in India from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan before December 31, 2014.

Acting on the directions of the ministry of home affairs (MHA), Tripura government recently formed a six-member state-level empowered committee, chaired by



the Director of Census Operations, to grant citizenship under the CAA.

Tripura's lone tribal autonomous body, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), oversees two-thirds of the state's 10,491 sq km area, home to over 12,16,000 people, approximately 84% of whom are tribals. Alongside the opposition CPI-M and Congress, the Tipra Motha Party (TMP), a new BJP ally in Tripura, has also opposed the CAA from the outset.

TMP founder Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma expressed

scepticism about CAA's implementation in its current form, warning that it could enable illegal entrants to claim citizenship with false documents, making verification challenging.

"We may be a partner of the BJP, but our party's principles and policies are very clear. We do not want demographic changes in any Northeast state because the indigenous population is small. Without a proper system, many people can falsely claim long-term residency," Debbarma told the media.

Opposition leader and CPI-M state secretary Jitendra Choudhury

reiterated his party's longstanding opposition to the CAA, revealing that he has filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court against the Act.

Choudhury warned that implementing the CAA would adversely affect the entire Northeast region, which has historically suffered from significant influxes.

He suggested the CAA is being implemented now for political mileage in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections and to divert attention from the electoral bond issue.

Tripura Congress MLA and former minister Sudip Roy Barman shared these concerns.

While expressing sympathy for persecuted minorities in neighbouring countries, Roy Barman warned that the CAA's implementation could reignite tribal insurgency in Tripura by further marginalizing the tribal community.

He also argued that granting citizenship based on religion could strain India's financial resources and bolster fundamentalist forces across the border, making the CAA an ineffective solution.

Tourist from Kolkata among 2 killed as taxi falls into river in Sikkim

GANGTOK, May 18: Two persons were killed as a taxi with tourists fell into a river near Singtam in Sikkim on Saturday morning, police said.

A family of five from Kolkata was travelling from Siliguri to Gangtok when the vehicle plunged into the Rani river at Sang Khola, they said.

The taxi driver and a member of the family were killed in the accident. While the driver is yet to be identified, the other deceased is 72-year-old Rabindra Nath Paul.

The injured persons were first taken to the nearby district hospital in Singtam, which sent them to the Central Referral Hospital in Gangtok.

They were identified as Tapas Paul (33), Krishna Paul (36), Mira Paul (60) and a four-year-old girl. The bodies of the deceased were kept at the mortuary of the district hospital in Singtam.

Police said the cause of the accident was being investigated.

Efforts are also underway to bring out the vehicle from the river, they said. (PTI)

Patrolling intensified in Pakke Tiger Reserve

ITANAGAR, May 18: Forest department personnel have intensified night patrolling in core zones and fringe areas of Pakke Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh's Pakke Kessang district, an official said on Saturday.

The patrolling has been intensified following the interception of four unidentified persons collecting frogs at Takosinyi pond area, about 20 km from the range office of Riloh Range, Talo Dibo said.

Dibo, who led the patrolling team, said patrolling was carried out to curb illegal fishing, and hunting of wild birds and animals in the Riloh Wildlife Range headquarters and also to generate awareness among the general public.

As soon as the patrolling team arrived, the unidentified persons carrying a .22 rifle and a 12-bore SBL gun fled deep into the forest. (PTI)

Inaugural programme of AGRIVISION held in M'laya

'Students should not be job seekers and should be job providers'



SHILLONG, May 18: The inaugural programme of the AGRIVISION : 1st Zonal Convention North-East Bharat was held recently at College of Post Graduate Studies in Agricultural Sciences, Umiam in Meghalaya, under joint collaboration with Vidyathi Nidhi, CAU-Imphal, ICAR-NEH, AAU, Vidyia Nidhi. More than 600 participants witnessed the event.

Dr Anupam Mishra, vice chancellor, CAU-Imphal chaired this inaugural session, with chief guest Dr S.K. Singh, DDG-Horticulture, ICAR, New Delhi. Guest of honour Dr Bidyut C. Deka, VC, AAU, Jorhat, Assam, Govind Nayak, National Joint Secretary, ABVP, Subham

Singh Patel, National convener AGRIVISION.

Dr P. K. Pandey, organising secretary AGRIVISION-2024, welcomed the gatherings while specifying the aims and objectives of this 2 days conclave.


Dr S. K. Singh, congratulated the agrivision team members for this noble effort and specified the wide potential of diverse agro products.

He urged that students should not be job seekers and should be job providers.

Dr Anupam Mishra, VC-CAU, emphasised on creating demands for specialised products and revisiting our old wisdoms to address various challenges and issues raised in the present agri and allied sectors.

Dr Bidyut C. Deka, spoke about tailor made technologies that need to be addressed for North Eastern agricultural sector for self reliance and also advocate the electronic marketing products and grooming of agro entrepreneurs.

Govind Nayak, special guest of the conclave spoke that the aim of Akila Bharathi Vidyarthi Parishath is to develop our students to be a good citizen of India with a slogan of "Students are the citizens of today not tomorrow" and narrated various activities undertaken by ABVP at national level. (NNN)



অসম লোকসেৱা আয়োগ

ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

No.150PSC/DR-26/2/2022-23

NOTIFICATION

It is for information to all concerned that the Assam Public Service Commission will hold the Interview/Viva-Voce for the post of **Financial Management Officer (Junior Grade-II) as per Assam Urban Financial Service cadre under Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, Govt. of Assam** (Advt. No.15/2023, dated 9th May/2023) at its office in Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22. The detailed programme for the Interview/Viva-Voce is given below:

Sl. No	Name of the Post & Department	Date of Interview/ Viva - Voce	Reporting Time
1	Financial Management Officer (Junior Grade-II) as per Assam Urban Financial Service cadre under Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, Govt. of Assam	6 th , 7 th , 10 th & 11 th of June, 2024	9:00 AM

Kindly note that the candidates appearing the interview/viva-voce must bring the following testimonials in original along with self attested photocopies in chronological order, thereof for verification/scrutiny on the day of the interview:

- i. H.S.L.C Admit/Pass Certificate as a proof of age.
- ii. H.S.L.C Marksheet and Pass Certificate.
- iii. H.S.S.L.C Marksheet and Pass Certificate.
- iv. Degree Marksheet (All Semester) and Pass Certificate.
- v. Intermediate in Chartered Accountancy(CA-inter) or Chartered Accountant (CA) from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) Certificate (if applicable)
- vi. CGPA Conversion Formula of the respective universities
- vii. Permanent Residential Certificate/Employment Exchange Registration/Voter ID.
- viii. State Government Employees of Assam must submit No Objection Certificate from their respective employer or Permanent Residential Certificate/Employment Exchange Registration/Voter ID as domicile proof.
- ix. Caste/PwBD certificate/BPL Card (if applicable).
- x. Declaration Form A ("May be downloaded from APSC's website").
- xi. Ex-Servicemen Identity Card issued by Zila Sainik Welfare Office of the state of Assam and Discharge Book (for Ex-Servicemen category candidates).
- xii. Any other documents that may be relevant for their candidature.

No intimation letter to the eligible candidates shall be sent separately by post. The intimation letters shall be uploaded on 30-05-2024 in the APSC's website (www.apsc.nic.in). The candidates shall have to download their own intimation letter from the aforesaid website.

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

Janasanyog/D/838/24/19-May-24

Shah visited Kashmir to direct BJP, its proxies, on defeating National Conference: Omar Abdullah

SRINAGAR, May 18: Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited Kashmir to issue directions to the administration, the BJP and its "proxies" on defeating the National Conference, party leader Omar Abdullah alleged on Saturday. Shah on Friday wrapped up his brief visit to the Kashmir Valley during which he interacted with several delegations, including local Sikhs, Paharis, and those from the BJP, officials said.

Though his visit in the midst of Lok Sabha elections led to speculation of his meetings with some Kashmir-based mainstream political leaders, there was no official word on the minister's engagements before he left the Valley.

"We have not been able to understand yet what the aim of the (home minister's) visit was because the BJP has not fielded candidates here. First, there was a rumour that he had come for a security review meeting but no meeting took place," Abdullah told reporters in the Magam area of Central Kashmir's Budgam district. The area is a part of the Baramulla constituency, which the National Conference vice-president is contesting.

Abdullah claimed Shah's visit was aimed at giving "directions to the administration, BJP and its 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'E' teams on how to defeat the National Conference".

The BJP has not fielded its candidates for the three Lok Sabha seats in Kashmir but unofficially extended support to some of the new political parties formed after

the abrogation of Article 370.

Abdullah, a former chief minister of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir state, has been targeting the People's Conference, Apni Party, Democratic Progressive Azad Party and the People's Democratic Party throughout his campaign, calling them BJP's "proxy parties".

These parties have come together to defeat the National Conference on the directions of the BJP, he said. "But, by the grace of God, people are with us and we will prove that on June 4."

"Don't you think it is strange that the person who used to claim till yesterday that he will win the elections, his aim has now changed. Today, the People's Conference does not talk of winning the elections, it talks about defeating Omar Abdullah. This tells you that all these parties follow the BJP's instructions. Their only target is the National Conference," Abdullah said.

Asked about claims that the National Conference won elections in the Valley because of vote boycotts, Abdullah said the rival parties will now claim that the increase in voter turnout also favours his party.

"...our opponents had to find an excuse for that (electoral losses). They used to say they used the National Conference benefited from the boycott but now they will say that since the voting percentage increased, it also benefits the National Conference. What can I say to that?" he asked. (PTI)

Prajwal Revanna's videos: D K Shivakumar, ministers rubbish BJP leader's claim

BENGALURU, May 18: Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar and other state ministers on Saturday rubbish allegations about their role in the circulation of pen drives containing explicit videos involving Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna.

BJP leader and advocate G Devaraje Gowda, who is in custody after being arrested in a sexual abuse case and is also facing charges of video leak, on Friday alleged that Shivakumar and four other ministers are behind the circulation of the pen drives and was being fixed in false cases as he did not agree to be part of their plan.

He has even alleged that he was offered Rs 100 crore by Shivakumar to "bring a bad name" to the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and to tarnish the image of JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy in Prajwal Revanna's obscene video case.

Speaking to reporters here, Shivakumar said, "Better, let him (Gowda) file a case before Lokayukta or any other agency. I think he has some problems mentally. I'm very sorry, the national and state media shouldn't have picked up such baseless allegations. A person who is in jail, how can he make such allegations? All these are baseless. I don't want to comment."

