

6 WORLD

● Malawi's vice president and 9 others have died in a plane crash

● Bangladesh names Lt Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman as new Army chief

8 NATION

● PM Modi to travel to Italy this week for G7 summit

● Chandrababu announces Amaravati as sole capital city of Andhra Pradesh

Bharat First and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam to be guiding axioms of foreign policy: Jaishankar

Modi govt ministers get going



NEW DELHI, June 11: Signalling both change and continuity, India's new government, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a third consecutive term, got into work gear on Tuesday with cabinet ministers and ministers of state filing into their respective offices to assume charge.

A day after the much anticipated portfolios were announced and two days after Modi and 71 ministers were sworn in at a grand ceremony in Rashtrapati Bhavan, there were flowers and felicitations aplenty in the corridors of power. Some said it with prayers and a few slogans were heard too. NDA 3.0 'took office' a week after election results threw up a majority for the alliance with 293 seats, above the halfway mark of 272, with the BJP getting 240.

In a seamless transition from the previous government to the present one, the four big frontline portfolios stay the same -- Amit Shah for home, S Jaishankar for external affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman for finance and Rajnath Singh for

defence. Bharat First and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (The world is one family) will be the two guiding axioms of Indian foreign policy, Jaishankar said shortly after taking over. On ties with China going forward, Jaishankar said some issues remained along the border with that country and efforts will be made to resolve them. "Our focus with regard to China will be on how to resolve the remaining issues," he told reporters.

BJP president J P Nadda assumed charge of the health as well as the chemical and fertilisers ministries. Several ministers made initial statements as they took charge of their ministries.

Ashwini Vaishnav who continues to hold the key portfolios of railways and electronics and information technology, assumed charge as Information and Broadcasting minister in the presence of senior officials, including information and broadcasting secretary Sanjay Jaju.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi

has made service to the poorest of poor the motto of his life and the main aim of the government. He has taken measures for welfare of the farmers, youth and empowerment of women," Vaishnav told reporters. Donning his MeitY hat as he resumed charge of the ministry, he said the government will push ahead with its tech-driven agenda of cementing India's global lead in semiconductor and electronics manufacturing and as a technology and digital hub.

Jitendra Singh, who took office as Union minister of state (MoS) for personnel, public grievances and pensions at his North Block office, said good governance reforms undertaken in the last decade will continue to increase citizen-centricity and ensure ease of living for every citizen. Modi is in charge of the ministry.

"Last 10 years have witnessed a series of revolutionary governance reforms happening under the guidance of PM Modi, which were basically inspired by the spirit of 'minimum government, maximum governance' and increasing citizen centricity to bring ease of living for every citizen of the country," Singh told reporters. Jyotiraditya Scindia, appointed communications minister, said both the telecom sector and the India post division have key roles to play at the global as well as local stage. The minister recalled his previous tenure as the minister of state for communications about one and half decades ago. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM visits site for IIM in Kamrup

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday visited the proposed site for an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) that is to come up in the Marabhita and Dighalkuchi localities in Kamrup district. The Centre recently gave the final nod, paving the way for the establishment of the IIM. Approximately 574 bighas of government land have been selected for the upcoming premier management institute, the second in the northeastern region after IIM Shillong in Meghalaya.

The chief minister on Tuesday also visited the Rajdhar Bora Higher Secondary School at Azara and inspected the infrastructure and development activities being undertaken there. He also inspected the renovation works for the upcoming sub-district office at Jalukbari that is currently known as Haj Bhawan. Interacting with the media at Marabhita, Sarma said the final nod by the Centre for an IIM in the state is a matter of great happiness and pride for the people of the state.

"After the IIM becomes functional the city and its vicinity can take pride of having the country's four of the most prominent institutions of higher learning's --- an Indian Institute of Technology, an All India Institute of Medical Sciences, a National Law University and an Indian Institute of Management, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



VIP security up for major change in Modi 3.0; NSG, ITBP to be withdrawn

NEW DELHI, June 11: The VIP security setup of the Union government is expected to witness a major shift and overhaul with the new ministers taking charge and the task of guarding over a dozen high-risk persons by the NSG and the ITBP being transferred to other paramilitary forces, official sources said Tuesday.

The sources told PTI that a review of this important wing under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is expected to be undertaken soon and the covers extended to various political figures and candidates, ex-ministers, retired bureaucrats and some others will be either withdrawn, scaled down or upgraded. It has also been decided that the long-awaited (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Women shot dead in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 11: Unidentified miscreants shot dead a young woman in the wee hours on Tuesday in Diphu in Karbi Anglong.

The victim identified as Hukuri Tisso (23), was shot in the head. She had been staying at Ar-longlangso, 3 Km Lumding Road with her siblings. The deceased was the daughter of Sing Tisso and Lt. Kare Rongpharpi of Virvar Bher Rongpi Village in Dengaon in Karbi Anglong.

The father, Sing Tisso stated before the media that he had constructed the homestead for his daughters. His three daughters stayed there as they were pursuing their education here. He said that at around 1 am a person had entered the house from behind by digging a hole into the room where



his daughter Hukuri was sleeping, while another stayed outside.

Tisso said that his daughters had told him that on the previous day two men had conducted an inspection of the place and came into the compound asking for water and direction. When the incident happened the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NEET sanctity hit, says SC; seeks Centre, NTA response on plea for fresh exam

NEW DELHI, June 11: Observing that the sanctity of NEET-UG, 2024 has been affected, the Supreme Court on Tuesday sought responses from the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA) on a plea seeking holding of a fresh examination on grounds of alleged question paper leak and other malpractices.

The top court, however, refused to stay the counselling of successful candidates for admissions to MBBS, BDS and other courses. Taking note of the allegations, a vacation bench of Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah said what the NTA was supposed to do was sacrosanct. "Sanctity (of the exam) has been affected, so we need answers," he said.

Besides the Centre and the NTA, which conducts NEET-UG, the bench also issued notices to the Bihar government. There were allegations of malpractice in holding the exam in the state.

"How much time do you want...Immediately on the re-opening? Otherwise, the counselling will start," the bench said. It tagged the plea filed by Shivangi Mishra and nine other MBBS aspirants with a pending petition and asked the NTA to file the response in the meantime. The top court will resume regular hearings from July 8 after the summer vacation which commenced on May 20 comes to an end.

NEET-UG, 2024, was held on May 5 and results were declared on June 4. It was expected to be declared on June 14. The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) examination is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in



government and private institutions across the country. "Issue notice. In the meantime, the response will be filed by the National Testing Agency," the bench said.

It, however, did not agree to the submission of lawyer Mathews J Nedumpara, appearing for the students, that the counselling of students be stayed in the meantime.

"Let the counselling start, we are not stopping the counselling... We will not stop the counselling. If you argue further, we will dismiss this (the plea)," the bench told the advocate.

It took note of the submission that the fresh plea be tagged with a similar petition filed earlier on which a bench headed by CJI DY Chandrachud had issued notices to the Centre and the NTA on May 17 and that the plea was already listed on July 8. The court granted the prayer. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sonowal takes charge of Union ministry

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 11: Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal has taken charge of the Union ministry of ports, shipping and waterways.

Addressing the office bearers as well as the staff, the minister evoked confidence in the team for delivering goals and objectives with a vision to serve the people of this country. Sonowal reiterated that the commitment towards serving this country to become Viksit Bharat must be absolute and called upon his team to sustain their good work towards this end.

Speaking on the occasion Sonowal, said, "Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modiji, the ministry of ports, shipping and waterway have been doing some stupendous work towards empowering the maritime sector and bringing about its holistic development in our endeavour to become an economic powerhouse. We will continue to commit ourselves to the cause of nation building with the intent of Nation First as we move ahead towards achieving the ultimate (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Will they suspend over 230 MPs this time: Gaurav Gogoi's dig at Modi 3.0

NEW DELHI, June 11: The BJP's approach to parliamentary democracy will not change as long as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is at the helm but in footballing terms, the "wall of defenders" is now bigger and much more robust with over 230 INDIA bloc MPs in the Lok Sabha, says Congress' Gaurav Gogoi.

In an interaction with PTI editors at the news agency's headquarters here, Gogoi also predicted that the coalition NDA government will not last a full term, saying Modi's leadership style does not inspire confidence that he can complete five years successfully.

"I do see that with the 236 MPs of the INDIA bloc, we will have a Parliament where they cannot bulldoze bills, intimidate us, suspend us. They had suspended 146

MPs (last year), will they suspend 236 this time?" the deputy leader of the Congress in the previous Lok Sabha said. Gogoi dismissed suggestions that NDA allies TDP's Chandrababu Naidu and JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar gave in to the BJP on government formation, saying they have "extremely shrewd political minds" and should not be judged quickly as "only time will tell what their true intentions are".

Fresh from his Lok Sabha polls triumph from the BJP stronghold of Jorhat in Assam with a massive margin of over 1.44 lakh, the Congress leader said he does not expect the BJP's approach to parliamentary democracy to change till the time Modi is the prime minister. "He simply does not have the flexibility (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Improve quality of life of urban citizens: Minister

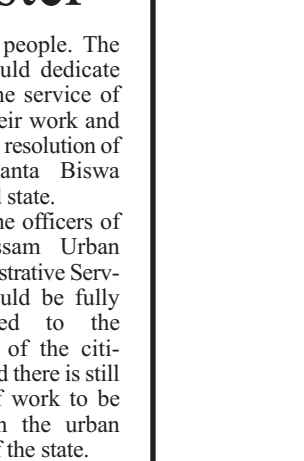
HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 11: State housing and urban affairs and irrigation minister Ashok Singhal on Tuesday held a meeting in the city with the newly appointed officers of the Assam Urban Administrative Service working as executive officers in municipalities and municipal corporations of the state.

Addressing the first batch of officers who were appointed as executive officers in various municipal bodies ahead of the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, Singhal said the present government has a clear goal to improve the quality of life of urban citizens.

The minister said the newly appointed officers should work tirelessly as 'representatives of transformation' for the overall development of the urban areas with the cooperation of the elected representatives of the municipalities,

OM SHANTI



RAISMODI NUNISA

Died on: 12-06-1971

We all remember you on your 53rd Death Day, May your soul be in everlasting peace!

- :: SONS ::**
- Dr. Motilal Nunisa, Shri Pradip Nunisa, Dr. Ruplal Nunisa and Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa
- :: DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW ::**
- Smti. Jayanti Nunisa, Smti. Prabhati Nunisa, Dr. Ritu Nunisa (W/o- Lt. Nirmal Nunisa (son) and Smti. Anima Nunisa
- :: DAUGHTERS ::**
- Smti. Usha Hojai and Smti. Alo Thoosen
- :: SONS-IN-LAW ::**
- Dr. Dhruva Hojai and Ramesh Thoosen and All grand children

Kooki, Hindi film from the state premiered at Cannes Film Festival on May 21

Junmoni Devi Khaund's Kooki to be released in India, Nepal on June 28

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 11: Junmoni Devi Khaund, producer of the Hindi film Kooki, on Tuesday announced that the movie would be released in India and Nepal on June 28.

Kooki is a Hindi film from the state, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, 2024 on May 21. The film narrates the story of a 16-year-old gang-rape survivor and the trauma she endures. The film has been directed by Pranab J Deka.

Addressing a meet at the Jorhat Press Club here on Tuesday, Khaund said that it was very encouraging that distributors from Nepal had approached her for distribution rights and that discussions were on with

distributors from UK, USA, Morocco, France and Monaco for a release two weeks after the June 28 release in India and Nepal.

"After the Cannes screening there was a lot of positive feedback about the movie, from producers, distributors, actors and others who had watched it in the market segment of the Cannes Film Festival, with many of them saying that the trauma of a gang raped 16 year old girl and how she picks up the threads of her life, is a universal theme which can be widely related to."

"I am a lawyer and have come across several such cases. The police catch the criminals, file charge sheets, lawyers fight the cases, if we win we are happy, but nobody really cares what happens to the girl

after that. How does she survive? Through the film we have tried to depict not just the struggles and sufferings of a rape survivor, but also attempted to provide a positive solution," Khaund said.

She further said that the stories of the victims had moved her to create a rough outline for the making of a movie, and story board was formed with the director Pranab J Deka and others, some of who came from Mumbai.

Khaund further said that they had made the movie in Hindi so that it catered to a wider audience and was not limited to the regional level. "It is time that movies made in the state compete with those made in Bollywood and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Sensex, Nifty settle almost flat amid volatile trade

MUMBAI, June 11: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended almost flat on Tuesday after a record-breaking rally as investors preferred to remain on the sidelines awaiting further triggers.

After trading in the positive territory for the most part of the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 33.49 points or 0.04 per cent to settle at 76,456.59 due to fog-end selling. During the day, it jumped 370.45 points or 0.48 per cent to 76,860.53. In a volatile trade, the NSE Nifty ended marginally up by 5.65 points or 0.02 per cent to 23,264.85.

Sensex and Nifty hit their all-time high levels in the early trade on Monday.

"After a notable rebound, the domestic market has stabilised, awaiting further triggers. With the resolution of uncertainties in government formation, attention has shifted back to global and domestic indicators. Concerns have risen regarding potential US rate cuts following last week's strong US job data, leading to an increase in US bond yields.

"However, FIIs have been net buyers lately. Investors are now gearing up for this week's policy decisions from the US Fed and the BoJ, as well as key inflation data from the US and India, seeking insights into the trajectory of rate cuts," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services,



said. Among the 30 Sensex companies, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Asian Paints, Reliance Industries, ITC, Sun Pharma, IICI Bank, Axis Bank and JSW Steel were the major laggards.

On the other hand, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, Maruti, NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra and UltraTech Cement were among the gainers.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.95 per cent, and midcap index rallied 0.74 per cent. Among sectoral indices, telecommunication rallied 1.93 per cent, oil and gas climbed 1.84 per cent, realty soared 1.04 per cent, energy jumped 1 per cent, auto (0.89 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.60 per cent).

In contrast, metal, FMCG and

consumer durables were the laggards. "The markets remained range-bound and ended unchanged, continuing the Monday's trend. After a flat start, the Nifty gradually climbed higher, but profit-taking in the latter half erased all gains, eventually settling at 23,264.85," said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled higher, while Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading lower. US markets ended in positive territory on Monday.

"Global equities were mixed on Tuesday in a busy week that will bring some important reports on US inflation along with a policy meeting of the Federal Reserve.

"The UK unemployment rate

unexpectedly climbed to its highest level (4.4 per cent in February-April vs 4.3 per cent in the previous period) in two and a half years. European assets extended Monday's losses as nervousness over political upheaval in France continued," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities, said.

Signalling continuity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday retained Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar in charge of the four high-profile ministries - Home, Defence, Finance and External Affairs - respectively, in his new government.

The four ministers in charge of these portfolios make up the crucial Cabinet Committee on Security headed by the prime minister. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.32 per cent to USD 81.37 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,572.38 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

After breaching the 77,000 mark during early trade on Monday, the BSE benchmark Sensex came under selling pressure at the fag-end of the session and ended 203.28 points or 0.27 per cent lower at 76,490.08. Halting its three-day rally, the NSE Nifty dipped 30.95 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 23,259.20. (PTI)

Manohar Lal Khattar takes charge as Power Minister

NEW DELHI, June 11: RSS pracharak and Haryana's former chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Tuesday took charge as union power minister in the Modi 3.0 government.

Khattar has replaced R K Singh who lost election from Arrah in Bihar.

After assuming charge of the ministry earlier in the morning, Khattar met heads of public sector undertakings in the power sector and other top brass of his ministry to understand the dynamics of the sector.

However, he did not offer any comments to media persons about the key challenges and his plan of action for at least next 100 days in the power sector.

As a power minister, Khattar will have to deal with various issues including high power demand and coal supply issues faced by electricity producers across the country.

The power demand has already touched an all-time high of 250 GW in May this year. Earlier, the ministry had projected that peak power demand was estimated to touch 260 GW during this summer.

Many power plants have been maintaining coal stock at lower than normative levels.

Khattar would have to work in close coordination with the ministries of coal as well as railways to ensure adequate supply of the dry fuel at all power stations across the country.

Coal-based thermal power still serves the base load to the national grid, despite having over 190 GW of renewable energy including large hydro (25 MW or above). Khattar defeated Divyanshu Budhiraja of the Congress in Karnal constituency during the latest general election. In 2014, Khattar became an MLA for the first time and took over as Chief Minister of Haryana. In March 2024, he was replaced by his confidante Nayab Singh Saini.

According to some accounts, Khattar is considered close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi with whom he worked in the BJP during 1990s.

Khattar, a bachelor, worked for almost 40 years as an RSS pracharak.

In 1996, Khattar started working with Modi, who was then the BJP in-charge of Haryana.

Coming from an agricultural background, his family arrived in Haryana from Pakistan post partition.

His family settled at Nindana, a village in Haryana's Rohtak district. He was born in Nindana in 1954.

In 2014, when the BJP formed the government in Haryana on its own for the first time, Khattar became the state's first non-Jat chief minister in nearly two decades, fracturing Jats' longstanding domination in the state's politics.

During his first stint as chief minister, Khattar came under criticism over his handling of the February 2016 Jat quota stir, which saw large-scale violence and arson in several parts of the state.

The stir was followed by a flurry of violent incidents which claimed many lives in 2017, when Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh was convicted by a court in Panchkula in a rape case. For his second stint as CM, which lasted four-and-a-half years, the BJP had to take support of JJP after it fell short of majority in 2019 assembly polls. Khattar's second stint also saw his government face criticism over farmers' stir against now-repealed farm laws.

During his two stints as chief minister, Khattar was credited with the decision to introduce pre-qualification conditions for the candidates contesting panchayat elections and ensuring transparent recruitment.

He also introduced the 'Parivar Pehchan Patra' scheme, under which the Haryana government issues every family a unique family identity.

Khattar was also credited for maintaining cordial relations with ally Jannayak Janta Party. However, JJP's tie-up with BJP ended after Khattar was removed from Haryana CM's post.

On the party's move to bring in Nayab Saini as CM in March, Khattar had said that the move was not sudden and that it was he who had suggested Saini's name to Modi more than a year ago.

"The reality is when I had served as the chief minister for eight to eight-and-a-half years, I myself told Prime Minister Narendra Modi that in any person's life if he hands over the baton to anyone on his own will, there cannot be a matter of greater happiness. I had said this to him about myself more than a year ago," Khattar had said.

Sworn in to the fresh Union Cabinet on Sunday, the BJP veteran now is set to begin his new innings as a parliamentarian and a Union Minister. (PTI)

Modi govt ministers get going

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"It is also a little bit like coming full circle for me. I worked as a junior minister in this department many years ago in 2007, 2008 and 2009. Therefore for me it is also a department with which I have had tremendous emotional ties," Scindia said.

Parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju, also given the responsibility of minority affairs, said he will make all efforts to take everyone along to ensure smooth functioning of Parliament. There was no need to pull each other down on the basis of numerical strength, he added.

"We need not pull each other down on the basis of numerical strength. People use muscle power outside Parliament, but inside the House, we should use vocal power for good debate," he said after assuming charge in the presence of his predecessor Pralhad Joshi and ministers of state Arjun Ram Meghwal and L Murugan.

Annapurna Devi, the country's new women and child development minister, said she will work towards fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dream of a Viksit Bharat.

Culture minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat echoed her and said his ministry will contribute towards the vision of making a Viksit Bharat. Senior BJP leader from Karnataka Pralhad Joshi took over as minister for consumer affairs, food and public distribution and said his priority would be to implement the 100-day agenda of the government and further strengthen the food security system.

"I am thankful to the Prime Minister who has given me the responsibility of this important department which is linked to the common people, where we provide free food grains to 80 crore people," Joshi told reporters.

RSS pracharak, Haryana's former chief minister and now Union power minister Manohar Lal Khattar met heads of public sector undertakings in the power sector and other top brass of his ministry to understand the dynamics of the sector.

However, he did not offer any comments to media persons about the key challenges and his plan of action for at least the next 100 days in the power sector. Chants of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Vande Mataram" were heard from party supporters when the BJP's Gujarat unit chief Chandrakant Raghunath Patil took charge of the Jal Shakti ministry. (PTI)

CM visits site for IIM

The An investment to the tune of Rs. 1,000 crores is likely to be approved by the Centre for the IIM," the chief minister said. The Chief Minister further added that a School of Planning and Architecture might also come up close to the upcoming IIM. He said such positive developments in the field of higher and specialized education would contribute towards the transformation of Palashbari Assembly constituency into an educational hub in the region. Sarma further stated that certain demands of the local residents such as an alternative road connecting the upcoming IIM with the highway would also be considered with all sincerity by the government. He also expressed gratitude towards the local residents for their wholehearted support.

"The ongoing infrastructure development activities across more than 400 government high schools and higher secondary schools in the state will fulfill most of the infrastructure needs of the state's school education system. Up gradation and development of another 126 schools would be approved shortly by the government, thereby taking the total number of schools receiving such assistance from the government to over 500," he said.

Sarma also said there would be a total of four sub-district offices in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district and the aim is to make them become functional by August this year. The sadar sub-division of Kamrup Metropolitan would not be recognised as a sub-district.

The government would see that all the proposed sub-districts across the state become fully-functional by 2025. He expressed hope that the sub-district offices would aid greatly in fulfilling the genuine hopes and aspirations of the people of the state in the days to come. The chief minister was accompanied by state education minister Ranaj Pegu, chief secretary, Ravi Kota and Palashbari MLA, Hemanga Thakuria.

NEET sanctity hit, says SC

"The allegation is that exam papers were leaked, and large number of students got the exam papers in advance, and they became successful. Twenty three lakh students wrote the examination, and total number of seats available is 1 lakh. This is the most coveted examination. Sixty-seven students got 720 out of 720 marks.

"The sanctity of the examination is so sacrosanct, and something has gone terribly wrong. The court has refused to stay the counselling, i.e. the admission..." lawyer Nedumpara later told PTI Video.

Mishra and nine other MBBS candidates sought a direction to the NTA "to recall the results of the examination conducted on May 05 and to conduct the examination afresh after issuing due public notice upon revelation at the end of investigation through a report that large number of examinees are bound to be affected by the declaration of results depriving those qualified examinees of just and fair opportunity to compete in seeking admission in college of their choice." (PTI)

Sonowal takes charge of Union

goal of Viksit Bharat. Our ministry will continue to work towards empowering the maritime sector towards holistic development as envisioned in the Amrit Kaal Vision, 2047."

VIP security up for major change

proposal of completely withdrawing 'black cat' commandos of the NSG from VIP security duties will be implemented now and all its nine Z-plus category protectees will be handed over to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) VIP security unit, the sources said.

