

6 WORLD

- An Israeli airstrike hits a school sheltering people in Gaza
- Jaishankar meets Russian FM Lavrov & other counterparts in Laos

8 NATION

- More BJP ruled states announce reservation
- India, Ukraine looking at possibility of PM Modi's visit to Kyiv next month



Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Moidams of Charaideo

The 700-year-old Mound-Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty

Now a part of
UNESCO
WORLD HERITAGE LIST
under Cultural Property category

Heartfelt gratitude to

Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi

for selecting the site as India's sole nomination for inclusion in the **UNESCO World Heritage List for 2024**

Special thanks to World Heritage Committee

for inscribing the site onto the World Heritage List

The *moidams* are known for their unique architectural design, religious significance and meticulous construction, symbolising the rich cultural heritage of Assam



Third World Heritage Site of Assam after **Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park**

First cultural heritage site from Northeast India to receive the recognition

About the Site

- Set in the foothills of the Patkai Ranges in eastern Assam, the site contains the **royal necropolis of the Tai-Ahom**
- For 600 years, the Tai-Ahom created *moidams* (burial-mounds) accentuating the natural topography of hills, forests and water, thus forming a sacred geography
- 90** *Ninety moidams* of different sizes are found within the site

Janasanyog /D/3145/24/28-Jul-24

Budget reflects Modi's vision to achieve the developed India goal: Mandaviya

RAIPUR, July 27: The Budget 2024-25 focuses on the development of the poor, women, youth and farmers to make India a developed nation by 2047 which reflects Prime Minister Narendra Modi's holistic vision, Union minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference on the 'Union Budget of Modi 3.0' at the Chhattisgarh BJP office in Raipur, the Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports said ex-PM Rajiv Gandhi's slogan on taking India to the 21st Century remained unfulfilled. In contrast, Modi has set the development target with a roadmap. "The Budget reflects Modiji's vision. He doesn't think in token but in total (holistically). Modi Ji gave the vision of Amrit Kaal on taking the country forward in an inclusive manner," he said.

Mandaviya said Modi has resolved to transform India into a developed nation when it completes 100 years of Independence and proposed to fix pathways to achieve this goal.



"Former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi had spoken about taking the country to the 21st century but he didn't set the pathway to achieve this goal. The slogan of 21st Century remained merely a slogan," he added.

Modi's vision to make India a developed nation underscores the need to empower "four castes", namely Garib (poor), "Annadata" (farmer), "mahila" (women) and

"Yuva" (youth), the Union minister said, adding that key allocations have been made in the Budget for the development of these four sections. "The Union Budget is centred around the youth and employment, and a provision has been made for skilling the youth," he said, referencing to a provision to make ITIs skill hubs and increase employment opportunities. "One crore youth will see skill

development while four crore youth will get employment in the next 5 years," Mandaviya said.

He highlighted a Budgetary provision to provide basic facilities like "roads, water and electricity" in sync with time considering a growing number of middle-class people, noting the "roti, kapda, and makan" slogan is transformed into "road, paani, and light (electricity)". Mandaviya also underlined the allocations for various sectors including manufacturing. "Micro and small industries will benefit by developing e-commerce platforms. The Budget will ensure proper development of villages in rural areas, roads, water supply, cleanliness, all basic amenities, nearby markets," he said.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) 2.0, the housing needs of 1 crore urban poor and middle-class families will be met with an investment of ₹ 10 lakh crore, Mandaviya said, adding that a provision of ₹ 1 lakh crore for research and innovation will directly benefit the youth. (PTI)

Pakistan jittery as suspense continues on energy sector loan from China

ISLAMABAD/KARACHI, July 27: Two key Pakistani ministers are camping in Beijing to discuss the cash-strapped country's request for rescheduling its outstanding debts with China linked to the ambitious China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Muhammad Aurangzeb, Pakistan's Minister for Finance and Revenue, and Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Laghari, the Minister for Energy (Power Division) are both in Beijing for the last three days, media reports said here on Saturday.

The duo is meeting one author-

ity and agency after the other, including Pan Gongsheng, Governor People's Bank of China (PBoC), and Cao Yuanyuan, Deputy Secretary-General of National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors (NAFMII).

The concern is that China was initially reluctant to discuss the issue, leading to a delayed visit, signalling their disagreement with Pakistan over talks related to energy loans, media reports said.

"Pakistan formally requested China on Thursday to reschedule its debts, with outstanding dues for

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) power projects increasing by 44 per cent to Rs 401 billion by the end of the last fiscal year," The Express Tribune newspaper said.

According to power ministry documents, as of June 2024, the outstanding dues to Chinese power plants surged to Rs 401 billion, up Rs 122 billion or 44 per cent from the previous year.

"These unpaid debts, in violation of the 2015 CPEC Energy Framework Agreement, are hindering further financial and commercial relations between the two countries," the newspaper added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

Undignified behaviour in House

Emergency in his speech. "There has been only one painful, heart-rendering dark period that was when Emergency was declared. "At that point of time, our Constitution was reduced to just a paper. It was shredded and leaders were jailed," he said. (PTI)

10 CMs skip NITI Aayog meet;

He also encouraged the creation of river grids at state level for effective utilisation of water resources. The Prime Minister emphasised on cooperation and collective effort of all states and the Centre to work together in order to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. Modi encouraged states to initiate Demographic Management Plans to address the issues of population ageing in future.

Modi observed that the vision of Viksit Bharat can be realized through Viksit States, and that the aspiration of Viksit Bharat should reach the grassroots level i.e to each district, block, and village. "For this, each state and district should create a vision for 2047 so as to realise Viksit Bharat @ 2047," he said. He observed that India has achieved steady growth in the past ten years. Indian economy, which was the 10th largest economy in the world in 2014, has risen to become the 5th largest economy by 2024.

Modi said that now the collective aim of the government and all citizens is to become the third largest economy in the world. The Prime Minister stressed that India has already made a lot of progress in the past ten years by strengthening social and economic infrastructure.

"From being a predominantly import-driven country, India now exports many products to the world. The country has made its mark on the world stage in wide-ranging sectors like defence, space, start-ups and sports," he said. The Prime Minister said that this is the decade of change which brings a lot of opportunities across sectors.

He encouraged States to utilise these opportunities and make policies and initiate governance programmes that are conducive for development through innovative approaches in policy-making and execution.

The Prime Minister emphasised on skilling and training of youth to make them employment-ready as the world looks favourably towards India for skilled human resources.

Modi encouraged all states to increase productivity and diversification in agriculture and provide market linkages to farmers. He further emphasised on spreading the adoption of natural farming practices which can improve soil fertility, ensure better and quicker returns to farmers due to low costs, and also provide a global market for the products. Meanwhile, talking to reporters, Banerjee said her microphone was switched off after only five minutes, while other chief ministers including from Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Assam and Chhattisgarh, were allowed to speak for longer durations.

"This is insulting. I will not attend any further meeting," the Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo said after walking out of the meeting. Refuting her claims, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that she spoke her full time and her mic was not switched off in between at the meeting.

"She (Mamata) spoke her full time. The screen in front of our tables kept showing the time. A few other CMs spoke beyond their allotted time. On their own request, extra time was allowed without any fuss. Mikes were not switched off, not for anybody, particularly, not for CM, WB," Sitharaman said in a post on X.

Congress general secretary, in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh said, "Since it was established ten years ago, NITI Aayog has been an attached office of the PMO and has functioned as a drumbeater for the non-biological PM." "Its treatment of the West Bengal CM today, although typical of the NITI Aayog, is unacceptable", Ramesh said in a post on X.

KSU, AASU ally fears of tourists

the state, with its president Sadon Blah saying that the group has called for such an action to force the government to implement a policy restricting the movement of tourist vehicles coming from outside the state.

The joint statement of KSU and AASU, issued after a discussion under the aegis of North East Students' Organisation (NESO), was shared by NESO chief advisor Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharjya on X.

"Tourists and the tourist vehicles ferrying tourists from Assam should come to Meghalaya without any fear, worry or agony-Khasi Students Union (KSU), All Assam Students Union (AASU) and North East Students' Organisation (NESO) on the issue of refusing entry of Assam registered cars in Meghalaya," he wrote.

In the statement signed by the presidents and the general secretaries of both the bodies, the KSU claimed that it was not "aware of any such incident of stopping vehicles from Assam and it firmly does not conform to any such initiative". While maintaining that tourists and their vehicles should come without any concern, KSU said it is "pertinent for both the governments of Assam and Meghalaya to have thorough dialogue on the issue and solve the same permanently".

It urged the tourist taxi associations to maintain cordial relations and a spirit of common understanding. The two students' bodies maintained that it has been their constant endeavour to strengthen friendly relations among the people as "both states are being plagued with the same problem of infiltration of illegal foreigners".

"AASU and KSU have always supported each other in their quest for survival and protection of indigenous Assamese and Khasis since time immemorial in both the states. We are committed to continue this affirmative effort," the statement added. (PTI)

Delhi-Jorhat direct air connectivity to

convenience for passengers but also stimulate economic growth by facilitating smoother business transactions and promoting tourism in the region," the Congress leader added.

₹ 13,000 cr in budget for tribal

sector, especially through MUDRA scheme that provides necessary credit support to the MSMEs. "This will not only empower the entrepreneurial prospects but also create huge employment opportunities. A new credit guarantee scheme will also support the MSMEs to enhance their operational capabilities and foster growth in the region's industrial sector," he said.

The Union budget also made significant financial injection to boost infrastructure via phase IV of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana to provide all-weather connectivity to remote areas, including in the Northeast, he said. "The PMGSY has already connected 3,482 km of roads across Meghalaya at a total cost of ₹ 2,310.76 crore since 2014. The budget has made a provision of ₹ 2.66 lakh crore for rural development including rural infrastructure for the Northeast. A total of ₹ 19,338 crore has been allotted in the budget for improvement of road connectivity in the Northeast," he added. (PTI)

CBI arrests NEIST employees

orders in exchange for a bribe," it added. The CBI conducted searches at 18 locations across Assam, Jharkhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, recovering incriminating documents and materials.

Dr G Narahari Shastri, former director of NEIST, stated that he had not been contacted by the CBI. Dr Jatin Kalita was unavailable for comment, and current director Dr Virendra Tiwari is out of station due to a family bereavement. This is the first time the CBI has investigated corruption at NEIST. The former controller of Finance and Accounts is also alleged to have sought approximately Rs 7 crore from CSIR Headquarters for equipment purchases linked to the private company.

Telecom connectivity in all

"For the past 75 years, North East was treated as an orphan. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi is determined to make the region the engine of growth," he claimed.

Special funds of about ₹ 11,000 crore have been earmarked for flood management in Assam and Sikkim, and 100 new branches of India Post Payments Bank will come up in the region as per provisions of the budget. Scindia maintained that the region will benefit from the different schemes for women, farmers, youth and economically weaker sections as provided in the budget.

He asserted that the importance given to the region can be gauged from increased monetary allocation to the DoNER ministry, more funds coming through the devolution of central taxes and investment in developing connectivity infrastructure. The minister maintained that major industrial projects would soon enter the region with the proper infrastructure in place.

Scindia cited the example of the ₹ 27,000-crore semi-conductor unit to be set up by the Tata Group near Guwahati and termed it as a 'game changer' for the entire North East.

"It is a holistic budget, which will set in a new era for the entire country," the Union minister added. (PTI)

Cancers in head and neck rising,

to Saturday. Cancer patients can call on this number to speak to leading oncologists directly or even do a video call to discuss about their treatment without paying any fees. Head and neck cancer was closely followed by gastrointestinal cancers which was 16 per cent. Fifteen per cent cancers in India are breast cancers and and blood cancers make up 9 per cent of them. These data are in line with the latest GLOBOCAN data -- a database that gives global cancer statistics -- on India. GLOBOCAN data is part of International Agency for Research on Cancer's Global Cancer Observatory.

India is expected to have 2.1 million new cancer cases by 2040, a big jump from the numbers in 2020, as per a recent GLOBOCAN report. (PTI)

India steel production to cross 300MT by 2030: Official



KOLKATA, July 27: Expressing optimism in steel demand amid headwinds, a senior central government official said on Saturday that the domestic production is likely to cross 300 million tonnes by 2030.

The ministry also does not foresee any hurdles in capacity addition due to decarbonisation efforts in the steel sector and will soon release a draft roadmap seeking public opinion to reduce the carbon footprint in the steel sector, which accounts for 12 per cent of total emissions. Steel Secretary Nagaendra Nath Sinha said.

"The current steel demand remains strong with infrastructure push from the government and expecting a growth of about 10 per cent. The GDP is also growing robustly, and with continued emphasis on infrastructure from both government and private sectors, steel demand will continue to stay strong," Sinha said, while addressing members of the Bharat Chamber of Commerce (BCC).

Finished steel output during 2023-24 was 138.5 million tonnes, up 12.4 per cent year-on-year. To achieve 300 million tonnes of installed capacity, a CAGR of 12 per cent would be required.

From January to April 2024, steel production was 49.5 million tonnes, a jump of 8.5 per

cent, BCC president N G Khaitan said.

Sinha also stated that some steel makers were not reporting production and sales data accurately, and the ministry feels there are gaps. He urged companies to report correctly to support policy framing.

The steel makers complain of several headwinds like iron ore shortage, cheap steel imports and policy shortcomings.

The steel makers of eastern India raised serious concerns about iron ore shortages in the sector and suggested several steps to address the 53 million tonne iron ore shortage in the Indian steel industry.

Asked about steel import concerns from the industry, Sinha said imports in quantity are only 5 per cent of consumption, but there are complaints about hot-rolled coil from Vietnam, which the Directorate General of Trade Remedies, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has taken up.

Speaking about the decarbonisation roadmap, Sinha said the government had set up 14 task forces on this and, after inter-ministerial discussions, the report will be released for public feedback soon. The roadmap focuses on increased hydrogen use in the steel industry and carbon capture, among others.

The short-term target for the government aims at about a 20 per cent reduction in carbon intensity. Currently, the average carbon intensity is 2.5 tonnes per tonne of steel production. A consortium has been planned with labs, IITs, primary and secondary steel makers, and equipment makers to develop indigenous green technology.

Sinha stated that the steel ministry has written to the Finance Ministry to support keeping Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd as a "going concern" during times of crisis so it does not lose its valuation. (PTI)

Marina Harley-Davidson sets up second facility in Chennai

CHENNAI, July 27: Marina Harley-Davidson, the retail outlet for premium Harley-Davidson range of motorcycles, has strengthened presence with the opening of its second dealership in the city, the company said on Saturday.

After the first facility located in Nungambakkam, Marina Harley-Davidson has inaugurated the second facility spread across 3,000 sq ft at Velappanchavadi in the city.

Marina Harley-Davidson General Manager Srinivasan inaugurated the outlet at an event here which would offer sales and service.

"We owe our success and continued growth to the unwavering support of our loyal riders and customers. Their enthusiasm fuels our commitment to delivering excellence in every aspect of our dealership experience," Srinivasan was quoted as saying in a press release. (PTI)

PAT grows 16.57% to ₹ 3,460.19 cr on high revenue

NEW DELHI, July 27: State-owned REC on Saturday posted a 16.57 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to ₹ 3,460.19 cr for the June quarter, mainly on the back of higher revenues.

In the year-to-date period, its net profit stood at ₹ 2,968.05 cr, the company said in an exchange filing. Total income rose to ₹ 13,092.44 cr from ₹ 11,108.16 cr in the same period a year ago. Expenses stood at ₹ 8,743.22 cr against ₹ 7,386.99 cr a year ago.

The board of directors also approved an interim dividend of ₹ 3.50 per equity share of ₹ 10 each for the financial year 2024-25.

"The Board has also taken note of striking off the name of Khavda II-D Transmission a wholly-owned subsidiary company of REC Power Development & Consultancy Limited ("RECPDCL"), a wholly-owned subsidiary of REC, from the Registrar of the Companies," the filing said. (PTI)

Equitas Small Finance Bank Q1 Profit Dips to ₹ 25.75 Cr

CHENNAI, July 27: Private sector Equitas Small Finance Bank has reported a dip in its net profits for the April-June 30, 2024 at ₹ 25.75 crore.