Asked if he will be filing any defamation case against Gowda, he said, "I don't want to make any comment or speak on a person who is mentally sick. I appeal to his party people to get him a good treatment."

Shivakumar also asserted that his government's commitment to get justice for women victims of the sexual abuse case, and expressed confidence about the Special Investigation Team's (SIT) ongoing probe.

While being taken from court in Hassan, Gowda on Friday spoke to media and alleged that Shivakumar is behind pen drive case, and a team

of four ministers -- N Chaluvarayaswamy, Krishna Byre Gowda, Priyank Kharge and another minister -- was formed to handle this, with an intention to bring bad name to BJP, PM Modi and Kumaraswamy.

He said Shivakumar had asked him to say that Kumaraswamy is behind the distribution of pen drives, but as he did not agree to it, he is being fixed in false cases.

Minister Priyank Kharge said Gowda has alleged that three responsible ministers in the state government were part of a team and that there was a conspiracy. "We will discuss whatever legal course, we will take it."

"Devaraje Gowda might be doing this to defame Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah. If he had a Rs 100 crore offer, he should have told Amit Shah (Union Home Minister) and get it investigated. He could have got CBI, ED, or IT raids done. Why didn't he do it? Claims have been made that he (Gowda) was sent Rs 5 crore as advance at a club, let them get CCTV footage and see who were all there," Kharge said.

While speaking to reporters here, he further said Gowda is a lawyer. When he was deposed before the Judge he should have told about the documents he has and should have presented to the court.

Minister Chaluvarayaswamy said allegations about the role of Shivakumar and a team of ministers being formed to oversee the circulation of pen drives are "baseless", and he questioned Gowda's morality to make such accusations.

"If Gowda proves that Chaluvarayaswamy, Priyank Kharge and Krishna Byre Gowda had held a meeting on this case and we as a team were given responsibility and we were involved in this case, I will apologise," he said and alleged that Gowda was being used to mislead and deviate from the main case of sexual abuse. (PTI)

While being taken from court in Hassan, Gowda on Friday spoke to media and alleged that Shivakumar is behind pen drive case, and a team

Aurangzeb's soul has crept into Congress: Yogi on inheritance tax

'Congress and the INDI alliance have no leader, policy or vision, and the party's manifesto is like the one of the Muslim League'

MALEGAON/PALGHAR (MAHA), May 18: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday took a swipe at the Congress over its alleged proposal to introduce inheritance tax, saying that Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's soul has crept into the grand old party.

He likened the inheritance tax to the 'jizya' tax imposed by Aurangzeb on non-Muslim citizens. Addressing rallies in Maharashtra on the last day of campaigning for the fifth phase of the Lok Sabha elections in the state, Adityanath also claimed that PoK will become part of India in six months after Modi becomes the prime minister for the third time.

During the rally in Malegaon town in Nashik district, where he canvassed votes for BJP's Dhule candidate and former Union minister Suresh Bhamre, Adityanath said his party was contesting elections not merely for power but to build a developed India. "There should be no doubt that Narendra Modi is returning once again as the prime minister," he asserted, adding that only the BJP and its NDA allies can provide security to the country.

The Congress and the INDI alliance have no leader, policy or vision, and the party's manifesto is like the one of the Muslim



League, he claimed.

Adityanath also alleged that the Congress wants to give reservations of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes communities to Muslims.

"Inheritance tax is like jizya imposed by Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb's soul has crept into Congress," Adityanath said.

He also claimed that for the Congress and its INDI alliance partners, winning polls is a way to loot the country, but for the BJP, it is to make India a strong power.

Post-2014, India's stature has risen in the world. But before that, borders were unsecured, and

there was infiltration and explosions by terrorists, he said.

Before 2014, there were riots before every Hindu festival, he added.

The construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya symbolises the sentiments of 140 crore people of India, the UP chief minister said, adding that Lord Ram will ensure that the opposition bloc doesn't come to power.

"I ask those who are pro-Pakistan to go and beg in that country. There is no place in India for those who shower praise on that nation," Adityanath said.

He said there should be no place for those who eat in India

but sing praises of Pakistan.

Pakistan's population is 23 crore, Modi has lifted 25 crore people out of poverty, he said.

On the infrastructure front, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has built an extensive network of highways under PM Modi's leadership, he said.

In another campaign rally for party candidate Hemant Savara in Palghar, the UP CM claimed that PoK will become part of India in six months after Modi becomes the prime minister for the third time.

He cited a media report, which stated that in the last three years, all dreaded terrorists in Pakistan were killed, and Indian agencies were involved in it.

"How can we spare those who killed our countrymen? We will not worship those who kill our people. We will do what they deserve," he said.

Adityanath further said earlier mafias in Uttar Pradesh spread anarchy, became a threat to women and businessmen and were hurdles to development.

"But, we ran a bulldozer and dealt with them," he said.

"Now nobody thinks of riots. Now no one offers namaaz on roads in Uttar Pradesh, and speakers have been removed from mosques," he said. (PTI)

Demand for statehood, Sixth Schedule in focus: Ladakh Independent candidate

KARGIL, May 18: Amid a three-cornered fight in Ladakh, Independent candidate Mohammad Haneefa Jan said his focus remains on the demands such as safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and statehood raised with the Union government.

Haneefa, who was a National Conference (NC) leader till recently, quit the party along with the entire Kargil unit to contest the Lok Sabha elections from Ladakh. While he belongs to Kargil, INDIA bloc's Tsering Namgyal and BJP's Tashi Gyalson are from Leh. It is believed that being the lone candidate from Kargil gives Haneefa an edge over the other two candidates.

Of the around 1,84,000 voters in Ladakh, Kargil has around 95,000 voters while Leh has around 89,000 voters, according to the local officials. With votes from Leh likely to split between Congress' Namgyal and BJP's Tashi Gyalson, Haneefa seems to have an advantage.

Haneefa told PTI that he is getting support from all social and religious groups in Kargil. His team is also campaigning in the Leh district with a four-point demand in focus.

The Ladakh seat was given to the Congress under the seat-sharing arrangement of the INDIA bloc. Namgyal, the leader of opposition in Leh Autonomous Hill Development Council, was announced as their candidate.

The entire unit of the NC in Kargil resigned citing pressure to support the Congress candidate. The lone unit of the Congress is also backing Haneefa.

INDIA bloc leaders slam PM on bulldozer remark; says oppn front govt will protect religious freedom

MUMBAI, May 18: Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and other INDIA bloc leaders on Saturday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his claim that the opposition alliance would bulldoze the Ayodhya Ram temple if voted to power, and said they were committed to protecting the religious freedom of all citizens and ensuring that the country runs as per the Constitution.

Kharge, Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar jointly addressed a press conference in Mumbai on the last day of the campaigning for the final phase of the Lok Sabha polls in the state on May 20.

These leaders responded to questions on PM Modi's charge that the opposition bloc will bulldoze the Ram temple, dilute quota for SC, ST and OBC categories and also restore Article 370

if voted to power.

Kharge accused PM Modi of inciting people over the issues "that the Congress will never do".

Thackeray said the INDIA bloc's government will complete the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, while Pawar said it will be the duty of their government to protect not just temples, but the places of worship of all religions.

Kharge also said reservation as enshrined in the Constitution will stay.

"We have never used a bulldozer on anyone. Modi has the habit of lying and inciting people about things which Congress will never do or which are impossible to be implemented," he said.

To a question on his party's stand on Article 370, Kharge said, "I am not answerable to Modi. We will implement what we have promised in

our manifesto."

Attacking the PM, he said, "Wherever he goes, he tries to create division, speaks of dividing society."

Kharge said Modi speaks of providing free ration of 5 kg to 80 crore people.

"Our government enacted the Food Security Act and it is bound to implement it. The Congress has now said that we will give 10 kg free ration," he said.

Pawar said the previous government had taken the decision of the Food Security Act, but now Modi is taking credit for providing 5 kg free ration.

Thackeray said the INDIA alliance has several prime ministerial faces, while the BJP has only one and even that is not working.

"Now they cannot replace the face at the flag

Modi's, dhakad, govt brought down wall of Article 370: Modi in Ambala

AMBALA, May 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi sharpened his attack on the Congress on Saturday and said it was his "dhakad" (strong) government that brought down the wall of Article 370 and as a result, Kashmir is now moving ahead on the path of development.

Modi said the history of the Congress has been of betraying India's forces and soldiers as he referred to the "Jeep scandal", the "first scam" during the grand old party's rule.

"Could a weak government have changed the situation in Jammu and Kashmir?" Modi asked the gathering, addressing his first Lok Sabha poll rally in Haryana.

Referring to Haryana contributing a sizable number of soldiers in the armed forces, he said when the Congress was in power, mothers in Haryana were a worried lot thinking about their children's safety.

"Have such things stopped now or not?" he asked the audience that responded with a loud "yes".

"Modi's dhakad (strong and decisive) government brought down the wall of Article 370 and Kashmir is now moving ahead on the path of development," the prime minister said.

In August 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre abrogated the provisions of Article 370 of the Constitution that had bestowed special rights on Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the erstwhile state into Union territories.

Modi said only 17 days are left for June 4, when the Lok Sabha poll results will be announced.

The Congress and its partners in the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) have drawn a blank in the first four phases of polling, he claimed.

Patriotism runs in the veins of Haryana, Modi said, adding that the "state understands anti-national forces. Therefore, each house in Haryana is saying -- phir ek baar" and the crowd responded, saying "Modi sarkar".

"When there is a dhakad government in the country, the enemy thinks 100 times before doing anything," the prime minister said.

He said Pakistan, which earlier had bombs in its hands, now has a "bheekh ka katora" (begging bowl) in its hands.

"When there is a dhakad sarkar, the enemy is terrified," Modi said.

Voting for the 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana will be held in the sixth phase of the seven-phase election on May 25.

Among those present at the rally were former Haryana chief minister and the BJP's Lok Sabha poll candidate from Karnal, Manohar Lal Khattar, the party's Ambala and Kurukshetra candidates, Banto Kataria and Naveen Jindal.

Earlier, Modi paid tributes to former Union minister Rattan Lal Kataria. Saturday marked the death anniversary of Kataria, who represented Ambala in the Lok Sabha. His wife Banto Kataria is the BJP's Lok Sabha poll candidate this time. (PTI)

end of poll campaign. We have decided what we should do when we get the majority," he said.