Similarly, some of the VIPs secured by the personnel of the border guarding force Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) may be transferred to the CRPF or the VIP security wing of the CISF called the special security group (SSG), they said. Those protected by the close protection force of the National Security Guard (NSG) commandos include Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his predecessor and BSP supremo Mayawati, Union defence minister Rajnath Singh, veteran BJP leader and former deputy prime minister L K Advani, Union shipping minister Sarbananda Sonowal, BJP leader and ex Chhattisgarh CM Raman Singh, Former Jammu and Kashmir CM and Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) president Ghulam Nabi Azad, National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah and TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu are also protected by NSG commandos. (PTI)

Women shot dead in

father was not present as he was in his village, Virvar. The additional SP (crime), Jayanta Baruah told the media that they received information about the incident at around 1:45 am and rushed to the place along with SP, Sanjib Kumar Saikia. They found the victim with bullet injury. Further investigation is on.

Expressing his shock and grief about the incident, the chief executive member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang said, "Two unknown persons have gone to the house of Hukuri Tissopi in the wee hours today and shot her to death. I immediately informed the Diphu Police Station and also directed the SP to carry out an inquiry into the incident so that the culprits can be nabbed and stringent punishment be awarded to them."

Will they suspend over 230

to change his approach even within his own party... the PMO will direct the cabinet colleagues. Even now his allies will keep demanding special status, caste census, revoking Agnipathi but I don't think his approach to allies will change," he said. "Till the time Modi is there as PM, I don't think their approach to Parliament is going to change. They will still try to bulldoze, suspend, disqualify, poach. But yes, as in football, while there were three defenders (earlier), our wall (of defenders) is now bigger and much more robust," Gogoi said during the interaction. "That is our (opposition's) role and that is what the public expects from us, that is what the public voted (elected) us for, that is what we hope to do," Gogoi said. He said the story of this election is that the people of India have taught a "lesson in humility" to Prime Minister Modi.

Gogoi, the son of late Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi, said that with the numbers that the elections have thrown up and the prevailing circumstances, he does not think Modi has the ability to run a coalition government.

"Mr. Modi doesn't even take his cabinet into confidence. When he did demonetisation, the finance minister did not know. When he abrogated Article 370, his cabinet did not know. When he brought Agnipathi, his cabinet did not know. So, someone who cannot even take his cabinet into confidence, how will he take the NDA alliance into confidence?" he said.

Gogoi said that for a coalition government to function smoothly, as it did under former prime ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, one needs to have an open mind, an inclusive approach and the ability to listen and be flexible. Asked about the BJP's argument countering the Congress' claim of emerging victorious in the polls, Gogoi said the BJP was not fighting alone but as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Congress fought as the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) and the result should be looked at from that perspective. (PTI)

Improve quality of life

situation," Singhal said. He said that if an initiative taken in one municipality is successful, the officers should come forward to implement it in other municipalities. He also directed the directorate of municipal administration to hold meetings with the executive officers of the municipal bodies every two months on the model of the meeting held on Tuesday and to select specific issues and arrange for detailed review in such meetings. The meeting was attended by commissioner-secretary, housing and urban affairs department Kabita Padmanabhan and director of municipal administration Tankeshwar Das along with other top officials of the department. Executive officers of Bongaigaon, Narayanpur, Nagaon, North Guwahati and Silchar municipalities were also present on the occasion.

Junmoni Devi Khaund's Kooki

South India. Kooki is one such movie in which the director, producer and all the other actors including the lead are all from Assam, barring four actors from Bollywood in minor roles," she asserted.

Director Pranab J Deka, who has directed episodes of the popular TV series, Crime Patrol said that the movie is an endeavour to create a movement in society akin to the one, which happened in education post Three Idiots and Taare Zameen Par.

Deka said that the actors in the film include Rajesh Tailang, Dipannita Sarma, Ritu Shivpuri, Devoleena Bhat-tacharya, Bodhisatwa Sarma, Kamal Lochan, Bibhuti Bhushan Hazarika, Preeti Kangkana, and Ranjib Lal Borah and that Bollywood singers Sunidhi Chauhan, Divya Kumar, Mohammad Faiz and Kritika Sharma from Assam have lent their voices to three songs in the film.

Rishita Khaund, who was also present at the meeting was the lead actor, who played the role of the rape victim. She said that the story is a sweet love story of a 16-year-old girl. But this goes terribly wrong when she is gang raped.

"I got under the skin of the actor to such an extent that I became Kooki and would shiver in fear at night and call my mother to sleep with me. I was lucky to watch the premiere at Cannes and was surprised to see most of the audience lingering post the screening, with tears in their eyes and compliments that this was a movie which delved into a universal issue," she said.

SIDBI SWAVALAMBAN Mela from June 14

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 11: The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) will organise SWAVALAMBAN Mela 2024 which is going to be held from June 14-18 in the city. The event will feature participation from key SIDBI officials, including Pradeep Kumar Nath, deputy general manager of SIDBI, Guwahati, who will play a pivotal role in the proceedings. The SWAVALAMBAN Mela will showcase the products of micro enterprises, artisans, SHGs and women entrepreneurs from various sectors including handloom, handicraft, processed food, FMCG, cane and bamboo items, water hyacinth products and other locally manufactured items. The event aims to provide a vibrant platform for small businesses to showcase and sell their unique products, promoting local industries and fostering economic growth. The highlights of the event include: 1) Interactions between buyers and sellers for exchange of good ideas and augmentation of sales. 2) Facilitation by SIDBI to connect with banking and formal credit systems. 3) Skilling, Reskilling and upskilling for sustainable business practices along with guidance and assistance by experts for onboarding onto e-commerce platforms such as Gem/ONDC etc. These programmes are designed to educate and inspire participants on business development, marketing strategies and sustainable livelihood, a PR stated.

Vaishnav takes charge of Electronics, IT Ministry; promises focus on tech, manufacturing

NEW DELHI, June 11: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Tuesday said the government will push ahead with its tech-driven agenda of cementing India's global lead in semiconductor and electronics manufacturing, and as a technology and digital hub.

Taking charge of Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) -- a nodal ministry tasked with crafting crucial policies and regulations for fast-evolving digital and tech landscape -- Vaishnav vowed that the government would build on the past momentum and leverage the power of technology and digital solutions to improve lives of people.

He highlighted that the Modi government's Digital India initiative has empowered the common man, bringing transformative changes through Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and other programmes over the last 10 years.

Vaishnav, who retained his electronics and IT portfolio in Modi 3.0 government, took charge of MeitY on Tuesday morning, after assuming office in Railways as well as Information and Broadcasting -- the two other ministries allocated to him.

Vaishnav said his efforts will be to ensure that technology continues to bring positive changes in the lives of people in the country, and that it empowers youth with a promising future driven by new-age tech.

"Modi government will continue its work of bringing transformative change in people's lives, through use of digital technologies... India will keep its lead in every segment, be it semiconduc-



tor, telecom tech, manufacturing tech...." Vaishnav told reporters.

Over the past years and months, Vaishnav has scripted success stories around electronics and semiconductor manufacturing and also spearheaded the enactment of crucial pieces of legislation like Digital Personal Data Protection Act.

Mobile phone manufacturing during Vaishnav's tenure crossed Rs 4.1 lakh crore worth of production, marking a 21-fold jump compared to 2014-15, when 98 per cent of local demand was met through imports. The country now meets 97 per cent of its total mobile phone demand, locally.

So far as regulations go, the DPDP Act approved by Parliament in August last year seeks to crack-down on misuse of individuals' data by online platforms. It mandates several compliance requirements for the collection, processing, and protection of personal data, and entails up to Rs 250 crore penalty for any data breach.

The DPDP moots creation of Data Protection Board of India to

handle grievances of individuals around personal data privacy if data fiduciaries or firms using personal data fail to address individuals' complaints.

Vaishnav's return to the ministry also sets the stage for taking forward the work on proposed Digital India legislation, which would replace the 24-year-old IT Act.

As it is, MeitY has been doing the groundwork on draft Digital India legislation that would provide guardrails and prescribe regulatory approach to new-age technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). It would also offer stringent safeguards against newer forms of online offences such as deepfakes, catphishing, doxxing, cyber stalking among others.

India has been pulling out all the stops to bolster its semiconductor and electronics manufacturing capabilities, and Vaishnav, during his tenure in Modi 2.0 was instrumental in getting global storage semiconductor firm Micron to set up a chip assembly plant followed

by investments from indigenous conglomerate Tata to set up a chip manufacturing plant in Gujarat and an assembly unit in Assam.

A fourth unit has been set up by CG Power in partnership with Renesas Electronics Corp and Stars Microelectronics in Gujarat.

India's AI agenda too is action-packed.

Before heading for 2024 general elections, the Modi government had approved an allocation of over Rs 10,300 crore for the IndiaAI Mission to bolster India's AI ecosystem.

The financial infusion, slated over the next five years, is poised to catalyse various components of IndiaAI Mission, including pivotal initiatives like the IndiaAI Compute Capacity, IndiaAI Innovation Centre (IAIC), IndiaAI Datasets Platform, IndiaAI Application Development Initiative, IndiaAI FutureSkills, IndiaAI Startup Financing, and Safe and Trusted AI.

Nitin Arora, Partner, Grant Thornton Bharat noted that several policy measures have been announced over the years, to promote indigenisation, job creation and entrepreneurship.

He mentioned the thrust on PLI schemes for sectors including telecom and electronics hardware, significant spends on digital infrastructure, and incentives for deep-tech/5G.

"The government is likely to continue on its glide path with similar budgetary measures to foster a robust ecosystem for research and development, innovation and manufacturing in the country," Arora said. (PTI)

The initiative aims to eliminate TB by 2025, targeting high-prevalence areas

Sivasagar launches adult BCG vaccination program to combat TB

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 11: In a major attempt to rid the country of TB by 2025, the Health Department launched the Adult BCG Vaccination Programme at a meeting presided over by district commissioner Aditya Vikram Yadav on Tuesday. The event was attended by the state consultant on TB Eradication Mission, Dr Gautam Buragohain, state immunisation officer, Dr Sabita Das, state cold chain officer, BK Choudhury, immunisation project officer, Dr Minakshi Buragohain, joint director of Health, Dr Saurabh Gogoi, district immunisation officer, Dr Arundhati Bora Hazarika, and other Health Department officials. DC Sivasagar, while inaugurating the programme, assured the Health Department of full cooperation from the administration for successful implementation.

The programme has been launched in two high-prevalence districts of the state, Sivasagar and Lakhimpur.



Providing details of the programme on Monday, Dr Saurov Kumar Gogoi, the joint director of Health and FW Department, stated that the BCG vaccination would be administered to people above 18 years since the BCG vaccine administered to babies is effective only until that age. Priority will be

given to people with diabetes and tobacco consumers as they are more susceptible to TB infection. Dr Gogoi expressed confidence that the new programme would eliminate the disease by 2025, as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Dr Dwijen Koch, district TB of-

ficer, Sivasagar, mentioned that a total of 152,783 registered TB patients in the district will be brought to seven designated vaccination camps in Kalugaon, Gaurisagar, Morabazar, Kheluwa, Demow, Gelekey, and Wood Urban Centre for vaccination and distribution of beneficiary kits provided by the government. Dr Koch highlighted that despite the best efforts through centrally orchestrated programmes like DoT (Directly Observed Therapy), the disease has spread due to affected individuals' lack of awareness. Many beneficiaries discontinue the medication once they feel better, leading to drug-resistant TB. Dr Koch assured that the BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guerin) vaccine, first administered to humans in 1921, is safe for all.

The meeting was also attended by Dr Sadhan Borah, sub-divisional health officer, Nazira, Jyotimsita Saikia, PPM coordinator, Anjuma Changmai, district community mobiliser, and Anjushree Phukan, district media coordinator.

District commissioner investigates paddy procurement issues

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, June 11: On Tuesday, district commissioner Munindra Nath Ngate visited Kharupetia to learn in detail about the sale of paddy from paddy-producing farmers and traders. On this occasion, the farmers also complained about the illegal activities being carried out from time to time by some officers of the Food and Public Supply Department. The farmers informed the district commissioner that currently, government agencies are not buying Boro paddy, and in the future, the paddy that will be purchased by the agencies will need to be of high quality. They expressed concern about who will buy the paddy if the agencies do not purchase it. The farmers and traders requested the district commissioner to facilitate the sale of paddy in the open market at a reasonable price without any departmental oppression.

The district commissioner, along with the additional commissioner, departmental officials, agriculture department officials, and the in-charge of the paddy purchasing center, inspected every point in the paddy market. While speaking to the media, the district commissioner stated that a report will be sent to the chief secretary of the state, and action will be taken based on the instructions received from the chief secretary. Although the district commissioner did not explicitly criticise the Food and Public Distribution Department, he indirectly expressed his displeasure with their operations and showed silent approval in favour of the farmers.

It is noteworthy that, with the aim of doubling the income of farmers, the BJP government set the minimum price for many agricultural commodities, including paddy. In this effort, the minimum support price of paddy was set at ₹ 2183, and various government agencies were engaged in purchasing paddy. These agencies are also ensuring timely purchase and transferring money to the farmers' bank accounts within 48 hours.

Rakibul Hussain resigns as MLA

GUWAHATI, June 11: Congress leader Rakibul Hussain, who was elected to the Lok Sabha with the highest victory margin, resigned as a member of the Assam assembly on Tuesday.

He handed over his resignation letter to Speaker Biswajit Daimary, in the presence of Deputy Speaker Numal Momin and several Congress leaders.

The MP-elect from Dhubri was also given a farewell by the Congress legislature party (CLP). Hussain, a five-time legislator from Samaguri in Nagaon district, was the deputy leader of the CLP in the current assembly.

Leader of opposition Debabrata Saikia and several senior leaders and MLAs, including chief whip Wajid Ali Choudhury, Bharat Chandra Narah, Jakir Hussain Sikdar and Nandita Deka, were present at the farewell function.

Addressing the function, Hus-

sain said it was mixed emotions for him as he steps out of the assembly and into the Lok Sabha.

"It is a moment of pride as well as a tinge of sorrow today," he said.

He expressed his gratitude to the people of Dhubri, a seat he won by 10.12 lakh votes, making it the highest victory margin ever as he defeated the incumbent MP Badruddin Ajmal of AIUFD.

The Congress leader also extended his gratitude to the people of the Samaguri assembly segment.

"I have been winning from Samaguri since 2001, whether the wave was in favour of Congress or not. I thank the people for constantly showing such faith in me," he said.

Hussain said that though he was entering the political arena of New Delhi, he would be coming back to state politics.

He said that he was initially re-

luctant to contest from Dhubri, but the party leadership told him that his candidature was crucial for defeating "certain forces".

Later talking to reporters, Hussain said the decision for him to contest from Dhubri was taken by the party.

"I didn't choose Dhubri. The party did its own survey and told me that if I were to contest there, we would win. And that's what happened," he said.

On speculation that the Congress might field his son for the by-election to the Samaguri assembly seat, Hussain said, "My son has been in the NSUI. He is actively associated with the party. If he gets the ticket, it will be the decision of the party leadership."

Congress had retained its tally of three seats in the Lok Sabha from this northeastern state, while the BJP won nine seats, and its allies AGP and UPPL one each. (PTI)

MSSV organises 11th foundation day

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, June 11: The eleventh foundation day of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya was observed with day-long programs at the auditorium of the varsity on Monday last here.

The program was initiated with the unfurling of the university flag by the chancellor of the varsity cum pradhikar of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha, Bhabendranath Deka. Dr Nayan Moni Saikia, in-charge registrar of the varsity, delivered the welcome address and also presented a brief note on the history of the university.

Sudarshan Thakur, secretary of Kalakshetra Samaj Guwahati, attended the program as the chief guest while senior scribe of Assamese news channel Pratidin Times, Mrinal Talukdar, was present as the special guest. Kushal Thakuria, secretary general of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha, highlighted in detail how the varsity was set up, including the law-making process, and also expressed his



gratitude to the state government.

The program was mentored by Dr Tribeni Saikia, HoD, Department of Education, while Gauri

Prasad Sarma, information and public relations official of the varsity, delivered the vote of thanks, a press note asserted here.

Sonitpur DC advocates inter-departmental unity to combat VBDs

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 11: The District Task Force (DTF) meeting on Vector-Borne Diseases (VBDs) such as Japanese encephalitis, acute encephalitis syndrome (AES), dengue, malaria, and filaria, regarding Sonitpur district, was held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of district commissioner Deba Kumar Mishra. The meeting took place in the presence of ADC (Health) Twahir Alam, joint director of Health Services Dr Jiyuddin Ahmed, and other officials from the Health Department, along with representatives from various concerned line departments at the Conference Hall of the DC's Office, Sonitpur, Tezpur. The primary objective of the meeting was to promote intersectoral collaboration among health and non-health sectors and adopt a plan for effective control and prevention of the various vector-borne diseases.

The district malaria officer, Sonitpur, gave a brief presentation



on the various vector-borne diseases, shedding light on the types, manner of infection, transmission, peak season, etc., of malaria, dengue, Japanese encephalitis, AES, filaria, and ways of combating or preventing them. The district commissioner emphasised that inter-departmental convergence is crucial for the prevention of vector-borne diseases in the district. Issues such as medicated mosquito net distribution, creating

awareness among school children, active cleaning and fogging of potential mosquito breeding pockets, especially municipal drains, and proper surveillance, were discussed in the meeting. In his closing remarks, the district commissioner added that there are various roles and responsibilities of the line departments that should be followed as per protocol to stop the spread of all types of vector-borne diseases in the rainy season.

NEEPCO wraps up workshop fostering life skills for underprivileged girls



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 11: A 15-day workshop under the flagship NEEPCO Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM): 2024 concluded on Tuesday at the NRC Complex of NEEPCO Residential Complex, RK Nagar, Agartala. Forty-two young girls aged 10-12 years, belonging to underprivileged families and nominated by schools located in the vicinity of Agartala Gas Based Power Station of NEEPCO, participated in the multi-pronged life skill trainings during the NEEPCO GEM Workshop, which is an initiative under the NEEPCO Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability Scheme. The multi-pronged life skill trainings and awareness sessions covered yoga, karate, foundation maths, vedic maths, english language, computer operation, creative arts & crafts, personality development, public speaking, and various awareness life skill sessions on health, hygiene, fire & safety, environmental consciousness, cyber crime, traffic rules & safety, gender issues, society & crime, prevention and protection from cyber crime, good & bad touch, child protection & rights, importance of girls' child education, etc. The interactive sessions were conducted by different

renowned personalities in these fields.

JL Das, the head of power plant, NEEPCO, Agartala, during his speech in the closing ceremony, said that the 15-day summer camp workshop, as part of its Girls Empowerment Mission (GEM), is an expression of its commitment to the society as a part of its corporate responsibility for the year 2024 apart from the company's CSR works in the areas of rural development, promoting education, entrepreneurship skill development, health & sanitation. He expressed joy in conducting such a program, being able to reach out to a few underprivileged children to groom them and teach them various life skill training, which would definitely help them face life's challenges head-on.

The dignitaries, resource persons, parents of the children who participated in the workshop, and heads of schools present in the closing ceremony appreciated the noble work of NEEPCO for its initiative for the empowerment of girl child belonging to the underprivileged family and encouraged it to continue doing such good job for the upliftment of society at large, apart from the generation of power to the state and beyond.

Demise of Mintu Changmai mourned

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 11: The sudden death of popular cultural worker Mintu Changmai on Monday, following tragic electrocution at his residence in Sivasagar Hanhchora, has been deeply mourned by the people of the area and the cultural workers of the district. According to family members, Changmai was repairing a ceiling fan from atop a pile of plastic chairs. As he stepped onto the floor barefoot and touched the fan, he was electrocuted and thrown into a nearby iron almirah. He suffered a massive impact on his head and died. His son, a class 11 student, survived because he was wearing sandals.

Mintu Changmai was an active member of several cultural organisations in the district and a technician in a mobile theatre group. He leaves behind his wife and a son.

Guwahati to host rally for Global Fatty Liver Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 11: Recognising the seriousness of fatty liver disease and aligning with the Global Liver Institute, the North East Digestive and Liver Foundation in Guwahati is organising 'Global Fatty Liver Day' on June 13 to raise greater awareness and promote prevention of this silent disease. To mark this occasion, a rally titled 'Run For Your Liver' for greater awareness and prevention of fatty liver is set to be organised on June 13, 2024, from Latastil Playground to Nehru Stadium, Guwahati, at 6:00 am.

Dr BD Goswami, secretary of the North East Digestive and Liver Foundation in Guwahati, informed about the disease, stating, "Global Fatty Liver Day is a public education campaign inaugurated in June 2018 to enhance awareness and emphasise the pressing nature of fatty liver disease, particularly its advanced stages, which impact a staggering 115 million individuals worldwide. Fatty liver disease, and its more advanced form, remain a concealed global epidemic. An estimated 357 million people will be affected by 2030. As symptoms of fatty liver disease are often not overt, it is often under-diagnosed and under-reported. Unchecked, fatty liver disease may lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver transplant."

Dr Amitava Goswami, senior gastroenterologist in Guwahati, in his address, informed, "There are two main types of fatty liver disease—metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) and alcohol-related fatty liver disease (ALD). MASLD, formerly known as nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), is very common in the US, affecting 1 in 3 adults.



While ALD is less common, affecting about 5 percent of people living in the US, and is caused by drinking alcohol."

With ALD and MASLD, there are usually no symptoms. Some people may have signs such as tiredness or pain in the upper right side of the belly where the liver is. If you have MASH or get cirrhosis, you may experience symptoms such as a swollen belly, enlarged blood vessels underneath your skin, larger-than-normal breasts in men, red palms, skin and eyes that appear yellowish due to a condition called jaundice, nausea, weight loss, loss of appetite, tiredness, or mental confusion.

Sharing about the complications of this disease, Dr Amritangsu Borkakoti, gastroenterologist, and hepatologist said, "The main complication of all these conditions is cirrhosis. As your liver tries to stop the inflammation that comes with these conditions, it creates areas of scars. As inflammation spreads, so do the scars, and eventually, your liver can't do its job. That can result in fluid buildup in your belly, swollen veins in your esophagus that can burst and bleed, confusion and drowsiness, an overactive spleen, liver cancer, liver failure, etc."

If your liver has little or moderate scarring, it shouldn't affect your lifespan. But if you have cirrhosis, it could affect how long you live. If FLD cirrhosis is diagnosed early, you could live another 10 to 15 years. If it is diagnosed late or you have complications, like swelling or fluid in your belly or bleeding in the gut, your life expectancy could be 3 to 5 years unless you get a liver transplant.

Emphasising the importance of lifestyle changes, Dr Utpal Jyoti Deka, gastroenterologist, and hepatologist informed, "One should exercise more. Try to be active for at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week. If you're trying to lose weight, you might find that it helps to exercise more than this. But if you don't already exercise regularly, get your doctor's approval first and start slowly."

"Get your cholesterol down. Eat a healthy plant-based diet, exercise, and take your medications. This will get – and keep – your cholesterol and your triglyceride levels where they need to be. Manage your diabetes. Check your blood sugar, and take medications as your doctor prescribes," shared Dr Hitesh Kalita, gastroenterologist, and hepatologist.

For MASLD and MASH, it boils down to making good choices – eat healthy food. Choose a plant-based diet with lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats. Stay at a healthy weight. Lose weight if you need to. If your weight is healthy, work to maintain it by choosing a healthy diet and exercising. Make exercise a part of your daily routine. Talk to your doctor first if you haven't been active in a while, a PR stated.