The bank had registered a profit after tax of Rs 191.20 crore registered in the year ago period. For the year ending March 31, 2024 the net profit of the bank stood at ₹ 798.96 crore.

Total income during the quarter under review grew to ₹ 1,709.65 crore, as compared to ₹ 1,425.32 crore registered in the same period of last year. For the year ending March 31, 2024 the total income of the bank stood at ₹ 6,285.07 crore.

In a statement on Saturday, the bank said the decline in profit after tax for the quarter under review, was due to 'floating provision of ₹ 180 crore to strengthen the Provisioning Coverage Ratio of the bank'.

In order to strengthen PCR, Bank has made additional provision in the form of floating provision of ₹ 180 crore during the

quarter. PCR improved to 70.29 per cent in Q1FY'25 from 56.06 per cent (during the same quarter of last year) and 57.79 per cent in Q1FY'24, the statement said.

The Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) for the quarter ending June 30, 2024 increased by 7 bps year-on-year to 2.67 per cent while Net NPA improved by 31 bps year-on-year to 0.81 per cent.

Yield on Gross Advances improved by 13 basis points to 16.45 per cent in Q1 over previous year while the Gross Advances growth was at 18 per cent year-on-year and 2 per cent quarter-on-quarter basis.

The overall deposits registered a robust growth of 35 per cent year-on-year and 4 per cent quarter-on-quarter.

The Net Interest Margin (NIM) stood at 7.97 per cent during the quarter under review while the Cost to Income stood at 65.75 per cent in Q1FY'25 as compared to 62.83 per cent in Q4FY24, the statement added. (PTI)

Cholamandalam Investment and Finance appoints Ravindra Kumar Kundu as Managing Director

CHENNAI, July 27: The Board of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company has announced the elevation of Ravindra Kumar Kundu as its Managing Director.

His term of appointment would be for a period of five years with effect from October 7.

Kundu currently serves Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company as its Executive Director. Under his leadership, the company in a statement said, the Assets Under Management (AUM) grew to ₹ 1,53,000 crore in FY'24 from ₹ 67,000 crore in FY'20.

Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd is the financial services division of the diversified conglomerate the Murugappa Group.

Kundu has been with Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company for 24 years, has an overall experience of 36 years in automobile and financial services industry.

For the April-June 2024 quarter, the company reported a profit after tax of ₹ 942 crore, up by 29.7 per cent from ₹ 726 crore registered in the year ago period. (PTI)

Bandhan Bank's total business grows 22% to 2.59 lakh crore

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, July 27: Bandhan Bank announced its financial results for the first quarter of the financial year 2024-25 with its total business growing by 22% to ₹ 2.59 lakh crore, said an official statement on Saturday.

As per the statement, the Bank's share of retail to total deposits now stands at nearly 69%.

The encouraging growth witnessed in the last quarter has been driven by its expansion in distribution, business efficiency and the favourable operating environment.

"The Bank's total business grew by 22%, to close at ₹ 2.59 lakh crore," the statement added.

Interestingly, the Bank now serves more than 3.44 crore customers through 6,300 banking outlets in India. The total number of employees working at Bandhan



Bank is now nearly 77,500.

During Q1 FY25, the Bank's deposit book grew by 23% over the same period in the previous year.

"The total deposit book now stands at ₹ 1.33 lakh crore while

total advances are at ₹ 1.26 lakh crore. The current account and savings account (CASA) ratio is standing at 33.4% of the overall deposit book. Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR), an indicator of the stability

of the Bank, is at 15.7%, higher than the regulatory requirement," it added.

Speaking on the Bank's performance, Ratan Kumar Kesh, MD & CEO, said, "The first quarter of the year is a testament to the business performance we aim to sustain throughout the year. We have demonstrated stability and growth across key parameters. Bandhan Bank's foundation is built on the trust of its customers and the unwavering commitment of its employees. These cornerstones, along with a focus on technology, process, product and people, will drive the growth trajectory of Bandhan Bank 2.0."

The Bank continues its focus on asset diversification with a clear intention to increase its retail book.

The bank intends to focus on greater digitisation for higher productivity and efficiency.

6 WORLD
8 NATION

- An Israeli airstrike hits a school sheltering people in Gaza
- Jaishankar meets Russian FM Lavrov & other counterparts in Laos
- More BJP ruled states announce reservation
- India, Ukraine looking at possibility of PM Modi's visit to Kyiv next month

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THE HILLS TIMES 3

CBI arrests NEIST employees in ₹ 8 lakh bribery case



HT Correspondent
JORHAT, July 27: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested four individuals, including two employees from the CSIR - North East Institute of Science and Technology (NEIST), in connection with an ₹ 8 lakh bribery case.

The arrested NEIST employees are Dr Prasenjit Manna, principal scientist at the Centre for Infec-

tious Diseases, and Prabin Verma, controller of stores and purchase.

As per an official statement, the CBI also apprehended the director of a private company based in New Delhi and his brother, who were involved in the bribery.

The statement further claimed that ₹ 1 lakh was seized from Dr Manna and ₹ 7 lakh from Verma during a raid. The funds were al-

legedly paid to secure favorable procurement deals from the private company.

"The CBI filed a case on July 26, 2024, against five public servants, including Verma and Dr Manna, as well as a Finance and Accounts Officer, a former controller of Finance and Accounts, and Dr Jatin Kalita, senior principal scientist at NEIST. The private company's director and his brother are also implicated," the statement added. The FIR alleged that the public servants received bribes from various private entities in exchange for preferential treatment in purchasing and contract awards.

"The CBI's investigation revealed that the controller of Stores and Purchase and the finance and accounts officer discussed their respective shares of the bribe. It is also claimed that the private company's director promised future work (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Modi calls for zero poverty as a priority for a Viksit Bharat

10 CMs skip NITI Aayog meet; Mamata walks out

NEW DELHI, July 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for setting zero poverty targets starting at village level at a meeting of NITI Aayog Governing Council that witnessed high drama with West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee walking out in a huff alleging her mic was switched off.

In his address to the ninth Governing Council meeting, Modi emphasised the need to tackle poverty on an individual basis rather than just at a programme level.

"We must target zero poverty as a priority for a Viksit Bharat starting at village level," Modi said, adding it would bring about a transformational effect in our country.

As many as 10 states and UTs did not participate in the Governing Council meeting of the NITI Aayog. The absentees were Kerala,



Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Bihar, Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Puducherry, said CEO B V R Subrahmanyam while briefing the media about the meeting.

"It is their loss if they did not participate," he added.

The NITI Aayog meeting held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural

Centre witnessed a walkout by the West Bengal chief minister, who claimed that she was unfairly stopped midway in her speech, despite being the sole representative of the opposition. The government, however, rejected her claim and said Banerjee's speaking time was over.

About Bihar, Subrahmanyam

said chief minister Nitish Kumar could not attend the meeting as he was busy with an assembly session in the state.

During the meeting, Modi encouraged states to provide an investor-friendly environment and directed the NITI Aayog to prepare an 'Investment-friendly Charter' of parameters which would include policies, programmes and processes to be put in place for attracting investments.

NITI Aayog vice chairman Suman Bery said that Modi wanted the states to compete for FDI so that investments could reach all the states, especially those that are less successful.

The Prime Minister also underscored the importance of law and order, good governance and infrastructure as vital for attracting investments, rather than just incentives. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

Rashtriya Sainik Sanstha

SIVASAGAR: Paying tribute to the martyrs of Kargil war, the Assam chapter of Rashtriya Sainik Sanstha celebrated Kargil Vijay Divas Sivasagar, Golaghat and Majuli and Guwahati with series of programmes on Friday. The programme was organised in collaboration with Unified Karate Guild at Khanapara in Guwahati where the patron of the Assam chapter of the Sanstha and additional director of Jalajwan Mission Dharmakanta Mili inaugurated the programme while paying tributes to the brave martyrs. He urged the youths and the players to imbibe the ideology of the brave soldiers.

Man Dies

RANGIA: In a tragic incident highlighting the dangers of the ongoing heat wave, a man in Rangia, Assam, has died of heatstroke. The victim, identified as 45-year-old Ramesh Das, succumbed to the extreme heat conditions on Thursday afternoon. The incident occurred as Assam continues to grapple with a severe heat wave, with temperatures soaring across the state. Local authorities have confirmed that Das was working outdoors when he began exhibiting symptoms of heat exhaustion. Despite being rushed to a nearby hospital, he was declared dead on arrival. This unfortunate event has prompted health officials to issue urgent advisories to the public, emphasising the need to take precautions during the intense heat.

Delhi-Jorhat direct air connectivity to commence from October: Gaurav Gogoi



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 27: Assam's Jorhat and Delhi will now have direct flight connectivity, the civil aviation ministry announced on Saturday, according to Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi.

The leader of the Congress party stated that he had asked the Union minister of civil aviation to start operating flights between Jorhat and the nation's capital earlier this month.

On July 1, Gogoi met Union Civil Aviation minister Ram Mohan Naidu and submitted a letter requesting air connectivity. "Naidu has informed that a 189-seater flight will run between Jorhat and Delhi. As per the information shared by the Minister, the routes connecting Jorhat to Delhi have been awarded to M/s SpiceJet with 189-seater type, of aircraft frequency of 07 flights per week under UDAN 5.0 round of bidding."

Flight operations on this route

will start from October this year.

Currently, Indigo Airlines offers flights from Jorhat to Kolkata, Dibrugarh, and Tezpur.

Gogoi, who is an MP from Jorhat parliamentary constituency said, "Further, my request for increasing the frequency of flights and operations have also been raised with the scheduled domestic airlines for favourable consideration."

According to Jorhat MP, previously, there was a direct flight between Delhi and Jorhat, which was greatly valued by the community for its convenience and efficiency. Unfortunately, this service has been discontinued, leaving residents with limited and less optimal travel options.

"The absence of a direct flight has not only inconvenienced travellers but has also resulted in significantly higher ticket prices, ranging from 12,000 to 15,000 INR for a single journey. Such high costs impose a heavy financial burden, particularly on those who depend on air travel for essential commuting purposes, such as medical emergencies, business travel, and family visits," Gogoi added.

He further said that Jorhat, renowned for its cultural heritage and economic potential, deserves reliable and direct air connectivity to Delhi-a critical hub for national and international travel.

"Restoring direct flights between these cities would not only enhance (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

₹ 13,000 cr in budget for tribal development in NE: Sonowal

SHILLONG, July 27: Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday said the Centre has allotted ₹ 13,000 crore in the budget for the empowerment of tribal communities of the Northeast.

The Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways claimed this was a 200 per cent increase since 2014-15.

"The provision in this budget for empowerment of tribal communities has increased by nearly 200 per cent with an allocation of ₹ 13,000 crore, which will be used for the welfare of the tribal communities," Sonowal said while addressing a press conference here.

He said the allocation was made as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has identified the northeastern region as 'Ashtalakshmi' and the 'new engine of India's growth'.

Sonowal said the region stands to benefit from this budget as it aims to empower the region's economic, industrial and agricultural sectors.

"We are working towards unlocking the tremendous potential of the Northeast as a hub of natural farming and horticulture," he said. An allocation of ₹ 598 crore for eco-friendly sustainable agriculture will control the adverse effects of climate change, soil erosion and insect, pest and disease infestation, which will greatly improve agricultural output from the region, he said. The budget also aims at boosting the manufacturing and services (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Undignified behaviour in House blow to spirit of democracy: Dhankhar to RS members

NEW DELHI, July 27: Rajya Sabha chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said undignified behaviour during House proceedings is a blow to the spirit of democracy.

He also lamented that members these days are not willing to listen to the views of others.

"You are free to disagree with the views of others. To ignore the other point of view is not part of

parliamentary practice," Dhankhar told new Rajya Sabha members at an orientation programme.

He said some members try to find space in newspapers, give media statements immediately after leaving the House and use social media to grab eyeballs.

"Members come a minute before their speech and leave immediately. Your presence is not there that you adopt a hit-and-run strategy," he said.

Dhankhar said Parliament has been a citadel of constitutional values and liberties.

At times, there have been issues, but House leaders have shown the way using wisdom, he added.

"But the situation now is worrisome. Undignified behaviour is being used as a political weapon, which is a blow to the spirit of democracy," he told the members. Dhankhar also referred to the period of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Telecom connectivity in all villages in next 12 months: Scindia



GUWAHATI, July 27: Union minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia said on Saturday that 100 per cent coverage of villages in terms of telecom connectivity in the country is targeted in the next 12 months.

Scindia, the Union minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), said special funds have been sanctioned by the Cabinet for the purpose and he has himself been monitor-

ing the progress of work every week.

Addressing a press conference here, he said, "The prime minister is committed to 100 per cent saturation. We have identified around 24,000 villages in the country that still need saturation in terms of telecom connection."

A special scheme to reach all these villages has already been rolled out along with funds sanctioned for the purpose, he said.

Areas in the northeastern states are among these villages, and strategies are being worked out to reach these places, the minister said.

Provisions of the new telecom Act enable setting up required infrastructure and mixed technologies, like V-sat and satellite, are being utilised with the "target of cent per cent saturation within 12 months", Scindia said.

"I have been monitoring the work on a weekly basis, and 13,000-14,000 of these villages have also been covered," he added. Scindia also spoke about the allocations for northeastern states in the 2024-25 Union Budget. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

KSU, AASU allay fears of tourists

AASU and KSU have always supported each other in their quest for survival: Joint statement



GUWAHATI, July 27: The influential Khasi Students' Union (KSU) and All Assam Students' Union (AASU), in a joint statement on Saturday, sought to allay fears among people visiting Meghalaya after pro-ILP activists stopped tourists from visiting certain areas of the state.

The two organisations maintained that both the states are being "plagued with the same problem of infiltration", and KSU and AASU have supported each other in their "quest for survival and protection" of the indigenous people.

Tourist inflow to Sohra and Dawki in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya was briefly af-

fectured on Friday when pro-ILP activists belonging to Hyniewtep National Youth Front (HNYF) tried to prevent some tourists coming from Assam from visiting these places.

There were reports that similar problems were faced by tourists on Saturday as well, although local authorities promptly intervened and did not allow the situation to escalate.

At least 10 members of the HNYF were arrested at Umtyngar town on Friday for unauthorisedly preventing tourists from visiting Sohra and Dawki, police said. The HNYF seeks the implementation of the Inner Line Permit in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'There is need to raise awareness about quitting tobacco'

Cancers in head and neck rising, account for 26% cases in India: Study

NEW DELHI, July 27: Around 26 per cent of cancer patients in India have tumours in the head and neck, and there is an upward trend of such cases in the country, a study has found.

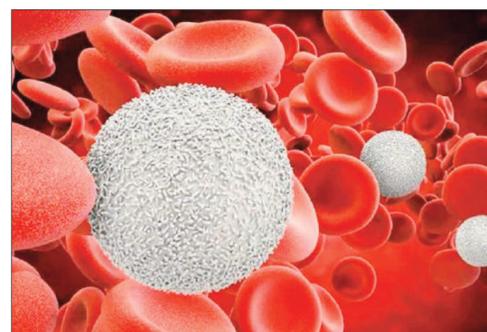
The findings of the study, conducted on 1,869 cancer patients across the country, were released on the World Head and Neck Cancer Day observed on Saturday.

Cancer Mukht Bharat Foundation, a Delhi-based non-profit organisation, conducted the study by collating data from calls received on its helpline number from March 1 to June 30.

Dr. Ashish Gupta, a senior oncologist who is heading the Cancer Mukht Bharat Campaign in India, said that India is seeing surge in head and neck cancer cases, especially among young men, due to increased tobacco consumption and human papillomavirus (HPV) infection.

"Around 80-90 pc of oral cancer patients have been found to use tobacco in some form, be it smoking or chewing. Most of the head and neck cancer are preventable, unlike other cancers for which the reason is unknown. It is a preventable cancer that can be prevented with lifestyle modification.