Attacking the BJP and PM Modi for calling his party "nakli" (fake) Shiv Sena, Thackeray said the BJP will also call RSS as 'Nakli Sangh'.

Citing BJP chief J P Nadda's interview, in which he said that BJP is capable and runs its own affairs, while the RSS is an ideological front and does its own work, Thackeray said, "BJP wants to disassociate itself with an organisation that gave birth to it."

The "jumla era" will end on June 4 and "achhe din" will come when the INDIA alliance comes to power, the Sena (UBT) chief said.

He accused the BJP-led government of misusing of central probe agencies, and said the INDIA alliance government will restore the lost glory of Mumbai and Maharashtra. (PTI)

IMD said warm night conditions are likely in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and west Rajasthan over the next two-three days; high night temperatures are considered dangerous because the body doesn't get a chance to cool down

Stifling heat in northwest India to continue for another five days

NEW DELHI, May 18: The extreme heat scorching large parts of northwest India will continue for another five days, with Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh predicted to bear the maximum impact.

A brutal heat wave swept swathes of north India on Friday, with the maximum temperature soaring to a scorching 47.4 degrees Celsius in southwest Delhi's Najafgarh, the highest this season in the country so far.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday predicted a severe heat wave over the plains of northwest India during the next five days and a heat wave over the east and central regions during the next three days.

The Met office also issued a red warning for Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and west Rajasthan, stressing the need for "extreme care for vul-

nerable people".

It issued an orange alert for east Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and emphasised "high health concern" for vulnerable people, including infants, the elderly and those with chronic diseases.

The Met office said high humidity could add to people's inconvenience in Goa and sub-Himalayan West Bengal.

The IMD also said warm night conditions are likely in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and west Rajasthan over the next two-three days. High night temperatures are considered dangerous because the body doesn't get a chance to cool down.

Increasing nighttime heat is more common in cities because of the urban heat island effect, in which metro areas are significantly hotter than their surroundings.

In view of the general elections in India, experts have warned of an



increased likelihood of heat-related illnesses in people exposed to the sun for prolonged periods or engaging in heavy work.

Researchers at Climate Central, a US-based group of climate scientists, said 543 million (54.3 crore) people in India will experience at

least one day of extreme heat during May 18-21.

"Human-caused climate change has made this intense heat much more likely. The high overnight temperatures make this event particularly alarming," said Andrew Pershing, vice-president for sci-

ence at Climate Central.

Heat waves can be deadly, with the elderly and children particularly at risk of heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

According to the World Health Organization, more than 1,66,000 (1.66 lakh) people died as a result of heat waves between 1998 and 2017.

Extreme temperatures can also impact economies. People are less productive during hot weather, even if they work indoors, while children struggle to learn in extreme heat. A 2022 study said extreme heat resulted in labour productivity loss of USD 2.1 trillion equivalent in 2017.

On Friday, maximum temperatures surged to 47.4 degrees Celsius in Najafgarh and 47.1 in Haryana's Sirsa.

According to India Meteorological Data (IMD) data till 7:30 pm,

Najafgarh was the warmest place in the country.

Before this, Kalaikunda in the Gangetic West Bengal region had recorded a high of 47.2 degrees Celsius on April 30.

The threshold for a heat wave is met when the maximum temperature of a weather station reaches at least 40 degrees Celsius in the plains, 37 degrees in the coastal areas, and 30 degrees in the hilly regions, and the departure from normal is at least 4.5 notches.

A severe heat wave is declared if the departure from normal exceeds 6.4 notches.

April witnessed record-smashing maximum temperatures in east, northeast, and southern peninsular India, prompting health warnings from government agencies and a few states to suspend in-person classes in schools.

Several places recorded their

highest-ever April day temperatures, with the mercury soaring to 47 degrees Celsius.

At least two people died in Kerala due to suspected heatstroke during this period.

On Wednesday, a group of leading climate scientists said similar heat waves could occur once every 30 years, and these have already become about 45 times more likely due to climate change.

The scientists from the World Weather Attribution group emphasised that heat waves intensified by climate change are making life much tougher for people living in poverty across Asia.

The IMD had earlier warned of extreme heat in India during the April-June period, coinciding with the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections that end on June 1. (PTI)

Of strawberry shakes, drives and four newspapers a day: Ruskin Bond turns 90

LANDOUR (UTTARAKHAND), May 18: Old writers never die, they simply go out of print, says India's storyteller through the decades Ruskin Bond as he turns 90 on Sunday, adding with his famed self-deprecating wit that 99 per cent of his tribe are forgotten in the long run. The companionship of his adopted family, drives on the serpentine Landour-Mussoorie route, frothy strawberry milk shakes, shelves filled with books to read and a handy notepad to write down his daily musings... they were and are just a few of his favourite things. Spending most of his days at his picturesque home Ivy Cottage in the quiet cantonment town of Landour, a short drive from the noisier Mussoorie, the twin towns' most famous resident shows little signs of ageing. High blood pressure and dwindling eyesight aside, his childlike enthusiasm is intact as he discusses life, old age, writing, food and everything in between. "Ninety-nine per cent of writers are forgotten in the long run. We are writing for posterity but nobody remembers us afterwards... I am happy if my family remembers me and a few readers get some pleasure out of my writing but it is very easy for a writer to disappear, to go out of print," Bond told PTI in a rare interview at his home, often breaking into laughter at his own answers. The ace raconteur makes light of his celebrity status and of being India's favourite children's author with more than 500 titles, including short



stories, essays and novellas, since his debut novel "The Room on the Roof" in 1956. "They say 'old soldiers never die, they simply fade away'. Even old writers never die, they simply go out of print," Bond laughed. His latest "Hold on To Your Dreams", published by Penguin Random House India (PRHI), offers a unique glimpse into Bond's personal space and everyday life -- memories of his boyhood, his friends, lost love, moments of joy, anguish, triumphs and tragedies. He became a writer almost by accident. Bond said didn't aspire to become one, at least initially. His first two ambitions, and he failed miserably at both, were to become an actor or a tap dancer. "I wanted to be an actor, that never happened. I wanted to be a tap

dancer, never had the figure for it. Then I realised I could write. I was a great bookworm. I grew up on books. Then I thought this is the best thing to do. Nothing better than a book, then why not write a few. Join the brigade of authors, so I did." At 90, Bond continues to be a voracious reader with his nose either in the books or newspapers -- quite literally -- due to his poor eyesight. "I am a newspaper addict. In fact, I get irritated when I don't get my newspaper early in the day. I read four newspapers a day. Books, I finish two-three of them a week easily. I read biographies, history, if it is interesting, crime thrillers for entertainment, and read classics... I have a fairly wide range of interest in books," he added. Born to British parents Edith Clarke and Aubrey Bond in 1934 in Kasauli, Bond was only four years

old when his mother separated from his father and married an Indian. Though Bond's custody was handed to his father, he soon relocated to his grandmother's house in Dehradun after his father lost his life to jaundice. Bond grew up in Jamnagar, Shimla, New Delhi, and Dehradun. He finally made Landour his home in 1963. The quiet mountain town has for years been attracting fans hoping to have a glimpse of the star author sipping tea at the famous Chaar Dukaan, a string of four shops somewhere on a winding road, or grab a fleeting look at him through the window of his bright yellow room. In fact, when Bond's grandson Sidharth created his Instagram account, which in no time amassed over two lakh followers, Bond jokingly said, "I hope they all don't turn up here together one day". "Lots of people come, knocking at the door, ringing the bell, wanting to meet me. Now, how can I spend all day meeting them? Still, I meet people sometimes when I can," said Bond. Till the Covid pandemic in 2020, Bond was a regular at book signing sessions in Mussoorie's Cambridge Book Depot. Those visits have become infrequent but Bond fans still inquire at the shop about when he might come next. Bond has received numerous awards and honours, including Sahitya Akademi Award for English writing in 1992, the Padma Shri in 1999, the

Padma Bhushan in 2014 and the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship in 2021. Having lived all his life in India, barring the four years that he spent in the Channel Islands and London, Bond, who has always identified himself as an Indian and nothing else, admits that even now some people take him for a foreigner in the country. Ever the storyteller, he recalls with humour a visit to Odisha's Konark Sun temple. "They wanted to charge me extra because they said I was a foreigner. They charge extra from foreigners for entry. I said 'I am not a foreigner, I am an Indian', but then to avoid an argument I paid extra. And behind me came a sardar ji, he had a British passport but they let him in. He wasn't charged extra because he didn't look like a foreigner," he laughed. Bond said he leads a happy and content life and doesn't think twice in indulging in things he likes, be it slurping his favourite strawberry milk shakes or going on shorts drives with his grandchildren. Bond also scrupulously follows his doctor's advice. He gave up on his favourite tippie vodka but isn't a teetotaler and "chota, chota whiskey pegs" is his current favourite. "The doctor tells me to cut down on salt as well. But I can't give up pickle. This morning only I had haldi pickle on bread toast. Very nice," said Bond, whose favourite all time delicacy is Kashmiri style 'mutton kofta curry'. (PTI)

India, UK review implementation of 10-year roadmap

NEW DELHI, May 18: A comprehensive review of the India-UK 'Roadmap 2030' was undertaken during Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra's two-day visit to London, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Saturday. The two sides also agreed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in areas of trade, defence and security, science and technology and people-to-people exchanges. The foreign secretary visited the UK from May 16 to 17 to attend the 16th round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between the two sides. In 2021, India and the UK adopted a 10-year roadmap to expand ties in the key areas of trade and economy, defence and security, climate change and people-to-people connections among others. At the FOC, the foreign secretary held talks with Sir Philip Barton, the permanent under-secretary at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Kwatra also held meetings with Minister of State (Foreign Office) Lord Tariq Ahmad, MoS for Defence Procurement James Cartledge, NSA Sir Tim Barrow, Home Office Permanent Secretary Matthew Rycroft, Chief Trade Negotiator Crawford Falconer and Senior Foreign Policy Advisor to the UK prime minister, John Bew. The MEA said both sides discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and regional and global issues of mutual interest. "The foreign secretary and permanent under-secretary undertook a detailed review of the Roadmap