NABARD sponsored training for assistant electrician underway at Lanka



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 11: A skill development programme on assistant electrician activity, sponsored by NABARD, Assam Regional Office, Guwahati, is being conducted at the Dalmia Institute of Knowledge and Skill Harnessing, run by Dalmia Bharat Foundation at Lanka in Hojai district. The training programme was inaugurated on Monday by additional district commissioner Saptati Endow. Rajendra Perna, DDM NABARD, attended the inaugural session as a

special guest.

In her inaugural speech, ADC Endow urged all participants to excel, stating that the demand for professionally trained electricians in the state is high, especially with the proposed semiconductor unit by the TATA group at Jagiroad in Morigaon district, which will create significant opportunities for unemployed youths. She thanked the officials of DDM Assam for their pragmatic approach in conducting such programmes in re-

mote rural areas like Lanka and appealed for more skill development programmes in the district in the coming years.

Addressing the occasion, Rajendra Perna, DDM, NABARD, shared information about NABARD's ongoing initiatives to promote skill-building and entrepreneurship in rural areas through various programmes. He encouraged participants to learn and practice extensively to hone their skills under the guidance of expert resource personnel.

It is reported that the participants will receive extensive training for over 400 hours.

Mrinal Baruah, DGM, HR, Dalmia Cement North East Ltd, Mousam Bora, LDM, Jayanta Patowary, RM, DICC, Tapas Kumar Sharma, RM, AGVB, Lalmuansangi, AM, NABARD, Jauga Mushahary, CRS, DM, and Sumit Paul, manager of the Dalmia Institute of Knowledge and Skill Harnessing, also attended the inaugural session of the training programme, according to a press note.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

To know how much there is to know is the beginning of learning to live. —Dorothy West

Govt grapples with Khalistani MP amid Reasi terror attack

The central government finds itself in a difficult position following the election of Sikh separatist Amritpal Singh from Punjab's Khador Sahib constituency. Currently held in Dibrugarh Central Jail in Assam, Singh's future remains uncertain as the government deliberates over whether to release him on interim bail or take other actions. The unexpected victory of Amritpal Singh has caught the government off guard. Neither the Union Home Ministry nor the Central Election Commission anticipated a pro-Khalistani winning a parliamentary seat. A prompt official response might have quelled the political speculation, but the government's silence speaks volumes. Top BJP policymakers, preoccupied with forming the new NDA coalition in New Delhi, had little time to address this unforeseen challenge. Simultaneously, the new NDA government is facing serious security concerns. The terrorist attack in Reasi district, coinciding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in, underscores the persistent instability along the Line of Control. The attack, targeting Hindu pilgrims, is widely attributed to Pakistan-based terrorist organizations testing the resolve of Modi's administration.

The BJP, now holding 240 seats after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, down from 303, faces a significantly altered political landscape. This reduction in seats may impact the government's ability to respond decisively to such provocations. The Reasi attack presents a unique challenge, demanding a strategic and measured response from the Modi administration. Internationally, the new NDA government is under scrutiny from various quarters, including Pakistan, China, the US, and the EU. The Congress party has condemned the Reasi incident, but questions persist about the efficacy of abrogating Article 370, which ended the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. Observers familiar with Modi's governance style expect a deliberate and effective response from the government at a time and place of its choosing. Establishing Pakistan's involvement in the Reasi attack is crucial, but its support for the Khalistani movement is undeniable. This brings us back to the predicament of Amritpal Singh. The rise in anti-Indian activities by Sikh separatists abroad, notably in Canada and the UK, has been linked to a broader regional political agenda.

India's diplomatic challenges with Sikh separatists have intensified, with incidents in Canada and the UK highlighting the growing problem. The perceived support from Western countries for the Khalistani movement has been a sobering revelation for India. Despite Western lip service to India as the world's largest democracy, there remains a deep-seated distrust of India's political institutions and its handling of minorities. The Western media's reaction to the 2024 Lok Sabha election results, marked by the BJP's reduced strength, has been notably satisfied. This reflects a broader geopolitical dynamic where India's rising regional influence is met with wariness by the West. The NDA government must navigate this complex international landscape while addressing internal challenges. The NDA must carefully manage the Khalistani issue, ensuring national security while addressing the concerns of the Sikh community. The path ahead requires diplomatic finesse and a strong, unified response to both internal and external threats.

Modi 3.0 - A verdict for real coalition dharma

It is normal for the political opposition of Narendra Modi to be jubilant as the seats they could harvest in the 2024 Lok Sabha election have considerably accelerated their confidence and brought a fresh sheen to their coalition profile. The next move by the INDI alliance will be to apply the tactics that they applied during the general elections in the upcoming state elections too. But nothing could deter the Modi momentum completely. Though his party was trimmed to a meager size below the required number for an adequate majority, the alliance he could stitch up with TDP and JDU will see him through a vibrant third term. This, unlike the first decade of his dominance in the alliance, would compel him to follow the coalition dharma.

Even the smallest party in the coalition would deserve to be heard. There have been applauses from particular corners of the world which seem to have been celebrating the pull that the Modi regime was made to face. Columns occupied larger spaces in international dailies commenting it as the failure of the policies enacted by the world's most aggressive Prime Minister, who, they describe, was all set to turn India a Hindutva stronghold.

But despite being diminished, Narendra Modi and his party would enjoy the credit for being the most dominant force that could alter the Indian tradition of coalition for a decade but obviously from outside the Congress bandwagon. Though multiple factors played their



critical role in pulling the tally of the saffron party, the Congress again failed to create a remarkable comeback.

It enjoys a breathing space now as its presence in the parliament counts to be more significant and a vibrant opposition with greater numbers seems to be a challenging force against the new government.

Interestingly, Rahul Gandhi gained a credible acceptance among the INDI alliance. His Bharat Jodo Yatra as understood to have churned a momentum in his party's favor. But his detractors refuse to accept it as the electoral progress of Congress. They call it coalition sympathy and dividends poured in for its divisive agenda.

The new government, stitched among unpredictable allies, would force the Modi regime to make coalition adjustments and draw alignments before the government acted on policy matters that his party had a historical commitment. The BJP's tireless efforts to expand into unreachable pockets bore fruits but its strongholds

like Uttar Pradesh shattered severely.

Undoubtedly, Modi's first two terms will be known for their historical decisions and progressive

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

M.R.Lalu

involvements.

What he will be known for will be the steps, the initiatives the country had witnessed in his first two tenures. Stretching from demonetization to the foreign policies to economic growth to the G20 success, there has been an endless list of unique initiatives by the Modi regime. But the BJP has to seriously ponder on its electoral drag. There has been strong anti-incumbency against its MPs.

Most of them appeared to have been depending on the popularity of the Prime Minister. The party and its machinery lost its originality as the whole mechanism failed to make credible efforts to counter narratives that its opposite camp flung innumerable. The most damaging one that gained inroads into the middle class and the minds of the lower stratum of the caste oriented

the revival of its culture. His focus was to satiate the impulses of the coalition and he successfully maintained it. Modi's third regime is going to be an ideological rivalry standing face to face with his opposition sharpening its teeth more formidably and contemptuously.

An ideological combat between two principal views; one being the proponent of the philosophy of nationalism and the other waiting to eagerly establish the entity of the country as a union of states. Modi, throughout his decade long administration was trying to infuse a sense of divinity, sacredness and motherhood in 'Rashtram', which he unequivocally remained a strong proponent of. This fundamental ideal of a Rashtram which in his divine political term became the resounding concept of Bharat Mata and victory to her "bharatmata ki jai" was his principal slogan. This slogan and its vigorous reverberation still influence millions and Modi tapped the best out of it.

That being said, the BJP and its leadership are to face terrible tremors of a backlash that it has had in the region where Ayodhya is located. The ruling party's plan to make the consecration of the Ram temple an event of significant political ramification could not fructify. Its failure in Ayodhya has held the party tight-lipped as the temple city was for decades its holy cow.

Ever since the party ensured its enhanced presence by systematically packaging its Hindutva agenda through the Ram temple, there have been

predictions in the air foreseeing its landslide victory in the state. This electoral setback has seriously pushed its Mathura plan into the cold storage.

Hindus, the principal majority could be easily divided into castes and sub castes and they probably, were reluctant to accept what Modi affirmed by reuniting and restructuring the Hindutva base.

Going beyond the caste distinctions, Modi's efforts were to systematically nurture the Hindu populace of the country as its political majority since 2014 and that is how he countered the minority appeasement of the Congress. Having been diminished and dismantled, the chunk that voted for him in the last decade stood with caste gimmicks of the INDIA camp this time. With his senior colleagues retaining their previous portfolios, Modi sends a strict message across party lines that the agenda he has set for India through its Amrit Kaal would materialize.

And the parliament, with members piling on unpredictable pockets including jail, is sure to give him unprecedented challenges. What he decides to hold on would make it more interesting; his party's strong nationalistic ideology or coalition adjustments. What he decides to give a try would determine the effectiveness of his administration. If he keenly sticks to coalition adjustments, his party's nationalistic ideology will have shrunk into its molecular level. (The author is a freelance journalist who can be reached at mrlalu30@gmail.com)

Need kinder laws for street-vendors navigating urban environment

By: Kumar Ritwik

The economic liberalisation of the 1990s brought with it malls and shopping arcades.

However, the timeless allure of traditional marketplaces, deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness of Indian society, persists. A significant part of that allure is individuals who earn a living vending goods, spices, vegetables, clothing, toys and more from movable wooden carts or from pavements, commonly known as 'street-vendors' or 'hawkers' in India.

Their numbers and presence are so visible that no individual residing in or having visited India could claim to have not seen them at work on the busy streets of a bazaar in urban India. With the burgeoning populations in Tier-I and Tier-II cities the number of street vendors has correspondingly surged to approximately four crores.

An abrupt surge in numbers brings with it several concerns pertaining to the housing capacity of urban spaces, traffic disruptions and related security challenges. Lately, civic authorities in densely populated metropolitan cities, such as Mumbai and Bengaluru, and upcoming metropolises such as Gurugram have intensified raids and eviction drives against street-vendors.

The iconic Banjara Market, a makeshift handicraft market in Gurugram, has been a victim of recurring demolition and eviction drives over the last couple of years, with its inhabitants (predominantly from the Gadya Lohar community) living in constant fear of being rendered homeless every couple of months.

At the same time, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has recently announced a survey of an estimated five lakh street-vendors in Delhi. The survey was done to ensure arrangements can be made for these street-vendors to set up their shops with dignity at designated locations.

But different state governments have adopted measures that are poles apart in their attempts to deal with the issue. Naturally, it becomes important to understand India's legal framework regarding street-vendors' rights in order to better implement robust safeguards, fostering a business-friendly and rights-based environment for such hawkers, in consonance with principles enshrined under Articles 14, 19(1)(g), 38(2), and 41 of the Constitution of India.

The Supreme Court in Maharashtra Ekta Hawkers Union versus Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai provides a broader definition to the term 'street-vendor' as encompassing those persons offering goods for sale to the public at large without a permanent structure or place for such activities, whether stationary on pavements or mobile with pushcarts or baskets on their heads.

Through such an expansive definition, the diverse and dynamic nature of street-vending was recognised, highlighting the adaptability and resourcefulness of vendors navigating urban environments. These vendors have now become integral to the urban economy, serving as crucial links in its supply chain and providing affordable and convenient services to a significant portion of the urban population.

Despite such widespread dependency, these street-vendors have continued to receive raw treatment from the State machinery with ongoing harassment and regular targeting by civic officials. Often, the harassment is a result of the continuous tussles between the vendors' right to conduct business on the roads and the commuters' right to use such roads freely. In an endeavour to strike a balance between these two sets of rights, the Supreme Court in Sodan Singh versus New Delhi Municipal Committee held that though public streets are meant for use by the general public and not laid to facilitate the carrying

of private business, these businesses can add to the comfort and convenience of the general public if properly regulated.

Therefore, the right to carry on such trade could not be denied on the ground that the streets are meant exclusively for passing. In light of the huge influx of people in metropolitan cities in search of livelihood and negligible scope for expansion of roads, the court aptly observed that there was a marked difference between the hullabaloo around vendors occupying spaces and the noise (or lack thereof) around the ever-increasing vehicular population.

While there is no restriction on the purchase of vehicles despite choked roads, the State machinery has always attempted to regulate (more often, curb) such vending.

Therefore, moving away from such one-way regulation, it is imperative that the regulation is made so as to harmonise both sets of rights, i.e., the right of commuters to move freely and use roads without impediments under Article 19(1)(d) & the vendors' right to business under Article 19(1)(g).

In this context, the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood & Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 (hereinafter 'SV Act 2014') was enacted with the intent of curbing harassment and victimisation that vendors are often subjected to by local authorities as well as ensuring a regulated manner of vending at designated places.

The Supreme Court was apt in observing that acts of destroying vendors' goods and belongings regularly only prove that "the minions in the administration had not yet understood the meaning of 'dignity' as is enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution".

While various provisions and the implementation/non-implementation of the SV Act 2014 are of concern, Section 12(2) in particular pertains to the designation of 'no-vending zones' within urban areas by the appropriate government, wherein no individual shall be allowed to carry out vending activities. Unfortunately, such zones are often designated arbitrarily by local authorities, without any or proper consultation with street vending associations or aspiring licence-holders.

Consequently, many bustling areas of business for street vendors are unjustly marked as 'no-vending zones', necessitating either costly relocations or bribery to sustain operations at the same location or close by.

Moreover, there is a huge disparity between the colossal number of applicants and the number of licences actually issued. To be fair, Section 5 enumerates certain conditions for the issuance of vending licences and certificates.

It requires that every street vendor submit an undertaking that: (1) Such vending shall be carried on by themselves or through any of their family members only. (2) No transfer or renting out of such vending certificate or transfer shall take place. (3) The concerned applicant does not have any other means of livelihood.

Although almost all applicants submit such an undertaking, verifying whether such conditions are being truly met or not is too lofty, even for a highly efficient civic authority.

Practically, there is no possible way of ensuring that such vending is indeed being carried on by the applicants themselves or their family members alone or if the same has been transferred to a third person or whether such vending is their only means of livelihood either.

In addition, Section 15 of the SV Act 2014 mandates vendors to uphold cleanliness and maintain public hygiene in vending zones and adjoining areas, and is susceptible to frequent misuse.

The lack of clarity and demarcation of what con-

stitutes 'adjoining areas' in a vending zone provides a loophole for corrupt officials to exploit, perpetuating intimidation and further harassment.

Further, Section 16 of the SV Act 2014 places an unfair burden on such vendors to maintain civic amenities, apart from ensuring that the public property in the vending zone remains in good condition.

Although it is incumbent on all residents to ensure no destruction or damage is caused to public property or civic amenities, the responsibility of maintaining such amenities rests with civic officials.

Therefore, such a responsibility cannot be thrust upon poor individuals trying to make ends meet.

Lastly, Section 27 issues a directive stating that no vendor that carries on activities in accordance with the scheme laid out in the SV Act 2014 shall be subjected to harassment by any person, police or other authorities. However, there are no penal provisions that apply in case a person, police personnel or civic official does engage in such harassment, which has become increasingly routine of late.

On the other hand, Section 28 lays down penal provisions with respect to vendors in case they act in contravention of the terms and conditions of the SV Act 2014.

Addressing these multi-faceted challenges, therefore, becomes crucial to safeguarding livelihoods and street vendors' rights without compromising on fostering an inclusive urban development with equitable opportunities for them.

Needless to say, certain basic facilities must be accorded to street vendors in order for them to survive in a dignified manner. Awareness workshops, in collaboration with civil society stakeholders, ought to be conducted so as to ensure that street vendors are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Act and enacted rules that vary across states.

A significant first step would be a large-scale registration drive to be conducted in different cities, as any policy decision meant to benefit such vendors ought to be firmly rooted in statistics and data-driven sets.

The recently-launched Prime Minister Street Vendors' Atmanirbhar Nidhi Scheme (PM SVANidhi Scheme) under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, can provide a solid base for the same with ±65 lakh vendors already on-board for disbursement of collateral-free micro-credit loans valued at over Rs. 8,600 crore, an incentive measure that has the potential to create a positive impact on the living conditions of street vendors with easier credit access. At the same time, it must also be understood that merely drafting appropriate laws would inevitably fall short of addressing many challenges faced by street vendors.

These must be accompanied by social interventions that directly target the underlying issues and grievances, affecting the authorities as well as the street vendors themselves.

A concerted effort must be made to implement provisions outlined in Section 32 of the SV Act 2014, particularly capacity-building initiatives, and education and training programmes.

In this vein, measures such as sensitisation training for civic and police officials to enhance their understanding of street vendors' rights, sensitive and uniform eviction policies with relocation provisions, fair opportunities for hearing before eviction Orders are passed, and clear, time-bound process to designate vending zones can significantly enhance prospects and mitigate conflicts.

By embracing these proactive measures, stakeholders can collectively work towards ameliorating the socio-economic conditions of street vendors on a broader scale, fostering inclusivity and sustainable urban development. (IPA Service)

What insights can we draw from the election outcomes?

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Lok Sabha 2024 election results underscore a significant takeaway: the Indian electorate is not to be underestimated. Time and again, voters have demonstrated their political acumen and independence through their ballots, emphasizing the need for political actors to respect and engage with their diverse perspectives.

Even the formidable figure of Indira Gandhi was unseated from power, both nationally due to the Emergency and locally in her constituency. However, her swift return to office within three years is testament to the dynamic nature of Indian politics. Over time, the electorate has wielded its political might, ousting parties like Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Janata Party, and Janata Dal from power when necessary, demonstrating its formidable influence.

At certain junctures, the electorate has momentarily strayed from the path of secularism, only to swiftly recognize its misstep and reject the fusion of religion and politics at the polls. During the 2024 general elections, the BJP predominantly focused on religious and emotive issues, sidelining critical concerns affecting the broader public, such as inflation, unemployment, farmer grievances, and the challenges faced by the underprivileged. The BJP, rooted in the principles of Hindutva, viewed the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya as a pivotal national endeavor, anticipating it would secure them a resounding electoral victory. Despite past instances where the electorate leaned towards the Hindutva narrative, this time, even though Hindus form a significant majority, they did not sway to it, displaying a discerning approach toward political agendas.

The BJP's loss in Faizabad, encompassing Ayodhya, serves as a striking rebuke to the party's Hindutva-driven aspirations of transforming India into a Hindu-centric nation.

Despite extensive propaganda surrounding the Ram temple, rallying cries to elect the purported facilitator of Lord Ram, and the widespread display of saffron flags adorned with his image, Narendra Modi and his party fell short of their envisioned 370-seat victory. The electorate's verdict has underscored the fallibility of even the most seemingly invincible figures. While Modi, once hailed as an unrivaled leader without equal, has clinched reelection from Varanasi, the narrow victory margin belies his considerable popularity and dominance. The electorate's decision unmistakably rebukes Modi, as the election centered more on his persona than the party's platform. In line with the nation's sentiment, Modi should have gracefully conceded the prime ministerial position. However, such a move requires the moral compass of an ethical leader or statesman, qualities he lacks.

With Modi set to assume office as Prime Minister of India once more, the road ahead promises to be arduous. Like cowards facing repeated demise, narcissists and authoritarian figures endure countless trials when confronted. Modi and his party lack an outright majority in the Lok Sabha, relying instead on coalition partners within the National Democratic Alliance, notably the Telugu Desam Party and Janata Dal (United) led by Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar, respectively.

Naidu and Nitish Kumar, both seasoned politicians renowned for their adept administrative skills, pose a formidable challenge to Modi's traditional autocratic style. Having wielded significant influence over the central cabinet for a decade, Modi's unilateral decision-making may face resistance. Their presence, whether within the cabinet or through influential party representatives, ensures a more collaborative approach, where decisions are made collectively rather than unilaterally.

Reports suggest that both NDA allies are pushing for significant concessions, potentially including prime ministerial roles for their respective parties. Should the BJP accede to these demands, ministers appointed from these parties may not unquestioningly comply with Modi's directives. Instead, their allegiances may lie more strongly with their own leaders rather than with Modi, a departure from the typical loyalty displayed by BJP cabinet members. This dynamic could render Modi a figurehead prime minister, with Nitish and Naidu effectively wielding control.

Modi's accustomed practice of self-promotion through government-funded advertisements will likely face constraints in his new term. No longer will he wield unchecked authority to claim credit for every government initiative. With accountability to the significant NDA partners, TDP and JDU, Modi's autonomy will be curbed. Consequently, BJP ministers may feel emboldened to voice dissenting opinions during cabinet deliberations. During parliamentary sessions, a robust Opposition will provide a stark contrast to the relatively subdued environment witnessed during Modi's earlier terms as Leader of the House. This heightened presence of dissenting voices will likely curtail the ruling party's ability to engage in disruptive antics or jeer at Opposition members.

There's speculation that the Speaker of the Lok Sabha might hail from the TDP or JDU, presenting a departure from the perceived partisanship observed during Om Birla's tenure as Speaker in the previous Lok Sabha.

In his third term as prime minister, Modi will helm a potentially precarious government, despite the numerical advantage of the NDA. Historical tensions between the BJP and leaders like Naidu and Nitish suggest underlying discord within the alliance. Given the slightest pretext, Naidu and Nitish may swiftly sever ties with the coalition and align with other political entities to safeguard their hold on power. Considering these circumstances, it wouldn't be unexpected to witness a more tempered version of Modi. Even in the wilderness, the mightiest of creatures resort to consuming vegetation. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Battling body odour? 56% women were sexually harassed in public transport, but only 2% reported it

By: **Shahnaz Husain**

Summer is here and so is the season of excessive sweating and body odour. With the heat and humidity rising every day, being sweaty and smelly is a big fear for many people. Body odour is a common concern for both men and women as our bodies start sweating in response to hot and humid weather conditions. However strong body odour can negatively affect your quality of life, making you feel embarrassed, self-conscious, and even ashamed. Body odour, although it can be embarrassing and uncomfortable, is a completely natural part of being human. Our body produces approximately 1 litre of sweat a day.

Sweating plays an important role in maintaining the body temperature. Higher temperatures signal the body to release sweat as a cooling mechanism. As perspiration evaporates, it cools your body temperature.

Sweating by itself doesn't cause body odour as human sweat is odourless. Sweat that comes from apocrine glands, which are found in your armpits, public region, and groin, is high in fats and other compounds that produce odour as they're broken down by the bacteria on your skin. As you sweat, these bacteria break down proteins in your sweat into acids, producing those unmistakable, pungent smells. Excessive sweating which is known as hyperhidrosis could be caused due to stress, physical exercise, emotional excitement, diet, hygiene standards, heredity hormonal imbalance and high temperature.

Here are natural, chemical-free ways to manage body odour:

Bathing and scrubbing help to clear away germs, dirt and odour. All parts of the body must be washed well, especially the neck, armpits and feet. These are the areas where germs accumulate and cause odour. Adding cologne to the bath water leaves the body fragrant. Colognes also have a cooling effect. Shower gels and body shampoos, containing natural ingredients, like sandalwood, rose and khus have a cooling and refreshing effect.