"There is a need to raise awareness to quit tobacco and early



check-ups for early pickup of the disease," Gupta said.

In India, nearly two-thirds of cancer cases are detected late likely due to low adoption of proper screening, he said.

Gupta added that the Cancer Mukht Bharat campaign aims to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer on individuals and communities through education and early detection.

"If found early in stages one or two, most head and neck cancers are curable in more than 80 pc of patients. In the field of cancer treatment, we get new medicines almost every week which can treat

cancer in better way leading to better outcomes and good quality of life.

"A combination of surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and immunotherapy can be used for treating head and neck cancer. Latest cancer treatment has evolved to prioritise not just curing the disease, but also ensuring a good quality of life for survivors," he said.

Under the Cancer Mukht Bharat Campaign, a free national helpline number (93-555-20202) was launched recently, which is operational from 10 am to 5 pm from Monday (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP-EKADC backs KAAC power boost via 125th Amendment

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 27: Laichan Englang, spokesperson for the BJP-East Karbi Anglong District Committee (BJP-EKADC), expressed support for the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) chief executive member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang's efforts to push for the implementation of Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) clauses 1 and 2 under the 125th constitutional amendment.

This initiative aims to enhance KAAC's powers as outlined in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

At a press conference on Saturday at the Hills People Cultural Forum (HPCF) office, Englang highlighted the progress made since the 1995 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which allocated certain subjects to KAAC.

He further said then 2011 MoS, signed by the disbanded United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), increased funding from the central government for KAAC. The 2021 MoS, signed by six disbanded armed groups, further sought to enhance KAAC's powers for better protection of scheduled tribe communities," he added.

"On July 25, Ronghang and his team met Union home minister Amit Shah in New Delhi. Shah stated that the state home minister would prepare a report on KAAC's demands within a month, after which discussions on including



these in the constitutional amendment would follow," he added.

While Englang acknowledged the ultimate goal of achieving an autonomous state, he emphasised that increasing KAAC's powers through incremental transfers of subjects is a step in the right direction.

Notably, Ronghang has also convened a meeting with the heads of Sixth Schedule autonomous councils in Northeast India to advocate for enhanced powers and implementation of MoS clauses 1 and 2. Englang also mentioned that if these clauses are included in the 125th constitutional amendment, KAAC's elected seats would increase from 26 to 44, with 34 reserved for ST and 10 open to all.

Englang further urged public support for the 125th constitutional amendment, stressing that it would strengthen KAAC's Sixth Schedule provisions.

He criticised opposition from figures like All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) organising secretary Kursing Timung, suggesting that such leaders should support, rather than oppose, the amendment.

Moidams of Assam: UNESCO World Heritage recognition celebrates Ahom dynasty's legacy

By: Mowsam Hazarika

On July 26, 2024, the Moidams of Assam achieved a monumental milestone by being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. This prestigious recognition marks a significant moment in preserving India's rich cultural heritage. Located in the northeastern state of Assam, the Moidams represent a unique burial system that reflects the ancient traditions of the Ahom Dynasty, which ruled Assam from the 13th to the 18th century. UNESCO's acknowledgment of these ancient structures underscores their profound historical and cultural significance, highlighting their value as an irreplaceable component of global heritage.

The Ahom Dynasty, established by Sukaphaa in 1228, played a pivotal role in shaping the history and culture of Assam. The Moidams, which serve as royal tombs for the Ahom kings and nobles, are primarily located around the ancient city of Charaideo, the first capital of the Ahom Kingdom. These mounds often referred to as 'royal tombs' or 'burial mounds,' are distinguished by their distinctive architectural features and symbolic design, reflecting the sophisticated funerary practices of the Ahoms.

Each Moidam is a meticulously constructed mound of earth and stone, designed to house a burial chamber where the deceased are laid to rest. These burial chambers are often

adorned with intricate carvings and inscriptions that offer insights into the identity and achievements of those interred within. The Moidams are not merely graves but are emblematic of the Ahom belief in the afterlife and their deep reverence for their ancestors. The elaborate construction and associated ceremonial rituals underscore the complex social and religious beliefs of the Ahom Dynasty.

The Moidams are unique in their design, which frequently includes multiple layers of mounds and a central chamber. This layered structure holds significant cosmological meaning, aligning with the Ahom's understanding of the universe and the afterlife. The uppermost layer typically represents the earth, while the lower layers symbolize the underworld, reflecting the Ahom's spiritual and philosophical views. The construction of these mounds required advanced engineering skills and a profound understanding of geomancy, showcasing the Ahom Dynasty's architectural and technical prowess.

UNESCO's recognition of the Moidams highlights their outstanding universal value and brings global attention to these remarkable structures. This designation is expected to bolster conservation efforts, ensuring the preservation of these irreplaceable monuments for future generations. It also opens up opportunities for increased research and scholarly engagement, which can provide deeper insights into the cultural



and historical legacy of the Ahom Dynasty.

For the state of Assam, the inscription of the Moidams on the UNESCO World Heritage List carries significant implications. Firstly, it brings international recognition and validation to the state's rich cultural heritage.

This global acknowledgment enhances Assam's profile as a tourist destination, attracting visitors and researchers interested in exploring its historical and cultural treasures. The anticipated increase in tourism can generate economic benefits, creating new job opportunities and supporting local businesses.

Moreover, the UNESCO recognition can foster a renewed sense of cultural pride among the people of Assam. It can galvanize local communities and stakeholders to take a more active role in preserving and promoting their heritage.

Educational and cultural initiatives can be developed to raise awareness about the Moidams

and the contributions of the Ahom Dynasty, further integrating these elements into Assam's modern identity.

The inscription also presents opportunities for sustainable development in the region. The increased attention and resources can be leveraged to improve infrastructure and facilities in the vicinity of the Moidams, enhancing the overall visitor experience while ensuring that conservation measures are robust and effective.

Collaborative efforts between local authorities, cultural organizations, and international bodies will be essential to managing and preserving the Moidams in a manner that respects their historical significance while supporting regional development.

Preserving the Moidams also underscores the importance of safeguarding intangible heritage. The traditions and rituals associated with the Moidams are integral to understanding the historical and cultural context of

the Ahom Dynasty.

Efforts to protect these structures must be accompanied by initiatives to document and perpetuate the associated cultural practices. This holistic approach ensures that both the physical monuments and the intangible heritage they represent are preserved for future generations.

In addition to their historical and cultural significance, the Moidams offer valuable lessons in sustainable heritage management. The construction and preservation of these mounds reflect the Ahom Dynasty's respect for the environment and their innovative approaches to landscape management. The methods used by the Ahoms can inform contemporary practices in heritage conservation, emphasizing the integration of cultural values with environmental stewardship.

The Moidams' inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List is a momentous occasion that illuminates the remarkable

achievements of the Ahom Dynasty and their enduring legacy. It underscores the need for continued efforts to preserve and promote cultural heritage. As we celebrate this recognition, it is crucial to remain committed to safeguarding these ancient treasures and ensuring they continue to inspire and educate future generations.

The Moidams are not just architectural marvels but are also symbolic of the Ahom Dynasty's cultural and spiritual ethos. The design and construction of these burial mounds reflect a deep understanding of cosmology and the afterlife, illustrating the sophisticated worldview of the Ahoms. Each Moidam represents a confluence of art, religion, and engineering, showcasing the dynasty's rich cultural heritage and advanced technical skills.

The global recognition of the Moidams also serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving and celebrating our shared cultural heritage. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the preservation of unique cultural sites like the Moidams helps to foster greater understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural traditions. The Moidams stand as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Ahom Dynasty and their contributions to the cultural and historical fabric of Assam.

Looking ahead, it is essential to embrace the UNESCO recognition as an opportunity to further enhance the Moidams' conservation and promotion.

This includes investing in research, educational programs, and community engagement initiatives that highlight the significance of the Moidams and the Ahom Dynasty. By doing so, we can ensure that the Moidams continue to serve as a source of inspiration and knowledge for future generations.

In conclusion, the Moidams' inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List is a significant achievement for India and a profound acknowledgment of the Ahom Dynasty's contributions to cultural and historical heritage. These ancient burial mounds not only reflect the architectural and engineering skills of the Ahoms but also their deep spiritual beliefs and societal values.

The global recognition of the Moidams presents an opportunity to enhance Assam's cultural identity, stimulate tourism-driven economic growth, and foster sustainable development. As we move forward, it is imperative to embrace this recognition as a catalyst for greater understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of our collective cultural legacy. The Moidams are a testament to the enduring legacy of the Ahom Dynasty and a vital component of our shared global heritage. (The author is a poet and People's Science Activist. He is the former Director, Assam Seed and Organic Certification Agency & Former Joint Director of Agriculture (Pulse), Department of Agriculture, Assam. He can be reached at mowsam2000@yahoo.co.in)

Education, family, society- What makes little minds disruptive



By: M. R. Lahu

A good friend of mine from the village days, having had a few years of extensive teaching experience in one of the remotest areas of India, has recently narrated his personal service anecdote. And I, with curiosity pouring in from all sides, have listened to him but of course with grave concern and intense perplexity. His anecdotal summary does not have to be written in detail here, but the essence of it was all about how the young generation has dangerously been tuned into an alarming level of arrogance, vengeance and hostility.

This, according to him, was instrumental in pushing societies through the harsh domains of disruption. Though his experience was personal, he had witnessed such occasions multiple times. While an ideal paraphrasing of thoughts has been exchanged between both of us, the question that surfaced was about how the society is looking at such negative transformation among the young minds.

Even if I consider his experiences as confined to a particular locality, wrapped under the situational volatility of a society that underwent perennial dismemberment from the mainstream, it demands a genuine and compassionate approach to know its emasculating effects on the country. When children enter the teenage years, what turns calamitous about their life is the intensity of pressure they receive from the parents and society that subsequently crushes them hard.

Aspirational parents and centers of competitive examinations frequently inject the venom of excellence into the children's veins that the former concocted with their crazy mindset. And children, with an unquestionable ability to survive in this atmosphere of complexity that has been designed by the illusory ideas of some elders, begin to shrink intellectually and deviate from the dreams that have grown with them all through the corridors of schools and colleges.

Situations have sweepingly changed well before the new dawn of Artificial Intelligence

(AI) and this outlook on excellence has been primitively driving the young minds towards certain harsher moments of an intellectual crisis. This has mainly been due to the ethical framework that we traditionally built around the process of education which indeed got dismantled today, and the idea that education is a lifelong process and it cannot be a mere bread-winning exercise, was dispelled.

Intense commercialization and the influx of Artificial Intelligence in its various forms have helped the world shrink into an accessible size. Radical human interventions in the life of people through various means have essentially curtailed their living space that they once used with intense involvement and affection. Many reasons can be ascertained in connection with this transition.

So, what, as per the changing tendencies, should be treated as an essential prerequisite? The first thing, as per my observation, is to revive the basic aspects of an ideal social relationship, its absence at present, is creating distress everywhere. Invariably, to a large extent, this was neglected and the ramifications of it began to surface everywhere, stretching from the families to societies and beyond.

Parents, being surmounted by aspirational thoughts began to deviate from the basic congeniality and the family atmosphere almost everywhere turned out to be mechanical. An alarming revelation under the RTI provides staggering statistics of suicide among students in the national capital. It tells that a total of 1294 students under 18 years died by suicide between 2014 and 2018. This number represents the situation in the national capital alone.

The national data must be a

hair-raiser with thousands of incidents being reported. The Supreme Court has directed the central government to make its point clear as to what has so far been done with respect to the implementation of Public Health Programme for prevention of suicides.

The situation is alarmingly serious and it does not confine its effects in certain areas alone. Being the most populous coun-

try, India's demographic responsibility with democracy flourishing vividly, is large and it needs to set the situation alright, before the young generation is carried away by the notions of stress, distress and disappointment.

In this instance, it is fair to say that there has been a distance engulfing between the parents and the children and the society too turned out to be ignominious and it disregards to dwell into what the young minds have to say. What is missing in the families is an honest conversation.

Mostly, the conversations in families are forceful monologues by parents on the children and the latter with fewer options and no spaces for them to make their voices heard, end up with a conclusion; that, the world around them is an ugly territory without a wind blowing to carry the voice of concern from the young and feeble minds. And the result is the statistics that I presented above. What makes children go astray? Should we blame the parents and the familial conditions as the principal reasons behind this perilous shift? Should society be not held accountable for what it has turned out to be-

come? Or is it someone who our children are in company with? Or is it the mobile screens that the children find convenient to personally bury their intellect in? There are multiple and obvious reasons to blame.

But with certainty one thing can be said; that the family atmosphere these days seems to have been self-defeating and the parents frequently fail to sense those frail and inexcusable terrains their children intellectually and emotionally land.

Families, where an ideal social behavior should have sprouted, became dry living spaces. And initiatives to cause distress begin from their aspirational intuitions and in most of the cases parents unknowingly take this rough ride and children often fail to catch up with the pace. Families are known to be places where lessons of basic discipline are taught. But they often become spaces of confrontation and there develops discrimination among members.

While having a firm commitment to family and the welfare of its members, parents time and again go

rude on children mostly due to the latter's inability to capture the gist of what the elders in the family dream about. Of course, the final impact of such menacing ways of implementing their plans on the children brings domestic violence both physically and mentally.

An aspirational society at large is often in contradiction with the self-designed dreams of the young minds and a generation gap is evident between the elders and the youth.

And my friend, having come across such familial confrontations, where parents have broken up unconditionally while children are left to endure without being taught the lessons of survival, makes a rejoinder; that the necessary takeaway of the present situation holds all of us responsible for what we are creating for the future.

Education, for a significant social change needs to be more coherent, emerging as a flow of a tributary of life, helping the children with adequate inner engineering to survive before they surrender to life's ordeals. (The author is a freelance journalist who can be reached at mr-lahu30@gmail.com)

The surging impact of the beauty and wellness sector on employment

By: Dipak Kurmi

It's essential to maintain a balanced perspective in our endeavors. Regularly reviewing our strategies and objectively assessing outcomes simplifies decision-making. In skill development, proactive engagement, consistent effort, and adherence to routines are pivotal. Leveraging our demographic strengths demands strategic planning, focusing on enhancing capabilities, establishing infrastructure, and nurturing a skilled workforce. This approach aims to empower our youth with the skills needed for successful employment, whether at home or abroad.

According to the India Skills Report, women have seen a significant 52.8% rise in employability, surpassing men whose employability increased by 47.2%. Women now lead in employability, especially in fields like nursing, beauty and wellness, and other soft skills, which have shown the strongest job prospects for women in the post-COVID era.

The beauty and wellness sector offers substantial opportunities for both women and men, both domestically and internationally. With its remarkable expansion, there is a growing demand in the country for proficient semi-skilled and skilled professionals in this field.

The beauty and wellness sector currently provides jobs for approximately 12.3 million individuals, with women constituting 66% of this workforce. Many come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including those from modest and well-educated families. Projections indicate that by 2027, this sector could employ as many as 20.3 million people across India.

A noteworthy aspect is that 44% of the beauty and wellness workforce holds educational qualifications equivalent to or below secondary education, often lacking technical training opportunities.

This underscores the potential for expanding vocational education, especially in areas like salon services, beauty care, fitness training, nutrition counseling, and yoga, where vocational training is gaining traction.

The rising demand for services such as nutrition consulting, fitness coaching, and nutraceuticals has opened up diverse career pathways for young individuals seeking skill development and vocational education in the beauty and wellness sector.

The Beauty and Wellness sector in India is witnessing rapid expansion, outpacing growth rates seen



in the United States and Europe by a factor of two. This surge is driven by heightened consumer awareness and growing aspirations, resulting in increased expenditures on beauty and wellness offerings.

Per capita spending on beauty and personal care, as reported by the Indian Beauty & Hygiene Association (IBHA), has risen from approximately ₹ 450 annually in 2017 to ₹ 684 in 2022, with projections reaching ₹ 772 by 2025.