2030," it said. "Welcoming good progress across all pillars, they underscored their interest to raise the level of ambition and agreed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation including in trade and economic, defence and security, science and technology, people-to-people ties and mobility, energy, and climate change, as well as health," the MEA said in a statement. It said India and the UK share a comprehensive strategic partnership which has been strengthened across all domains through regular high-level political exchanges and meetings of bilateral institutional mechanisms. The India-UK relationship was elevated to the comprehensive strategic partnership in May 2021. The two sides are currently negotiating a free trade agreement. Both sides are also keen to expand cooperation in the maritime sphere. In June 2021, the UK posted a liaison officer at the Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre (IFC) that has emerged as a key hub in tracking movements of ships and other developments in the Indian Ocean region. The UK joined a select group of countries such as the US, Australia, Japan and France to deputise officials at the Gurugram-based facility. The Indian Navy established the IFC-IOR in 2018 to effectively keep track of the shipping traffic as well as other critical developments in the region under a collaborative framework with like-minded countries. (PTI)

Education, jobs and ending discrimination main issues, says transgender icon

SHIMLA, May 18: Abuse by students and reluctance on the part of teachers to take action compelled her to drop out of school after class IX, says Maya Thakur, the transgender icon of the election department of Himachal Pradesh's Solan district. Hailing from the Kothi village in Kunihar area of the Solan district under Shimla parliamentary constituency, Thakur said that the situation had become so grim that villagers started pressurising her family to "throw her out". She was perhaps the only transgender among 35 belonging to the third gender in the state, who gathered the courage to speak up. "When I used to tell my family members about the mal-treatment and discrimination in the school to an extent that I was not allowed to use the toilet, they thought I was making excuses to skip the school. Given a chance, I would like to resume

my education," she said, lamenting that she faced discrimination at "every step in life". "Education, jobs and ending discrimination against transgenders are our main issues. There are transgenders who wish to study, become teachers, lawyers, join the police and excel in other spheres of life but when we apply for jobs, the response is 'will tell you if there is any scheme for you'. "I would appeal to voters, especially the transgenders, to vote for employment, safety and education and elect good people who could work for development and welfare of the people," she said. "I was born as a male but identified myself as a woman. My identity is that of a transgender woman, we are unisex and not eunuchs," she told PTI, adding that they are not accepted in society as people consider them eunuchs and maintain distance.

The situation is still better in south India as compared to the north, and there is a need to spread awareness for social acceptability for transgenders, who have the right to live a life of their choice, she said. She also blamed the police for not registering their complaints against high handedness. Thakur, who earlier worked at an NGO in Delhi, advocates for lessons on transgenders in educational curriculum on the lines of countries like Canada, which provides for the right to an educational environment free from discrimination and harassment and use of bathrooms that correspond with their gender identity. The eunuch culture of extorting money by threatening or cursing should be stopped, she said. Besides, the practice of eunuchs taking away transgenders or harassing them, and people indulging in such acts should attract legal action, she insisted. (PTI)

Matheran's popular toy train to don heritage steam engine look

MUMBAI, May 18: The iconic toy train that runs at Matheran, a hill station located around 100 km from Mumbai, will soon get a heritage makeover as the present diesel-run engine will be given the look of a steam engine of the past, officials said. The Central Railway (CR), which operates this narrow gauge train that passes through a difficult and steep mountainous terrain offering a picturesque view of a thickly wooded ridge and a valley, has decided to give a heritage look to it to revive the glorious past of this train, they said. But despite the new steam engine look, the train will continue to run on diesel, the officials added. "A special team of engineers and technicians have been working 24x7 at the Central Railway's workshop in Mumbai's Parel to create a model of the steam engine

hood and make necessary changes to ensure smooth running of the engine by also maintaining the heritage look," CR's chief public relations officer Swapnil Nila said. The entire process of giving the heritage look involved a lot of technical processes, including the removal of hoods of the existing engine, manufacturing and fitting of the new heritage steam locomotive-like hood, modifications in the present diesel engine, fitting of steam vapour and sound producing system and finally painting of the engine with the new heritage hood and decorating the same with stickers as per requirement, he said. "This initiative will not only enhance the overall experience for tourists but also contribute significantly to the local economy by promoting tourism and providing employment opportunities," Nila said,

adding that the undergoing modification work is likely to be completed next month. The Neral-Matheran Light Railway, which is one amongst the few heritage mountain railways in India has completed 116 years with the first toy train service run by steam engine commencing in 1907. The Neral-Matheran railway's construction started in 1904 and the two feet gauge line finally opened to traffic three years later. This train that runs on a 21-km long stretch between Neral and Matheran is quite popular, especially among children. But the services remain shut between Neral station located at the foothills and Aman Lodge, during the monsoon, but shuttle services between Aman Lodge and Matheran continue even during that period. (PTI)

Violence in Bishkek: Indian students asked to stay indoors

NEW DELHI, May 18: India on Saturday asked its students in Bishkek to stay indoors after the Kyrgyz capital city reported fights between some locals and foreigners. The Indian embassy in the Central Asian country said it is in touch with the Indian students and the situation is "calm" now. The mission asked Indian students in the city to stay indoors. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar advised the Indian students to stay in regular touch with the Indian embassy. "Monitoring the welfare of Indian students in Bishkek. Situation is reportedly calm now. Strongly advise students to stay in regular touch with the Embassy," he said in a post on X. The Indian embassy said, "We

are in touch with our students. The situation is presently calm but students are advised to stay indoors for the moment and get in touch with the Embassy in case of any issue." Police in riot gear were deployed in part of Kyrgyzstan's capital overnight as large crowds gathered in anger over an alleged fight between local and foreign people, The Times of Central Asia reported. The incident appeared to reflect tension over the presence of migrants, many from South Asia, in Kyrgyzstan, it said. The number of Indian students in Kyrgyzstan is estimated to be around 15,000. It was not immediately known how many of them are in Bishkek. (PTI)

More than 50 lakh large farmland trees vanished between 2018 and 2022 in India: Study

NEW DELHI, May 18: More than 50 lakh large farmland trees vanished between 2018 and 2022 in India, partly due to altered cultivation practices, revealing a "concerning trajectory," new research published in the journal Nature Sustainability has found. Researchers said that "an observable trend was emerging" wherein agroforestry systems are being replaced with paddy rice fields, even as a certain loss rate could be found to be natural. Large and mature trees within these agroforestry fields are removed, and trees are now being cultivated within separate block plantations typically with lower ecological value, they said. Block plantations, usually involving fewer species of trees, were found to have increased in numbers which some villagers from Telangana,

Haryana, Maharashtra and other states confirmed via interviews. The team, including researchers from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, explained that the decision to remove trees is often driven by perceived low benefits of the trees, coupled with concerns that their shading effect, including that of Neem trees, may adversely affect crop yields. Boosting crop yields also contributed to the expansion of paddy rice fields, further facilitated by water supply which was augmented by the establishment of new boreholes, the authors said. "This finding is particularly unsettling given the current emphasis on agroforestry as an essential natural climate solution, playing a crucial role in both climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, as well as for

livelihoods and biodiversity," the authors wrote. Agroforestry trees are a vital part of India's landscapes as they generate socio-ecological benefits, along with being a natural climate solution owing to their ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the air. However, despite their importance, the lack of robust monitoring mechanisms has contributed to an insufficient grasp of their distribution in relation to management practices, as well as their vulnerability to climate change and diseases, the researchers said. For the study, the team used AI-based deep learning models for detecting individual non-forest trees for each year. By tracking the tree crown over the years, they then analysed the changes. Crowns of multiple trees together form a canopy. The researchers mapped about 60

crore farmland trees, excluding block plantations, and tracked them over the past decade. They found that around 11 per cent of the large trees, each having a crown size of 96 square metres and mapped in 2010/2011, had disappeared by 2018. "Moreover, during the period 2018-2022, more than 5 million large farmland trees (about 67 square metres crown size) have vanished, due partly to altered cultivation practices, where trees within fields are perceived as detrimental to crop yields," the authors wrote. The researchers clarified that while the findings may appear to contradict official reports and studies showing that tree cover has increased in recent years, they reported only gross losses and did not look at tree gains as a separate class. (PTI)

Climate change likely to impact people with brain conditions: Study

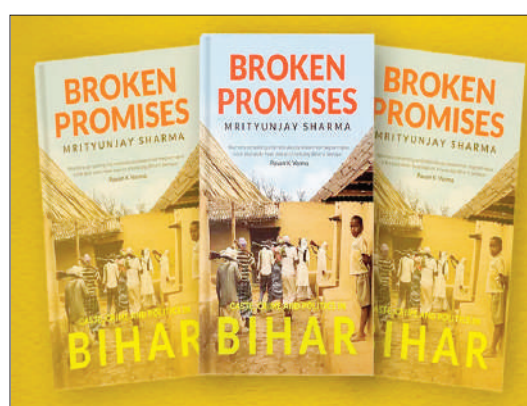
NEW DELHI, May 18: Climate change is likely to negatively affect the health of people suffering from brain conditions such as migraine and Alzheimer's, new research published in The Lancet Neurology journal has found. Extreme temperatures, both low and high, and greater changes over the course of the day -- driven by climate change -- were shown to have an impact on brain diseases, explained lead researcher Sanjay Sisodiya from the University of College London's Institute of Neurology, UK. "Night-time temperatures may be particularly important as higher temperatures through the night can disrupt sleep. Poor sleep is known to aggravate a number of brain conditions," he said. The study, reviewing 332 papers published from around the world between 1968 and 2023, looked at 19 different nervous system conditions, including stroke, migraine, Alzheimer's, meningitis, epilepsy and multiple sclerosis. The researchers found an increased number of admissions, disabilities or deaths resulting from a stroke due to higher temperatures or heatwaves. They also said that people having dementia are vulnerable to damage from extreme temperatures and extreme weather events such as floods and wildfires as cognitive impairment can limit their ability to adapt to environmental changes. (PTI)

POCSO court convicts 2 for raping 14-year-old girl, burning her in coal furnace

JAIPUR, May 18: A POCSO court in Rajasthan's Bhiwar district on Saturday convicted two men of gang raping and killing a 14-year-old girl by throwing her in a coal furnace in August last year. The court also acquitted seven other accused who were accused of destroying evidence. Special Public Prosecutor Mahaveer Singh Kishanawat said that the court will pronounce punishment on Monday. He said that an appeal against the acquittal would be made. The incident had become a political issue with the BJP, which was in opposition at that time, targeting the then Congress government over crime against women. "The court today held Kalu and Kanha guilty of gang-raping and killing the girl. Seven people, three women and four men, who were accused of destroying evidence, were acquitted," Kishanawat said. A 14-year-old girl was murdered and she was thrown in a coal furnace in the Kotri police station area in August last year, police said. Kotri now falls in the newly created Shahpura district. Police had arrested the two accused, who were from the Kalbelia tribe and were involved in making coal in furnaces there, in connection with the incident, they said. The girl went missing while she had gone to graze cattle on August 2 last year. The two accused gang-raped and threw her into a coal furnace in the night, police said. After the gang rape, assuming that the victim had died, the accused threw her in the furnace. However, the forensic report showed that the girl was alive when she was thrown. She died due to burn injuries, they said. (PTI)