They are not only natural coolants but have germicidal and antiseptic benefits. Wear cotton underwear and clothes during the humid season. Porous materials help sweat to evaporate. Loose, light clothing is much more appropriate and comfortable during summer. Daily changes of clothing is, of course, a must.

The use of antiperspirants and deodorants does help. Most deodorants are also antiperspirants. A spray, rather than the roll-on deodorants may be more

suitable in summer, but this is a matter of personal choice.

However, be sure to choose a mild deodorant, as strong built-in antiperspirants can cause skin irritation or sensitive reactions. It is always better to try them out on a small area, on the inner arm, first. If the skin tingles or burns for more than a minute, you should not use it. Some people find the use of talcum powders quite adequate. They absorb perspiration and maintain freshness for some time.

The climate also plays a part in choosing the right perfume. In hot and humid conditions, it is better to go for light, lemony and fresh fragrances, rather than heavy ones. The effect of perfumes intensifies in hot and humid weather. A heavy perfume can be quite overpowering. Lemon, rose, lavender or sandalwood are light and refreshing during hot weather.

Be generous with the use of colognes, even splashing them on. Colognes and Eau de Toilette constitute mainly water, or a mixture of alcohol and water, with only 2 to 5 % perfume. They are lighter and leave a light lingering fragrance.

Colognes can be added to bath water. Or, add eau de cologne to a mug of water and use it as a last rinse. It has a cooling effect too.

Bicarbonate of soda (baking soda) helps to prevent body odour. Make a paste of baking soda and water and apply under the arms. You can also add lemon juice to this paste. Leave on for ten minutes and wash off with water. Or, mix a little baking soda with your talcum powder and apply under the arms, or on the feet.

Potato slices can also be rubbed on areas where odour forms easily.

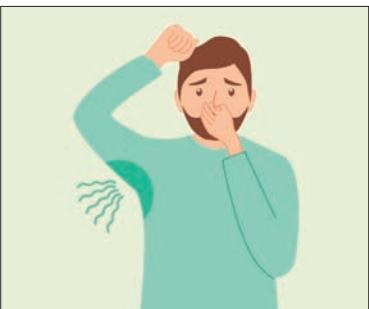
You can also add one teaspoon of alum to your bath water. Crush some mint leaves and add them too.

Rose water can always be added generously to bath water. It is a natural coolant and also fragrant.

Add 2 drops of Tea Tree Oil to two tablespoons of water or rose water. Apply this under the arms with cotton wool.

To remove odour from the hair, add the juice of a lemon and half a cup of rose water to a mug of water and use as a last rinse. For excessive perspiration (which can result in body odour), Ayurveda gives some dietary suggestions:

"Sip nimbu paani." Sip ginger tea before and after your meals. Chop fresh ginger root finely and mix with a pinch of salt. Chew a little of this before your meal. Sipping warm water with your meal may also help. A light diet and fewer spices are advised. Eat smaller meals. *(The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India)*



By: **Ishika Satwika Singh**

Recently, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) released a troubling insight painting a grim picture of women's safety in India. The latest annual report has revealed a distressing surge of 4% in crimes against women in India throughout 2022. The report further detailed a substantial escalation in reported crimes against women, soaring from 3,71,503 cases in 2020 to 4,45,256 cases in 2022. Compared to 2021's 4,28,278 cases, the 2022 statistics marked a troubling increase.

The stark reality depicted by the above data highlights the relentless surge in crimes against women in India. This not only casts a shadow of fear over women's safety in public spaces but also severely constrains their freedom of movement.

The prevalent threat looms ominously, infiltrating every aspect of their lives, from their ability to pursue education and employment to their basic right to leisure.

Moreover, this atmosphere of insecurity severely affects women's capacity to react effectively in times of crisis, perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability and distress.

In 2020, Youth Ki Awaaz and the Observer Research Foundation conducted a survey titled "Women on the move" over ten months before and during the pandemic, with participation from 4,262 women across 140 Indian cities. The survey was primarily conducted to understand Indian women's experiences better using public transport and the impact of safety concerns on their mobility choices.

56% of urban Indian women say that



they were sexually harassed in public transport, but only 2% of them reported it.

The survey "Women on the move" highlights the alarming prevalence of sexual harassment against urban Indian women in public transport, with a staggering 56% reporting such incidents at some point in their lives.

Despite this prevalent issue, only 2% of these cases were officially reported. Of the 56%, 33% took action themselves, while 33% did not find it safe to take any action, 26% chose to ignore the situation, and 6% sought help from other passengers. This indicates a profound lack of trust in the authorities' ability to handle such matters sensitively and effectively.

While women defending themselves in challenging situations is truly commendable. It is equally important to recognize that women should not bear the sole responsibility of fighting for their safety and the authorities should be there for women in adverse circumstances.

Women not having trust in the authorities and handling harassment on their own might not always work and must not always be relied upon as a

sole means of protection. In many cases, situations involving harassment or violence can escalate quickly, making it difficult for individuals to react appropriately or effectively defend themselves, especially if they are caught off guard or outnumbered by assailants.

Furthermore, relying only on self-defense places the burden of safety solely on the victim, rather than addressing the root causes of harassment and violence or holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

To encourage more women to report harassment cases, law enforcement must prioritize building trust and offering support to survivors and have a victim-centered approach which means the needs and preferences of survivors are prioritized throughout the reporting and investigation process.

The survey also revealed that 30% of women stated congestion (crowd) was the cause for feeling unsafe while using public transport, while 18% women felt the most unsafe at the interchanges (bus stops, train platforms, traffic lights) etc.

At the same time about 72% of the women did not even know the emergency contact numbers for transport

services. This statistic is crucial because it highlights specific areas of concern for women's safety while using public transport.

What can be the way forward

Hence, as stated in the above survey, to make public transportation safer for women, the government can:

- Increase accessibility and approachability of surveillance and monitoring authorities in public transport to address women's safety concerns. Sensitize bus drivers, conductors, and transport authorities to create a safer environment.

- Install CCTVs in key transport junctions to address the lack of surveillance, as cited by 46% of women. This proactive measure can deter perpetrators and provide crucial evidence in case of incidents, enhancing women's confidence in using public transport.

- Improve visibility and accessibility of emergency contact numbers for transport services, as 72% of respondents were unaware of them. Display advertisements warning against harassment alongside emergency numbers and helpdesk information to empower women with essential resources while traveling.

- Additionally, ensure clear display of route, fare, and timing information to enhance transparency and reduce misinformation, contributing to women's safety and confidence in using public transport.

- In conclusion, the survey highlights the urgent need for concrete measures to address sexual harassment in public transport. With only 2% of incidents reported, there's a clear imperative to improve safety measures and empower women to feel secure while commuting. *(Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)*

Femicide: Many countries are making the killing of women a specific crime – here's why it's needed



By: **Madhumita Pandey**

While no agreed definition of the phenomenon exists, femicide is broadly defined as the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender. This might be as a result of intimate partner violence or killing in the name of "honour", for example.

Since the UN adopted resolution 68/191 in 2013, calling for nations to take action against gender-related killing of women and girls, many high-income countries have introduced femicide laws.

In 2022, Cyprus integrated femicide into the criminal code as a distinct crime and rendered gender-related killings an aggravating factor when imposing sentences. That same year, femicide was introduced in Malta's criminal code. It can now be considered a motivation of the crime of homicide, and in such cases,

the judge can consider the highest form of punishment – life imprisonment. Croatia is the most recent country to adopt a dedicated femicide law, making it a standalone offence punishable with a prison sentence of ten years or more.

Latin America and the Caribbean have some of the highest rates of hate killings of girls and women. In response, 18 of the 33 countries in the region have created new legislation classifying femicide as a distinct hate crime.

Costa Rica became the first country to pass a law making femicide a legally defined crime in 2007. A man who murders his wife or partner can be punished with between 20 and 35 years in prison. There are also specific punishments against physical abuse and restriction of movement, in which a partner manipulates a woman to prevent them from leaving.

Laws are not enough

A report from Queen Mary University of London used the case study of Mexico to argue that the law alone has not led to the reduction of femicide there. The key findings from this report should certainly act as a crucial resource to not only understand the complex-

ity of femicide as an extreme form of gender-based violence but to increase efforts to better respond to it.

One of the main problems is the misclassification of numbers. In many cases, only gender-related killings perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member are counted as femicides.

This leads to under-reporting and invisibility of femicide that happens as part of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, hate crimes linked to sexual orientation, killing of indigenous women or connections with gangs and other forms of organised crime.

Costa Rica has sought to address this problem by signing into law an extended definition of femicide, which includes femicides perpetrated by those based on a relationship of trust, friendship, authority or power. This is to make it possible to punish crimes against women even if there is no "romantic" relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

Today, Costa Rica has a lower rate of femicide compared with its neighbours, Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico.

While the social and political circumstances of countries around the world may differ, there are several lessons in combating femicide that are universal.

The term "femicide" also carries political connotations. In Latin America it is used to refer to a lack of responsiveness from governments in relation to the killings of women and girls.

The idea of femicide emphasises state culpability and inadequate responses to this gender-based violence. This is particularly noteworthy as the rape and murder of women and girls are commonly used as abominable tools of conflict – this has recently been in evidence in Ukraine, for example.

Given that most femicides are perpetrated by current or former husbands or intimate partners, it is of utmost priority to tackle toxic masculinity and to promote gender equality. Clearly, we need to go beyond the legal framework to combat violence against women and girls. It will take advocacy and active participation of community members to create long-term solutions to curtail femicides. *(Courtesy: The Wire)*

Why don't we talk about violence against women in their home?

By: **Renuka Viswanathan**

The recent days have been especially harrowing for the women of our country. The tales of rape that usually hog the headlines have given way to stories of bodies dismembered and disposed of by lovers and partners.

Voices are being raised against interfaith marriages, live-in relationships, working women who are independent or live alone, families that do not know their daughters' friends or fail to support them when they seek escape from brutal surroundings. We are being warned that we can expect a horrible end if we disregard parental advice, insist on a career, have our own home, choose our partner, consort with a person from a different religion or live with a man without going through the formality of a marriage.

What is missing from the debate is the root cause of such horrors—the pervasive domestic violence that women of all classes, incomes, religions and education levels experience throughout their lives in relationships within and outside marriage, often with the full knowledge of families, friends and neighbours.

In India, as in other countries, there are laws to shield us all from violence. Several sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) meticulously list out various types of physical and mental assault culminating in culpable homicide that are punishable.

For serious forms of assault (like those which leave recognisable marks on the victim) formal complaints are not necessary; police officers have the authority and obligation to take cog-

nizance of the crime and arrest the criminal. However, no Station House Officer of an Indian police station does this automatically when he learns about assaults on women, even when there is unmistakable evidence.

To compel the police to do its duty, two additional clauses were added to the IPC to punish those who cause "dowry deaths". Section 498A is meant for husbands and their relatives, who cruelly injure their wives, harass them for property or drive them to suicide. And Section 304B defines and penalises "dowry deaths"; a death caused by demands for dowry is punishable with minimum jail time of at least seven years extendable to imprisonment for life.

But, these provisions apply only to dead and injured wives subjected to violence by husbands or relatives of husbands in the first seven years of marriage for demands relating to property. Such distinctions exclude relationships outside marriage and attacks that take place for other sadistic reasons or beyond the arbitrary limit of seven years; they do not also apply to cruelty within natal families.

Since Indian police stations ignore general IPC clauses when women are assaulted, where do battered women turn for relief from violence?

The legal system has also effectively neutralised the special provisions. The numbers relating to "dowry death" put out by the National and State Crime Records Bureau (NCRB and SCRBs) are patently false. Most women badly injured or killed by husbands and their families are burn victims. Those who commit the crimes rely on the police to conceal them as "kitchen accidents", so that they ap-

pear in the tally of "unnatural deaths," but need never be investigated or taken to court.

On the rare occasions that the special provisions were invoked over the many years since the new laws were enacted, hardly anyone has ever been convicted under 498A. The section has today been deliberately devalued, so that it can be used only to trouble innocents (since the section shifts the burden of proof from the prosecution to the accused), shore up statistics and grease the palms of officials.

While listening to the testimonies of ten women who had suffered extensive burns from such violent attacks, I noted that Bangalore city police had scored a perfect ten-not one case had resulted in conviction or punishment of the criminals. Let us face facts; then-Indian women have nowhere to go for protection from violent men.

What is ironic is the predictable public and media reaction to the latest horrors. As usual, the women sufferers, their families and friends, are being blamed for gullibility and inaction. Lawyers, social workers, activists and concerned citizens who are already familiar with such stories have been struggling for decades with indifferent doctors, hostile policemen, brusque prosecutors and insensitive judges.

The minimum time for disposal of a case is seven years and conviction rates are deplorable. The criminal justice system is crying out for radical reform, but that's a larger question. It is only realistic to realise that such reform will not come in response to the demands of powerless women's groups, whose tribunals, however well-publicised, do not create political

ripples. We are most troubled by the knowledge that the battered women in the news today had sought help to release themselves from their tormentors, but could not be rescued. They are now being castigated for their dependence on violent criminals. Like rats in a trap, they found no escape door nor a world to escape to.

Must we then wait till the society to which we all belong changes its attitudes and norms? Friends, neighbours and activists in whom such women confide run from pillar to post struggling to help them find a way out of their agonies.

In their innocence, they turn to that magic solution—"the women's help line" run by the same police, who exclude women from legal reliefs. A call for help never results in an FIR and case registration under the IPC, which is what police are paid for.

The buck passes routinely to untrained policewomen, who send the complainant back to the same violent home with gratuitous advice. It is self-evident that counselling and police work are incompatible and must never be tackled together. Yet, this is the only relief offered by women's help lines. Even though, much more is possible from government agencies themselves.

Unfortunately, almost nothing is being done on creating awareness and publicity, which are the key to a change in attitudes and behavior. In the past, the government has successfully used wall paintings, hoardings, posters, radio and TV slots to push the message of family planning. Environmental protection and restrictions on popular fireworks displays are also

being promoted by these methods.

A publicity blitz against domestic violence is long overdue to bring the ugly secret into the open. If the practice of using assaults to settle domestic disagreements is shamed and made "uncool", we can instill fear into criminals and confidence in victims.

Greater knowledge of the perils underlying relationships and the ways out of them can also help to save lives. Awareness sessions on the topic are essential for girls in high schools and colleges, who are the most vulnerable, just as we already have courses in sex education and training to sensitise children about inappropriate adult behavior. To this must be added information on where to seek help in moments of crisis.

Reform of the police and the criminal justice system will not happen overnight. Some of the initiatives recently begun by the Punjab government (like discouraging the display and use of arms) give hope that change in police attitudes is possible.

Even heroic efforts by committed lawyers and social workers have not transformed the police and judiciary into a system responsive to women's complaints. There is, however, one light of hope in the general gloom. Protection Officers appointed under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005 (enacted through the efforts of lawyers and activists like Indira Jaisingh and Flavia Agnes) do provide relief to a broader range of battered women than the IPC does through counselling, protection orders, legal assistance and escape to shelter homes.

This is the most effective escape route available today but few know

about it as it is not publicised. Far more money should be put into the program to cover the country with services that women in trouble can seek. Shelter homes must be increased exponentially to welcome women and their children, who are often fleeing without funds or the ability and confidence to run their own lives.

Above all, the program must be strengthened by adding a career counsellor who can guide every runaway towards a self-reliant and confident future. Repeated domestic violence is prevalent precisely because perpetrators know that victims cannot escape from them, with children to care for and without money or skills to stand on their own feet. When effective methods of fleeing attacks within the home are available and criminals are formally called out for violent behavior, we can deter and reduce domestic violence.

It's a matter of shame that the Central Women's Commission and State Women's Commissions have consistently ignored their responsibilities in pushing through the programs that can support battered women and break their cycle of dependency. The AAP government in Delhi and its Women's Commission have done nothing to tackle this difficult subject.

They do not need police powers to provide publicity and awareness, to augment the number of Protection Officers and shelter homes and strengthen them with career counsellors or launch schemes to support assaulted and friendless women. What explains the continued indifference of all governments to measures that can bring down violence against women? *(Courtesy: The Citizen)*

The group was traveling to Mzuzu to attend the funeral of a former government minister

Malawi's vice president and 9 others have died in a plane crash, the president says

BLANTYRE, June 11: Malawi's vice president, Saulos Chilima, was among 10 people killed when a small military plane crashed in a mountainous region in the north of the country, the president said on Tuesday. Chilima was 51.

President Lazarus Chakwera announced in a live address on state television that the wreckage of the plane had been located after a search of more than a day in thick forests and hilly terrain near the northern city of Mzuzu. Chakwera said there were no survivors of the crash.

Former first lady Shanil Dzimhiri, the ex-wife of former President Bakili Muluzi, was also on the plane, the president had said. There were seven passengers and three military crew members on board.

The group was traveling to Mzuzu to attend the funeral of a former government minister. Chilima had just returned from an official visit to South Korea on Sunday.



Hundreds of soldiers, police officers and forest rangers had been searching for the plane after it went missing Monday morning while making the 45-minute flight from the southern African nation's capital, Lilongwe, to Mzuzu, around 370 kilometers (230 miles) to the north.

Air traffic controllers told the plane not to attempt a landing at Mzuzu's airport because of bad weather and poor visibility and asked it to turn back to Lilongwe, Chakwera said in an address late Monday night.

Air traffic control then lost contact with the aircraft and it disappeared from radar, he said.

The president described the aircraft as a small, propeller driven plane operated by the Malawian armed forces.

The tail number he provided shows it is a Dornier 228-type twin propeller plane that was delivered to the Malawian army in 1988, according to the aviation website that tracks aircraft information.

Around 600 personnel were involved in the search in a vast forest plantation in the Vipha Mountains near Mzuzu, authorities said, including around 300 police officers, 200 soldiers and local forest rangers.

Chilima was serving his second term as vice president. He was also in the role from 2014-2019 under former President Peter Mutharika. He was a candidate in the 2019 Malawian presidential election and finished third, behind the incumbent, Mutharika, and Chakwera. The vote was later annulled by Malawi's Constitutional Court because of irregularities.

Chilima then joined Chakwera's campaign as his running mate in an historic election rerun in 2020, when Chakwera was elected president. It was the first time in Africa that an election result that was overturned by a court resulted in a defeat for the sitting president.

Chilima had previously been facing corruption charges over allegations that he received money in return for influencing the awarding of government procurement contracts for the Malawi armed forces and the police, but prosecutors dropped the charges last month. He had denied the allegations, but the

case led to criticism that Chakwera's administration was not taking a hard enough stance against graft.

The search for the plane lasted more than 24 hours and provoked an international response. Chakwera had said the U.S., the U.K., Norway and Israel had offered assistance in the search operation and had provided "specialized technologies."

The U.S. Embassy in Malawi said it also had assisted and had offered the use of a Department of Defense small C-12 plane.

However, officials with Chilima's United Transformation Movement political party — a different party to the president — criticized the government response as slow and said there was no transponder on the plane, and that was concerning for an aircraft carrying a high-level delegation.

Malawi is a country of around 21 million people and was ranked as the fourth poorest nation in the world by the World Bank in 2019. (AP)

UN says Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups may have committed war crimes in a deadly raid

GENEVA, June 11: The U.N. human rights office is citing possible war crimes by Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups in connection with a deadly raid by Israeli forces that freed four hostages over the weekend and killed hundreds of Palestinians.

Office spokesman Jeremy Laurence expressed concerns about possible violations of rules of proportionality, distinction and precaution by the Israeli forces in Saturday's raid at the urban Nuseirat refugee camp.

Palestinian health officials say at least 274 Palestinians, including dozens of women and children, were killed in the operation.

Laurence said Palestinian armed groups who are holding hostages in densely populated areas are putting the lives of nearby civilians and the hostages at "added risks" from the hostilities.

"All these actions by both parties may amount to war crimes," he told a regular U.N. briefing in Geneva.

It was catastrophic, the way that this was carried out in that civilians — again — were caught

smack bang in the middle of this," Laurence added.

Alluding to the "ordeal" faced by hostages and their families, he said: "The fact that four hostages are now free is clearly very good news. These hostages should never have been taken in the first place. That's a breach of international humanitarian law. They must be freed. All of them. Promptly."

Israel launched its war against Hamas after the group's Oct. 7 attack, in which militants stormed into southern Israel, killed some 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and abducted about 250.

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 36,730 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Palestinians are facing widespread hunger because the war has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies. U.N. agencies say over 1 million in Gaza could experience the highest level of starvation by mid-July. (AP)

Bangladesh names Lt Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman as new Army chief



DHAKA, June 11: Lieutenant General Waker-Uz-Zaman was named Bangladesh's next Army chief for a three-year term and will assume charge on June 23, the Defence Ministry said.

Lt Gen Zaman, 58, would concurrently be upgraded to the rank of a four-star general on the day he assumed charge.

"Lieutenant General Waker-Uz-Zaman has been appointed as the Army Chief with promotion as (four-star) General... for three years from the afternoon of June 23," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

He would succeed General SM Shaheedul Alam after the end of the latter's three-year tenure.

Commissioned as an Infantry Corps officer in 1985, Zaman is now the Bangladesh Army's incumbent Chief of General Staff (CGS).

Under his position as the CGS, Zaman will oversee military operations, military intelligence, United Nations peacekeeping affairs, and budget, alongside other military-related issues.

During his more than three and a half decades of illustrious career, Zaman has an enormous experience in holding key command, staff and instructional appointments, according to the Defence Ministry's Inter Service Public Relations Department (ISPR).

He commanded an infantry battalion, the only independent infantry brigade of the Bangladesh Army, and an infantry division.

As head of the Armed Forces Division, he was directly involved with UN Peacekeeping Affairs of the Bangladesh Armed Forces. He was also nominated as a Gender Champion and Gender Advocate of Bangladesh for UN Peacekeeping Affairs.

By his appointment as principal staff officer, he also headed the Bangladesh National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention as chairman.

His key staff appointments include staff officer at an infantry brigade, School of Infantry and Tactics and Army headquarters while he was an instructor at the School of Infantry and Tactics, Non-commissioned Officers' Academy and Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operations Training.

He is an alumnus of the Bangladesh Defence Services Command and Staff College and Joint Services Command and Staff College of the United Kingdom. (PTI)

US lifts weapons ban on a high-profile Ukrainian military unit with a checkered past

KYIV, June 11: The US has removed restrictions on the transfer of American weapons and training to a high-profile Ukrainian military unit with a checkered past, the State Department said on Tuesday.

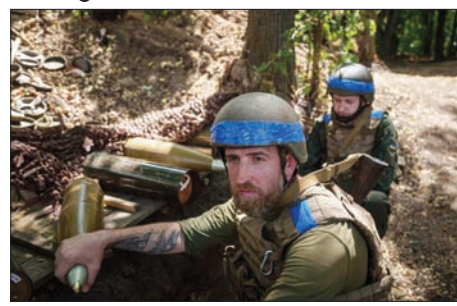
The move will help the Azov Brigade, among Ukraine's most effective and popular fighting units, move beyond its reputation as a far-right movement, a perception its commanders have been trying to dispel as Russian propaganda.