From 2018 to 2023, the global beauty and wellness industry saw a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 17.60%. In contrast, the Indian sector exceeded this with an impressive 18.40% CAGR during the same period. This accelerated growth can be attributed to a rising affluent and middle-class demographic and the expansion of organized retail across the country. Projections suggest that by 2025, the sector will reach approximately ₹ 2,77,000 crores, marking a substantial 23% increase from ₹ 92,000 crores recorded in 2018.

Promoting female entrepreneurship in India is crucial, given the current low representation where only one in every five entrepreneurs is female. The beauty and wellness industry offers unparalleled prospects for women in both employment and entrepreneurial ventures.

Thus, there is an urgent call to cultivate entrepreneurship and self-employment among women in this sector through tailored education, training programs, and financial backing. These initiatives are pivotal in empowering women to elevate their businesses and thrive in the entrepreneurial landscape.

Creating a dedicated fund in partnership with NSDC, industries, and angel investors is essential to bolstering female entrepreneurs in the beauty and wellness sector. Regional incubation centers play a pivotal role in fostering the entrepreneurial zeal of talented women within the industry.

As part of this initiative, young female entrepreneurs in the beauty and wellness sector will receive

enhanced business management skills to effectively manage their ventures. This targeted support aims to empower women entrepreneurs to refine their business concepts, develop viable and attractive business plans, and strategize for sustainable business growth.

The beauty and wellness industry is undergoing significant transformation due to digital advancements, including technology-driven startups and expanding 5G connectivity in rural regions. This shift necessitates updating traditional skills with proficiency in modern technologies like app development, virtual try-on services, and data analytics. Additionally, enhancing customer engagement strategies will be crucial to staying competitive in the evolving market landscape.

Moreover, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is advancing rapidly within the beauty and wellness sector, revolutionizing practices such as augmented reality. An example is AI-powered skin consultation, which analyzes signs of skin aging and offers personalized skincare advice based on extensive dermatological knowledge gathered over 15-20 years from thousands of images. This technology marks a significant evolution in how skincare solutions are tailored and delivered to consumers.

Customized services have grown in importance as customer preferences, lifestyles, body types, and genetic factors continue to evolve. The era of one-size-fits-all solutions is outdated, as consumers now prioritize personalized and distinctive experiences tailored to their individual needs and desires.

The popularity of on-demand home services has skyrocketed, especially among busy professionals, highlighting the importance of versatile skills within the industry workforce. Moreover, innovative concepts and methodologies are inspiring young students to pursue technical and technological careers, driven by a desire to contribute to a brighter future. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

My noisy city makes me sick

By: Kamal Baruah

David is a YouTuber based in Czech Republic, who can't help wondering how vehicles beep pap-pap, while visiting our Doul Govinda Mandir on the foothills of Chandra Bharati hill at Rajaduar, North Guwahati. Surely he had noticed that most of the vehicles sped by honking their horn. There were no pedestrians or even other vehicles on the road and he saw all honking vehicles passed by.

Commuters often distracted by a commotion across the bustling street of India. The other day while I was returning home, there were blaring sound of sirens along with so many VIP Cars in the midst of a rainstorm.

All those crazy traffic circled around and honked. Traffic blocked in key roads as police failed to streamline the flow of traffic. And there was an ambulance kept blowing siren for a passage.

This is our city-year-splitting crack of thunder all day and all night. The sound of horns is causing great annoyance in our day to day life. There is a need now to put an effort to suppress noise.

Our ears are more sensitive to loud sounds. The effects of such noise can damage hearing leading to hearing loss. A sound's loudness is measured in decibels (dB). Sounds anything above 85 dB are harmful, where heavy traffic and noisy restaurant make noise levels between 80-89 dB.

Besides sports crowd, rock concert, and loud symphony, where it goes



120-129 dB, there is gun shot and siren at 100 feet that make 140 Db, which is extremely dangerous to us.

People regularly exposed to harmful noise because of their jobs such as construction factory workers, fire fighters, drivers and traffic police. Military personnel often face while firing arms.

They suffer from Tinnitus symptoms. Even musicians face heavy crunch sound at musical concert. Such urban commotions by non-bothering individuals make not only our city noise but create systemic changes to our environment too.

The bustle of big city makes people sick. We forget that noise pollution is still pollution. Ironically hearing damage is irreparable. The days of bird-song, intelligible human speech, the gentle rustling of leaves, the crispy highs of brushes on jazz cymbals are over. People living in cities are regularly exposed noise.

An hour-long commute at such sound levels could cause significant

hearing loss over time. Even noise level of 60 decibels could raise blood pressure, heart rate and cause stress, loss of concentration and sleep. According to WHO, human pain threshold is at 120 decibels.

However the permissible limits of noise at residential areas are 55 dB and 45dB during daytime and night respectively. So does with 75-70 dB and 65-55 dB for industrial and commercial areas respectively.

Creating noise is considered to be a public nuisance under Section 290 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. Further, if there is noise after 10 pm, one may contact the local police helpline.

Now loud horns (pressure horns) are to be a thing of past in India. The government is taking a significant step to reduce noise pollution on its roads by enforcing a 50-decibel limit for vehicle horns.

Yet unnecessary honking is indeed a common issue on Indian roads. Many motorists installed modified silencers on their sports bikes and violated the

rules. It contributes significantly to noise pollution and can be quite annoying for everyone around.

Aizawl has set an example on how to deal with this crisis. Nobody honks, or jumps their lane in Aizawl. So be with Gangtok city. Horn is not OK please: Honking without reason is illegal, so we might as well stop it.

I have to wonder whether sirens in many instances are worth. Sirens often confuse people and frequently it's hard to tell what direction the sound is coming from and caused driver in stress and disorientation, doubtless leading to more accidents. However, it is essential to differentiate between the distinct sounds of a police siren and an ambulance siren.

Understanding their differences can help pedestrians and motorists respond appropriately, ensuring the smooth flow of traffic and timely assistance in emergency situations.

Police sirens typically produce a combination of wailing and alternating high-low sounds. Ambulance sirens generally produce a continuous, high-pitched wailing sound.

So, the next time you hear a siren, you'll have the ability to differentiate between the type of emergency vehicle in action, facilitating a prompt and responsible reaction from everyone involved. That raised a key question.

While urban noise may seem inevitable and unavoidable and city dwellers continued to suffer from their noisy city. *(The author can be reached at kamal.baruah@yahoo.com)*

SHORT STORY

Fulfil if you promise



By: Dr. Suman Bharali

(...continued from the previous edition)

She would visit the place repeatedly to meet Wilson telling others she is going to collect the special flower there. Gradually they became close to each other and shared their feelings towards each other. One day Wilson kissed her holding her soft cheeks in his hands. Then he looked into her eyes and spoke.

"I promise that we will live together and die together."

"Me too" She replied and hugged him tightly.

Fortunate is one who felt what love is and who receives the pure love. Wilson's fight with the Royals had not stopped. There were often rebellions in the neighbouring villages. The band would help the villagers secretly. The central law became cruel and exploitation of citizen increased. People were hanged for disobeying royal orders or not cooperating.

If the peasants were unable to pay the revenue their daughters were taken away by the Royal soldiers. Their land and house were confiscated. People became homeless and helpless. Knowing about it the anger inside Wilson and his fellow men increased. As the situation worsened people stopped roaming out of their home here and there. That's why Jasmine had not visited Wilson since many days.

One day an old man was beaten to death by Royal soldiers because of spilling water on one's shoes. The old man was offering water to the soldier but he had Parkinson's disease so his hands were trembling. This made the people violent and they protested. The soldiers killed man people there and burnt their village. Many people lost lives and become homeless.

Cruel laws always give birth to revolution. People of different villages gathered and decided to revolt against the tyranny. Every citizen developed similar emotions. Whether men or women, old or child all wanted to fight against the injustice. Soldiers tried to stop them by applying force but when the dam is breached the water can't be stopped. Wilson's band ceased the opportunity and came to lead the republic revolutionaries. They trained the people and converted peasants and craftsmen into tough warriors. They provided weapons and safety gears to as many people as they could provide. Now the whole country was together with same determination against common enemy. They wanted sovereignty and to uproot the monarchy.

They attached Royal outposts one by one and destroyed them. The soldiers were forced to leave their posts and retreat. Those who fought were killed. Day by day the strength and confidence of the revolutionaries increased. And reverse happened in the Royal peoples. Soldiers feared to go to the villages and were confined together in their camps. They were in fear that this might be their last night. Few soldiers surrendered and joined the revolutionaries. They gave the information about Royal plans and arm depots. The revolutionaries attacked and took more arms from there.

The Royal ministers started diplomacy and sent negotiators with lucrative offers for citizens and asked them to stop the revolution. But people were determined they would not stop until they get sovereignty. The revolutionaries started biggest assault and started attacking from all directions. Gradually they moved towards the palace killing soldiers on their way and taking away their strong holds.

Now the Royal Community was confined in the Palace only. The revolutionary leaders gathered and arranged a meeting to discuss about final attack to take over the palace and finish the Royal rule forever. The fort was strong and well-guarded. It was not easy to breach and enter. But the fire in the heart of revolutionaries was so high that they were ready to burn anything in their way.

All the revolutionaries came together and attached with full strength. The Royal soldiers retaliated with all their strength as well. Many revolutionary warriors sacrificed their lives for attaining their goal. Wilson was fighting ferociously. He saw many of his friends being killed in the fight. River of blood flowed that day.

Finally, Wilson and a few of his band warriors climbed the fort wall after tough fight and support of fellow revolutionaries who gave them cover. Once Wilson and the warriors reached the top of fort, they slayed everyone who came in their path. They opened the main entrance for the other revolutionaries. Soon the palace was flooded with the angry revolutionaries. They vandalized the palace and killed the soldiers who resisted them.

Meanwhile, the minister who burnt Wilson's village was caught by some revolutionaries. They were about to kill him. When Wilson saw it, he shouted.

"Stop. He is my prey. I have to punish him for what he has done to my people and my village."

The mob made path for him and he reached near the minister. The minister knelt down in front of him as asked for mercy.

"Please forgive me. I will give whatever you want. You, you take everything I have. I will make you the chief of Royal Army or, whatever you want."

"You think we are fool or greedy. We are not here to rob you but to give you the punishment

for all the evil deeds you have done to us. You can't imagine how much pain our people have under, how many family members we have lost in all these years. We are living worse than animals. But now its justice time. You will get what you deserve." Announcing that Wilson rose his sword.

"Wait, wait. Please forgive me. I will leave this land and never return back. You can have what you want. Please give me pardon." The minister cried falling on Wilson's feet.

"No. We will have our vengeance and avenge the death of our dear ones. Get ready to die." Wilson replied.

Just then one of his fellow warriors grabbed the hairs of the minister and extended his throat. Wilson slit his throat with his sword and stream of blood erupted. All the revolutionaries shouted together in joy of punishing the most-evil person.

All the other Royal family members were captured by the revolutionaries and put into prison. They took over the palace and celebrated their victory. After a week all the leaders of the revolutionaries held a meeting and decided to execute every Royal family member to finish their blood line. So that there is no scope for monarchy in the future.

One by one the Royal prisoners were brought forward and executed by different revolutionary leaders. The King, the queen, the prince all were executed. Finally, the princess was brought with a sack over her head covering her face. Wilson came forward to finish the last member of Royal family. Everyone was waiting eagerly and cheering to declare their total independence. Wilson rose his sword and was cheering with the people ready to kill the last one. As a man removed the sack from the face of the princess Wilson was shocked. The sword fell from his hand and he froze.

"Jasmine" we muttered.

"Wilson" she answered back. They cried seeing each other. Wilson did not know Jasmine was a princess nor Jasmine knew that Wilson was an outlaw.

"Where were you all these days? I was searching for you everywhere." Asked Wilson "I was confined in my home." Jasmine sobbed

"What have we become? Enemies of each other's blood." Jasmine continued.

"What could I do? It is my duty to fight for my people and to avenge the death and destruction of the citizen. It's my mother land and these are my brother and sisters. How could I ignore their sufferings?"

"No, no. It's not your fault. You are right in your place. It was destined to happen. We were not meant to live together." Jasmine sobbed and spoke.

All the surrounding people shouted and demanded.

"Wilson, go on chop her head off. She is the las Royal seed. Finish her and our revolution will be over." One man said

"No, no, I can't." Wilson cried and fell on his knees.

Jasmine stood fearlessly and firmly, extending her throat. Then she spoke.

"Do your duty Wilson."

"What are you saying?" asked Wilson in wonder.

"I can't kill my love with my own hands. I will die first before anything happens to you." Wilson continued.

"You can't erase what is written in our destinies. Come on Wilson perform your duty. Be loyal to your people. You are strong always. Don't allow the emotions to weaken you. I want to see you as a winner. I will not become the cause for your weakness. I cannot destroy your reputation. I have lost everything. Let me clear your confusion and finish what you started." Jasmine said to Wilson.

She then knelt down and took the sword on ground nearby. All of a sudden, she stabbed her belly with the sword and closed her eyes. Soon the floor was full of her blood. Wilson did not expect this will happen. Before he could stop her, she fell on the ground looking at him.

"No, my dear, no. what have you done. Why you did not stab me instead?" Asked Wilson crying loud.

Wilson took her head on his lap and removed her hairs spread over her face. He kissed her forehead and held her tight close to his heart. And shouted like a mad man. Then he said.

"Ok, if it is destined then let it be. He took out the sword gently from Jasmine's belly and pushed it into his chest. Soon both their blood mixed together. Wilson lied close to Jasmine, and held her with his arms. Both of them kept looking at each-other's eyes. Wilson murmured to Jasmine.

"Remember what I promised. We will live together and die together." Then both of them smiled and closed their eyes. They died together hugging each other gently.

Wilson fulfilled both his promises that day. The one he gave to the people of his village that he will take revenge from the Royal authorities for their atrocities and the other promise he gave to his lover, Jasmine.

Where there was joy of victory and freedom of the republic. A shadow of grief marred over the villages due to sacrifice of Wilson.

Wilson became immortal by fulfilling his promises. He was remembered as a great fighter and a great lover forever. *(The author is an M.D. (Ayurvedic Medicine), Ph.D. based in Guwahati. He can be reached at bharali.suman@rediffmail.com)*

BOOK REVIEW

BHAONA and Assamese society: A book that decodes Assam and its cultural history

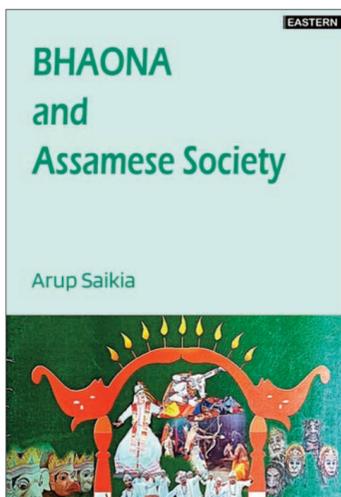
By: Samiran Bhuyan

It's a book about the deeply rooted history of Assam in all aspects. This book primarily in many chapters focuses on Bhaona, Assamese culture and Sankardeva. Bhaona or Ankiya Bhaona is one of the prominent unifying festivals of Assam. On the other hand, Saint Sankardeva is the creator of Ankiya Bhaona. The ingredients of Bhaona were taken from pre existing resources of Assam and India. So the research and discourse on Bhaona propound many important reality or study worthy facts about Assam and Assamese polymath Sankardeva in Indian cultural history. It's not a simple history of chronological events.

We better call it investigative journalism with an inventory outlook. Author Arup Saikia projects Mahapurush Sankardeva as a social scientist. Religion is just a part of his multifaceted personality. Moreover as a full-fledged drama Bhaona has music, dance, orchestra, makeup, costume, stages and some other paraphernalia which are directly related with it. The origin and creation of above mentioned features of Bhaona are elaborately discussed in the book.