Lok Sabha, 2025 assembly polls will unveil Bihar's political landscape: Book

NEW DELHI, May 18: Bihar has been the only state in the Hindi heartland where the BJP hasn't ever been able to secure a majority on its own but the 2024 Lok Sabha and the assembly elections next year will unveil the political landscape of the state, says a new book. In "Broken Promises: Caste, Crime and Politics in Bihar", Mrityunjay Sharma tells the story of Bihar's plunge into an abyss of crime, corruption and economic ruin during the tumultuous decade of the 1990s, often referred to as the 'jungle raj' years. Sharma traces the post-Independence socio-politics of Bihar and the momentous events leading up to the '90s - the unravelling of long-standing Congress governments, the rise of OBC assertion with Lohiaite politics, the JP movement that put the spotlight on young leaders like Lalu Yadav and Nitish Kumar, Karpoori Thakur's reservation formula, the rise of Naxal movements and the entry of socialist governments. The author says Bihar is the only state in the Hindi heartland where the BJP hasn't ever been able to secure a majority on its own. "While in Uttar Pradesh, which at many levels seems similar to Bihar, the BJP has been able to secure decisive mandates in successive elections. The Hindu consolidation that seems to work well in Uttar Pradesh seems to bow down to caste considerations in Bihar," he says. He argues that the current uncertainty surrounding Nitish's future leaves Bihar at a crucial political crossroads. "The 2024 general elections and 2025 state elections will unveil the political landscape of Bihar, a region that has never succumbed to political complacency," Sharma says.



According to him, Nitish has long been twisting and tossing to find a comfortable footing in Bihar and national politics and his political challenges seemed no less than his administrative challenges. He says Nitish strongly believed in the political dictum that you have to be in power first to be able to do anything good. "It may be the inclination to this principle that led him to concentrate power in himself and thus avoid any dangers to his party and government," the author claims. In a state where every regional party associated itself with a particular caste, such as the RJD with Yadavs, the LJP with Paswans, and the JMM with Advaitis, Nitish took all possible measures not to be perceived as a Kurmi-centric party, the book, published by Westland, says. Even later, the new party entrants in Bihar politics such

as the RLSP (Rashtriya Lok Samta Party), the VIP (Vikasheel Insaan Party) and the HAM (Hindustani Awam Morcha) would identify themselves with the specific castes of Kushwaha, Mallah and Musahar respectively, it says. Sharma also writes that Nitish slowly reined in the influence of strong personalities within the party, thus reducing the scope for multiple power centres. "Unlike its predecessors, the JD(U) never suffered a split and was hardly affected when even significant names such as its Samata Party-founding partner George Fernandes or JD(U)-founding leader Sharad Yadav were shunted out. "Nitish became both the president of the party as well as the leader of house legislators. Ironically, in this case, he followed all other regional parties in making the JD(U) an individual-centric party. He also made sure that the individual was him," he adds. The author says that coalitions have rarely had such longevity as has been seen in Bihar. "Coalitions are delicately balanced partnerships and depend on a number of factors, such as the relative strengths of parties, overlap and contrast in messaging and vote banks, the electoral advantages of going alone versus as a coalition, and personal equations between senior leaders of the coalition," he writes. Sharma says the period from 1990-2005 was a long and tragic one in the recent history of Bihar. "Ironically, tragedies often make for the most compelling stories. My book is a humble attempt to give the unfamiliar reader a chance to understand what it actually meant to live through the 'jungle raj' years of Bihar and how it pushed Bihar forever into the realm of irredeemable ignominy," he says. (PTI)

FEASIBILITY STUDY AND DETAILED PROJECT REPORT FOR ELIMINATION OF LEVEL CROSSING

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/79 of 2024; Dated: 15-05-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

SN.1. Brief Description of Item: Feasibility study and detailed project report for elimination 15 nos of Level Crossing by provision of ROBU/UB under the jurisdiction of Sr. DENVR/Lumding in Lumding Division.

Tender Value: ₹63,13,513.00; **Earnest Money:** ₹1,26,300.00. E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 10-06-2024 and opened at 15:00 hrs. on 11-06-2024. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 10-06-2024 in website <http://www.iregs.gov.in>.

ORR/Works, Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

"Serving Customers with a smile"

Pieces of mosaic come together gradually: George Miller on 'Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga'



NEW DELHI, May 18: It is hard to predict how a film will turn out while stepping into the story but one hopes that it means something to the audience, says filmmaker George Miller ahead of the global release of "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga".

Starring Anya Taylor-Joy and Chris Hemsworth, the film continues Miller's dystopian "Mad Max" franchise and tells the origin story of Furiosa, a character he introduced through Charlize Theron in his 2015 blockbuster "Mad Max: Fury Road".

"You can't anticipate the end result. You can theorise about what you want it to be, but as you go through the process, gradually, the pieces of the mosaic come together, and you end up with the film that you hope means something to an audience," Miller told PTI in an interview.

Taylor-Joy has stepped in for Theron in the new movie, which had its world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival on Wednesday and received a standing ovation of over seven minutes. The film will release globally on May 23. Considered one of the most original and genre-bending directors today, the 79-year-old Australia-born filmmaker said with "Fury Road", he

wanted to make a story that was a continuous chase and also picks up all the backstories of the Mel Gibson-starrer past three movies -- "Mad Max" in 1979, "Mad Max 2" in 1981 and 1985's "Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome".

Miller, also known for "Babe", animated film "Happy Feet" and "Three Thousand Years of Longing", said he decided to reboot the franchise in 2015 because "the tools of filmmaking are quite different in the digital age".

"I thought you could do things that you could never do in the past," he said, adding that he wanted to make something where conflict was human because "most stories are allegorical and somehow interact with the zeitgeist".

"In this case, it was five wives, who basically, as has often happened in history, are the breeding stock of a tyrannical guy, Immortan Joe, (who's) sitting on top of the dominance hierarchy with all the wealth of the wasteland. The most important currency is water and looking for heirs. It's a story told over and over again in all cultures throughout history," he said.

The filmmaker said Furiosa was born out of an idea of a female saviour who would rescue these five wives from Immortan Joe.

"If it was a male warrior taking them away, that's a completely different story than if it's a female. So that's what gave rise to Furiosa. Then, we had to go to her backstory. Where is she taking them? She's taking them to the place that was once her home, a place called Green Place of Many Mothers..."

The new film will show Furiosa's childhood and how she is snatched from her home at a young age and battles to go back.

Miller said both "Fury Road" and "Furiosa" play out differently because his action is always rooted in the storytelling. "The idea is not a game where you're trying to top yourself. You always go back to the unfolding of the story, the dynamics of the story, and that will tell you the best way to render each of one of the sequences or events. So it's not saying, 'Oh, let's do another action movie and let's top the action that we're doing.' It's always story driven."

While "Fury Road" had long set pieces with action playing out in real time, "Furiosa" has sequences that take place over 18 years from when she's a 10-year-old taken away from home until she becomes Furiosa, a road warrior. "It's got a different rhythm. If it was music, a symphony, it would have different structures as this one does... It's always the story that defines what you're going to do."

Stories of conflict between Theron and her "Fury Road" co-star Tom Hardy are part of movie lore now with both the actors later acknowledging the tension and even Miller has spoken about it in interviews. (PTI)

Cannes 2024: Aishwarya Rai Bachchan walks in blue-silver gown in second appearance



CANNES, May 18: In her second appearance at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan once again opted for a gown by designer duo Falguni Shane Peacock.

Aishwarya wore a shimmering blue and silver gown as she walked the red carpet on Friday for the screening of acclaimed filmmaker Yorgos Lanthimos' latest feature "Kinds of Kindness", starring two-time Oscar winner Emma Stone.

The outfit boasted a sweeping trail and bold, dramatic shoulders, featuring metallic fringe. The actor had a cast on her right hand that she has been wearing for an unspecified injury.

A regular at the Cannes Film Festival for the past two decades, Aishwarya debuted at the 2024 edition on Thursday with a gown by Falguni Shane Peacock, who are also attending the film gala.

The actor struck a pose in the monochrome gown adorned with 3D metallic elements and golden accents while walking the red carpet. She was attending the premiere of Hollywood legend Francis Ford Coppola's latest movie "Megalopolis", starring Adam Driver.

Besides Aishwarya, actor Kiara Advani made her first appearance at the French Riviera in a draped ivory crepe back satin dress from designer Prabal Gurung.

The 31-year-old actor was representing India at the Red Sea Film Foundation's Women in Cinema Gala dinner.

"Rendezvous at the Riviera," Kiara posted on Instagram along with a video from Cannes.

At the internationally recognized festival, several Indian movies and productions will be showcased. The highlight will be filmmaker Payal Kapadia's "All We Imagine As Light", which has been selected in the Competition section, where it will vie for the top prize, Palme d'Or.

British-Indian filmmaker Sandhya Suri's "Santosh" will be showcased at the 77th edition under the Un Certain Regard section, while "Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know", a short film by Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) students, has been shortlisted in the La Cinef Competitive section.

Karan Kandhari's "Sister Midnight" will be screened in Directors' Fortnight and Maisam Ali's compelling "In Retreat" in L'Acid.

A restored version of veteran filmmaker Shyam Benegal's 1976 film "Manthan" was screened on Friday under Cannes Classics, a section created 20 years ago that features celebrations, restored prints, and documentaries. (PTI)

Banita shares BTS pictures from 'Bridgerton 3': Wonderful experience

MUMBAI, May 18: Actor Banita Sandhu, who made her debut in Netflix romantic series "Bridgerton 3" as Miss Malhortra, uploaded a series of pictures from the sets on her Instagram.

Sharing the behind the scenes photographs, the actor called it a "wonderful experience" and how she was "grateful for the opportunity". "Had a ton of fun. So grateful to have had the opportunity to immerse myself in the Bridgerton universe, being able to dress up and join the world of @juliaquinnauthor's incredible characters." "Thank you @netflix and @shondaland for a wonderful experience that I will forever cherish. Wish I could keep the costumes though", the post read.