The State Department applied the Leahy vetting process to the Azov Brigade, which has been absorbed into Ukraine's National Guard as the 12th Special Forces Brigade.

US laws prohibit providing equipment and training to foreign military unit or individuals suspected of committing gross human rights violations. The State Department found "no evidence of Gross Violations of Human Rights (GVHR) committed by the 12th Brigade Azov," according to a statement.

"This is a new page in our unit's history," the Azov Brigade wrote in a statement on Instagram. "Azov is becoming even more powerful, even more professional and even more dangerous for occupiers."

"Obtaining western weapons and training from the United States will not only increase



the combat ability of Azov, but most importantly, contribute to the preservation of the lives and the health of personnel," the statement said.

Up until the State Department's decision, a provision in the US appropriations law prohibited the Azov from sending fighters to Western military exercises or access weapons bought with American funds. Lifting the ban will likely bolster the brigade's fighting capacity at a difficult time during the war against Russia's invasion. Ukraine suffers from persistent ammunition and personnel shortages.

In the years since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, the brigade has tried to recast its public image away from the controversy surrounding its ultranationalist origins to that of an

effective and skilful fighting force.

Azov soldiers played a key part in the defence of Mariupol, holding out in a siege and low on ammunition for weeks at the southern port city's steel mill despite devastating attacks from Russian forces.

In Ukraine they are hailed as heroes, remembered for defence of the sprawling plant that became a symbol of Ukrainian tenacity in the war against Russia, and people take to the streets for weekly rallies calling for the release of hundreds of Azov POWs who remain in Russian captivity for two years now.

Moscow has repeatedly portrayed the Azov as a Nazi group and accused it of atrocities, but has publicly given no evidence. In 2022, Russia's top court officially designated Azov a terrorist group.

The brigade grew out of a group called the Azov Battalion, formed in 2014 as one of many volunteer brigades created to fight Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. The battalion drew its initial fighters from far-right circles. While its current members reject accusations of extremism and any ties with far-right movements, the Kremlin has seized on the regiment's origins to cast Russia's invasion as a battle against Nazi influence in Ukraine. (AP)

Chinese premier to visit Australia on Saturday

MELBOURNE, June 11: China's Premier Li Qiang will visit Australia later this week, officials said on Tuesday, in a further indication that strained bilateral relations are improving.

Li's visit will extend from Saturday to Tuesday, and will be the first by a Chinese premier to Australia since 2017, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

Albanese and Li will hold an annual leaders' meeting at Parliament House in the Australian capital Canberra during the visit, an Australian government statement said.

Li, the second most powerful official in China's leadership, will also visit the Australian cities of Adelaide and Perth.

Li's visit follows Albanese's visit to Beijing in November last year, where leaders agreed to resume key bilateral dialogues and to further several areas of cooperation.

China imposed a series of official and unofficial trade barriers that cost Australian exporters up to 20



billion Australian dollars (USD 13 billion) a year after Australia's previous government demanded an international inquiry into the causes of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most of those barriers have been removed since Albanese's government was elected in 2022.

"Premier Li Qiang's visit to Australia is an important opportunity to engage directly on key issues for both our nations," Albanese said in a statement.

"Australia continues to pursue a stable and direct relationship with China, with dialogue at its core," Albanese added. (AP)

4 US college instructors teaching at Chinese university are attacked at a public park

BEIJING, June 11: Four instructors from Iowa's Cornell College teaching at Beihua University in northeastern China were attacked in a public park, reportedly with a knife, officials at the US school and the State Department said.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday that the injured were rushed to a hospital for treatment, and that none was in critical condition. Police believe Monday's attack was an isolated incident, based on a preliminary assessment, and the investigation is ongoing, ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said at a daily briefing.

Cornell College President Jonathan Brand said in a statement that the instructors were attacked while in the park with a faculty member from Beihua, which is in an outlying part of the industrial city of Jilin. Monday was a public holiday in China.

The State Department said in a statement it was aware of reports of a stabbing and was monitoring the situation. The attack happened as both Beijing and Washington are seeking to expand people-to-people exchanges to help bolster relations amid tensions over trade and such international issues as Taiwan, the South China Sea and the war in Ukraine.

An Iowa state lawmaker posted a statement on Instagram saying his brother, David Zabner, had been wounded during a stabbing attack in Jilin. Rep. Adam Zabner described his brother as a doctoral student at Tufts University who was in China under the Cornell-Beihua relationship.

"I spoke to David a few minutes ago, he is recovering from his injuries and doing well," Adam Zabner wrote, adding that his brother was grateful for the care he received at a hospital.

News of the incident was suppressed in China, where the government maintains control on information about anything considered sensitive. News media outlets had not reported it. Some social media accounts posted foreign media reports about the attack, but a hashtag about it was blocked on a popular portal

and photos and video of the incident were quickly taken down.

Cornell spokesperson Jen Visser said in an email that the college was still gathering information about what happened.

Visser said the private college in Mount Vernon, Iowa, partners with Beihua University. A college news release from 2018, when the program started, says Beihua provides funding for Cornell professors to travel to China to teach a portion of courses in computer science, mathematics and physics over a two-week period.

According to a 2020 post on Beihua's website, the Chinese university uses American teaching methods and resources to give engineering students an international perspective and English-language ability.

About one-third of the core courses in the programme use US textbooks and are taught by American professors, according to the post. Students can apply to study for two years of their four-year education at Cornell College and receive degrees from both institutions.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has unveiled a plan to invite 50,000 young Americans to China in the next five years, though Chinese diplomats say a travel advisory by the US State Department has discouraged Americans from visiting China.

Citing arbitrary detentions as well as exit bans that could prevent Americans from leaving the country, the State Department has issued a Level 3 travel advisory - the second-highest warning level - for mainland China. It urges Americans to "reconsider travel" to China.

Some American universities have suspended their China programs due to the travel advisory.

Lin, the Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said China has taken effective measures to protect the safety of foreigners. "We believe that the isolated incident will not disrupt normal cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries," he said. (AP)

SKorean troops fired warning shots after NKorean soldiers briefly crossed land border

SEOUL, June 11: South Korean soldiers fired warning shots after North Korean troops briefly violated the tense border earlier this week, South Korea's military said on Tuesday, as the rivals are embroiled in Cold War-style campaigns like balloon launches and propaganda broadcasts.

Bloodshed and violent confrontations have occasionally occurred at the Korea's heavily fortified border, called the Demilitarized Zone.

While Sunday's incident happened amid simmering tensions between the two Koreas, observers say it won't likely develop into another source of animosity as South Korea believes the North Koreans didn't deliberately commit the border intrusion and North Korea also didn't return fire.

At 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, some North Korean soldiers who were engaged in unspecified work on the northern side of the border crossed the military demarcation line that bisects the two countries, South Korea's Joint



Chiefs of Staff said.

Those North Korean soldiers carrying construction tools — some of them armed — immediately returned to their territory after South Korea's military fired warning shots and issued warning broadcasts, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. It said North Korea had not conducted any other suspicious activities.

South Korea's military has assessed that the North Korean soldiers didn't appear to have intentionally crossed the border because the site is a wooded area and MDL signs there weren't clearly visible, Joint Chiefs of Staff

spokesperson Lee Sung Joon told reporters.

Lee gave no further details. But South Korean media reports said that about 20-30 North Korean soldiers had entered South Korean territory about 50 metres (165 feet) after they likely lost their way.

The reports said most of the North Korean soldiers were carrying pickaxes and other construction tools.

The 248-kilometer (155-mile)-long, 4-kilometer (2.5-mile)-wide DMZ is the world's most heavily armed border. An estimated 2 million mines are peppered inside and near the border, which is also guarded by barbed wire fences, tank traps and combat troops on both sides. It's a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty.

On Sunday, South Korea resumed anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts from its border loudspeakers in response to the North's recent launches of balloons carrying manure and rubbish across the border. South Korea

spoke North Korea has installed its own border loudspeakers in response but hasn't turned them on yet.

North Korea has said its balloon campaign was in response to South Korean activists' launches of their own balloons to drop propaganda leaflets critical of leader Kim Jong Un's authoritarian rule, USB sticks with K-pop songs and South Korean drama shows, and other items in North Korea.

North Korea is extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of its political system as most of its 26 million people have no official access to foreign news. On Sunday night, Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, warned of "a new response" if South Korea continued its loudspeaker broadcasts and refused to stop civilian leafletting campaigns.

The tit-for-tat over speakers and balloons - both Cold War-style psychological warfare - have deepened tensions between the Koreas as talks over the North's nuclear ambitions have remained stalled for years. (AP)

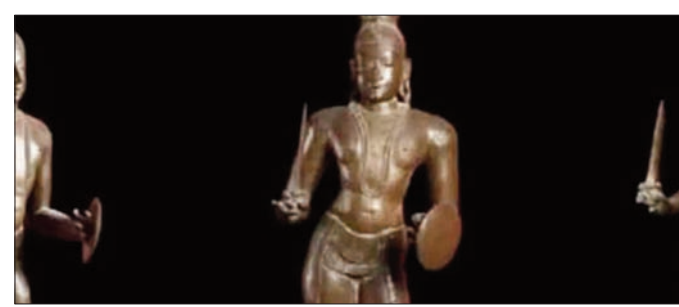
The statue was stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu

Oxford University to return stolen 500-year-old bronze idol to India

LONDON, June 11: The UK's prestigious Oxford University has agreed to return a 500-year-old bronze idol of a saint believed to be stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu to India.

"On 11 March 2024, the Council of the University of Oxford supported a claim from the Indian High Commission for the return of a 16th-century bronze sculpture of Saint Tirumankai Alvar from the Ashmolean Museum. This decision will now be submitted to the Charity Commission for approval," said a statement from the university's Ashmolean Museum.

The 60 cm-tall statue of Saint Tirumankai Alvar was acquired by the Ashmolean Museum at the University of Oxford from Sotheby's auction house in 1967 from the collection of a collector named Dr J R Belmont (1886-1981). The museum says that it was alerted to the origins of the



ancient statue by an independent researcher in November last year, following which it alerted the Indian High Commission.

The Indian government made a formal request for the bronze idol believed to be stolen from a temple in Tamil Nadu and found its way to a UK museum through auction.

The museum, which holds some of the world's most famous art and archaeology artefacts, says it acquired the statue in "good faith" in 1967.

There have been several instances of stolen Indian artefacts being restored from the UK to India, most recently in August last year when a limestone carved relief sculpture, originating from Andhra Pradesh, and a "Navaneetha Krishna" bronze sculpture originating from 17th century Tamil Nadu, were handed over to the Indian High Commissioner to the UK following a joint US-UK investigation involving Scotland Yard's Art and Antiques Unit. (PTI)

A migrant boat sank off the coast of Yemen, leaving at least 49 dead and 140 missing, UN agency says

CAIRO, June 11: A boat carrying migrants sank off the coast of Yemen, leaving at least 49 dead and 140 missing, the U.N.'s International Organization for Migration said on Tuesday.

The boat was carrying some 260 Somalis and Ethiopians from the northern coast of Somalia on the 320-kilometer (200-mile) journey across the Gulf of Aden when it sank Monday off Yemen's southern coast, the IOM said in a statement.

It said search efforts were continuing and so far 71 had been rescued. Among the dead were 31 women and six children, it said.

Yemen is a major route for migrants from the East Africa and the Horn of Africa trying to reach Gulf countries for work.

Despite a nearly decadelong civil war in Yemen, the number of migrants arriving annually tripled

from 2021 to 2023, soaring from about 27,000 to over 90,000, the IOM said last month. Around 380,000 migrants are currently in Yemen, according to the agency.

To reach Yemen, migrants are taken by smugglers on often dangerous, overcrowded boats across the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden.

In April, at least 62 people died in two shipwrecks off the coast of Djibouti as they tried to reach Yemen.

The IOM said at least 1,860 people have died or disappeared along the route, including 480 who drowned.

Monday's sinking "is another reminder of the urgent need to work together to address urgent migration challenges and ensure the safety and security of migrants along migration routes," said IOM spokesperson Mohammed Ali Abunajela. (AP)

Congress leader claims PM would not pay attention to RSS chief

Modi to 'avoid' Manipur, 'misuse' agencies: Gaurav Gogoi

NEW DELHI, June 11: Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi on Tuesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not expected to pay attention to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's words on the prevailing situation in violence-hit Manipur and he will "avoid" the northeastern state, "misuse law enforcement agencies and try to bend the Indian Constitution".

The RSS chief on Monday expressed concern over peace eluding Manipur even after one year and said the situation in the strife-torn state must be considered with priority.

"I do not expect Prime Minister Modi to pay any attention to the words of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. Prime Minister Modi will avoid Manipur, misuse law enforcement agencies and try to bend the Indian Constitution.

"Thankfully, the people have

chosen the INDIA alliance to speak up on its behalf and defend the Indian Parliament and the constitution," Gogoi wrote on 'X'.

The young Congress MP was elected to Lok Sabha from Assam's Jorhat constituency after he defeated his nearest BJP rival by a margin of over 1.44 lakh votes.

Gogoi had delivered a powerful speech in Lok Sabha in August 2023 on the opposition-sponsored no-confidence motion against the Narendra Modi government where he questioned the "maun vrat" (vow of silence) of Modi on Manipur and asked why he had not visited the state.

He had said the government that "talks of one India has created two Manipurs and deeply divided communities are now talking the language of revenge against each other". (PTI)



Reserve civic body polls for the indigenous : NSF

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 11: The Naga Students' Federation (NSF), along with its federating units and subordinate bodies, reiterated their firm stance that contestation in the urban local body (ULB) elections be reserved exclusively for indigenous Naga individuals of Nagaland state.

In a joint statement on Tuesday, the NSF and its 11 federating units, stressed that the candidates must be Nagas by blood, not by adoption.

The NSF also strongly advocated for exclusion of women married to non-locals from contesting in the ULB elections.

"This stance is rooted in a deep-seated understanding of the intrinsic connection between governance, culture, and identity, which collectively shape the socio-political landscape of

Nagaland," the statement said.

The NSF underscored the necessity of ensuring that the voices and aspirations of the indigenous Naga populace are authentically represented in all decision-making processes.

According to the student bodies, electing non-Naga individuals to local governance positions poses a significant risk to the preservation of the Naga cultural heritage.

"Such appointments could disrupt the traditional systems that have long sustained our communities and dilute the cultural legacy that defines us as a people," the statement said.

The NSF said it strongly believed that indigenous representation in local governance is not just a matter of political correctness but a fundamental necessity for the survival of Naga cultural identity.

HNLC 'sleeper cell' busted, three arrested

SHILLONG, June 11: A 'sleeper cell' of the proscribed Hyniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) was busted on Tuesday even as three including a senior cadre of the outfit were arrested for serving multiple demand notes and threatened several individuals to pay the extortion amount or to face the dire consequences.

The three have been identified as Cyfrank Paul Pariat (25), who was heading the sleeper cell as senior cadre of HNLC, Kitbok Mujai (23) and Barnabas Lyngdoh (49). Ri Bhoi SP Jagpal Singh Dhanoa said in a statement.

He said in the light of recent serving of extortion/demand notes to several individuals, the Ri Bhoi police has managed to bust a sleeper cell of the banned HNLC operating in Mawhati-Umroi of Ri Bhoi district and Shillong.

The 'sleeper cell' of HNLC was headed by the senior HNLC cadre Cyfrank Paul Pariat of Ummat village. He alongside his members



served multiple demand notes on behalf of the HNLC and threatened several individuals to pay the extortion amount or to face the dire consequences, the police officer said.

Accordingly, a joint operation was launched on June 10 by a special team of Police Headquarters and Ri Bhoi DEF and arrested the HNLC members.

"All three arrested persons were involved in recruitment, financing and propaganda for banned HNLC

Policeman among two arrested with heroin in North Tripura

AGARTALA, June 11: Two persons, including a police constable, were arrested with heroin worth ₹ 25 crore in North Tripura, officials said on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off, a vehicle coming from Mizoram's Champhai district was intercepted at Damcherra on Monday, they said.

"On searching the vehicle, heroin weighing more than 2 kg, worth around ₹ 25 crore, was found," Superintendent of Police Bhanupada Chakraborty told PTI.

There were two persons in the vehicle -- Sahidul Rahaman (35), a constable of Tripura Police, and Jasimuddin (36), a resident of Sepahijala district, and they were arrested.

Chakraborty said the vehicle was heading to Sonamura in Sepahijala.

"This was the biggest seizure of drugs in the state in the recent past. We suspect the involvement of organised gangs in heroin smuggling," he said.

In a Facebook post, chief minister Manik Saha said, "Tripura police is leaving no stone unturned to achieve the goal of NahaMuktaBharat by Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi." (PTI)

Violence in Manipur failure of govt: Former CM



IMPHAL, June 11: Former Manipur chief minister and Congress legislator party leader Okram Ibobi Singh on Tuesday said the fresh wave of violence in Jiribam district escalated due to the failure of the government to take up timely action to resolve the crisis.

"The violence hit the district because of the state government's failure to take security measures timely and weakness of the intelligence agencies," Ibobi said while addressing the media at Congress Bhavan here.

The fresh wave of violence has once again displaced hundreds of people in the district.

"So, in order to check the repetition of such unfortunate turn of events, the state government, instead of blaming others to cover up its failure, must concentrate on its bounden duty of safeguarding the lives and properties of the people by finding ways to resolve the crisis," Ibobi added.

Ibobi then lashed out at incumbent chief minister N Biren Singh for "making baseless and un-

founded allegations" against the Congress party.

The former three times chief minister dismissed the allegation of the Congress entering into an agreement endorsing separate administration demands raised by the Kukis in the run-up to the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections.

Ibobi challenged the incumbent chief minister to provide hard evidence to back his (Biren's) allegation to the Congress party.

He alleged that the chief minister and his party BJP of doing dirty politics and making irresponsible statements when the government is unable to handle issues in the state from time to time.

He said that the government remains focusing on blaming the Congress instead of working on resolving the ongoing crisis in the state.

Many leaders of the Congress including MPCC president K Meghachandra, deputy CLP leader K Ranjit and CWC member Gaikhangam attended the press conference. (NNN)

Sangma thanks PM for release of tax devolution to Meghalaya

SHILLONG, June 11: Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma on Tuesday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for authorising the release of over ₹ 1,000 crore as tax devolution to the state for June.

"I want to thank the government of India, especially the prime minister and the finance minister for releasing the tax devolution yesterday," Sangma said in a video message.

The Centre on Monday authorised the release of tax devolution of ₹ 1,39,750 crore to states for June.

It was decided that apart from the regular release of the devolution amount for the month of June, one additional instalment will be released, the Finance Ministry said in a statement.

In another post on X, Sangma said: "We express our gratitude to the @FinMinIndia, for releasing an additional devolution instalment of ₹ 536 crore to Meghalaya and a total of ₹ 1,072.90 crore for the month of June. This additional money will enable the state to accelerate the ongoing development projects." (PTI)

Electioneering for ULB polls picks up in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 11: With candidates from different parties and Independents filing nominations, electioneering is picking up for the urban local body (ULB) elections in Nagaland slated for June 26.

Altogether, there are three municipal councils in Dimapur, Kohima and Mokokchung and 36 town councils in the state.

The civic body elections are going to be held after more than two decades in the state. This time around, the polls this time will see participation of more women candidates with 33% of seats reserved for them.

The last date of filing of nominations ended on Tuesday while scrutiny of nominations will take place on June 13. The last date for withdrawal of nomination is June 18.

According to a data released by the office of the state election commissioner, a total of 394 candidates filed nominations for the ULB elections till June 10. Of them, 144 are women candidates.

The election machinery in the state stepped



up activities for the polls by conducting training programmes for polling staff in different districts. The candidates from different parties and Independents have geared up their activities by mainly canvassing through door-to-door campaigns.

Need not pull each other down on basis of numbers: Rijju

NEW DELHI, June 11: Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju on Tuesday asserted that he will make all efforts to take every-one along to ensure smooth functioning of Parliament, and said there was no need to pull each other down on the basis of numerical strength.

Rijju made the remarks after assuming charge as the Parliamentary Affairs Minister in the presence of his predecessor Pralhad Joshi and Ministers of State Arjun Ram Meghwal and L Murugan.

"We need not pull each other down on the basis of numerical strength. People use muscle power outside Parliament, but inside the House, we should use vocal power for good debate," the four-term Lok Sabha member from Arunachal Pradesh said. (PTI)

NCP (SP) leader questions 'treatment to Manipur' despite being integral part

'The people, women, children there are Indians'

PUNE, June 11: NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule on Tuesday expressed concerns about the violence in Manipur and wondered why the north-eastern state was being given such a treatment when it is an integral part of the country.

Speaking to reporters here, the Baramati MP said a terror attack took place in Jammu even as Narendra Modi was sworn in as prime minister for a third term.

"We have been questioning the government over the Manipur issue for months. A lot of discussions took place in the Parliament over the Manipur situation. Manipur is an integral part of the country. The people, women, children there are Indians," Sule said when asked about RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's remark that peace had eluded the north-eastern state even after one year.

Bhagwat had on Monday said the situation in the strife-torn state must be considered a priority.

"In Manipur, the convoy of



the Chief Minister was also attacked. It shows that somewhere something is going wrong. A word is not spoken about Manipur, though we sought a discussion on the issue. Leaders from the INDIA bloc travelled to the state, but we were stopped there. Manipur is an integral part of India, and why is it being meted out such treatment?" she said.

Sule further said that as a re-

lected MP, raising the issue of unemployment will be her priority in the Parliament.

She reiterated that the issue of companies leaving Rajiv Gandhi Infotech Park in Hinjawadi was worrying, and said that the Maratha Chambers of Commerce has requested NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar to convene a meeting and urge firms not to leave Maharashtra.

"More than 6 lakh people are working at the IT park, and it is worrying if firms are leaving," the NCP (SP) leader said.

Talking about the row over the medical entrance exam NEET-UG, 2024, Sule questioned why the Central government was outsourcing the conduct of the examination.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought the response of the Centre and the National Testing Agency on a plea seeking fresh conduct of the medical entrance exam NEET-UG, 2024, on the grounds of alleged question paper leak and other malpractices.

"What is the need for so many exams? If you ask me, when the INDI alliance government comes to power, my first demand will be to stop these exams. Students get exhausted just appearing for exams. They should be multifaceted and multi-talented. What importance do board exams have if students again have to appear for entrance exams like NEET? On top of this, there is irregularity and shoddy management, and the Centre is responsible for this," she said.

Asked about Shiv Sena MP Shirang Barne expressing disappointment about his party not getting a cabinet berth despite winning seven Lok Sabha seats, Sule said his demand was justified as she has seen his performance in the Parliament, and he also received the Sansad Ratna award.