To some extent this book, BHAONA and Assamese Society, is about the practical experience of the writer Saikia. The writer traveled extensively and visited many countries for cultural performance. The worthy experiences gained through interaction with various people are put in writing words. This is the main resourceful foundation of the book - BHAONA and Assamese Society. This is a kind of comparative study of Assam and Assamese culture written in the first few chapters. The writer tries to display Bhaona as cultural umbrella of Assam. The other traditional festivals of Assam flow into the oceanic arena of Bhaona. The importance of religion in creation of culture is indispensable. The most prominent popular secular Assamese festival is Bihu. The formal appearance of Bihu from Dikkaravasini temple of Sadiya is described in detail. Later the influence of Sankardeva and Bhaona on Bihu is also specifically mentioned.

While discussing about Sankardeva, the age-old traditional values or outlooks are kept aside. The unfounded, easily not comprehensive deeds of Sankardeva is specially highlighted. This book is written sitting on the ground realities of mankind. Even God and Goddesses are not shown in supernatural way. Spirituality is nothing but morality. Everything is written in real world analytics. What's the idea of Assamese nationalism? Before emergence of Sankardeva,



the kingdoms of Assam was known by its community. The Ahom, Kachari and Koch kingdoms were good example of it. Assam is situated outside of mainland India. The first bridge constructed to connect with mainland India started during the era of Varman Kingdom. Sankardeva later inserted reinforcement there. The saint has millions of followers, but who will shoulder his legacy? It's very hard to reply in few words. To claim the legacy of Sankardeva, the people of Assam are divided socio-religiously into many folds. Writer Arup Saikia tries to find an amicably acceptable reply. The world wide experience of the writer is taken as veritable reference.

Sometimes the book delves into social formation and behaviour of Assam. It is as such a book of comparative sociology. The tradition and culture of various countries are taken into account. The Satra and Namghar are two prime institutions of Assam. Saikia lively describes the origin and functions of Satra and Namghar. Readers can acquire the idea that what force drive Assamese society at large. What is Nalchali style construction of Assam? One chapter is added about Assamese architectural aspects from personal houses to religious shrines including temples and Namghars.

What's the musical beauty of a drama? How was it created? Music isn't the result of any process or planned endeavour. According to author Saikia, "Emotive thought blended with reality created music. Music and instruments are real, concept is abstract." A special dissertation is written on the formation and origin of the Assamese community which is necessary to have comprehensive study about Assam.

The author says that, "Language and literature reflect the thoughts, imaginations and ethnic feelings of people. Long two thousand years have been spanning to appear Assamese as full-fledged language. But the acquisition of words is much older than that. It has been nearly four thousand years since the immigration of Australoids." What is romanticism in Assamese literature? Is Sankardeva's Keli Gopala or Parijata Harana characterized as romantic drama? We have to go through the book to know it. This book covers one very amazing chapter on wildlife. Once "Bagh Bheta" (Enclosure of tiger) was a thrilling festival of Jamugurihat (Sonitpur).

Finally the economic conditions play a most important role in society. Therefore any historical writings are imperfect if it doesn't touch the monetary sources and dealings of the said country with others. The internationally famed traditional cloth industry of Assam has been started from the era of the epic Ramayana. The place was known as Koshakaram-Bhumi (Country of cocoon rearers).

Is salt eating a luxury in Assam? How is the salt industry in Ahom's kingdom? Salt was really a symbol of luxury at that time. The modern Dima Hasau and Tuensang area of Nagaland were like gold mines for the availability of salt. This book "Bhaona and Assamese Society" is really reading worthy for the people who have curiosity to have a glimpse of Assam in all features.

Book Name: BHAONA and Assamese society
Writer: Arup Saikia
Publisher: Eastern Book House
Price: ₹ 450
Pages: 160

Walking Together in Rains

By: Dr Priyanka Bhattacharjee (Part 1) & Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee (Part 2)

Part 1

Those outlying peaks of the mountains outpouring Terra's elixir

Beaming with sun rays, these wines of Vanir Cascading down like a maiden unfurls her locks

Those crashes on bosoms, so as the falls on the rocks. Forming a brook, tis edged by hanging willows

Only there my love! Our union my fancy follows

Hands in hands we walk on the brightest cobbles

Bare foot we step sometimes on the pointed pebbles

We look eyes to eyes and witness our odysseys together

Of joys and pains, of sufferings and happiness we gather

We see the stream and pray for the joys to flow incessant

We see the crashing falls and pray for our proud competent

And a walk together towards Elysium I pray with thee

Hand in hand we close our eyes under a willow tree

And we smile and kiss and brace each other

Then pray for the eternal love this life and further.

Part 2

Suddenly an ecstatic breath seizes me as I think

how the sky will be after the rains

To wash all my pains Rain drops create ripples of river

Only you are some secret stranger

A dweller of nameless port of mind

In between told and untold thoughts left behind

Sometimes at midnight has-nuhena fragrance

In Insomniac night when Bokul blooms I feel your existence

In the droplets of rain the fountain's song

A thirsty heart craves for love which everyone takes as wrong

You come riding the wings of the sea gull to my sea

In the resplendent love line of life's meadow full of glee.

Sandwiching Desires Between Fancy And Reality

By Bipul Chandra Kalita

Sandwiching desires between fancy and reality
Oft I do not get my desired space lost
Though an ultramodern civility crunches moral values;
Your ceaseless efforts to root out my presence work,
Your eyes' perpetual search for confirming my absence goes on
And my squeezed existence pinches your pride invisibly!

I can never build any castle in an unseen planet for you
Though your dreams and desires seem not to be earthly;
I enjoy the fragrance of soil-water-air,
I enjoy the sight and sound of rock-buildings too...
But your nostrils ignore the beauty of thrilling innocence!

Poverty is my wealth, really descent and self-proven;
It paints not pain in my face,
It gains pleasure from my simple acceptance;
And, your glittering assets drizzles not peace on me any more
As I reign with pride in my independent earthly heaven!



POETRY

The war began with an assault by Hamas militants on southern Israel on October 7 that killed 1,200 people

An Israeli airstrike hits a school sheltering people in Gaza, killing at least 30

DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP), July 27: Israeli airstrikes hit a school being used by displaced people in central Gaza on Saturday, killing dozens, as the country's negotiators prepared to meet international mediators to discuss a proposed cease-fire.

At least 30 people sheltering at a girls' school in Deir Al-Balah were taken to Al Aqsa Hospital and pronounced dead after a strike that Israel's military said targeted a Hamas command and control centre used to store weapons and plan attacks. It said militants "used the compound as a hiding place to direct and plan numerous attacks against IDF troops" and "developed and stored large quantities of weapons inside".

Civil defence workers in Gaza said that thousands were sheltering in the school, which also contained a medical site.

Near the hospital, where the bodies were transported, Associated Press journalists saw an ambulance rushing through a dusty road as a few people ran in the opposite direction. An injured man lay on a stretcher on the ground. A body covered with a blanket and a dead toddler lay inside the ambulance.

Inside the school, classrooms were in ruins. People were seen searching for victims under the rubble and some were gathering the remains of those who were killed.

Gaza's Health Ministry said at least 12 people had been killed in other strikes on Saturday.



The strikes hit a day before officials from the US, Egypt, Qatar and Israel are scheduled to meet in Italy to discuss the ongoing hostage and cease-fire negotiations. CIA Director Bill Burns is expected to meet Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Abdul Rahman al-Thani, Mossad director David Barnea and Egyptian spy chief Abbas Kamel on Sunday, according to officials from the US and Egypt who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to discuss the plans.

US officials said on Friday that Israel and Hamas are in agreement on the basic framework of the three-phase deal under consideration. However, in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to the US Congress, he vowed to press forward with the war until Israel achieves "total victory".

Palestinian officials vehemently condemned the speech after the school strike. Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesperson for Palestinian Authority Presi-

dent Mahmoud Abbas, said in a statement that Netanyahu's reception from his supporters in the United States constituted a "green light" to continue Israel's offensive.

"Every time the occupation bombs a school that shelters displaced persons, we see only some condemnations and denunciations that will not force the occupation to stop its bloody aggression," he said.

Earlier, Israel's military ordered the evacuation of a part of a designated humanitarian zone in Gaza ahead of a planned strike on Khan Younis on Saturday.

The evacuation order was in response to rocket fire that Israel said originated from the area. The military said it planned an operation against Hamas militants in the city, including parts of Muwasi, the crowded tent camp in an area where Israel has told thousands of Palestinians to seek refuge throughout the war.

It's the second evacuation order issued in a week that has included striking part of the hu-

manitarian zone, a 60-square-kilometer (roughly 20-square-mile) blanketed with tent camps that lack sanitation and medical facilities and have limited access to aid, United Nations and humanitarian groups say. Israel expanded the zone in May to take in people fleeing Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population at the time had crowded.

Gaza Health Ministry officials said the evacuation orders had forced at least three health centres to stop providing care and compounded existing issues such as displaced people crammed in places where waste has piled up and hygiene kits are unavailable.

According to Israeli estimates, about 1.8 million Palestinians are currently sheltering there after being uprooted multiple times in search of safety during Israel's punishing air and ground campaign. In November, the military said the area could still be struck and that it was "not a safe zone, but it is a safer place than any other" in Gaza.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, said it was increasingly difficult to know how many people would be affected by the evacuation order because those sheltering under there were constantly being displaced.

"Referring to the orders as evacuation orders don't do any justice to what this means," said Juliette Touma, the agency's di-

rector of communications. "These are forced displacement orders. What happens is when people have these orders, they have very little time to move."

Further north, Palestinians mourned the deaths of seven killed by Israeli airstrikes overnight on Zawiada, in central Gaza. Members of two families - parents and their two children as well as a mother and her two children - were wrapped in traditional Islamic white burial shrouds as community members gathered to perform funeral rights. As men lined up to pray in front of the bodies, weeping friends and neighbours approached individually to pay their final respects.

Deir al-Balah's Al Aqsa Hospital confirmed the count and Associated Press journalists saw the bodies.

The war in Gaza has killed more than 39,200 Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. The UN estimated in February that some 17,000 children in the territory are now unaccompanied, and the number is likely to have grown since.

The war began with an assault by Hamas militants on southern Israel on October 7 that killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took about 250 hostages. About 115 are still in Gaza, about a third of them believed to be dead, according to Israeli authorities. (AP)

referred to as the "dominant centre" of the world.

Orban also alleged that the US was behind the 2022 explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines built to carry gas from Russia to Germany, calling it "an act of terrorism carried out at the obvious direction of the Americans". He didn't offer any evidence to back up the claim.

The far-right leader's remarks came amid growing criticism from his European partners after he embarked on a "peace mission" trips to Moscow and Beijing earlier this month aimed at brokering an end to Russia's war in Ukraine. Orban is widely considered to have the warmest relations with the Kremlin among all EU leaders.

On Ukraine, Orban cast doubt on the war-torn country becoming either a member of NATO or the

Jaishankar meets Russian FM Lavrov & other counterparts in Laos; exchange views on ways to further boost bilateral ties

VIENTIANE (LAOS), July 27: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday met his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov and leaders from South Korea, Singapore, Laos and other countries to discuss various aspects of bilateral collaboration, including education and agriculture technology.

Jaishankar is in the capital of the Laos People's Democratic Republic to participate in the meetings of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN). He met Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on the sidelines of the meeting.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Foreign Minister of India Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met on the sidelines of #ASEAN events Vientiane, July 26, 2024 #RussiaIndia #DruzbaDosti," the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a post on X, attaching a picture of the two ministers.

Jaishankar held a bilateral meeting with his counterpart from South Korea and had a wide-ranging conversation on Special Strategic Partnership. "A pleasure to meet RoK @FMChoTaeyul today in Vientiane. Wide-ranging conversation on Special Strategic Partnership. Our shared convergences in the Indo-Pacific region is also opening new avenues of cooperation," Jaishankar posted on X. He also met the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission.

"Delighted to meet EU HRVP @Josep-BorrellF, this time in Vientiane. Spoke of India and European Union's potential to augment partnership in trade, clean energy transition and advanced technologies. Exchanged perspectives on regional and global issues. Thank HRVP Borrell for his friendship and staunch support for strengthening India-EU ties," Jaishankar posted.

He also met and had great conversations with his counterpart and "dear friend" from Singapore. "Great conversation with dear friend FM @VivianBala of Singapore. Thank Singapore for steering ASEAN-India relations in the last three years as Country

Coordinator. We spoke about creating a new agenda for our bilateral ties. Also appreciated his thoughts on the current geopolitical situation," Jaishankar posted on X.

He also met his Indonesian counterpart.

"Always good to see my friend FM @Menlu_RI of Indonesia. Congratulated her on a great stint as Foreign Minister. Her contribution towards India-Indonesia and India-ASEAN relations are notable. Enjoyed working with her during our G20 Presidencies." Jaishankar also met his Malaysian counterpart.

"A warm conversation with Malaysian FM @tokmatn9 today in Vientiane. Discussed ongoing initiatives in our bilateral relationship. Look forward to enhancing our ties in the second decade of our Enhanced Strategic Partnership," Jaishankar posted on X. Jaishankar held a bilateral meeting with his counterpart from New Zealand, Winston Peters, also the country's deputy prime minister. "Always enjoy meeting DPM & FM @winstonpeters of New Zealand. Discussed education, agriculture technology, Pacific Islands & cricket," Jaishankar said in a post on X. Jaishankar also held a meeting with his counterpart from Brunei, Dato Haji Erywan.

The two leaders launched the logo, celebrating 40 years of diplomatic relations between India and Brunei.

"Confident that our warm and friendly ties will prosper further," Jaishankar said.

He also met Laos' Minister of Home Affairs, Vlayvoeng Bouddakham; Minister of Industry and Commerce, Malaithong Kommasith; Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Sanya Praseth; and Special Envoy Alounkeo Kittikhoun.

"Thank Ambassador Prashant Agrawal for hosting us," Jaishankar said. Jaishankar is in the Laotian capital to participate in the Foreign Ministers' Meetings under the ASEAN framework in the format of ASEAN-India, East Asia Summit (EAS) and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to further deepen India's ties with the bloc, as New Delhi marks a decade of Act East Policy. (PTI)

Vice President Kamala Harris officially declares candidacy for US presidential elections



WASHINGTON, July 27: Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday officially signed her forms, declaring her candidacy for the post of President of the US and voiced confidence that she would win the high-stakes election on November 5.

"Today, I signed the forms officially declaring my candidacy for President of the United States. I will work hard to earn every vote," 59-year-old Harris, who is of Indian and African origin, said

on X.

"In November, our people-powered campaign will win," the presumptive Democratic Party candidate said, referring to her electoral battle with former president and the Republican Party's nominee Donald Trump.

Harris launched her presidential campaign last Sunday, hours after President Joe Biden, 81, withdrew from the race for a second term. She is, however, yet to be officially declared as the presidential

candidate by the Democrats.

If elected on November 5 to succeed President Biden, Harris - the daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother - would not only be the first woman, but the first Indian-American, the first Asian, the first Black woman and the first person of Jamaican descent to ascend to the office.

Meanwhile, no other Democrats have announced their candidacy for the presidential race. Harris has secured endorsements from more than 40 state delegations, surpassing the number of delegates she will need to win the nomination and if that support holds, Democrats will officially nominate her for president during a virtual roll call vote early next month.

Under new rules adopted by the Democratic National Committee on Wednesday, the nominee will be selected as soon as August 1,

and the candidate has until August 7 to select a running mate. The party will meet for its convention in Chicago starting August 19.

Harris, who was a senator from California before she was elected vice president, quickly hit the campaign trail with events in Wisconsin, Indiana and Texas. Her campaign said it raked in more than USD 130 million since she officially joined the White House race.

The endorsement comes as 'Harris for President' kicks off a 'Weekend of Action' marking 100 days until Election Day (on November 5).

With over 1.70,000 volunteers and 2,300 events across the battleground states, Team Harris is making its case to the voters who will decide this election about the fundamental choice they will face this November at the ballot box. (PTI)

Hungary's nationalist leader warns of EU's demise and backs Trump in anti-Western speech

BAILE TUSNAD (ROMANIA), July 27: Hungary's nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban said on Saturday that the European Union was sliding toward oblivion in a rambling anti-Western speech in which he warned of a new, Asia-oriented "world order" while throwing his support for Donald Trump's US presidential bid.