The post began with the picture of the actor wearing a white ball gown followed by snaps alongside her co-stars and the author of the show Julia Quinn. She also posted a photograph of Lady Whistledown's society paper.

Sandhu, 26, made her acting debut with 2018 romantic drama "October". Directed by Shoojit Sircar, the film also featured Varun Dhawan in the lead. (PTI)



It took a long time but it was worth it: Karuna Pandey on finding fame with 'Pushpa Impossible'

MUMBAI, May 18: The wait was worth it, says actor Karuna Pandey, whose popularity soared like never before due to her TV show "Pushpa Impossible". She says she has never experienced such a fan-following ever in her career.

In a career of almost 20 years, Pandey has played supporting to lead roles in many Indian television shows like "Woh Rehne Waali Mehlon Ki", "Yahan Mein Ghar Ghar Kheli", "Bhaage Re Mann", "Devanshi", among others. But "Pushpa Impossible", which went on air on Sony SAB in 2022, made her an overnight star. In the show, she plays the lead role of Pushpa Patel, a feisty middle-aged woman.

"The kind of popularity and fame that 'Pushpa Impossible' has given me, the love of the audience... I meet so many people who share their stories,

some women cry saying, 'I've changed their lives.' When I go to the market, some women kiss me."

"It took me a long time to reach here but better late than never. I did 'Jhalak Dikhlai Jaa' which I got because of the popularity of 'Pushpa'. So, there are just add-ons, this show has given me a lot. It took a long time but it was worth it," the actor told PTI in an interview.

According to Pandey, the reason behind the popularity of "Pushpa Impossible" is because many Indian women resonate with her character.

"A lot of women are either like Pushpa or they want to be like Pushpa. She does a lot of jugaad, she has this spice, innocence and at the same time, she is hopeful. She is not conventionally shy, she makes mistakes and has shortcomings as well. So all these things drive people towards us," she said.

Pandey, who did masters in theatre from Chandigarh in 2002, said when she came to Mumbai, the aim was to join the movie industry. She was set to make her debut with "Satte Pe Satta" fame filmmaker Raj Sippy's movie "Cool Baby Cool". But the film, also starring Vrajesh Hirjee and Rajpal Yadav, didn't see the light of the day.

"When I came to Mumbai, I started out with a film, which unfortunately didn't release. Then I took a turn towards the television industry in 2005. I've done a lot of characters -- negative, grey and positive. When I got 'Bhaage Re Mann' (2015), I was very happy because that was my first lead (role). The show did well and then I did 'Devanshi', in which I was the antagonist," the actor recalled.

When she auditioned for the titular part of 'Pushpa Impossible', the actor had doubts about whether she would be

able to bag the show or not.

"I was skeptical after giving the audition. I was not confident because I had done so many grey and negative roles. I was not sure if I'll get the role of Pushpa. Getting a positive lead was not easy but I got it," Pandey said.

The 43-year-old actor, who has appeared in movies like "Bollywood Diaries" and Nawazuddin Siddiqui-starrer "Motichoor Chaknachoor", said she is open to acting across all mediums but only if the role excites her.

"I would love to do films and web-series. If it's a good concept and role, then why wouldn't I do it? Cinema is my first love. If I get it (films), then good, and if not, then it's okay. I'm satisfied as an actor, I'm content," Pandey said.

Produced by noted actor-producer JD Majethia, "Pushpa Impossible" recently completed 600 episodes. (PTI)



SATWIK-CHIRAG PAIR ENTERS THAILAND OPEN FINAL



BANGKOK, May 18: India's premier men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty entered the final of the Thailand Open badminton tournament with an easy straight-game victory over Lu Ming-Che and Tang Kai-Wei of Chinese Taipei here on Saturday.

Asian Games gold medalist pair of Satwik and Chirag needed just 35 minutes to beat their world No. 80 opponents 21-11 21-12 in the semifinal

match of the Super 500 tournament at the Nimibutr Stadium here. Satwik and Chirag have a deep relation with Thailand as it was here five years back in 2019 that they had won their maiden super 500 crown. On Saturday, the Indian pair inched closer to regaining the title after reaching the summit clash again.

The Indian pair thus continued to make waves in the BWF World Tour after progressing to their fourth final of the season.

The duo had finished runner-up at Malaysia super 1000 and India super 750 before claiming the French super 750 in March. In the final on Sunday, the world number three Indian duo, the top seeds in this tournament, will be up against the Chinese pair of Chen Bo Yang and Liu Yi, who defeated Kim Gi Jung and Kim Sa Rang of South Korea 21-19 21-18 in the other semifinal on Saturday.

Satwik and Chirag had some low returns in the last couple of

tournaments. The Indian pair lost in the second round at All England Championships and then missed the Asia Championships due to an injury to Satwik. The Thomas Cup campaign was also not too fruitful as they lost a couple of narrow matches to top pairs. The final appearance will thus provide a major boost ahead of the Paris Olympics.

On Saturday, Satwik and Chirag were not really tested by Lu and Tang, who played well only

in patches but lacked the aggression and accuracy to trouble the Indians, who were a cut above their rivals.

In the opening game, Satwik and Chirag were up 3-0 but the Taiwanese pair managed to make it 5-4 before they started leaking points. Errors crept into their game as they went long a number of times, allowing the Indians to enter the break with an 11-7 lead.

Things didn't change after resumption as the Indians continued to gather point with their sharp placements. At 17-10, Chirag produced a power-packed smash as they gained nine game points when the Chinese went out twice.

The second game began on a close note as the two pairs moves 4-4 to 6-6. Satwik also produced an ambitious behind-the-back return only to spray it wide.

Leading 9-7 for the first time in the match, Lu and Tang, however, couldn't sustain the pressure as a fast and long rally ended at the nets for the Chinese. With Lu and Tang continuing to find the going tough, it was 15-10 in favour of the Indians, who grabbed 8 match points when the Chinese made another soft error at the net.

Chirag then stood at the front court and sealed it with a barrage of fast returns.

In the women's doubles, the fourth-seeded Indian pair of Tanisha Carsto and Ashwini Ponnappa will face top seeds Jongkolphan Kititharakul and Rawinda Prajongjai of Thailand in the semifinals later on Saturday. (PTI)

Nikhat, Minakshi strike Gold as India finish Elorda Cup with 12 medals



ASTANA (KAZAKHSTAN), May 18: Reigning world champion Nikhat Zareen and Minakshi Singh clinched a gold each as the Indian team concluded their Elorda Cup campaign with a best-ever tally of a whopping 12 medals here on Saturday.

Besides Nikhat and Minakshi's gold medals, Indian boxers won two silver and eight bronze to better their last edition's record of five medals.

Nikhat (52kg) continued her dominance in the prestigious tournament as she outclassed Zhazira Urakbayeva of Kazakhstan with an unanimous 5-0 scoreline to add yet another gold medal to her impressive resume.

Minakshi started the day for India with a bang when she defeated Uzbekistan's Rahmonova Saidahon 4-1 in the women's 48kg final to give India their

first gold medal of the competition. Meanwhile, Anamika (50kg) and Manisha (60kg) suffered losses in the final to end their campaigns with silver medals. Anamika fought valiantly but conceded a 1-4 loss against reigning world and Asian champion China's Wu Yu while Manisha faced a 0-5 defeat to Kazakhstan's Viktoriya Grafeeva.

Indian medalists:

Gold: Minakshi (48kg) and Nikhat Zareen (52kg)

Silver: Anamika (50kg) and Manisha (60kg)

Bronze (men): Yaiphaba Singh Soibam (48kg), Abhishek Yadav (67kg), Vishal (86kg) and Gaurav Chauhan (92+kg); (women) Sonu (63kg), Manju Bamboriya (66kg), Shalakra Singh Sansanwal (70kg) and Monika (81+kg). (PTI)

Felt sorry for Hardik, never nice to go through something like that: Boucher on boos

MUMBAI, May 18: Mumbai Indians coach Mark Boucher really felt bad watching skipper Hardik Pandya face hostile reactions and boos from the fans throughout the disastrous IPL campaign and admitted that it did affect the star all-rounder, something that the management would need to address in coming days.

Pandya, after two successful seasons as Gujarat Titans skipper was brought back as captain of Mumbai Indians, removing five-time champion skipper Rohit Sharma, a decision that didn't sit well with legion of fans.

"It wasn't great hearing all the boos. I felt sorry for Hardik as well. It's never nice to have to go through something like that," Boucher said after MI lost their last league game to Lucknow Super Giants by 18 runs.

"I do think that there are certain things that did affect individuals, which ultimately did affect the team," Boucher said after MI finished last for the second time in three years. Boucher felt the underwhelming performances and outside pressure did cloud his judgement.

"There's a lot of stuff going on around him that, maybe, clouded his thoughts every now and again, which is tough for him as a leader as well. He certainly had a lot of support within our dressing room as well and guys trying to help him out as well. But it's a tough thing to go through as a player," he said. Boucher said if any off-field issues are hampering the team, they require attention from management. "Those are the sort of things that, yes, we do need to sit down and address and hopefully make some good calls going forward, to address the off-field stuff that we can get it right on the field," he added. "Ultimately, this is a professional unit and players and staff and everyone alike gets judged about the performance that they put on the field. If there's stuff that's happening off the field which is hampering that, then we need to address it," he said.

Boucher backed Pandya to continue as MI skipper even though he admitted a thorough review of the team's abysmal performance would be assessed but no emotional decisions must be taken. (PTI)

Rohit master of his own destiny, who knows what will happen next year: Boucher

MUMBAI, May 18: Rohit Sharma is the "master of his own destiny" and Mumbai Indians head coach Mark Boucher isn't exactly aware about franchise's most successful former skipper's future plans ahead of the mega auctions before next edition of IPL. Rohit, the current all-format India captain was unceremoniously removed by the MI management earlier this year bringing in Hardik Pandya at the helm, a move that had massively backfired with the team ending as wooden spooners with only four victories to its credit.

Despite an underwhelming season, Rohit ended as team's top-scorer with 417 runs including a hundred and half-century and got a standing ovation from a packed Wankhede.

"To be honest, there hasn't been many conversations about Rohit's future at all. I spoke to him last night or the night before, just to do a little review of the season," Boucher told the media here at the Wankhede Stadium after MI's 10th defeat this season on Friday.