Barne has experience with the BJP for many years and knows how it treats the allies, she said. (PTI)



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UCC part of our agenda: Meghwal

NEW DELHI, June 11: Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Tuesday said the implementation of a uniform civil code was part of the government's agenda.

He also said a solution will be found on the issue of memorandum of procedure -- a set of documents on the appointment, elevation and transfer of high court and Supreme Court judges -- pending finalisation.

He also rejected suggestions that there was a conflict between the executive and the judiciary.

Meghwal on Tuesday assumed charge as the minister of state (independent charge) for the ministry of law and justice. He held the same portfolio in the previous Modi government too.

Responding to a question on key vacancies in his ministry, he said wherever there are vacancies, be it the Supreme Court, high court or our ministry or the subordinate courts, we will try to fill them at the earliest.

On the issue of simultaneous polls, he said the committee under former president Ram Nath Kovind has submitted its report and we will inform about it later.

He noted the law commission is also working on the subject.

Before the law panel could submit its report, its chairperson Justice (Retd.) Ritu Raj Awasthi moved to Lokpal as a member.

Responding to a question on the uniform civil code, he said that it was part of the government's agenda.

The uniform civil code has remained a part of the ruling BJP's successive manifestos.

Responding to a query on memorandum of procedure, Meghwal said it is pending and the government has written to the SC collegium on it. "I believe that we will certainly find a solution to it," he said.

Addressing the issues of vacancies in the higher judiciary and pending cases, and finalising the Memorandum of Procedure are the key challenges before Meghwal.

According to data shared by the government with Parliament, over five crore cases are pending across courts -- the lower courts, the 25 high courts and the Supreme Court.

There are various reasons for the rising pendency but one of the key reasons is vacancies in the judiciary.

As on June 1, while there are two vacancies in the top court, the posts of 345 judges are vacant in the high courts.

While the sanctioned strength of the apex court is 34, the 25 high courts have a combined sanctioned strength of 1,114. Another key issue which Meghwal will have to handle is the finalisation of the memorandum of procedure (MoP).

Seeking to replace the Collegium system of appointments of judges of the Supreme Court and the high courts with a more transparent appointment mechanism, the government had brought into operation the Constitution (99th Amendment) Act, 2014 and the National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014 effective April 13, 2015. The new law was passed by the Parliament with near unanimity.

However, both the Acts were challenged in the Supreme Court which in October, 2015 declared the Acts as unconstitutional and void.

The Collegium system as existing prior to the enforcement of the two Acts was declared to be operative.

The top court issued an order on supplementing the MoP, saying the government may finalise the document supplementing it in consultation with the chief justice of India.

It was laid down that the chief justice of India will take a decision based on the unanimous view of the Collegium comprising four senior-most judges.

Despite a series of back and forth between the government and the top court, the MoP's finalisation remains pending. (PTI)

Shah takes charge as Union home minister, says will build Bharat as bulwark against terror, Naxals

NEW DELHI, June 11: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said the new government will take its efforts for India's security to the next level and build Bharat as a bulwark against terrorism, insurgency and Naxalism. After taking charge of the Union home ministry for the second consecutive term, he also said the ministry under him remains committed to the security of the nation and its people, as it always has been.

Shah, 59, who has been holding the portfolio since 2019, has returned to the Modi 3.0 government in the same capacity.

"Under the stewardship of PM Shri @narendramodi Ji, I reassumed charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs today. The MHA will remain committed to the security of the nation and its people, as it always has been. Modi 3.0 will take its efforts for India's security to the next level and build Bharat as a bulwark against terrorism, insurgency, and naxalism," he wrote on X.

Before taking charge of the ministry, Shah visited the National Police Memorial in the city's Chanakyapuri area to pay homage to policemen who had laid down their lives while serving the nation.

"Remembering the martyrs of our police

forces who laid down their lives guarding the honour of the nation and whose saga of sacrifice immortalised the fervour of patriotism forever. Paid floral tributes in their memory at the National Police Memorial," he said. Shah was elected from Gandhinagar constituency in Gujarat in the Lok Sabha election after defeating his nearest rival by a margin of 7.44 lakh votes.

He has also retained his other portfolio in the Ministry of Cooperation.

In his fresh tenure as home minister, the immediate priority of Shah will be the implementation of the three newly enacted criminal laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyaya 2023. These laws, scheduled to come into effect from July 1, are set to replace the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act, marking a significant shift towards a more efficient and effective legal framework.

Aimed at reshaping the landscape of the country's criminal justice system, Shah brought the three laws last year aimed at modernising and replacing outdated British-era legislation. (PTI)



The minister, who also expressed satisfaction with the progress of the cheetah project, said Prime Minister Modi launched Mission Life at COP26 in Glasgow to promote mindful consumption of resources and called upon people to plant one tree each in the name of their mother to address rising temperatures, desertification, and biodiversity challenges.

"Both planting trees and protecting them are important," he said.

He said that India marked 50 years of Project Tiger and 30 years of Project Elephant last year and initiated the MISHTI programme to protect mangrove ecosystems.

Besides India, Italy has invited leaders from 11 developing countries in Africa, South America and the Indo-Pacific region

PM Modi to travel to Italy this week for G7 summit in first trip abroad in third term

NEW DELHI, June 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to travel to Italy this week to attend the annual summit of G7 advanced economies in his first trip abroad after assuming office for the third straight term.

The G7 summit, to be held in the luxury resort of Borgo Egna in Italy's Apulia region from June 13 to 15, is likely to be dominated by the raging war in Ukraine and the conflict in Gaza.

US President Joe Biden, his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau are among the top leaders attending the summit. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is also scheduled for a session on the Russian invasion of his country.

People familiar with Modi's planned trip to Italy said he is set to leave for Italy on June 13 and will return late on June 14, adding it will be his first trip abroad after taking charge as the prime minister for the third consecutive term.

There is no official announcement on Modi's visit to Italy yet.



Modi will be accompanied by a high-level delegation that is likely to include External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra and NSA Ajit Doval, the sources said.

The prime minister is set to hold a number of bilateral meetings including with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. Modi had attended the previous G7 summit in Hiroshima in May last year.

On the sidelines of the summit, he had held talks with Zelenskyy and a number of other leaders.

The G7 comprises the US, the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Canada and Japan.

Italy is holding the current presidency of the G7 (Group of Seven) and is hosting the summit in that capacity. A key focus of the Italian pres-

idency has been to defend the rules-based international system.

Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine has undermined its principles and triggered growing instability, with multiple crises unfolding worldwide, according to Italy.

The G7 will give equal importance to the conflict in the Middle East, with its consequences for the global agenda, it says.

The bloc expanded into the G8 between 1997 and 2013, with the inclusion of Russia. However, Russia's participation was suspended in 2014 following its annexation of Crimea.

In line with its tradition, representatives of a number of countries and international organisations are invited to the summit by the host nation that holds the chair.

Besides India, Italy has invited leaders from 11 developing countries in Africa, South America and the Indo-Pacific region to attend the summit.

Though the European Union is not a member of the G7, it attends the annual summit. (PTI)

Chandrababu announces Amaravati as sole capital city of Andhra Pradesh



AMARAVATI, June 11: A day before his swearing-in as the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday announced that Amaravati will be the sole capital of the state.

Naidu made this announcement, addressing a joint meeting of TDP, BJP and Janasena legislators, where he was unanimously

idea of Amaravati as the capital city.

However, this brainchild of Naidu suffered a setback in 2019 when the TDP lost power and Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP won a landslide victory.

Reddy poured cold water on the Amaravati capital city plans and propounded a new theory of three capitals, which Naidu has now replaced with the decision to have a single capital.

The NDA alliance of TDP, BJP and Janasena won a landslide victory in the recently concluded simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly elections in the state with a brute majority of 164 assembly and 21 Lok Sabha seats.

The triumph has breathed new life into the Amaravati capital city project. (PTI)

Modi's latest cabinet nothing new except for date and year. Akhilesh

SAIFAI (UP), June 11: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday said the latest cabinet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is no different from the previous ones except for the date and year.

He also said he would soon inform the UP Vidhan Sabha about the seat he will vacate.

Akhilesh is an MLA from Karhal in Mainpuri district and won the latest Lok Sabha election from Kanauj.

"There is nothing new except for the date and the year," he told reporters in Saifai in Etawah district while talking about the Modi 3.0 government.

The SP chief said his party is carrying forward the ideas and thoughts of socialist Ram Manohar Lohia, B R Ambedkar, and Netaji, as the party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav is often referred to.

He said his party's MPs will raise the issues faced by the masses in the Parliament whenever the next session begins.

He thanked the party workers saying, it was "due to them the SP has become the number three party in the country."

The SP won 37 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh, only third after the BJP and the Congress in overall numbers. (PTI)

Poll results 'reality check' for overconfident BJP workers: RSS affiliated magazine

NEW DELHI, June 11: The Lok Sabha poll results have come as a reality check for "overconfident" BJP workers and many of its leaders as they were happy in their "bubble" and enjoying the glow of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's aura but not listening to the voices on the streets, an RSS-linked magazine has said.

An article in the latest issue of "Organiser" magazine also noted that though the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is not a "field force" of the BJP, the party leaders and workers did not reach out to its 'swayamsevaks' (volunteers) seeking their cooperation in electoral work.

Neglect of older dedicated workers who worked without the urge for recognition by the new age social media-aided selfie powered activists was also evident in the poll results, it said.

"Results of 2024 general elections have come as a reality check for overconfident BJP karyakartas and many leaders. They did not realise that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call of 400 plus (seats) was a target for them and a dare to the Opposition," Ratan Sharda, a life-long member of the RSS, noted in the article.

"Results of 2024 general elections have come as a reality check for overconfident BJP karyakartas and many leaders. They did not realise that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call of 400 plus (seats) was a target for them and a dare to the Opposition," Ratan Sharda, a life-long member of the RSS, noted in the article.

The BJP with 240 seats fell short of a majority but the NDA secured the mandate with 293 seats in the Lok Sabha polls. The Congress bagged 99 seats while the INDIA bloc got 234 seats. Following the polls, two Independents who won have also pledged support to the Congress, taking the INDIA bloc tally to 236.

Sharda said targets are achieved by hard work on the field, not sharing posters and selfies on social media.

"Since they were happy in their bubble, enjoying the glow reflected from Modi's aura, they were not listening to the voices on



the streets," he added.

Sharda noted that the idea that Modi was fighting on all 543 Lok Sabha seats had "a limited value". "This idea became self-defeating when the candidates were changed, imposed at the cost of local leaders and defectors given more importance."

Sacrificing even well performing parliamentarians to accommodate late comers hurt. It is estimated that around 25 percent of candidates were seasonal migrants," he said. "This happened despite the shocking experience of 30 per cent rebels in the last Himachal Pradesh elections that resulted in defeat of the BJP. Local issues, track record of the candidate does matter, one can see. Disinterest of local BJP workers was due to this factor too," he added.

Sharda, who has authored many books on the RSS, also flagged "unnecessary politicking" as one of the many reasons behind the BJP's underperformance in the Lok Sabha polls. "Maharashtra is a prime example of unnecessary politicking and avoidable manipulations. NCP faction led by Ajit Pawar joined BJP though BJP and split SS (Shiv Sena) had a comfortable majority. Sharad Pawar would have faded away in two-three years as NCP would have lost energy with infighting between cousins," he said.

"Why was this ill-advised step taken? BJP supporters were hurt because they had fought against this Congress ideology for years and were persecuted. In a single stroke, BJP reduced its brand value. After years of struggle to become numero uno in Maharashtra, it became just another political party without any difference," he added. The BJP fared poorly in Maharashtra as it could win only

Jailed J'khand minister Alamgir Alam resigns from state cabinet

RANCHI, June 11: Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam, who is in jail in connection with a money laundering case, has resigned from the state cabinet and also as the leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP), an official said on Tuesday.

In a letter to Chief Minister Champai Soren from Birsu Munda Central Jail, Ranchi, Alam tendered his resignation as a cabinet minister, he said.

Alam, in another letter to AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge, said, "I hereby submit my resignation from the post of leader of Congress Legislature Party, Jharkhand. I shall remain grateful to the party leadership for providing me an opportunity to work and serve as CLP leader."

The Enforcement Directorate had on May 15 arrested the Congress leader in a money laundering case, days after about Rs 32 crore cash was seized from premises linked to his aide.

The opposition BJP in the state last week demanded the removal of Alam from the Champai Soren cabinet.

A BJP spokesperson alleged, "The JMM-led alliance's corruption saga has been exposed before the nation. Alam is accused of a huge tender scam where he and his coterie fixed tenders in lieu of favours. He had crossed all limits of political decency by not resigning... He tried to follow Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's model where Kejriwal did not resign despite being arrested... But here we won't allow wastage of taxpayers money."

The resignation came only after the BJP threatened to hit the streets and gherao the CM secretariat, he said.

A Congress spokesperson said that Alam was due to resign after the Model Code of Conduct was removed. (PTI)

nine seats compared to the 2019 tally of 23 constituencies out of the total 48.

The Shiv Sena led by Shinde faction bagged seven seats and Ajit Pawar-led NCP just one. Without naming any leader, Sharda said the induction of Congressmen into the BJP, who had "actively promoted" the bogey of saffron terror and persecuted Hindus and also called 26/11 'RSS ki saazish' and branded RSS as a terrorist organisation, showed the BJP "in poor light" and also hurt the RSS sympathisers "immensely".

On the question of whether the RSS worked for the BJP in this election or not, Sharda said, "Let me say bluntly, RSS is not a field force of BJP. In fact, BJP, the biggest party in the world, has its own karyakartas."

He said routine electoral work of reaching out to voters, explaining the party's agenda, distributing literature and voter cards are the responsibility of the party.

"The RSS has been raising awareness among the people about issues that impact them and the nation. Except during the 1973-1977 period, RSS has not taken part directly in politics," he said.

"This time, too, it was officially decided that RSS workers will organise small local, mohalla, building, office level meetings of 10-15 to request people to go out and vote as a duty. It also addressed issues of nation building, national integration and support to nationalist forces," he said. In Delhi alone, 1.20 lakh such meetings were held, he added.

"Beyond this, to seek (RSS) swayamsevaks' cooperation in electoral work, BJP workers, local leaders need to reach out to their ideological allies. Did they? My experience and interaction tells me, they did not," Sharda said. "Was it lethargy, overconfidence, sense of comfort that 'Avega to Modi hi, Abki bar 400 plus'? I do not know," he said.

"Showing off is more important by posting selfies with a multiplier effect is the new norm," he said, adding, "If BJP volunteers don't reach out to RSS, they have to answer why they thought it was not required?" (PTI)

Modi govt will continue to balance development and environment protection: Bhupender Yadav

NEW DELHI, June 11: The Modi government will continue to balance development with environmental protection and conservation, Bhupender Yadav said on Tuesday after taking over as Union Environment minister.

Yadav's role as Environment minister will be crucial as India proposes to host the international climate talks (COP33) in 2028. If accepted, it would be the next major global conference in India after the G20 Summit last year.

Listing the major achievements of the Modi-led government, which enters its third consecutive term, he said, "India met the quantitative and qualitative targets set under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - the national climate plan to achieve Paris Agreement goals - nine years ahead of schedule."

"Our achievements in emission reduction and the renewable energy sector are significant milestones of the Modi government over the past decade," Yadav told reporters.



According to Yadav, India has implemented crucial reforms in the environment sector and launched several key initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilience and Infrastructure and International Big Cat Alliance.

India achieved two quantifiable targets under its first NDCs -- reducing GDP emissions intensity by 33 to 35 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels, and achieving 40 per cent installed power capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2030. Both were ahead of schedule.

The country now aims to reduce emissions intensity of GDP by 45 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels and achieve 50 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.

It has also committed to becoming a net-zero economy by 2070. Kiritvardhan Singh, the BJP MP from Gonda and a first-time minister in the Modi government, has been appointed Union minister of

state for Environment.

Yadav, who took over as Environment minister from Prakash Javadekar in the second Modi government in July 2021, defended India's dependence on coal at international climate talks in Glasgow and Dubai. He previously served as the Union Labour and Employment minister, a portfolio now allotted to Mansukh Mandaviya.

Under Yadav's leadership in the Environment ministry, India's climate actions were rated the fourth strongest in an annual performance index released by Germanwatch in 2023, an improvement of one place from the year before.

His accomplishments also include a ban on identified single-use plastic items, and an increase in Ramsar sites -- wetlands of international importance -- in India.

The country made significant amendments to forest, wildlife, and environmental laws during his previous term, some of which drew criticism from opposition parties and environmentalists. (PTI)

People of Ayodhya corrected temple politics by defeating BJP candidate Sharad Pawar

PUNE, June 11: NCP (SP) leader Sharad Pawar on Tuesday said the people of Ayodhya have demonstrated how to correct the "politics of temple" by defeating the BJP's candidate in the Uttar Pradesh town in recent Lok Sabha elections. Speaking at a traders' meet in Baranasi, Pawar highlighted that while the BJP had secured more than 300 seats five years ago, this time their count dropped to 240, well short of majority.

"The result shows that their 60 seats got reduced, and in this reduction, Uttar Pradesh is a key state as the people there gave a different kind of verdict," he said.

Pawar said he had anticipated that Ram temple would be the election agenda and the ruling party would get votes, but the people of our country are quite wise.

"When they realised that votes were being sought in the name of the temple, they decided to take a different stand and the BJP had to face defeat," the veteran politician said. In a major upset in the Faiz-

abad parliamentary constituency, where the temple town of Ayodhya is situated, Samajwadi Party candidate Awadhesh Prasad defeated sitting BJP MP Lallu Singh by a margin of 54,567 votes in recent elections. Pawar, a key member of the INDIA bloc, said the Opposition was apprehensive about the temple being used as an election agenda, but people took a different stand.

"As we were scared of the temple being used as the election agenda to seek votes, the people of Ayodhya showed how to correct the 'politics of temple' (by defeating the BJP candidate)," the former Union minister said. He asserted that democracy in India is intact, not because of politics but due to the "collective conscience" of the people.

"For the last 10 years, those in power have taken extreme stands, but the people have brought them back to the ground. Narendra Modi did form the government, but not on his own but by taking help of Chandrababu Naidu (TDP) and Nitish Kumar (JDU)," Pawar said. (PTI)

DU modifies teacher recruitment criteria



NEW DELHI, June 11: The Delhi University has modified its eligibility criteria for the recruitment of assistant professors in colleges, introducing an additional layer of "presentation".

The move has drawn flak from the teachers' community which has demanded a rollback. The varsity has raised its minimum eligibility from the earlier 50 to 55 points with a relaxation of five points for SC/ST/PwD candidates in its recently notified Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for teacher recruitment.

As per the new rules, the process for the final selection of candidates will be conducted in two stages - assessment through presentation and interview with the selection committee.

The presentation will be assessed based on several factors, including "humility, passion and zeal for teaching," the notification read. Candidates will also be asked to write an essay on the day of the presentation for the assessment of their writing skills, the June 3 notification said.

The varsity has also made changes in the weightage given to different components used in the assessment of the candidates.

"Objective parameters such as academic record, experience and research performance have been clubbed together for 20 points in the 100 points marker while subjective parameters have been given high weightage making the assessment highly arbitrary," Maya John, a member of the varsity's Academic Council, said.

The faculty member, who called the change arbitrary and the rationale behind it unclear, said the new SOP must be opposed as it will restrict the number of applicants.

"Far from a coincidence, the new DU guidelines have surfaced in the light of growing criticism regarding the quality of ongoing interviews and the resulting displacement of many long-serving ad hoc teachers," she added.

Abha Dev Habib, the secretary of the Democratic Teachers' Front, demanded the SOP be rolled back, saying no new criteria for selection should be introduced when the selection process is underway.

"The SOP issued is against the interests of serving teachers as it reduces the number of candidates who can appear before the Selection Committees. Appointments in many colleges are pending and many colleagues who were displaced are waiting to join back."

"The SOP adds a layer of presentation in the selection process which is to be done by a centralised committee. This will lead to over-centralisation of the process. Single window for appointment, without the say of the College, will pave the way for centralised corruption," she said.

Mithuraj Dhusiya, an elected Member of the Academic Council, said the SOP violates the UGC 2018 guidelines.

"The SOP released by DU on 3.6.2024 violates the UGC Regulations 2018. This SOP introduces additional conditions of recruitment such as the 'Presentation Assessment Committee' which finds no mention in the UGC Regulations 2018 binding on all universities and colleges. This draconian SOP needs to be immediately rolled back," he said. (PTI)

Delhi man shot dead on Jammu bus was trying to warn others of terror attack

NEW DELHI, June 11: Unfazed by shots being fired, 21-year-old Saurav Gupta, who was on the bus in Jammu that came under a terror attack, took it upon himself to raise an alarm but was felled by a bullet just then which pierced the back of his neck.

Saurav was among the nine pilgrims killed in the Sunday terror attack on a bus in Jammu's Reasi.

His body was brought to Delhi in an ambulance by his father Kuldeep Gupta and other family members. He was cremated near his house in northeast Delhi's Mandoli area on Tuesday.

Saurav had gone to the Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu with his wife Shivani Gupta to pray for a baby. The couple, which had been married for two years, was scheduled to return home later the same day.

"She saw her husband die in front of her eyes. She was inconsolable," Manoj Gupta, Saurav's uncle, told PTI.

According to him, Saurav was a



brave man with a strong build and 6-ft height.

"He was sitting behind the driver in a window seat when the terrorists attacked their bus. As soon as the firing began, he raised an alarm but was shot," Manoj Gupta said.

The bullet hit him in the back of his neck since he was sitting by the

window.

"His wife Shivani Gupta escaped unhurt in the attack but suffered fractures in legs and face when the bus fell into a gorge," Manoj Gupta said.

"Shivani had even made a video call to her grandmother-in-law from the bus just before the attack to show her the scenic view," he said. Shivani

is currently under treatment at Shanti Niketan Nursing Home near the couple's house.

Saurav, who lost his mother at the age of three, is survived by his wife, father, who works in an export house, and a younger brother, who is studying in a college.

Saurav too used to work in an export house in the Gandhi Nagar area.

His uncle said the couple had gone to the Vaishno Devi shrine last week and on June 9, the two decided to go to the Shiv Khori temple on a bus.

"Indian Army must give a fitting reply to the terrorists responsible for the attack," he said.

Nine people were killed and 41 injured as the terrorists opened fire at a 53-seater bus, which was on its way from the Shiv Khori temple to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra Sunday evening.

The bus veered off the road and fell into a deep gorge near the Teryath village of the Poni area of Reasi. (PTI)

Kolkata teacher stops going to college over wearing hijab, authorities say miscommunication

KOLKATA, June 11: A teacher at a private law college, affiliated to the University of Calcutta, resigned and stopped attending classes after the institute authorities allegedly requested her to refrain from wearing a hijab at the workplace. However, as the matter became public and sparked an uproar, the college authorities claimed that it resulted from miscommunication, and she would be returning on Tuesday after withdrawing her resignation.