"Europe has given up defending its own interests," Orban said in Baile Tusnad, a majority-ethnic Hungarian town in central Romania. "All Europe is doing today is following the US's pro-Democrat foreign policy unconditionally ... even at the cost of self-destruction."

"A change is coming that has not been seen for 500 years. What we are facing is in fact a world order change," he added, citing China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia as becoming the "dominant centre" of the world.

Orban also alleged that the US was behind the 2022 explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines built to carry gas from Russia to Germany, calling it "an act of terrorism carried out at the obvious direction of the Americans". He didn't offer any evidence to back up the claim.

The far-right leader's remarks came amid growing criticism from his European partners after he embarked on a "peace mission" trips to Moscow and Beijing earlier this month aimed at brokering an end to Russia's war in Ukraine. Orban is widely considered to have the warmest relations with the Kremlin among all EU leaders.

On Ukraine, Orban cast doubt on the war-torn country becoming either a member of NATO or the

EU. "We Europeans do not have the money for it. Ukraine will revert to the position of a buffer state," he said, adding that international security guarantees "will be enshrined in an agreement between the EU and Russia".

Throughout Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, Orban has broken with other EU leaders by refusing to provide Kyiv with weapons to defend against Russian forces and has routinely delayed, watered down, or blocked efforts to send financial aid to Kyiv and impose sanctions on Moscow.

Orban typically uses the annual Tusnavos Summer University platform in Romania to indicate the ideological direction of his national government and to deride the standards of the EU bloc, which Hungary joined in 2004.

Hungary currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, during which Orban has made a Trumpian vow to "Make Europe Great Again" and has openly endorsed Trump's candidacy in this year's US presidential election. Orban visited Trump twice this year at the former president's beachside compound in Mar-a-Lago.

Orban said on Saturday that Trump's bid for re-election aims "to pull the American people back from a post-nationalist liberal state to a nation-state" and reshaped a slew of conservative tropes that Trump is being penalised unfairly

to prevent his electoral bid.

"That is why they want to put him in prison. That's why they want to take away his assets. And if that doesn't work, that's why they want to kill him," Orban said, referring to an assassination attempt on Trump at a Pennsylvania rally this month.

Orban's remarks on Saturday aren't the first time he's used the festival in Transylvania to stir controversy. In 2014, Orban declared for the first time his intentions of building an "illiberal state" in Hungary, and in 2022, he sparked inter-

national outrage after he railed against Europe becoming a "mixed race" society. He doubled down on his long-held anti-immi-

gration stance on Saturday, saying it is not an answer to his country's aging population.

"There can be no question of a shrinking population supplemented by migration," he said in his Saturday address. "The Western experience is that if there are more guests than owners, then home is no longer home. This is a risk that should not be taken."

The EU's longest-serving leader, Orban has become an icon to some conservative populists for his firm opposition to immigration and LGBTQ+ rights. He has also cranked down on the press and judiciary in Hungary and been accused by the EU of violating rule-of-law and democracy standards. (AP)

Philippine forces sail to hotly disputed shoal without incident for first time since deal with China

MANILA (PHILIPPINES), July 27: Philippine government personnel transported food and other supplies on Saturday to a fiercely disputed shoal occupied by a Filipino navy contingent but closely guarded by Beijing's forces in the South China Sea and no confrontations were reported, Philippine officials said.

It was the first Philippine government supply trip to the Second Thomas Shoal, which has been the scene of increasingly violent confrontations between Chinese and Philippine forces, since the Philippines and China reached a deal a week ago to prevent clashes, the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila said in a statement.

"The lawful and routine rotation and resupply mission within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone is a credit to the professionalism of the men and women of the Philippine navy and the Philippine coast guard and the close coordination among the National Security Council, Department of National Defense and the Department of Foreign Affairs," the Philippine Foreign Affairs Department said, without providing other details.

A top Philippine security official told The Associated Press that the Chinese and Philippine coast guards communicated for coordination Saturday, and their ships did not issue two-way radio challenges like in the past to demand that each other's ships leave the shoal immediately.

Also, for the first time at the shoal, Chinese coast guard ships did not shadow or block the Philippine vessels as they had repeatedly done in the past, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authorization to discuss the delicate issue publicly.

China's coast guard said the Philippine ship delivered daily necessities "in accordance with a temporary arrangement reached between China and the Philippines."

"The China Coast Guard confirmed it, supervised and managed the entire process," spokesperson Gan Yu said in a statement posted online.

The deal was reached by the Philippines and China after a series of meetings between the two country's diplomats in Manila and exchanges of diplomatic notes aimed to establish a mutually acceptable



arrangement at the shoal — which Filipinos call Ayungin and the Chinese call Ren'ai Jiao — without conceding either side's territorial claims, Philippine officials said.

The deal has not been made public by either side. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken welcomed the news that the resupply mission was completed without a confrontation.

"We applaud that and hope and expect to see that it continues going forward," said Blinken, who was in Laos for a meeting of foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a group that includes the Philippines.

China's coast guard and other forces have used powerful water cannons and dangerous blocking maneuvers to prevent food and other supplies from reaching Filipino navy personnel at Manila's outpost at the shoal, on a long-grounded and rusting

warship, the BRP Sierra Madre.

In the worst confrontation, Chinese forces on motorboats repeatedly rammed and then boarded two Philippine navy boats on June 17 to prevent Filipino personnel from transferring food and other supplies, including firearms, to the ship outpost in the shallows of the shoal, according to the Philippine government. The Chinese seized the Philippine navy boats and damaged them with machetes and improvised spears.

They also seized seven M4 rifles, which were packed in cases, and other supplies. The violent face-off wounded several Filipino navy personnel, including one who lost his thumb, in a chaotic skirmish that was captured in video and photos that were later made public by Philippine officials.

China and the Philippines blamed each other

for the confrontation and each asserted their own sovereign rights over the shoal.

The United States and its key Asian and Western allies, including Japan and Australia, condemned the Chinese acts at the shoal and called for the rule of law and freedom of navigation to be upheld in the South China Sea, a key global trade route with rich fishing areas and undersea gas deposits.

In addition to China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have been locked in separate but increasingly tense territorial disputes in the waterway, which is regarded as a potential flashpoint and a delicate fault line in the U.S.-China regional rivalry. The U.S. military has deployed Navy ships and fighter jets for decades in what it calls freedom of navigation and overflight patrols, which China has opposed and regarded as a threat to regional stability.

Washington has no territorial claims in the disputed waters but has repeatedly warned that it is obligated to defend the Philippines, its oldest treaty ally in Asia, if Filipino forces, ships and aircraft come under an armed attack, including in the South China Sea. (AP)

Japan's Sado gold mine gains UNESCO status after Tokyo pledges to exhibit dark WWII history

TOKYO, July 27: The UNESCO World Heritage committee on Saturday decided to register Japan's controversial Sado gold mine as a cultural heritage site after the country agreed to include it in an exhibit of its dark history of abusing Korean labourers during World War II.

The decision signals an improvement in ties between Tokyo and Seoul. The mine on an island off the coast of Niigata in northern Japan operated for nearly 400 years and was once the world's largest gold producer before closing in 1989. It was also linked to Japan's wartime abuse of Korean labourers.

Committee members, including South Korea, gave unanimous support to the listing at Saturday's annual meeting in New Delhi, India.

They said Japan provided additional information, made all necessary amendments to the plan and consulted with South Korea over the mine's wartime history. The Japanese delegate told the meeting that Japan has installed new exhibition material "to explain the severe conditions of (Korean labourers) work and remember their hardship".

Japan acknowledged that Koreans were put to more dangerous tasks in the mine shaft, which caused some to die. Many of them were also given meagre food rations and nearly no days off. A memorial service for all the workers at the Sado Island gold mines will be held annually at the site, Japanese officials said.

The South Korean delegation said the country expects Japan to keep its pledge to be truthful to history and to show "both the bright and dark side" of the Sado mine in order to help improve relations over the long term. Japan had to demonstrate a commitment to face its wartime atrocities in order to gain support from South Korea, which had opposed the UNESCO bid because of the wartime abuse of Korean labourers.

Such disputes over history that have consistently strained bilateral ties. Seoul has said some Koreans brought to Japan during its 1910-1945 colonization of the Korean Peninsula were put to forced labour at the mine.

Historians say Japan used hundreds of thousands of Korean labourers, including those forcibly brought from the Korean Peninsula, at Japanese mines and factories to make up for labour shortages, as most working-age men were sent to battlefronts across Asia and the Pacific. Sado was among them.

Japan's government has long been criticized for its reluctance to discuss wartime atrocities, including the sexual abuse of Asian women known as "comfort women" and Korean forced labourers. Japanese authorities have hailed the Sado Island mine for advancements in mining technology before and after industrialisation but made no mention of its connection to the abuse of Korean laborers during WWII. (AP)

Death anniversary of former minister observed

HT Correspondent
HOJAI, July 27: The second death anniversary of former minister and social activist Dr Ardhendu Kumar Dey observed at Nanigopal Guest House in Hojai on Saturday.

Local MLA Ramkrishna Ghosh along with other well-wishers, relatives paid homage in front of portrait of the Dr A K Dey. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Ramkrishna Ghosh remembered his contributions. He said people should emulate his contributions and that Dey always believed in unity is strength.

He added that from MLA fund, funds will be sanctioned for the statue of Dr AK Dey.

Dr Dey's journey from physician to a fire brand politician was recalled, the way he used to work for the upliftment of the people taking everyone together. People present in the meeting felt that Dey was a candid, softspoken, friendly person to whom anyone could connect easily.

Talking to our correspondent, Bijay Chakraborty said a souvenir on the life of Dey will be released on his birth anniversary in March.

He said, "We demand a road to be named in Hojai Girls' College and Santiban, every year we will observe his death anniversary."

70 are in the handicrafts sector and 30 in handloom Training programme for artisans, weavers inaugurated in 100 clusters



GUWAHATI, July 27: Union Minister of State for Textiles, Pabitra Margherita, on Saturday inaugurated a special training programme for artisans and weavers in 100 clusters of the country.

In the first phase, more than 3,500 artisans and weavers will be benefited, he said.

Speaking to reporters after opening the 'Bunkar and Karigar Utthan' Upskilling Programme FY 2024-25' here, the minister said the

clusters are spread across the country, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and Northeast to Gujarat.

Among the 100 clusters, 70 are in the handicrafts sector and 30 in handloom, Margherita said. "We have trained master trainers

in all the clusters and they are confident that this training of 100 days will benefit the weavers and artisans. We intend to extend the programme to every nook and corner of the country," he added.

"Each cluster has more than 30 artisans and weavers, and they are very enthusiastic to be associated with this programme as they know this will enhance their capacity in their respective fields," the minister claimed.

Margherita, who is a Rajya Sabha MP from Assam, added, "We are working very hard to leverage the textile industry to the next level, especially in handloom and handicrafts, by giving special training programmes and market linkages."

Besides the beneficiaries from Assam who were present at the function, beneficiaries from other states attended the event virtually. (PTI)

Alleged corruption in construction of drains at Margherita



HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, July 27: Rampant corruption has been alleged in sewerage works worth ₹ 21 crore under the NLCPR scheme at Margherita town. The sewerage works were done under NLCPR scheme at ward number 4 under Margherita Municipality Board of Tinsukia District.

The poor conditions irked locals and urged authorities to look into the matter. Local residents of this area said that construction of drain started a month ago but allegedly unfortunately low substandard materials were used where instead of cement and sand mud is used at construction work.

Papu Dutta president of Satra Mukti Sangram Samity Central Committee an Umbrella organisation of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samity (KMSS) came down heavily on the ongoing NLCPR scheme construction work where an huge amount of ₹ 21 crore has been allegedly wasted.

Dutta said that NLCPR scheme drain work started more than 6 years ago at Margherita town area but unfortunately due to unscientific way of construction water logging occurred at Margherita town area.

Dutta further accused that substandard cement, rod, bricks and other materials are used at NLCPR scheme drain construction work.

NFR continues to undertake initiatives to improve customer interface

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 27: The NF Railway has opened additional stations for handling of both inward and outward goods traffic during the month of June, 2024 to facilitate easier transportation of various goods by different segments of customer.

To improve customer interface and augment freight revenue, Adina station under Katihar division is opened for handling of inward coal traffic w.e.f. June 3. Tatibahar station under Rangiya division is opened for handling of outward Bamboo traffic w.e.f. June 10.

Moreover, under Business Development Units (BDUs) initiative, Bamboo cuts were loaded from Vishwanath Chariali station under Rangiya Division. Further, 42 wagons of Maize have been



booked from Falakata station and 21 wagons of stone chips have been booked under Binnaguri station under Alipurduar Division. Also, 20 wagons of bamboo were transported from Dhemaji in Assam to Amlai in Madhya

Pradesh for the first time by Tinsukia Division. Due to continuous effort under BDU, parcel earnings of Dimapur station has been increased by 16.69% in comparison to corresponding month of previous year.

Bodoland University offers spot admission opportunities

HT Correspondent
GOSSAIGAON, July 27: Bodoland University has announced that spot admissions for vacant seats in the newly introduced five-year integrated postgraduate program for the current academic year will be held on July 29, 30, and 31, 2024, according to the university's academic registrar.

As the sole higher education hub in the BTR region, Bodoland University has commenced the admission process for the five-year integrated postgraduate program for the 2024-25 academic year, as per a statement from the university's academic registrar.

Previously, students in the four districts of the BTR region pursued a two-year postgraduate program through local colleges to obtain their postgraduate degrees. However, in line with the recent National Education Policy, Bodoland University has launched the five-year integrated postgraduate (FYIMP) program to cater to the educational and developmental needs of the student community and the local populace. The university authorities have stated that the new program aims to enhance the accessibility of higher education for students in the BTR region.

Prospective students can apply for admission online through a designated portal starting from the 2024-2025 academic year. The academic registrar has advised students to visit <https://assamadmission.samarth.ac.in> for more information. Additionally, details about admissions can be found on the university's bulletin and website. The registrar has also mentioned that candidates can apply online through the Samarth portal as soon as the application window reopens.



Congress coming back to power in KA: Former KAAC EM

HT Bureau
DIPHU, July 27: Former Executive Member (EM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and president in-charge, Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (KADCC) hinted that there is a clear chance of Congress coming back to power in Karbi Anglong.

Speaking before media persons at Dokmoka on Friday, Rongpi said, "In the 2024 Lok Sabha election the Congress from 6 Diphu (ST) Parliamentary Constituency has stood in third position after All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHL). There is reason to believe that the Congress is coming back to power in the next election."

Rongpi was referring to the State Assembly election 2026. He said, "The BJP has been in power for 9 years. People have seen the miss-rule of BJP and are rejecting it. Unlike the previous Congress government the present BJP ruled Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council has no public oriented schemes for their upliftment of society. There is no scheme that reaches money directly to the public. There is only one scheme by the BJP government i.e. Arunodoi. But with ₹ 1,250/- per month family survive cannot survive."

CEM Pramod Boro attends Seemanta Chetana Mancha convention



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, July 27: A two-day convention of the Assam state of Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar has begun from Saturday at the Bengtol College auditorium in Chirang district.

Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) inaugurated the event in the august presence of Governor of Assam, Gulab Chand Kataria, and several leaders of the Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar. The mancha has been working assiduously to promote peace, security, self-reliance, and unity in the north east.

CEM Boro has extended his heartiest greetings and welcome to the members of the mancha, and hopeful that the convention would be concluded with a smooth successful.

He said that the convention has been emphasizing towards the imperative need for peace and unity for the fulfillment of the dream of a Vikshit Bharat.

"It is a pleasure moment to at-

tend the Inaugural session of the Assam state convention of the Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar, in the august presence of Hon'ble Governor of Assam Shri Gulab Chand Kataria Ji, at Bengtol College in Chirang district today. On the occasion, I extended my heartiest greetings to the members of Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar which has been working assiduously to promote peace, security, self-reliance, and unity in the North East," Boro said.