"I said, 'what's next for Rohit Sharma?' He said to me, 'the



(T20) World Cup'. (And) that's perfect. That's all I need to know about what Rohit Sharma's future is." "For me, he's a master of his own destiny. It's a big auction next season. Who knows what's going to happen? We'll just have to take each day as it comes," he said. Boucher said Rohit had a season of two halves as a batter and despite finishing as highest run-scorers for MI, the former skipper would be disappointed with the outcome.

"It was almost a season of two halves for him. He started off really well, was hitting the ball sweet in the nets, got a great hundred against CSK as well," Boucher said.

"We honestly thought that he was on a great path for us to go out there and get some good runs for us. Unfortunately, it's just the nature of T20 as well," he added.

The former South Africa wicketkeeper-batter said Rohit continued to adapt to the new

way of playing as an aggressive opener.

"He went out there trying to be aggressive, which is the new way of playing as an opening batter. He got a couple of low scores, which unfortunately didn't help us in that particular situation as well," he said.

"But he finished off with a fantastic knock — a competition of two halves for him. If you had to ask Ro, he'd probably say that it was an average season for him, especially with the start that he got off to," Boucher added.

Boucher admitted Mumbai Indians did not play up to their potential and losing some of their bowling strength even before the tournament began hurt their chances. He didn't name but not getting services of left-armers Jason Behrendorff did hurt Mumbai Indians.

"Disappointing, to say the least," Boucher replied when he was asked for his assessment of the season.

"I thought after the auction that we had, we (had) identified our bowlers as something we wanted to strengthen and we felt that we did that." (PTI)

Impact player rule's unavailability in T20 WC will be the differentiator, says Dhawan

MUMBAI, May 18: Shikhar Dhawan reckons that the game of cricket has undergone a lot of change this year but he does not see mindboggling scores being made in the upcoming T20 World Cup like the IPL in the absence 'impact player' option during the showpiece.

The impact player rule which allows teams to play an extra batter or a bowler is believed to have bolstered the number of high scores being recorded in this IPL, with totals in excess of 250 being recorded as many as eight times.

The bowlers' misery reignited the debate of creating a balance between the bat and the ball since wickets and conditions in IPL generally tend to favour batters.

"I feel as if the game itself has changed this year, which is why scores of 250 are being put on. The mindset has certainly changed," Dhawan told PTI.

"But when you go into the World Cup which won't have the impact player rule, the impact of it would be seen definitely. That is a differentiator and how we adapt to the conditions is what will matter the most."

"The mindset has changed after the introduction of the impact player. When a batter in the middle knows that there is batting available till number 8 and 9, he is going to take the aggressive route which is why so many high scores are being made," the aggressive Indian opener, who will host a TV show 'Dhawan Kareng' on Jio Cinema, said.

He said India have a strong squad at their disposal for the T20 World Cup in Americas and that the players enjoy their game under Rohit Sharma.

"All bases have been covered. The team looks balanced and India have got a very good chance (of winning the title)," he said.

"Rohit is a seasoned captain and the boys are very happy and comfortable around him. We have got a very good and experienced side with amazing youngsters and we have a very good chance to win the World Cup," Dhawan added. (PTI)

Coaching India could be exhausting, timing has to be right: Langer

MUMBAI, May 18: Being the India head coach is one of the biggest assignments in cricket world and former Australia head coach Justin Langer believes that it could be very exhausting if the timing isn't right for the incumbent.

Langer, who coached Lucknow Super Giants during this IPL season was asked multiple times about his aspirations to become India head coach, a post set to be vacated by Rahul Dravid after T20 World Cup in the Americas.

"It would almost be the biggest job in cricket — being the head coach of the Indian cricket team," Langer replied when asked if the Indian board had approached him for taking on the mantle.

"One, because of the huge volume of cricket, the huge expectation. It would be a great challenge. It would be great fun and it would be a wonderful opportunity to win ICC titles," Langer told the media here at the Wankhede Stadium after Lucknow Super Giants beat

Mumbai Indians by 18 runs in their last IPL match of the season. Langer cited immense pressure and workload that comes along being an India coach, while adding that it has not been too long since he held a similar role with Australia.

"But with all these things, the timing has got to be right. I did four or so years with the Australian cricket team. It is all encompassing. It is exhausting," said the 53-year-old.

"Rahul Dravid will probably tell you the same thing and Ravi Shastri will probably tell you the same thing. The pressure on winning for the Indian team is massive," he said.

He did drop a hint that he might not be mentally ready to commit 10 months a year for the job. "I'm sure the next person who gets the job will be really looking forward to the project," Langer added.

Langer likened pressure in IPL with that of a World Cup competition, adding that it is the best domestic competition in the world.



"I would say categorically — it is the best domestic competition in the world. I can't get over how tough the competition is. There's so many good players. There's so many good teams. There's so much pressure on performance," he said.

"I guess the biggest thing is, it is just really tough cricket. It is like a World Cup. It is honestly like the same sort of pressure as a World Cup, and I've been to a few World Cups now."

"That's a great credit to the IPL that we're able to keep producing such fun, entertaining, evolving cricket in front of a capacity crowd with noise every game. And there's a game on every night."

"I'm sad to go home. I'm going home on the weekend. I'm actually really sad to go home. I've loved it that much," he added.

Langer admitted World Cup selection for LSG players in their respective national sides could have been a distraction.

"I've had this sense that since the World Cup selection — and

there is always distractions every IPL — but things seem to change a little bit," he said.

"I'm not exactly sure what happened, but we had a couple of poor games and it is cost us. We played some really good cricket. We started off well. I was warned about May; everyone's up and about in April, but how you go through May is very important in the IPL."

"(It is) something that we did fall away, we'll sort of analyse it as well as we can, but it is been disappointing because we had a very good team. We missed a few injuries to our bowlers, which made a difference," said Langer while adding that dropped catches 'killed' his side this season.

Langer, however, backed Rahul despite consistent criticism over his batting strike rate. "I've heard the criticism, but you know, everyone does it differently. We can't all have, often if you play at a strike rate of 160 or 70 — it is very high risk cricket," Langer said. (PTI)

Rajasthan aim to snap losing streak and secure No 2 spot against table toppers KKR

GUWAHATI, May 18: Rajasthan Royals will be desperate to snap their four-match losing streak and finish in the top two when they meet table toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in an important IPL game here on Sunday.

Having secured the playoff berth with 16 points, Royals have started floundering at the business end of the tournament losing four matches on the trot.

Their batting flair has eluded them as they have not managed to cross the 150-mark in their last two matches, and with their star England opener Jos Buttler returning home for national duty, the Royals have big shoes to fill.

Their top three batters Yashasvi Jaiswal, skipper Sanju Samson and local hero Riyan Parag will have to shoulder additional responsibilities if they are to snap the losing streak and head to the playoffs finishing in top-two, that will give them two cracks to reach the final.

KKR (19 points), on the other hand, have already assured themselves a table top position after a washout against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad in the previous round handed them one point.

They will be high on confidence but at the same time they may have to guard against complacency.

Since their win in the return leg clash against Mumbai Indians at Eden Gardens on May 11, KKR have not played any match with the washout in Ahmedabad.

Travelling to Ahmedabad and then back home in Kolkata for a day's practice and again heading to Guwahati for the final league clash could be quite frustrating and break their rhythm of four-match winning streak.

It remains to be seen if the Gautam Gambhir-mentored side manage to hold on to the winning momentum without appearing to be



rusty. In between, they have lost their in-form opener Phil Salt, their second leading rungetter this season as the Englishman is

back home for the series against Pakistan in the build up to T20 World Cup next month. Salt and Narine, the two KKR openers, have scored 897 runs with seven fifties and

one century between them at strike rate of 182-plus each.

The duo's top form has been a key element in KKR's journey to their first playoffs since 2021.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz will be a like-for-like replacement for Salt but expecting him to make an impact like Salt straightway will be unrealistic.

The Afghan wicketkeeper-batter, who played 11 matches in 2023, has not played any match this season and his last outing was way back on March 18 in a T20I versus Ireland.

As KKR will be keen to keep their rhythm intact, the onus will be on the likes of skipper Shreyas Iyer, finishing duo of Rinku Singh and Andre Russell to fire in unison.

There is also some rain forecast as conditions are likely to be on the slower side and in the last match between Rajasthan Royals and Punjab Kings the ball seemed to stop.

Teams:

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Gus Atkinson and Allah Ghazanfar.

Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Abid Mushtaq, Avesh Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Donovan Ferreira, Kuldeep Sen, Kunal Singh Rathore, Nandre Burger, Navdeep Saini, Ravichandran Ashwin, Riyan Parag, Sandeep Sharma, Shimron Hetmyer, Shubham Dubey, Rovman Powell, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Trent Boult, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Yuzvendra Chahal, Tanush Kotion

Match starts: 7.30pm. (PTI)

Sunrisers aiming for second spot in IPL points table with win over Punjab Kings



HYDERABAD, May 18: High on confidence after making their first playoffs in three years, Sunrisers Hyderabad will aim for a second-place finish in the IPL points table when they take on Punjab Kings in their final league game here on Sunday.

Sunrisers Hyderabad, who had finished in the bottom rung in each of the last three editions of the IPL, came out all guns blazing this year to establish themselves as firm contenders for the title with their ultra-aggressive batting approach and skilful bowling.

The Pat Cummins-led side made it to the final-four a few nights back after their clash against Gujarat Titans at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium here was washed out.

Placed at the third spot with 15 points from 13 matches, SRH can reach a maximum of 17 points if they get the better of PBKS on Sunday.

However, if the struggling Rajasthan Royals manage to beat table-toppers Kolkata Knight Riders in the last league match, the Sanju Samson-led side will overtake SRH to take the second spot with 18 points.

The third-placed Sunrisers have been somewhat unlucky in their last six outings, winning just two while three matches ended in defeats and one match was a washout.

However, in their last completed contest, SRH had pulverised Lucknow Super Giants by 10 wickets with their explosive opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma delivering the goods.

With 533 runs in 11 matches and the best strike rate of 201.89 among batters, Head is in pursuit of the Orange Cap with only Virat Kohli (661 runs) and Rituraj Gaikwad (583 runs) ahead of him.

For SRH, it is important that other batters also find form as they seem to be relying heavily on their openers.