Sanjida Qadar, a teacher at LJD Law College for the past three years, resigned on June 5, alleging that the college authorities had instructed her not to wear a hijab at the workplace after May 31.

"The diktat from the college governing body offended my values and religious sentiments," she said.

Expressing solidarity with the teacher, West Bengal minister and Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind president Siddique Chowdhury said the college governing body president should apologise to her.

The veteran Muslim leader also wondered whether the college authorities were working at the behest of the RSS and the BJP. Sanjida had been wearing the headscarf at the workplace since March-April, and the issue seemingly escalated over the past week.

However, after her resignation became public, the college authorities contacted her and insisted that it was merely a miscommunication, clarifying that they had never prohibited her from covering her head with clothes during working hours, sources said.

College governing body chairman Gopal Das told PTI. "There was no directive or prohibition, and the college authorities respect the religious sentiments of everyone. She will resume classes on Tuesday. Now, there is no misunderstanding. We engaged in prolonged discussions with her. The initial developments were the result of some miscommunication."

The teacher said, "I received an email from the office on Monday. I will analyse my next steps and then decide. But I am not going to the college on Tuesday," she said.

The email stated that according to the dress code for all faculty members, which is periodically reviewed and assessed, she was free to use a dupatta or scarf to cover her head while taking classes.

The minister alleged that the management of the institute was instilling regressive values among students and trying to incite them against a teacher for wearing a headscarf.

"How can the head of the management of a law college issue such a diktat? Mind if children are expected to learn about the Constitution and laws at such an institute... We heard that he has no objection to Sikh men wearing turban and women's headscarves. Why then he is targeting Muslims?," Chowdhury said in a video posted on social media.

He claimed that the "people of Bengal won't forgive such persons who are out to destroy the secular, pluralistic and tolerant values of the state". (PTI)

Several parts of national capital face outage

NEW DELHI, June 11: Several parts of national capital, including the area housing Delhi LG secretariat and Chief Minister's residence, faced outages for varying lengths as a substitution of power grid in neighbouring UP's Mandala caught fire on Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

Power discom officials said several areas, largely in the central and east Delhi, were affected due to the failure. Some areas in North Delhi also faced outages.

"Areas likely Civil Lines, Model Town, Kashmiri Gate, Gulabi Bagh, Shakti Nagar and Vijay Nagar in North Delhi faced outages. The supply was resumed within an hour," said a discom official. He said the power supply of LG House and Chief Minister's residence was also briefly affected.

Areas in east, central, south and north Delhi like ITO, Laxmi Nagar, Lajpat Nagar, Jamia, Narela, Model Town, Rohini, Gopalpur, Sabzi Mandi, Wazirpur, and Kashmiri Gate also faced outages, he said. (PTI)

J&K bus terror attack: Combing operation enters second day, over 20 picked up for questioning

JAMMU, June 11: Extensive efforts to track down terrorists involved in the attack on pilgrims in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district continued on Tuesday, with 11 teams of security personnel working on the ground and a multi-directional cordon laid around the Poni-Treyath belt, officials said.

Security forces have sounded a high alert in Jammu and Rajouri districts and intensified checking and frisking in the belt following the terror attack that left nine dead and 41 injured, they said. According to the officials, more than 20 people have been picked up for questioning.

On Sunday, terrorists opened fire at the 53-seater bus carrying pilgrims when it was en route from the Shiv Khori temple to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra near Teryath village in the Poni area.

The bus, which was ferrying pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi, plunged into a deep gorge following the gunfire.

Deputy Inspector General of Police, Udhampur-Reasi Range, Rayees Mohammad Bhat said the security forces have got some leads as 11 teams of police, Army and CRPF are jointly working on two different axes to neutralise the fleeing terrorists.

"The search operation is going on today in and around the area (where the attack took place) with 11 teams working on the ground apart from a multi-directional cordon laid around the (Poni-Treyath) belt," another senior police officer said.

The officials said that based on the statements of those injured in the attack, they have not ruled out the possibility of a fourth person being present at the spot who acted as a lookout for the three terrorists.

Sources said security forces suspect the Pakistani terrorists are hiding in the mountainous terrains of Rajouri and Reasi and have intensified combing operations in the region. They are taking directions from Pakistan's ISI through secured communication, the sources said.

There are reports that four terrorists including a local overground worker were involved in the attack which was carried out on the directions of Lashkar-e-Taiba commander Abu Hamza, they said.

Bajrang Dal to hold nationwide protest against J-K terror attack

NEW DELHI, June 11: The Bajrang Dal will hold a nationwide protest on Wednesday against a terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi in which nine persons, including a two-year old, were killed and several others were left injured, a senior Vishva Hindu Parishad functionary said on Tuesday.

Bajrang Dal is the youth wing of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the BJP's ideological fountainhead.

Condemning the incident, VHP general secretary (organisation) Milind Parande said, "It was a cowardly attack by Islamic terrorists backed by Pakistan."

"The VHP's youth wing Bajrang Dal has decided to burn effigy of Islamic terrorism across the country tomorrow (Wednesday) and submit a memorandum to President Droupadi Murmu through respective district collectors, urging her to ensure strict action against the perpetrators," he said.

Nine persons, including a two-year-old, were killed and several others injured on Sunday when the

terrorists opened fire at the 53-seater bus carrying pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi.

The bus was en route from the Shiv Khori temple to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra near Teryath village in the Poni area when the incident took place.

The VHP leader paid tribute to the pilgrims, who were killed in the terror attack and wished for the speedy recovery of those left injured in the incident.

Extensive efforts to track down the terrorists involved in the attack on pilgrims in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district continued on Tuesday, with 11 teams of security personnel working on the ground and a multi-directional cordon laid around the Poni-Treyath belt, officials said.

Security forces have sounded a high alert in Jammu and Rajouri districts and intensified checking and frisking in the belt following the terror attack that left nine dead and 41 injured, they said.

Fire at Park Street restaurant in Kolkata, no one injured

KOLKATA, June 11: A major fire broke out in a restaurant in the Park Street area of central Kolkata on Tuesday, triggering panic among local people, an official said.

No casualty was reported in the incident, he said. At least nine fire tenders were pressed into service to douse the blaze, which was first spotted around 10.50 am, the official said, adding that a disaster management team was also deployed.

The fire broke out at the restaurant adjacent to a multi-storied building on Park Street. Thick smoke and flames were seen billowing from the higher floors of the structure, a part of which was covered with tin sheets that got destroyed. People from nearby residential buildings and offices came out on the street in fear.

Firefighters managed to bring the blaze under control, and they are still working as the cooling-off process is underway. Fire and Emergency Services Minister Sujit Bose said.

The cause of the fire will be ascertained after a forensic investigation, he said, adding that the authorities will examine whether the restaurant owner had followed safety regulations or not.

Asked about the part of the structure built with tin sheets, Bose said the fire services department doesn't have any say in it. (PTI)

Sule inspects rain-hit areas of Pune, slams govt over neglect of infrastructure



PUNE, June 11: NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) MP Supriya Sule on Tuesday visited areas of the city that had faced waterlogging and other rain-related problems last week, and claimed that the government was not responsive enough.

The Baramati MP visited Model Colony, Sinhgad Road, Wadgaon and Katraj localities. The city was lashed by torrential rains on Saturday evening with Shivajinagar area receiving more than 100 mm of rain between 5.30 pm to 8.30 pm.

Speaking to reporters, Sule said the city was facing multiple crises including rising crime, but the administration's response was inadequate. "On the one hand, crime is increasing, drug-related crimes are taking place, and on the other hand there is a complete collapse of administration and infrastructure," she claimed.

Pune was part of the Union government's Smart City project but rainwater was entering people's houses due to encroachments, Sule said, demanding action against encroachments on water bodies.

"Pune residents pay their taxes and now they are asking for accountability over the collapse of infrastructure," the NCP (SP) MP said, adding that she was going to meet the municipal commissioner and discuss these issues. "Someone has to speak, as everybody is busy breaking up political parties and families. Now that they have got less seats in the Lok Sabha (compared to the last time), they will be busy increasing the count. They have time to increase their count but not for the people who vote for them," Sule said, taking a swipe at the BJP and ruling Mahayuti alliance in Maharashtra.

The BJP was in power in the civic body (before the term of its general body ended and an administrator was appointed), she noted. (PTI)

Two minor siblings raped, blackmailed for six months; 2 held

NOIDA, June 11: Two minor siblings were allegedly raped and blackmailed for money for over six months by two men in Greater Noida, police said on Tuesday.

The two accused -- Rahul (23) and Suraj (25) -- were arrested on Monday, a day after the girls' father approached the local Beta 2 police station with a complaint leading to the registration of an FIR in the case, they said. The two men had raped the siblings and videographed the acts, they said.

The girls aged 13 and 15 were befriended by the accused, who had extorted about Rs 10 lakh from the siblings' family since January by threatening to circulate the videos on social media, police officials said. "The accused befriended the two girls after contacting them over phone. They once lured the girls on the pretext of partying with them but fed them intoxicants and raped both the girls. At the time of the incident, the accused also made obscene videos of both the girls," a police spokesperson said.

"Lakhs of rupees were extorted from the girls as the accused otherwise threatened to circulate the videos on social media and threatened to kill the girls," the spokesperson said. "The matter came to light when the father was looking for some money, which the family had kept at their home, but could not find and he asked the girls if they had seen the money. The girls then told their father that they had given the money to the accused and narrated the entire ordeal," the official said.

On the basis of the father's complaint, an FIR was immediately lodged under IPC sections 376 (rape), 506 (criminal intimidation), 328 (giving poison to someone) to commit an offence, and 384 (extortion), the police said. Charges under provisions of the stringent POCSO Act were also invoked in the case lodged on Sunday after which the accused were held on Monday from the Aichra T-pole in Greater Noida, the police added. The accused were produced in a local court which has remanded them in judicial custody, the police said. (PTI)

Climate change-fuelled extreme weather events cost at least USD 41 bn globally since COP28

NEW DELHI, June 11: As millions of people in India grapple with blistering heat intensified by climate change, a new report has said extreme weather events have caused over USD 41 billion in damages globally since the international climate talks in Dubai (COP28) in December last year.

The report by the UK-based NGO Christian Aid said four extreme weather events in the past six months -- all scientifically shown to have been made more likely and/or more intense by climate change -- killed over 2,500 people.

The non-profit organisation said insufficient progress has been made since COP28 in the UAE to move away from fossil fuels or to support lower-income countries in coping with climate disasters.

As the second week of mid-year climate talks in Bonn began on Monday, it said these numbers demonstrate that the costs of the climate crisis are already being felt.

"Rich countries, responsible for the lion's share of the greenhouse gases that are heating the atmosphere and fuelling extreme events, should recognise their historic responsibility and increase their funding to the Loss and Damage Fund to help other countries cope with and recover from extreme weather," Christian Aid said.

Delegates at the UN climate negotiations in Dubai in December agreed on a new loss and damage fund to address the impacts of climate change disproportionately affecting poor communities in the Global South.

The USD 41 billion in damages is an underestimate, according to the charity. Only insured losses are typically reported, and many of the worst disasters have occurred in countries where few people or businesses have insurance, the report said.

The human cost of disasters is also not fully captured in these figures, it added.



According to the report, floods that killed at least 169 people in Brazil and caused at least USD 7 billion in economic damages were made twice as likely by climate change.

In South and Southwest Asia, flooding that killed at least 214 people and caused USD 850 million in insured damages in the UAE alone was also made more likely by climate change. Simultaneous heatwaves in West, South, and Southeast Asia

killed over 1,500 people in Myanmar alone, with heat deaths notoriously underreported, the report said. The report said the heatwave is expected to slow growth and increase inflation, and in Southeast Asia, it would have been completely impossible without climate change. In South and West Asia, it was made five and 45 times more likely, respectively, and also hotter.

Flooding from cyclones in East Africa killed 559 people and was made about twice as likely and also more intense by climate change, it said.

"We cannot heal the burns caused by the climate crisis while we are still throwing fossil fuels on the fire," Mariana Paoli, Christian Aid's Global Advocacy Lead, who is from Brazil, said.

"We need rich countries, who are largely responsible for causing the climate crisis, to massively scale up funding for climate action. They need to show real creativity and political will, and tax

polluters and the super-rich to finance genuine climate action. We need to cancel historic debt owed to rich countries by poor ones, and instead ensure that money is used to improve climate equity, helping everyone to be safer from climate disasters," Paoli said.

The report mentioned that countries in 2015 agreed to limit global average temperature rise to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius and "preferably" to 1.5 degrees Celsius to prevent further worsening of climate impacts, such as droughts, extreme rain, floods, sea level rise, cyclones, heatwaves etc.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of leading climate scientists, the world needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 43 per cent by 2030 (compared to 2019 levels) and at least 60 per cent by 2035 to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Earth's global surface temperature has already increased by

around 1.15 degrees Celsius compared to the average in 1850-1900 due to the rapidly increasing concentration of greenhouse gases -- primarily carbon dioxide and methane -- in the atmosphere.

Developing nations argue they cannot be expected to reduce CO2 emissions faster if developed countries -- historically responsible for climate change -- do not provide enhanced financial support.

An agreement on New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) or a new climate finance goal will be the key issue at the United Nations climate conference (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November.

NCQG is the new amount developed countries must mobilise every year from 2025 onwards to support climate action in developing countries. Rich countries are expected to raise more than the USD100 billion they promised to provide every year from 2020 but repeatedly failed. (PTI)

Merging Indian mythology and sci-fi in 'Kalki 2898 AD' nothing short of a dream: Nag Ashwin

NEW DELHI, June 11: Filmmaker Nag Ashwin says his much anticipated pan-India film "Kalki 2898 AD" is a blend of Indian mythology and science fiction, a dream that became a reality with the dedication of his cast and crew.

Previously titled "Project K", the multilingual big-budget sci-fi movie stars Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, Amitabh Bachchan, and Kamal Haasan. It is produced by C. Aswini Dutt of Vyjayanthi Movies.

The makers launched the trailer of "Kalki 2898 AD" on Monday evening on social media in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and English.

The 3.03 minute-trailer of the mythology-inspired sci-fi spectacle set in the future is filled with references to a 'naya yug' (new era) on the horizon and an impending battle.

Ashwin said the first glimpse into "Kalki 2898 AD" is just the tip of the iceberg.

"My heart is filled with so many emotions today. As a filmmaker, I have always been fascinated by Indian mythology and science fiction. Merging these two elements in 'Kalki 2898 AD' is nothing short of a dream, made possible by the incredible talent and dedication of our artists and team," the filmmaker said in a statement.

"It has taken us a lot to witness this day today. From our producers and star cast to the brilliant creative minds and the entire crew of 'Kalki 2898 AD', each person has poured their heart and soul into this film. We hope the trailer makes the Telugu audience and the entire nation proud, leaving them excited for what's to come," he added.

Also starring Saswata Chatterjee, Disha Patani, Brahmanandam, and Rajendra Prasad, "Kalki 2898 AD" is set to be released on June 27. (PTI)



Assam Police's documentary on extremism to be screened at Mumbai film festival

GUWAHATI, June 11: Short documentary 'Fehujali - The New Dawn', produced by Assam director general of police G P Singh, will be featured at the Mumbai International Film Festival starting on June 15, film director and inspector general Parthasarathi Mahanta said on Monday.

Having won the 'Best Short Documentary' award at the 7th New Delhi Film Festival in March, the 19-minute film carries a poignant message for the youth of the state, urging them to steer clear of extremism and embrace a path of purpose and righteousness.

"We have seen some young boys and girls join the camps of terrorist outfits after falling victim to the various gimmicks being peddled. We decided to bring to the public domain true-life stories of disillusionment amongst those who had fallen prey to such propaganda campaigns and joined terrorist organisations", Singh said.

"The documentary serves as an awakening for the youth of the state, shedding light on the struggles of marginalised youth ensnared by extremist factions," the director said, adding, "It depicts their journey from disillusionment to clarity, urging others to avoid the allure of extremism and pursue a path of righteousness". The screening of "Fehujali" at MIFF on June 21 not only recognises its cinematic excellence, but also highlights its role as a powerful tool for awareness and change, Mahanta emphasised. (PTI)



We need to normalise obsessive work culture: Actor-MP Kangana

NEW DELHI, June 11: Stressing the need to "normalise obsessive work culture", actor and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut on Tuesday said Indians can't afford to be lazy as the country is yet to become a developed nation.

Ranaut shared her thoughts in an Instagram Story, in which she posted a video clip of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the staffers of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) after he began his third term on Monday.

"My every moment is for the country," Modi had said, asserting that he has promised to work round the clock to achieve the goal of India becoming a developed country by 2047.

In her post, Ranaut

wrote the concept of weekends was nothing but "western brainwashing".

"We need to normalise obsessive work culture and stop with waiting for the weekends and complaining about Mondays memes. That's all western brainwashing; we are not a developed nation yet, and we can't afford to be bored and lazy at all," she captioned her post.

Ranaut, a popular face from Bollywood and a long-time Modi supporter, was elected from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, her home state, in her first poll. She defeated Vikramaditya Singh, the son of six-time chief minister Virbhadr Singh and state Congress chief Pratibha Singh. (PTI)

Dhanush-starrer 'Raayan' to release in July

NEW DELHI, June 11: Tamil film Raayan, starring and directed by Dhanush, is set to hit the screens on July 26.

Dhanush has also written the action thriller movie, which marks his second directorial venture and 50th feature film.

The actor-filmmaker shared the release date of Raayan on his official X page on Monday.

"#Raayan From July 26th," he captioned the new posters of the film.

The film is backed by Kalanithi Maran under the production banner of Sun Pictures. It stars Dhanush in the titular role.

S.J. Suryah, Prakash Raj, Selvaraghavan, Sundee Kishan, Kalidas Jayaram, Dushara Vijayan, Aparna Balamurali, Varalaxmi Sarathkumar and Saravanan also round out the cast of Raayan.

The music and background score of the movie is composed by A R Rahman. This is the composer's fourth collaboration with Dhanush following Raanjanaa, Maryan and Atrangi Re. (PTI)

Julianna Margulies won't be part of 'The Morning Show' season 4

LOS ANGELES, June 11: "The Good Wife" star Julianna Margulies won't return for the upcoming fourth season of the award-winning drama series "The Morning Show".

Sources told Variety that the decision was made before the controversy stirred by a podcast that featured Margulies last year.

The actor was offered a one-episode appearance in season four of the Apple TV+ show that she turned down, they said.

Margulies, also known for films such as "Snakes on a Plane" and "The Upside", joined "The Morning Show" in the second season as journalist Laura Peterson, who becomes Bradley Jackson's (Reese Witherspoon) love interest.

While Laura and Bradley break up early in season three, the former's arc continues through the remaining episodes. (PTI)

Mia McKenna-Bruce, Martin Freeman and Helena Bonham Carter join for 'The Seven Dials Mystery'

WASHINGTON [US], June 11: In exciting news for Agatha Christie fans, Netflix has announced that Mia McKenna-Bruce, Martin Freeman, and Helena Bonham Carter will be starring in a new Agatha Christie adaptation titled 'The Seven Dials Mystery'.

The series is set in England in 1925 and revolves around a practical joke gone horribly wrong at a lavish country house party, confirmed The Hollywood Reporter.

Mia McKenna-Bruce, known for her role in 'How to Have Sex,' will be leading the cast as Bundle, a young and determined sleuth.

Joining her will be the talented Helena Bonham Carter and Martin Freeman. McKenna-Bruce expressed her excitement, stating, "Chris Chibnall's scripts are brilliant, and I am thrilled to be part of this new interpretation of the iconic Agatha

Christie's storytelling."

According to the Hollywood Reporter, 'The Seven Dials Mystery' is penned by Chris Chibnall, the creator of 'Broadchurch' and former showrunner of 'Doctor Who.'

The series is executive produced by Suzanne Mackie from 'The Crown' through her company Orchid Pictures, along with Chris Sussman from 'Good Omens.'

Directing the series is Chris Sweeney, known for his work on 'The Tourist' and 'Back to Life.'

Set against the backdrop of a luxurious country house party in 1925, the story unfolds as a practical joke turns deadly.

Bundle, the young sleuth played by McKenna-Bruce, embarks on a thrilling journey to unravel a chilling plot that will change her life forever, as per The

Hollywood Reporter.

'The Seven Dials Mystery' marks the first series to go into production with Orchid Pictures and is scheduled to start filming this summer.

Fans of Agatha Christie can expect a captivating adaptation that stays true to the author's iconic storytelling.

But that's not all! The BBC and Britbox International have also announced their own Agatha Christie project. Anjelica Huston and Oliver Jackson-Cohen will be leading the adaptation of her novel 'Towards Zero.'

As per The Hollywood Reporter, the three-part series also features Ella Lily Hyland, Anjelica Huston, and Mimi Keene.

Directed by Sam Yates, filming for this exciting project is currently underway in and around Bristol and on the picturesque Devon coast. (AGENCIAS)



Fearless Vishnu Saravanan ready to unleash 'fighter mentality' at Olympics

NEW DELHI, June 11: A fearless approach helped then rookie Vishnu Saravanan at the Tokyo Olympics and the Indian sailor is ready to continue with the same mindset, unleashing his "fighter mentality" at the Paris Games next month.

The 25-year-old qualified for his second Olympics earlier this year at the ILCA 7 Men's World Championship in Australia.

"In Tokyo, I was a bit fearless. I just went 'OK, it's my first Olympics. I don't really care about the results. So I just want to sail my best and see where I land up.' And I did ok," Saravanan told a virtual press conference arranged by the Sports Authority of India on Tuesday.

The Asian Games bronze medalist said that he did not get overwhelmed by veteran sailors and their achievements, which gave him confidence to do better against them.

"That fearlessness kind of taught me like you can perform much better by not putting yourself underneath some of the veteran sailors. You really have to push that level of comfort where you can do your best and that's what I think I improved this season as well.

"Because I was more confident and I had more of kind of a fighter mentality where I really wanted to beat these guys before they quit."

World no 17 Saravanan has been training in Marseille for the past month, getting the taste of the Olympic venue alongside London 2012 silver medalist Pavlos Kontides of Cyprus and Rio and Tokyo silver medalist Tonči Stipanović of Croatia.



"I've been lucky to be able to train in the Olympic waters and have such good training partners who actually won Olympic medals. I'm training with Pavlos Kontides and Tonči Stipanović, who've been in the top five for many years. So it's quite a solid group.

"As I say, I am in the Army, but I've never been in the war.

But when I'm sailing on water with these guys, it feels like I'm on war every day because the intensity is super high and my heart rate never goes below 150.

"It might look from outside like we don't really work so much but the tension is quite high and it's always running. So it's quite fun to be there."

In the run up to the Olympics,

Saravanan has competed at the Europa Cup that was in Palma in Spain along with a tournament in France, where he finished 11th. At the Paris Olympics, Saravanan knows that his biggest challenge will be navigating through the tough conditions.

"The biggest challenge would be the conditions because it's so random. If you see the map of

Marseille, it's like a big bay, like marine drive, but with cliffs on the edges. "So when the wind comes in different directions, it's very challenging because there's a lot of unpatterned movements of the wind, which is very unpredictable.