"The grand ceremony saw several enlightening speeches by the respected speakers on the imperative need for peace & unity for the fulfillment of the dream of a Viksit Bharat that stressed the importance, and strengthening the peace and tranquility amongst the communities in the entire north east India," he added.

Present on the occasion, vice chancellor of Bodoland University Prof Babulal Ahuja, BTR executive member Ranjit Basumatary were prominent attendees in the event.

Topcem cement organises annual blood donation camp



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, July 27: Topcem Cement, a leading cement brand of Northeast India on Saturday, organized a blood donation camp in Guwahati.

The blood donation camp this year was organized in association with Marwari Hospitals, Guwahati. The camp was inaugurated by Anil Kapur, president, sales & marketing, Topcem Cement at a press conference in Guwahati.

Commenting on the occasion, Anil Kapur, president sales & marketing, Meghalaya Cements Ltd, said: "Topcem cement has always taken initiatives for the betterment of the society and will continue to do so in the near future. It's an honour on our part that Marwari Hospital has given their support in making this camp a successful one" The purpose of the campaign is to help medical patients who need blood transfusion as the first thing to survive. There are misconceptions regarding blood donation among the population. This needs education and motivation through dissemination of information regarding blood donation through suitable activities and initiatives. The blood donation camp was a testament to the commitment of Topcem Cement and its employees to giving back to society and making a positive impact on the community. Topcem Cement donated approximately 32 units of blood to support Marwari Hospital's blood bank through employee volunteerism. Marwari Hospital expressed their gratitude to Topcem Cement and their employees for the support and enthusiasm demonstrated in organising such an event.

Sonitpur District Day from August 2

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, July 27: The Sonitpur district administration is going to celebrate five-day long District Day from August 2.

It is worth mentioning that on the historic day of August 3 of 1983 Sonitpur (Tezpur) achieved it's separate identity as a new district as Sonitpur.

It has been bifurcated from erstwhile undivided Darrang district. Having glorious past of last four decades of it's existence the district administration under the initiative of district commissioner, Deba Kumar Mishra is expecting to generate a good feedback through the historic event.

In an exclusive interview, outlining the five day long mega event DC, Deba Kumar Mishra told this

reporter that the programme which would begin with opening of 'Jaipur Foot Camp' at Tezpur Government Boy's HS School by cabinet minister Pijush Hazarika on August 2. The weeklong mega event will comprise walkathon, blood donation camp, interaction programme, open session, cultural programme among others. "Among other personalities from various fields, cabinet minister cum Dhekiajuli MLA, Ashok Singhal, Naduar MLA, Padma Hazarika, Ramesh Chandra Deka, VC, Cotton University, renowned poet-orator Nanda Singh Borkola, noted flautist Dipak Sarma, local MLA, Prithiraj Rabha and Bar-chala MLA, Ganesh Kumar Limbu will grace their presence in various sessions."

Cachar Student shines in statewide essay competition

Competition, held to commemorate 'Deshbhakti Diwas' on July 28

HT Correspondent
SILCHAR, July 27: Rajlakhi Banik, a Class VI student at Government Girls HS & Multi-purpose School in Silchar, Cachar, has achieved the prestigious first prize in Category A of the statewide essay competition in Assam.

The competition, held to commemorate 'Deshbhakti Diwas' on July 28, honors the legacy of the renowned freedom fighter Tarun Ram Phukan.

Rajlakhi's essay, titled "Tarun Ram Phukan: His Life and Achievements," stood out among numerous entries and was selected as the best by a state-level panel of judges. Students from across various districts participated, with the finest essays in each category receiving recognition.

Rajlakhi will be awarded a certificate and a cash prize of ₹ 50,000 at the state-level program on July 28, 2024, at the Conference Hall, Janata Bhawan, Dispur. This event celebrates the enduring legacy and patriotic spirit of Tarun Ram Phukan.

The Cachar district administration, in collaboration with the Regional Office of Information



& Public Relations Barak Valley Zone Silchar, has arranged transportation for Rajlakhi and her companion to Guwahati on July 27. The Directorate of Information Public Relations Assam

has also organized their accommodation in Guwahati.

Under the initiative of Cachar District Commissioner Rohan Kumar Jha and Deputy Director of Information & Public Relations Barak Valley Zone Silchar, Bonny Chetia, the principal of Government Girls H.S. & M.P. School, Bibhas Chakraborty accompanied Rajlakhi and her father to Guwahati on Saturday.

It needs to mention that, the award will be presented by minister for water resources & information and public relations, Pijush Hazarika, on "Deshbhakti Divas," observed on July 28, marking the death anniversary of Tarun Ram Phukan.

The statewide essay competition was conducted in three categories: Category A (Classes VI to VIII), Category B (Classes IX to XII), and Category C (Bachelor degree level). Students from various schools and colleges participated, submitting their essays to their respective district commissioners by June 30. The best essays from the districts were evaluated by a state-level panel of judges.

Kendriya Vidyalaya, Diphu initiates plantation drive



HT Bureau
DIPHU, July 27: Kendriya Vidyalaya, Diphu Karbi Anglong celebrated Shiksha Saptah - Day 6 with the theme "Eco Clubs for Mission Life Day" through a tree plantation drive under the banner "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam".

The drive saw participation from mothers, children, and teachers under the guidance of Principal Dr Surender Singh.

The program was organised meticulously by Ajay Kumar (post

graduate teacher (PGT)-Hindi); Leonard Bey (trained graduate teacher (TGT)-AE); Vandana Vishwakarma (TGT-Science); Meena Kumari (TGT-Library) and all the esteemed staff members. The event aimed to foster a deep-rooted bond between nature and the community. The participants, including mothers and their children, joined hands in planting a total of 43 trees of diverse species around the school premises of KV.

The plantation drive was set in motion at 7:45 am. With saplings in hand, participants carefully planted each tree, symbolising new beginnings and the promise of a greener tomorrow. The atmosphere was filled with a sense of unity and purpose as mothers and children worked together, guided by the dedicated teachers. The principal and teachers highlighted how the initiative, 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam', serves as a tribute to mothers and the invaluable lessons they impart about care and responsibility. They encouraged the students to ensure the well-being of the newly planted trees and ensure their commitment to caring for the plants, thus nurturing the environment. Vikram Kumar (PGT-History), one of the key organisers, expressed his gratitude to everyone involved. The tree plantation drive at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Diphu stands as a testament to the power of community action in promoting environmental conservation.

More BJP ruled states announce reservation/preference to ex-Agniveers in state police recruitment

NEW DELHI/JAIPUR, July 27: Rajasthan and Arunachal Pradesh have joined other BJP-ruled states that have announced reservation or preference to ex-Agniveers for jobs in uniformed services like police, amid criticism of the short service military recruitment scheme by opposition parties which are calling for its scrapping.

States like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh had on Friday announced similar incentives.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma said his government will provide reservation for Agniveers in the recruitment of jail and forest guards and state police.

A statement from the Chief Minister's Office on Saturday said Sharma made the announcement for Agniveers on the occasion of Kargil Vijay Diwas on July 26.

"The Rajasthan government has made a provision of reservation in state police, jail guard and forest guard recruitments for the Agniveers who protect the country's borders with a sense of dedication and patriotism," it said.

However, the percentage of the reservation in these services for Agniveers was not disclosed.

Retired Agniveers will be given preference during recruitment for the state's police, emergency and fire services, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu announced. Khandu said this transformative initiative would enable



the youngsters of Arunachal Pradesh to serve the country.

"The government of Arunachal Pradesh will facilitate training for local youths to prepare them for recruitment as Agniveers under the AGNIPATH scheme," the chief minister said in a post on X.

"Additionally, retired Agniveers from Arunachal Pradesh will be given preference in recruitment for the Arunachal Pradesh Police, AP Battalions, and Emergency and Fire Services," he added.

On Friday, the Odisha government announced a 10 per cent quota and five years of age relax-

ation for Agniveers in the state's uniformed services.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the Agniveers who return after serving the country will be given weightage in UP Police and Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC).

However, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said on Saturday that the Agniveers scheme will be cancelled "as soon as we come to power".

While campaigning for the Lok Sabha elections, Yadav repeatedly promised to scrap the scheme if the INDIA bloc, of which the Sama-

ajwadi Party is a constituent, formed the government at the centre.

In a post on X, Yadav said, "As soon as we come to power, the short-term 'Agniveer' military recruitment that compromises the security of the country and plays with the future of the soldiers will be cancelled within 24 hours."

"This is our demand on 'Agniveer' ... The old recruitment (model) should be reinstated," he said in Hindi.

On Friday, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo said Agniveers from the state would be

given priority while recruiting police constables and forest and jail guards once they complete their service in the Indian Army.

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said his government will give priority to Agniveers in the recruitment for armed police as well as the State Reserve Police Force (SRP).

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said his government will provide quota to Agniveers in police and armed forces recruitment. Agniveers will be granted a reservation in government jobs in Uttarakhand upon their return after serving in the armed forces, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami announced on Friday.

Last week, Haryana's BJP government had also announced a 10 per cent reservation for Agniveers in the recruitment of constables, forest guards and jail wardens, along with quotas in other posts, months ahead of the assembly polls.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini also said that in the recruitment for civil posts in Group B and Group C, the government has decided to grant Agniveers a relaxation of three years in the upper age limit. "However, for the first batch of Agniveers, this age relaxation will be five years," he added.

He said his government will provide Agniveers five per cent reservation in direct recruitments for civil posts in Group C and one per cent in Group B.

Saini also announced that if an Agniveer takes a loan of up to Rs 5 lakh to start a business, no interest will be charged on it.

The Centre introduced the Agniveer scheme in 2022 for short-term induction of personnel in the Army, Navy and Air Force, with an aim to bring down the age profile of the three services.

The scheme provides for recruiting Agniveers youngsters between the age group of 17-and-a-half and 21 for a block period of four years with a provision to retain 25 per cent of them for another 15 years.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs had announced that 10 per cent of vacancies for recruitment in the Central Armed Police Forces or the paramilitary forces would be reserved for ex-Agniveers.

PM Modi on Friday said the Agniveer scheme is an example of necessary reforms undertaken by the Army and accused the opposition of playing politics over the recruitment process.

"The aim of Agniveer is to make the forces young... The aim of Agniveer is to keep the armies continuously fit for war," he said and rubbished claims the Agniveer scheme was launched to save pension money.

The Congress and other parties have alleged that the Agniveer scheme is discriminatory to soldiers, has disrupted the recruitment process for armed forces and can compromise the country's security. (PTI)

India, Ukraine looking at possibility of PM Modi's visit to Kyiv next month

NEW DELHI, July 27: India and Ukraine are looking at the possibility of a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kyiv next month amid renewed global efforts to bring peace to the eastern European nation, multiple diplomatic sources said on Saturday.

Modi might visit Kyiv around the Ukrainian National Day on August 24 and is expected to travel to Poland after concluding the trip to Ukraine, the sources said.

The prime minister held talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last month on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Italy's Apulia.

If Modi travels to Poland, it would be the first by an Indian prime minister to that country in more than four decades.

India and Ukraine are looking at Modi's visit to Kyiv in the later half of August, the sources said, adding that there is no finality on the trip yet as massive preparations would be required in terms of logistics and related issues.

The prime minister's two-nation visit might begin around August 23-24, the sources said.

There is no official word on the visit either from India or Ukraine.

At the meeting with Zelenskyy on June 14, Modi conveyed to the Ukrainian president that India would continue to do everything within its means to support a peaceful solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and that the way to peace is through "dialogue and diplomacy".

Modi also told Zelenskyy that India believes in a "human-centric" approach to find a solution to the conflict in Ukraine.

At the meeting, the Ukrainian president invited the prime minister to visit Kyiv.

India has been maintaining that the conflict in Ukraine must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.

Modi visited Russia on July 8-9 and drew criticism from the United States. Many western countries are also learnt to be unhappy over the prime minister's trip to Moscow.

India on Thursday rejected Washington's concerns over Modi's trip to Moscow and asserted that all countries have the "freedom of choice" in a multipolar world and everyone should be mindful of such realities.

In his summit talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the prime minister delivered an unambiguous message, saying a solution to the Ukraine conflict is not possible on the battlefield and peace talks do not succeed amidst bombs, guns and bullets. (PTI)

Kerala Governor says he welcomes court orders on staying formation of search committees for VCs

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 27: Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, who had recently received a major setback in the wake of orders from the state High Court and the Supreme Court over various matters including those related to universities, on Saturday said he appreciated the orders and welcomed it.

The Supreme Court had yesterday issued notice to Khan and the West Bengal Governor over the inordinate delay in granting assent to various Bills.

The state High Court had recently in multiple orders stayed Khan's decision to constitute search committees for the appointment of Vice Chancellors to various universities in the state.

Talking to the media here, Khan said anyone aggrieved by an executive order can approach a court anytime as it was a right enshrined in the Constitution.

"I have already said, everybody has a right to feel aggrieved against any executive action and if you feel aggrieved, the constitution provides the remedy. You can always go to the court. That

should be welcomed and appreciated. What is not acceptable is that you indulge in street violence.

"If somebody goes challenging the executive action and the court stays it, that means they were exercising their constitutional rights which we must respect," Khan said.

He said let the matters be scrutinised by the court.

"I am trying to have regular Vice Chancellors for the universities. There are people who are obstructing that process and don't want the universities to have regular VCs. As long as they use the legal option, there is no problem," Khan said.

Let the court take a decision, he added.

The High Court had on Friday stayed the formation of search committees for the Kerala Agricultural University and the Sree Narayana Guru Open University.

The court had earlier stayed the order of Khan forming search committees for Kerala University, Mahatma Gandhi University, Malayalam University and the Kerala University of Fisheries and

Ocean Studies.

Khan had in June constituted search committees for the selection of vice-chancellors for six universities in the state and said that he was doing his duty but there was a willful omission on part of the university authorities despite reminders from his office.

The government had moved against his action. According to separate notifications for the six universities, the Governor took the decision using his power as the chancellor conferred by the provisions of the University Act, and in compliance with the judgement of the Kerala High Court dated December 8, 2022.

The committees were directed to make their recommendations within a period of three months from the date of the notification.

The Governor's move came amidst an ongoing tussle between the Raj Bhavan and the Left government in Kerala over various matters related to the administration of universities in the state. (PTI)

Congress questions logic of overall taxes on gold being effectively halved

NEW DELHI, July 27: The Congress on Saturday questioned the economic logic of the overall taxes on gold being effectively halved in the budget.

The opposition party's remarks came after Kotak Mahindra AMC Managing Director and CEO Nilesh Shah reportedly urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to keep a watchful eye on any surge in India's gold import bill in the wake of the customs duty cut and rising international prices.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said Shah was a very respected name in the financial world and also a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council. "Unlike other members who speak on all issues but the economy, Mr Shah

sticks to matters related to the economy," he said. Shah's latest comment on gold imports needs to be reflected upon seriously, Ramesh asserted.

"In FY 2023-24 India's gold imports totalled USD 45.4 billion, rising by almost 30 per cent from the previous year. It is hardly debatable that gold imports add very little to economic growth. Yet, the 2024/25 budget reduced import duty on gold from 10 per cent to 6 per cent," Ramesh said.

"Combined with the cut in the Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess, the overall taxes on gold (including GST) have effectively halved, from 18.5 per cent to 9 per cent. What is the economic logic?" the Congress leader asked. (PTI)

Parliamentary panel highlights telemetry system installation delays in critical flood-prone areas

NEW DELHI, July 27: A parliamentary panel has highlighted significant delays in the installation of telemetry systems vital for real-time data collection and flood forecasting in some critical flood-prone areas.

The committee's report on the performance audit of schemes for flood control and forecasting, submitted to the 17th Lok Sabha and tabled in the 18th Lok Sabha on Friday, underscores the need for urgent action to ensure timely and effective flood management.

According to the report, the installation of telemetry systems -- vital for real-time data collection and flood forecasting -- had been completed at all stations except three: Khanabal under the Chenab division, and Sara Thang and Dambong under the Gangtok division.