SRH will be keen to address the batting concerns as wicket-keeper-batter Heinrich Klaasen has lacked consistency in the last

few games, though Nitish Kumar Reddy has picked up well in the same period.

SRH would like to continue testing their bowlers in order to keep them prepared for the knockout stage, where they could face either Chennai Super Kings or Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the Eliminator, provided Cummins' side finishes third.

For PBKS, it will be an opportunity to bow out on a high after failing to make it to the final four again.

PBKS have lost the services of their England players, including stand-in skipper Sam Curran, who had played a decisive role in their five-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals.

With Curran returning home for national duty, India wicket-keeper-batter Jitesh Sharma will lead Punjab Kings in their final match of the season. It could be an opportunity for Jitesh to make an impression on the franchises, who are set for a mega auction before next year's IPL.

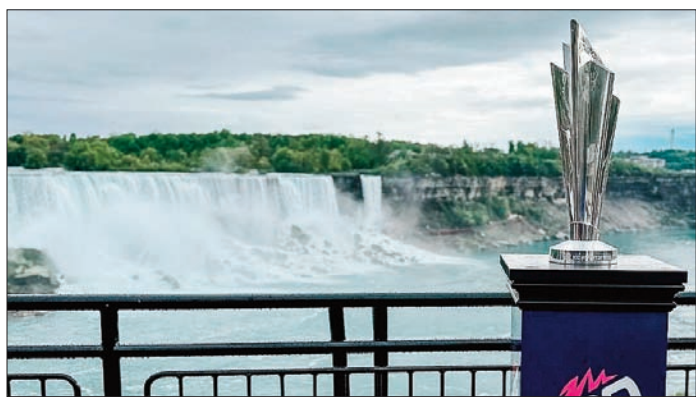
Teams:

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Abhishek Sharma, Travis Head, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Aiden Markram, Abdul Samad, Nitish Reddy, Shabbaz Ahmed, Pat Cummins (c), Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, T Natarajan, Mayank Markande, Umran Malik, Anmolpreet Singh, Glenn Phillips (wk), Rahul Tripathi, Washington Sundar, Upendra Yadav (wk), Jhathavedh Subramanyam, Sanvir Singh, Vijayakanth Viyaskanth, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Marco Jansen, Akash Maharaj Singh, Mayank Agarwal.

Punjab Kings: Matthew Short, Prabhsimran Singh (wk), Jitesh Sharma (c & wk), Sikandar Raza, Rishi Dhawan, Atharva Taide, Arshdeep Singh, Nathan Ellis, Harpreet Brar, Rahul Chahar, Harpreet Bhatia, Vidwath Kaverappa, Shivam Singh, Harshal Patel, Ashutosh Sharma, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, Shashank Singh, Tanay Thyagarajan, Prince Choudhary, Rilee Rossouw.

Match starts at 3:30pm IST. (PTI)

T20 World Cup: Majority of Indian players to leave for New York on May 25



NEW DELHI, May 18: The majority of the Indian players along with the jumbo support staff will be flying out to New York on May 25, with the rest leaving for the T20 World Cup only after the May 26 IPL final.

Earlier, the members of teams failing to qualify for the play-offs were supposed to leave for New York on May 21, two days after the final league game of the IPL on May 19 but it has since been learnt that there has been some change in plans and now the first batch will leave on May 25.

"The likes of skipper Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya, Suryakumar Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Rishabh Pant, Arshdeep Singh, Axar Patel are some of the players along with support staff who are expected to leave on May 25," a BCCI source told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

"Earlier, departure date for first batch was May 21 but since India

is playing only one warm-up game (vs Bangladesh on June 1), the players will get to spend some extra days at home," the source added. Only those players who are part of the IPL final will stay back and will leave for New York on May 27.

This will also give adequate time to the squad to reduce jet lag and have at least three to four quality net sessions before the Bangladesh warm-up game.

India will open their campaign against Ireland on June 5 in New York, followed by the marquee clash against Pakistan on June 9.

India squad: Rohit Sharma (Captain), Hardik Pandya (Vice Captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (WK), Sanju Samson (WK), Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Siraj. (PTI)

Gavaskar hails Rohit innings, positive sign ahead of T20 World Cup

MUMBAI, May 18: Rohit Sharma's return to form might have come too late for Mumbai Indians but it augurs well for him and the Indian team heading into the T20 World Cup next month, feels the legendary Sunil Gavaskar.

Following a 105 not out against Chennai Super Kings in the first-half of the season, Rohit struggled to make a fifty and got out for single digit scores four times in seven matches.

Rohit got his mojo back in their last match of the season when he smashed a 38-ball 68 studded with three towering sixes to delight everyone including the former India captain.

Well, that was such a nice thing to see. Because look, we know that Mumbai Indians can't qualify, but to see Rohit Sharma, the Indian captain for the T20 World Cup starting in about 15 days' time, bat-



ting the way that he has, it's very heartening," Gavaskar said on Star Sports Cricket Live.

"That's exactly what you want. You want Rohit Sharma to be setting the team off to a good start, so that the lower-order batters can come in and finish it off, poten-

tially getting 200-plus every time they play."

India will head to USA this month end and face Bangladesh in a warm-up match before beginning their T20 World Cup campaign against Ireland at New York on June 5. (PTI)

I didn't live up to standard but overthinking was not an option: Rohit



MUMBAI, May 18: India skipper Rohit Sharma acknowledged that he could not match the expected batting standards in the ongoing IPL but instead of indulging

in over-thinking, his endeavour was to stay in the right zone and keep working on his flaws.

The five-time IPL winning skipper endured a wretched form in the second-half of the season, struggling to cross even a score of 20 in six matches for Mumbai Indians.

"As a batter, I know I didn't live up to the standard. But, after playing for all these years, I know that if I overthink, I won't play well," Rohit said on JioCinema Match Centre Live.

He returned to form with a 38-ball 68 in their last match against

Lucknow Super Giants but MI ended up on the losing side and finished the season at the bottom of the table.

"All I try is to stay in a good mindset, in the right zone, keep practicing, and improve on all the flaws in my game. That's all I kept doing."

"Our season didn't go according to plan. We blame ourselves for this because we made too many mistakes during the season. We lost many games that we should have won, but that's the nature of the IPL. You get a few chances and

when those chances come, you must grab them."

The Indian skipper said they knew what their T20 World Cup-squad would be like and 70 per cent of the players had clarity about their roles going into the IPL.

"We thought a lot about the team we ultimately selected for the World Cup. The spinners, seamers, batters, and keepers, we knew before the IPL who we would take to the World Cup."

"The IPL performances for everyone can be up and down, so

we didn't focus too much on that. We needed to see the performances of certain players, but it was important for us to give everyone the clarity they needed."

"Everyone going into the IPL needed clarity of whether they would participate in the team and what their role would be so they could practice and play accordingly. All of these indicators we had shared with 70% of the team before the IPL."

India begin their T20 World Cup campaign against Ireland in New York on June 5. (PTI)

Impact player rule's unavailability in T20 WC will be the differentiator: Dhawan

MUMBAI, May 18: Shikhar Dhawan reckons that the game of cricket has undergone a lot of change this year but he does not see mindboggling scores being made in the upcoming T20 World Cup like the IPL in the absence 'impact player' option during the showpiece. The impact player rule which allows teams to play an extra batter or a bowler is believed to have bolstered the number of high scores being recorded in this IPL, with totals in excess of 250 being recorded as many as eight times.

The bowlers' misery reignited the debate of creating a balance between the bat and the ball since wickets and conditions in IPL generally tend to favour batters.

"I feel as if the game itself has changed this year, which is why scores of 250 are being put on. The mindset has certainly changed," Dhawan told PTI.

"But when you go into the World Cup which won't have the impact player rule, the impact of it would be seen definitely. That is a differ-

entiation and how we adapt to the conditions is what will matter the most."

"The mindset has changed after the introduction of the impact player. When a batter in the middle knows that there is batting available till number 8 and 9, he is going to take the aggressive route which is why so many high scores are being made," the aggressive Indian opener, who will host a TV show 'Dhawan Kareng' on Jio Cinema, said. He said India have a strong squad at their disposal for the T20 World Cup in Americas and that the players enjoy their game under Rohit Sharma.

"All bases have been covered. The team looks balanced and India have got a very good chance (of winning the title)," he said.

"Rohit is a seasoned captain and the boys are very happy and comfortable around him. We have got a very good and experienced side with amazing youngsters and we have a very good chance to win the World Cup," Dhawan added. (PTI)

BENGALURU, May 18: Echoing India skipper Rohit Sharma's sentiments, star batter Virat Kohli has criticised the Impact Player substitution rule and said it is "disrupting the balance" of the game.

The mid-innings substitution rule, adopted in the previous edition of the IPL, has sparked a row with Rohit expressing his displeasure in a podcast last month.

Now, Kohli has urged for a rethink of the rule.

"I agree with Rohit. Entertainment is one aspect of the game but there is no balance," Kohli said on Jio Cinema.

"I think it has disrupted the balance and a lot of people are feeling this way, not just me," he said.

Rohit in the podcast had said, "I'm not a big fan... It's going to hold back all-rounders. Cricket is played by 11, not 12 (players)."

Punjab Kings set the record for the highest successful chase in T20 history when they overhauled Kolkata Knight Riders' 262 with eight balls to spare.

Sunrisers Hyderabad also smashed the record for the highest-ever total in franchise cricket by posting 287/3 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

This edition has witnessed eight 250-plus



totals and Kohli felt the bowlers' pain.

"Bowlers are feeling like what they

should do," Kohli said.

"I have never experienced anything like

it where bowlers think they will concede four or a six on every ball.

"Not every team has a Bumrah (Jasprit) or the mystery of Rashid Khan," he said.

"I am telling you, with one extra batter there is a reason I am playing with 200-plus strike rate in the powerplays. I know there is a batsman waiting at No. 8 as well."

"We are playing a high level of cricket and it should not be that dominant in my opinion. There is a beauty about having an equal balance between bat and ball," Kohli added.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah has said that the Impact Player rule is a "test case", implemented to give two Indian players opportunity in a game.

He has also indicated that they would talk to the stakeholders for using it in future editions of the IPL.

"I am sure Jay (Shah) bhai has mentioned it already that they will review it and I am sure that they will come to a conclusion which brings the game into balance," said Kohli.

"As a batsman, I can say this rule is good but the match should be exciting. Only fours and sixes are not exciting in cricket. Exciting is that you can defend 160 as well," Kohli said. (PTI)