"I have to have a good start to have the tactical advantage." (PTI)

Lewandowski and Swiderski injured in last Euros warmup

WARSAW, POLAND, June 11: Strikers Robert Lewandowski and Karol Swiderski were in doubt for the European Championship after they were injured as Poland beat Turkey 2-1 in a warmup on Monday. Lewandowski set up Swiderski for the opening goal in the 12th minute. But in his celebrations, Swiderski hurt his ankle and had to be replaced. Captain Lewandowski, Poland's all-time leading goal-scorer, lasted until the 32nd when he hurt his right leg and was substituted.

The double blow was a nightmare for Poland. Arkadiusz Milik was to be up front with Lewandowski for the Euros until he damaged his left knee on Friday in the friendly against Ukraine. Milik returned to Juventus and had successful knee surgery on Monday.

Lewandowski and Swiderski have only until Sunday to recover when Poland opens its Euros campaign against the Netherlands in Hamburg.

Turkey threatened the equalizer in the second half. Arda Güler and Orkun Kökçü were saved but goalkeeper Wojciech Szczęsny was helpless when halftime substitute Barış Alper Yılmaz's shot from the edge of box deflected in. After Turkey's Kerem Aktürkoğlu hit the crossbar from long range, Poland won in the 90th thanks to a beauty by

Nicola Zalewski, who weaved past two defenders to the box and scored his maiden international goal. Turkey faces Georgia in its opener on Tuesday week in Dortmund, while Poland will be sweating on its strikers.

There was nothing wrong with the Dutch attack. They have warmed up with consecutive 4-0 wins. Iceland was put to the sword in Rotterdam, with Virgil van Dijk and Wout Weghorst scoring, just as they did against Canada last Thursday at De Kuip. Xavi Simons' first goal for the Netherlands was teed up by Denzel Dumfries' header in the first half, then Nathan Ake's nod set up Van Dijk.

Substitute Donyell Malen scored thanks to Memphis Depay, but Depay was denied moments later when VAR ruled out his goal because of an earlier handball. However, VAR overturned another on-field decision to allow Weghorst's goal in added time. The Czech Republic struggled to subdue North Macedonia 2-1, needing two second-half penalties in Hradec Králové.

After Malta was ravaged 7-1 last Friday, the Czechs made nine changes to give their likely Euro lineup a run before facing Portugal in a week in Leipzig.

But nobody scored until the 60th when Patrik Schick converted a penalty for a foul on Tomas Soucek. (AP)



Chennaiyin FC rope in Colombian star Wilmar Jordan Gil

CHENNAI, June 11: Chennaiyin FC have signed Colombian striker Wilmar Jordan Gil ahead of the 2024-25 season, the Indian Super League club announced on Tuesday.

The Colombian striker brings a wealth of experience and skill to the club, having been part of ISL for two seasons.

Wilmar made his ISL debut with NorthEast United FC in 2022. He then continued his impressive journey with ISL debutants Punjab FC the following season, scoring eight goals in 15 appearances.

Joining Chennaiyin on a one-year deal, Jordan's arrival marks the club's fifth signing for the 2024-25 season and their third foreign acquisition, following Elsinho Dias and Chima Chukwu. The club had earlier announced an extension for captain Ryan Edwards.

"Wilmar has had a fantastic career and scored goals everywhere he has been. Scoring 24 goals in 33 appearances between North-East and Punjab is a great ratio for

a striker. We are delighted to add that kind of firepower to our attack," coach Owen Coyle said.

Throughout his career, Wilmar has excelled on various stages, including domestic leagues and international competitions. He began his senior career with Monagas in Venezuela, where he made 35 appearances and emerged as the top scorer with 20 goals.

"I am very happy to be part of this great club and team, and very grateful for this great opportunity they have given me. With a lot of work, humility, and sacrifice, we can fulfill all the objectives we set for ourselves and win the title," Wilmar said.

In 2011, he joined Gyeongnam FC in South Korea before heading to Bulgarian side Litex Lovech in 2013, where he once again topped the scoring charts with 20 goals.

He has also had stints with Chinese Super League club Tianjin Teda, U.A.E. side Emirates Club on loan, Portuguese club Chaves, and Colombian side Atletico Huila. (PTI)

Marwari Sammelan's two-day Indoor Games Competition concludes in Ghy

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 11: Keeping in mind the participation of children and youth of the society in various sports at the State and National level, the two-day Indoor Games 2024 was successfully organized by Marwari Sammelan Guwahati Branch in the memory of Late. Deendayal Singhania.

Children, Youth, Women and Elderly people of the society participated enthusiastically in various competitions organized at Tarunram Phookan Indoor Stadium of Nehru Stadium. Amit Singhania, the title sponsor of the games, was present as the chief guest at the award distribution ceremony. Chief guest Singhania, in his address, wholeheartedly appreciated the efforts of Marwari Sammelan Guwahati Branch and said that such events provide a platform to the children of the society where they can further enhance their hidden talent. On this occasion, branch president Shankar Birla, provincial general secretary Vinod Lohia, mandaliya co-secretary Makhlanil Agarwal, program convenor Praveen Daga, branch



secretary Ashok Sethia also expressed their views and called the event successful and meaningful for the entire Society. During this, many dignitaries including Guwahati branch advisor Pitaram Kedia, Maheshwari Sabha president Sitaram Bihani, Sammelan Barpeta branch secretary Pramod Agarwal were present.

After that, branch senior vice president Pradeep Bhuwalka conducted the award distribution ceremony and announced the names of winners and runners-up

in Ludo, Dart, Arm Wrestling, Chess, Carrom, Table Tennis and Badminton. These competitions were divided into two categories under Under-15 and Above-15 for Men-Women (Singles), Men-Women (Doubles). Apart from Guwahati, Jorhat, Bokakhat, Tinsukia, Mangaldai, Hojai, Nagaon and other places around 350 participants participated in the two-day competition, which speaks of the success of this event.

Branch PRO Narendra Soni said that trophies were given to all the Winners and Runners-up.

At the same time, every participant who took part in the competition was given a certificate and jersey as a gift. On this occasion, the winners of the online painting competition organized on the occasion of Mother's Day under the coordination of Gaurav Siotia were also awarded with trophies.

Branch Treasurer Suraj Singhania said that the two-day indoor games organized under the supervision of competition co-convenors Surendra Laddha, Vivek Sanganeria, Vikash Agarwal and Pradeep Patni along with Vice President Mahendra Mittal, former President Sanwarimal Agarwal, Joint Secretary Sanjit Dhoot, Joint Treasurer Vikash Jain, Prabhash Poddar, Rahul Lohia, Samit Saraf etc. members played an important role in making the two-day indoor games a grand success. All the participants wholeheartedly appreciated the arrangements made for two days during the Indoor Games Competition organized for the third time by Marwari Sammelan Guwahati Branch and urged to organize this event in a more grand manner in future.

Olympics-bound Nagal moves to pre-quarterfinals of ATP Challenger in Italy

PERUGIA (ITALY), June 11: India's top-ranked tennis player Sumit Nagal officially qualified for the Paris Olympics and advanced to the pre-quarterfinals of the ATP 125 Perugia Challenger with straight sets win over Bosnian Nerman Fatic here on Tuesday.

The sixth seed Indian, who won the men's singles crown at the Heilbronn Neckarcup 2024 Challenger event in Germany last week, registered a 7-6(1) 6-2 win in the first round that lasted one hour 52 minutes.

On Tuesday, the first set was fought on even keel with little separating the two players but Nagal managed to edge out Fatic in the tiebreak.

He then continued his fantastic first serve performance, dominating his Bosnian rival in the second set.

Nagal will take on local player Alessandro Giannessi in the second round.

The win has elevated Nagal four spots to a new career-high of 73 in the ATP live rankings.

The 26-year-old Indian had sealed a spot in the Paris Olympics men's singles draw through his ATP Rankings.

Nagal would be the only Indian in the men's singles event in Paris. The International Tennis Federation (ITF) will notify national federations about qualified athletes by June 12, following which National Olympic Committees will confirm their entries by June 19.

Nagal made the cut-off after climbing 18 places in the singles rankings last week, occupying the last spot among the eligible players who secured quotas via world rankings. He was 95th in rankings last week but reached a career-high of 77th following his ATP Challenger title win at the Heilbronn Neckarcup in Germany on Sunday. France had one quota spot reserved as the host country in the event that none of the French singles players managed to secure a direct berth through rankings. However, with the hosts managing their full allotment of four quotas in men's singles through the ATP Rankings, the host country quota was added back to the pool, which brought the cut-off up to 57 from 56. (PTI)

If you showcase this to world, it's not great selling product: Klaassen on New York pitch

NEW YORK, June 11: If the ICC wants to market T20 cricket in the USA, the pitch and outfield at the Nassau County Cricket Ground isn't a "great selling product". South Africa's flamboyant batter Heinrich Klaassen said joining the chorus of criticism against the venue.

The new drop-in pitch at the ground located in the Long Islands has been dual-paced with uneven bounce, making batting very difficult. India and South Africa have been able to defend totals as low as 119 and 113 respectively on back-to-back days on this track.

"Obviously, if you have to showcase it to the world and sell it, I don't think it's a great selling product, but for cricket, it's tight competition. It brings the other teams and the higher teams very close to each other." Klaassen, who scored 46 off 44 balls in team's four-run win said at the post-match press conference.

The power-hitter said that all premier batters across teams would love to just get out of New York while the bowlers would

love to stay put forever. The ICC has already acknowledged that the pitches here have not played as consistently as was desired.

"I think all the batters are keen to get out of this place, to be fair. The bowlers would love to stay here but - no we've done our job that was the goal to win three out of three here. Obviously, it was a little bit harder than what we thought," he said.

"For us, it's very nerve-wracking, because every game becomes a really big game. There's no easy games for us especially in our group. So, it's still good entertaining cricket. Everyone is on the edge of their seats and any team can beat any team on the down this on this field."

Klaassen was a part of the inaugural edition of Major League Cricket last year and when asked if he has enjoyed this ICC project of trying to market cricket in a new city with a temporary stadium, his answer was a mixed one. "Yes and No," he said before elaborately explaining his take.

"I played in Dallas and in North Carolina where I think



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there's a little bit more cricket there. The wickets (pitches) are better so it's easier to sell cricket in that aspect," he said.

"It's fantastic what they've done with the stadium here and I think as the wicket matures, but obviously I think they're taking it out in two - three days' time so that doesn't help," Klaassen explained. "The more the wicket matures, the better these conditions will get and I think it will be a better showcase for the people. This wicket is I think, four months old, so there's a lot of maturity that needs to go into the wicket that will produce bigger scores." Klaassen was an integral part of a very successful Sunris-

ers Hyderabad batting unit which redefined Powerplay in this year's IPL with the help of an Impact Player and flat batting decks. The towering batter said that one month is ancient history now.

"Yeah, it's a big change you see scores there - well it was a month and a half ago we were part of a score that's 270 - 260 so it's well off, but it's part of the game.

"It doesn't look like the Caribbean wickets are too much better. So, we have to play smart cricket and use our cricket brain a little bit more."

He feels that once the Super Eight starts in the West Indies, the par-score will be 160 plus. (PTI)

Australia face Namibia with an eye on Super Eight; SL in must-win situation against Nepal

NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA), June 11: Living up to the favourites tag with two consecutive wins, a confident Australia will aim to secure a Super Eight berth when they face lower-ranked Namibia in their Group B T20 World Cup clash here on Wednesday.

Australia fired in unison to become the first team in this edition of the tournament to score 200-plus runs in a one-sided 36-run win over arch-rivals England in their last group league match.

It was their second win from as many matches, having started off with a 39-run triumph over Oman. Beating Namibia will be enough for them to make the cut before they take on Scotland in their concluding Group B league fixture.

Scotland lead the table with five points and along with Australia, are firmly ahead in the race to make the Super Eight at the expense of defending champions England who have one point from two matches. Their opening game against Scotland was a washout.

Australia defeated Namibia by seven wickets after restricting their opponents to 119/9 in their only T20 meeting, albeit in a warm-up game two weeks back.

Playing his last World Cup for Australia, David Warner has

been in splendid form with one half century and it was his 16-ball 39 that set the tone for their 201/7 against England.

Warner incidentally scored a fifty in the warm-up against Namibia as well. He has 97 runs in the tournament at a fine strike rate of 141.79.

Warner's opening partner Travis Head has also been at his explosive best and the duo will look to give the team a fiery start.

Namibia will expect their veteran all-rounder David Wiese to step up after he starred in their Super-Over win against Oman.

The globe-trotting all-rounder has the experience of facing Australia four times in T20s during his stint with South Africa.

Left-arm spinner Bernard Scholtz, who has been tidy conceding just one four and one six in his eight overs, will also look to make an impact.

Teams (from): Australia: Mitchell Marsh (c), Ashton Agar, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Nathan Ellis, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Matthew Wade, David Warner and Adam Zampa.

Namibia: Gerhard Erasmus (c), Zane Green, Michael Van Lingen, Dylan Leicher, Ruben



Trumpelmann, Jack Brassell, Frylinck, JP Kotze, David Ben Shikongo, Tangeni Lungameni, Niko Davin, JJ Smit, Jan Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, Malan Kruger and PD Blignaut.

Match starts: 6am IST. Former champion Sri Lanka's campaign has gone terribly hay-

wire after defeats to South Africa and they are now faced with a do-or-die clash against Nepal in

a group D fixture in Lauderdale, Florida.

Nepal, on the other hand, lost to the Netherlands by six wickets in their only match so far.

South Africa have already qualified to Super Eight following their nervy win over Bangladesh.

A win for the Wanindu Hasaranga-led side will further heat up the race for the second spot with Bangladesh, Netherlands, and Nepal also in the reckoning. For that to happen, the onus will be on the batters.

A loss, on the other hand, would mean curtains for Sri Lanka.

Teams:

Nepal: Rohit Paudel (c), Aasif Sheikh, Anil Kumar Sah, Kushal Bhurtel, Kushal Malla, Dipendra Singh Airee, Lalit Rajbanshi, Karan KC, Gulshan Jha, Sompal Kami, Pratis GC, Sundeeep Jora, Abinash Bohara, Sagar Dhakal and Kamal Singh Airee

Sri Lanka: Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis, Pathum Nissanka, Kamindu Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Dhananjaya De Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Wellalage, Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana and Dilshan Madushanka.

Match starts: 5am IST. (PTI)

Shotgun shooters aim World Cup medal points in Lonato, eye Paris Olympic berths



NEW DELHI, June 11: Commonwealth Games gold medalist Shreyasi Singh will be among 12 Indian shooters competing at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup, starting in Lonato, Italy on Wednesday.

The first three rounds of the men's and women's trap qualifiers take centerstage with India fielding a full strength three-member team in each event.

Medals won at this World Cup can earn shooters points that will help them getting Paris Olympic berths before the shotgun squad is announced.

A 15-member Rifle and Pistol squad has already been announced for the Paris Games next month.

Many among the 12-member Lonato team are still vying for Paris berths, particularly in men's and women's trap and women's skeet. Therefore the Indian shooters are expected to come out all guns blazing.

Prithviraj Tondaiman, Vivaan Kapoor and Bhowneesh Mendiratta will feature in the men's trap, while Rajeshwari Kumari, Shreyasi and Manish Keer will represent India in the women's trap competition.

The top-six in each event will advance to the finals, scheduled for Thursday after the final two rounds of qualification. (PTI)

I'm truly sorry: Akmal apologises for inappropriate comments against Arshdeep

LAHORE, June 11: A day after being called out for making disrespectful comments against India pacer Arshdeep Singh, former Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Kamran Akmal apologised for his "inappropriate" remarks while analysing the recent T20 World Cup clash between the two sides in New York.

In a viral video, Akmal was seen making fun of Arshdeep's Sikh religion, prompting a furious response from ace Indian cricketer-turned-commentator Harbhajan.

"I deeply regret my recent comments and sincerely apologise to Harbhajan Singh and the Sikh community. My words were inappropriate and disrespectful. I have the utmost respect for Sikhs all over the world and never intended to hurt anyone. I am truly sorry. #Respect #Apology," Akmal wrote on X, tagging Harbhajan.

Akmal's remarks came during the tense penultimate over of the clash, when Pakistan needed 17 runs in the

India to host Junior Hockey World Cup in 2025

LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND), June 11: India will host next year's men's Junior Hockey World Cup, marking the event's return to the country after nine years, the Executive Board of the International Hockey Federation announced on Tuesday.

The tournament will be held in December and it will be the first time ever that a Hockey Junior World Cup will include as many as 24 teams.

This was announced by FIH President Tayyab Ikram who said: "Giving more opportunities to play to a larger and more diverse number of National Associations is one of the key pillars of our empowerment and engagement strategy."

"We saw at the FIH Hockey5s World Cup in Oman this year how more diversity brings a huge added value to our events."

"Therefore, I'm very happy that we've increased the number of participating teams for the FIH Hockey Junior World Cups and I look forward to seeing these 24 young teams, representing the future of our sport, next year!" he

added.

The last edition of the tournament was held in Kuala Lumpur in 2023 with Germany emerging winners with a 2-1 win over France. Spain and India took the third and fourth places respectively.

India have, in the past, hosted the tournament three times in 2013 (New Delhi), 2016 (Lucknow) and 2021 (Bhubaneswar). India were the winners of the

2016 edition as well.

"At this stage, I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to Hockey India for their commitment to organise yet another fantastic event," Ikram added.

Extending his gratitude, president of Hockey India Dilip Tirkey said: "This prestigious tournament highlights India's growing importance in international hockey and shows our dedication to developing the sport for future generations."

"We're excited to share India's rich hockey history and provide a stage for young talent to showcase their skills."

Secretary general of Hockey India Bholu Nath Singh termed this a significant step for HI.

"We appreciate the FIH's trust in us. This event offers a fantastic chance to bring hockey to even greater heights, inspiring a whole new generation of players and fans in India and globally."

"We're committed to making this tournament a memorable experience that celebrates everything hockey is about," he added. (PTI)

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BCCI secretary Jay Shah visits NFL headquarters in New York



NEW YORK, June 11: Indian cricket board secretary Jay Shah visited the National Football League (NFL) headquarters in New York with the BCCI saying the move was aimed at "fostering international sporting collaborations."

BCCI secretary Shah is in the United States for the ongoing T20 World Cup.

"In a significant move towards fostering international sporting collaborations, BCCI Secretary Jay Shah visited the National Football League (NFL) headquarters in New York," the Board said in a statement.

The BCCI organises the IPL that has become the world's second-richest sports league in terms of per match value, behind USA's National Football League.

Since its maiden season in 2008, the IPL and T20 cricket have grown exponentially.

During the visit, the BCCI said Shah held "productive discus-

sions" with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and his team, focusing on sharing best practices, exchanging innovative ideas, and enhancing fan engagement and experiences.

Shah presented a customised helmet adorned with the BCCI logo and a Team India jersey to Commissioner Goodell.

In a gesture symbolizing the collaboration, Shah received a trademark NFL ball in return.

According to the BCCI, the exchange underscores the deepening relationship and shared vision between cricket and American Football, two of the world's most popular sports.

"This historic interaction between the BCCI and the NFL paves the way for innovative ideas and opportunities, marking a significant milestone in the cross-cultural sporting dialogue between India and the United States," the BCCI said in conclusion. (PTI)

Satwik, Chirag lose No1 ranking; slip to third in latest BWF list

NEW DELHI, June 11: Premier Indian doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, who pulled out of their title defence at Indonesia Open last week, slipped two rungs to third in the latest Badminton World Federation rankings on Tuesday.

China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang are the new men's doubles No.1s followed by Denmark's Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen, who jumped two places.

The Chirag-Satwik pair won the Thailand Open in May to reclaim the No.1 ranking but suffered loss of form and made a first-round exit from the Singapore Open last month.

The Indians have also pulled out of the ongoing Australian Open.

In men's singles, HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen remained inside top-15, maintaining their 10th and 14th positions respectively.

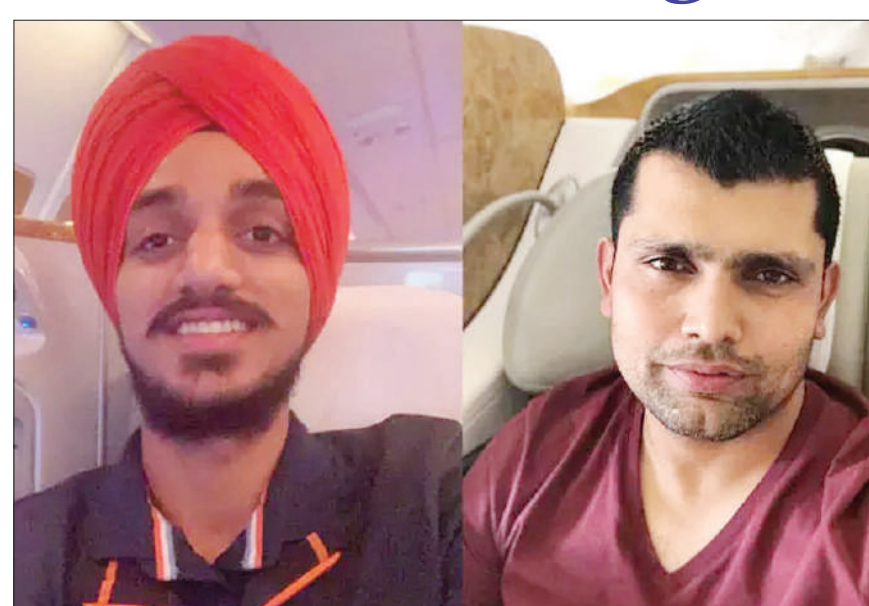
Kidambi Srikanth dropped four places to be No 32, while Priyanshu Rajawat (No 34) and Kiran George (No 35, up by one place) were the next best Indians.

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu remained static at No 10 in the women's singles rankings.

In women's doubles, Paris Olympics-bound pair Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa improved one place to 19th.

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand also climbed one notch to 24th.

The Commonwealth Games bronze-medallist pair had made a last-16 exit from the Indonesia Open. (PTI)



last over in their chase of 120. Left-arm pacer Arshdeep performed the task to perfection, sealing a six-run win over the arch-rivals. Akmal, while

analysing the match on ARY News, made the controversial comments on Arshdeep before he came in to bowl.

"Kuch bhi ho sakta hai... Dekhe last over karna Arshdeep Singh ne hai. Waise uska rhythm nahi laga. 12 baj gaye hai (Anything can happen. The last over will be bowled by Arshdeep Singh; he hasn't looked in a great rhythm. And It is already 12)," he said.

In the video reposted by Harbhajan, Akmal was also seen laughing with other panellists on the show. The Indian off-spinner lashed out at Akmal.

"...You should know the history of sikhs before u open ur filthy mouth. We Sikhs saved ur mothers and sisters when they were abducted by invaders, the time invariably was 12 o'clock. Shame on you guys.. Have some Gratitude."

The win at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York put India at the top of Group A with four points from two wins. (PTI)