The delay at Khanabal is attributed to a court case pending since 2018 while non-clearance from the forest department has stalled installations at Sara Thang and Dambong since 2017.

The Union Ministry of Jal Shakti informed the committee that an alternative location for the Khanabal station had been identified and installation of the telemetry system was expected to commence shortly.

However, the committee expressed its dissatisfaction with the prolonged delays.

"Noting that an alternate location has since

been identified for the installation of the telemetry system in place of Khanabal under the Chenab division, the committee fails to fathom the reason for the delay in installation of the same," the report stated.

Emphasising the critical role of telemetry stations, the committee highlighted their importance in the collection and transmission of automatic real-time data, formulation of flood forecasts, and rapid dissemination of information.

It called for earnest efforts to expedite the installation of the telemetry systems in Sikkim and other pending locations.

"The committee desires that earnest effort should be taken for installation of the telemetry systems in Sikkim in a time-bound manner so as to enable concerned agencies to undertake mitigation measures for reducing the risk of disasters from floods based on the data made available by these stations," the report stated.

The committee also recommended regular inspections and maintenance for all installed telemetry systems around the country.

Recognising the diverse topography of India and the unpredictable nature of natural calamities, the committee called for a comprehensive action plan and an infallible system to handle worst-case scenarios and improve quick-response measures during floods. (PTI)

Renaming Ramanagara district to utilise 'Brand Bengaluru' for development: K'taka Deputy CM

BENGALURU, July 27: Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Saturday said the government's decision to rename Ramanagara district as 'Bengaluru South' was to utilise the brand of the capital city to give a new direction to next generation and bring development to the region.

Noting that the government was not changing the name of the district headquarter town Ramanagara, he said only that of the district will be changed, which comprises four Taluks -- Ramanagara, Channarayana, Kanakapura and Magadi.

"We are not touching Ramanagara (town). Bengaluru is our district. Those living in Ramanagara Taluk, Channarayana Taluk, Kanakapura Taluk and Magadi Taluk are our people. Ours is Bengaluru, not Ramanagara," Shivakumar, who is Kanakapura Congress MLA, told reporters here.

The Karnataka cabinet on Friday approved changing the name of Ramanagara as Bengaluru South district.

"Today Bengaluru is famous worldwide. Why should we spoil the name given by our forefathers?" Shivakumar pointed out.

'Ground test programme towards human rating of the Crew Module Propulsion System has been completed and the Service Module Propulsion System test programme is nearing completion'

One Gaganyaan astronaut to travel to ISS in joint mission with NASA, says govt

NEW DELHI, July 27: One of the four astronauts undergoing training for the Gaganyaan mission will travel to the International Space Station as part of a collaborative effort with NASA, Union Minister Jitendra Singh has informed the Lok Sabha.

In a written reply, Singh said NASA has identified a private entity Axiom Space and ISRO had signed a Space Flight Agreement with the American firm for the joint mission to the International Space Station (ISS).

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US last year, President Joe Biden announced that India and the US were collaborating to send an Indian astronaut to the ISS in 2024.

India's Astronaut Selection Board had selected four astronauts from the group of test pilots from the Indian Air Force for the Gaganyaan mission, India's first human space flight planned to take place next year.

"All four astronauts have undergone training on a spaceflight basic module in Russia. Currently, astronauts are undergoing training at ISRO's Astronauts Training Facility (ATF) in Bengaluru for the Gaganyaan Mission," Singh said.



The minister said two out of three members of the Gaganyatri training programme have been completed while independent training simulators and static mockup simulators have been realised.

Sharing an update on the Gaganyaan mission, Singh said ground testing of propulsion systems stages, including solid, liquid and cryogenic engine, towards human rating of the launch vehicle has been completed.

Design and realisation of five types of crew escape system solid motors has been completed, he said.

The Union minister said static testing of all five types of solid motors too has been completed. Also, the first Test Vehicle mission (TV-D1) for performance validation of crew escape system and parachute deployment has been successfully accomplished, he added.

Singh said designs of the crew module and service module structure have

been completed and various parachute systems have been tested through integrated main parachute airdrop test and rail track rocket sled tests.

The ground test programme towards human rating of the Crew Module Propulsion System has been completed and the Service Module Propulsion System test programme is nearing completion, the minister told Lok Sabha.

He said characterization of the Thermal Protection System has been completed.

Critical ground facilities such as Orbital Module Preparation Facility (OMPF), Astronaut Training Facility (ATF) and Oxygen Testing Facility have been operationalized and works on the Mission Control Centre (MCC) facilities and establishment of Ground Station networks were nearing completion, Singh said.

The minister said solid and liquid propulsion stages of human-rated launch vehicle was ready for flight integration and the C32 cryogenic stage was nearing completion.

The crew module and service module structure realization has been completed and flight integration activities were in progress, he added. (PTI)

Ladki Bahin scheme announced after all approvals, asserts DY CM Pawar

MUMBAI, July 27: The Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana was announced after the approval of the finance and planning as well as other concerned departments apart from the state cabinet, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said on Saturday.

Amid criticism from the opposition about the financial burden on the exchequer due to the scheme, under which women will get monthly financial aid, Pawar asserted it was possible for a prosperous state like Maharashtra to bear the expenditure.

In a statement, Pawar, who holds the finance and planning portfolio in the Eknath Shinde government, said he introduced Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin scheme in the supplementary budget of the state for the year 2024-25 after "approval of finance and planning, all concerned departments as well as the state cabinet."

"The entire amount of ₹ 35,000 crore required for the scheme in the current financial year has been provided in this year's budget itself. So, the question about where the money for the scheme will come from

does not arise. It is possible for a financially prosperous state like Maharashtra to spend such amount," Pawar said.

The state government is ready to spend this amount for economic independence, self-reliance, nutrition and all-round empowerment of mothers-sisters-daughters, to increase honour and self-respect, the NCP leader said.

"There is no reason for anyone in this state to oppose the scheme. Reports of the finance department's opposition to the scheme, which have been published in some media outlets, are fanciful, inconsistent with facts, and politically motivated," the senior Nationalist Congress Party leader said.

Under the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, women in the 21-65 years age group with a family income of less than ₹ 2.5 lakh will be given ₹ 1,500 per month.

While announcing the scheme in the budget, Pawar had said the scheme will entail an annual expenditure of ₹ 46,000 crore. (PTI)

Soldier killed, captain among 4 injured as Army foils BAT attack along LoC in J&K's Kupwara

BAT generally comprises special forces personnel of the Pakistan Army and terrorists

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, July 27: A soldier was killed and four others, including a captain, were injured as the Indian Army foiled an attack on Saturday by Pakistan's Border Action Team (BAT) in the Kamakari sector of Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, military sources said.

They said a Pakistani intruder was also killed in the exchange of fire, while two more managed to return to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) amid the intense gunfight that lasted for hours.

The BAT generally comprises special forces personnel of the Pakistan Army and terrorists.

"Action by Border Action Team has been foiled by alert Indian Army troops on Saturday morning in Kamakari sector," one of the sources said.

Security in the Union territory has been tightened following a recent uptick in terror attacks there. In the Jammu region alone, attacks in Rajouri, Poonch, Reasi, Udhampur, Kathua and Doda districts have claimed 22 lives, including that of 11 security personnel and a village de-



fence guard member, this year.

As part of its attempt to beef up security in Jammu, the government is sending two BSF battalions, comprising more than 2,000 personnel, from Odisha, according to sources.

The decision to "immediately" move the two units from the anti-Naxal operations grid was taken in the wake of the recent spate of terror attacks in the Jammu region, they told PTI.

In the attack on Saturday morning

in Kupwara, a Srinagar-based defence spokesperson said, the intruders crossed the LoC taking advantage of the bad weather and poor visibility in the area and fired on a forward Army post from proximity.

According to the sources, the group of three intruders hurled a grenade and opened fire on a forward post near the Kumkadi post in the Trehgam sector of the north Kashmir district.

The troops retaliated, triggering a gunfight between the two sides, the sources said, adding that five soldiers were injured in the encounter and one of them later succumbed to injuries.

They said the injured Army personnel, including the captain, were evacuated to the Base Hospital in Srinagar. In a statement, the defence spokesperson said the identification and affiliation of the slain Pakistani intruder was being ascertained.

One of the soldiers who suffered severe injuries in the gunfight is responding well to treatment and is stable at present, he added. The soldier who died was identified as rifleman Mohit Rathour.

The official said that in the past too, similar attempts by infiltrators, actively aided and abetted by the Pakistani Army, have exploited thick foliage and poor visibility conditions, but have always been successfully thwarted and disrupted.

The Indian Army is firm in its resolve and commitment to maintain the sanctity of the LoC and defeat the nefarious and inimical designs of the Pakistani side, he added. (PTI)

3 dead after 4-storey building collapses in Navi Mumbai; 2 rescued from under rubble



MUMBAI, July 27: Three persons were killed and two others injured after a four-storey residential building collapsed in Navi Mumbai's CBD Belapur area early on Saturday, officials said.

The two injured persons were pulled out alive from under the rubble after the incident that occurred at 4.50 am in Shahbaz village, they said, adding that the scale of the tragedy could have been bigger had 52 other residents of the building not been evacuated in time after cracks were noticed in it in the wee hours.

"The four-storey building with 13 residential units and three shops collapsed early this morning. A man and a woman who were trapped under the rubble were rescued and admitted to a hospital," Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) Commissioner Kailas Shinde said.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the personnel of the civic body's fire brigade launched a rescue operation. Around noon, the body of a man was recovered from under the debris, while the bodies of two others were recovered hours later, a civic official said.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Miraj

Altaf Hussain (30), Miraj Saif Ansari (24) and Safique Ahmed Rahmat Ali Ansari (28). Their bodies were sent to a government hospital for post-mortem, he said.

According to the municipal commissioner, the collapsed building was 10 years old and a probe will be conducted into the cause of the crash.

Talking to PTI, NMMC's divisional fire officer Purushottam Jadhav said, "In the wee hours, some residents noticed cracks in the building and alerted the authorities about it. The fire brigade team reached the spot and evacuated 52 residents, including 13 children, from the building. The structure collapsed some time after that."

Two persons - Lal Mohammad (22) and Rukhsana (21) - were rescued from under the rubble around 6 am. The authorities later learnt that one person was feared trapped under the debris and the rescue teams tried to call him on his mobile, but in vain. Later on, they came to know that two of his friends were also with him at that time, he said.

A dog squad also assisted the rescue teams, the NDRF official said.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who was in Delhi for Niti Aayog's governing council meeting, spoke to the Navi Mumbai municipal commissioner and directed him that necessary assistance be provided to the injured and affected persons, an official release by the Thane district administration said.

The NDRF said final search is being carried out and the work of removing the debris is underway.

Earlier this week, heavy and incessant rains lashed Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Raigad and parts of the Maharashtra capital metropolitan region. However, the showers have taken a break in the past two days. (PTI)

Bengaluru PG murder case: Accused arrested in Bhopal



BENGALURU, July 27: The Bengaluru police have arrested the prime suspect in the murder of a 24-year-old woman at a paying guest accommodation here on July 23.

Abhishek was arrested in Bhopal where he fled after committing the gruesome murder of Kriti Kumari.

"Yes, he has been arrested," a senior police officer told PTI on Saturday.

Addressing reporters, Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda said the accused has been identified and picked up from Madhya Pradesh.

He is being brought to Bengaluru on a transit remand.

To a query about the motive behind the murder, he said, "We don't know it yet. He has to be brought here and then we have to take his police custody and thorough investigation and interrogation has to be conducted... only then further details can be shared."

On Friday, the video of the chilling incident went viral.

According to police, Abhishek had sneaked into the PG accommodation and killed Kriti Kumari from Bihar.

In the video, the man is seen walking into the corridor of the paying guest accommodation holding a polythene bag. He then knocks on the door and, later, drags a woman out. The victim resists the attack, but is soon overpowered by the murderer, who slits her throat and runs away.

Upon hearing the loud noise, other women in the building rush to the spot, but could not save her.

Kriti Kumari was working in a private firm in the city, they added. (PTI)

NCRTC rolls out new features on RRTS Connect app

NEW DELHI, July 27: The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) has introduced new features in the RRTS Connect application, including ticket booking, live train tracking, and station navigation, a statement said on Saturday.

According to the statement, the NCRTC has rolled out new updates to the RRTS Connect app, making travel on Namo Bharat trains smoother and more convenient.

Available on Google Play and the Apple Store, the app now includes many new features alongside ticket booking, ensuring a more comfortable journey for passengers on the country's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) Corridor, it said.

"Passengers can book their journey tickets under the 'plan your journey' option on the app, with payments accepted via UPI, debit or credit card, and net banking. Users can also access their transaction history to review details about their previous journeys and download invoices," it read.

"NCRTC has introduced a live train tracking feature that shows passengers the real-time status and tracking of Namo Bharat trains available at their station in the next 30 minutes. Additionally, it provides information about the next station in the direction of Delhi or Meerut, the distance to it, and the estimated arrival time. The app also offers a complete timetable of train services, including start and end times for all days of the



week," the statement said.

The feeder bus services feature on the app provides comprehensive information about bus stops near the starting point of the journey and the nearest available RRTS station, including bus arrival and departure times for better travel planning, it stated.

Additionally, the RRTS passengers can book bikes, autos, and cabs at stations through a link to the Rapido app, allowing easy ride booking. These features effectively address the crucial need for last-mile connectivity, it said.

The station facilities option provides extensive information to enhance user travel experience. It displays the name and location of the nearest RRTS station, along with key nearby landmarks. Details on drinking water and restroom availability, entry and exit gate status, and which gates are open for passengers are also included, the statement said.

The app provides platform information, train directions, and the operational status of lifts and escalators. Additionally, it offers parking information, showing the number of two-wheeler and four-wheeler parking spaces available. The app includes the complete station layout design of the platform and concourse levels, making navigation and planning easy, it stated.

Furthermore, the contact number for the station control room is provided in the app. Passengers can contact the control room for assistance or send WhatsApp messages for help or suggestions. The app also provides information about major attractions near RRTS corridor stations and includes a system map for passengers to learn about all the stations on the corridor, it said.

The lost and found feature on the app lists all recovered items, along with the date, time, and station where they were found, and includes the procedure for recovery, the statement added. (PTI)

Himachal to develop ₹ 350-cr medical devices park with own resources, returns central funding

SHIMLA, July 27: The Union government would have no stake in ₹ 350-crore Medical Device Park coming up at Nalagarh in Solan district as the state government has decided to construct the park from its own resources and return ₹ 30 crore received from the centre, according to a release. The decision has been taken in the interest of the state.

The project would come up in over 265 acres of land and in case ₹ 30 crore received from the centre was not returned, the land would have been provided to industrialists at the rate of ₹ 1 per square meter, electricity at ₹ 3 per unit and water, maintenance and warehouse facilities, free

of cost for ten years, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said. The state government has so far spent ₹ 74.95 crore for the project, a statement issued here on Saturday said.

Keeping the interests of the state and steering out of the bindings, the government has decided to build the Park by itself as the project when commissioned would accrue benefits amounting to ₹ 500 crore from the sale of land and other resources in the next five to seven years, he added.

The state government will take a loan from SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India) under the cluster development scheme for the construction of

the medical device park and with restructuring of the project, 25 per cent of the land will be allotted exclusively for medical device industries and 75 per cent for other strategic industries, he said. The industrial park will be developed as a modern industrial hub which will become a perennial source of income for the state government along with economic development and better infrastructure in the coming years, he said. Earlier also the state government had decided not to take help from any private agency in the Bulk Drug Park being built at Haroli of Una district and the government will provide ₹ 1,000 crore from its own resources, the statement added. (PTI)

'Protecting married people wanting to be in live-in relationships will encourage wrongdoers'

CHANDIGARH, July 27: The Punjab and Haryana High Court has held that granting protection to married people who want to be in live-in relationships with their partners would amount to encouraging "wrongdoers" and promoting the practice of bigamy.

A bench of Justice Sandeep Moudgil also observed that such couples, who run away from their parental homes, not only bring a bad name to their families but also violate the right of their parents to live with dignity and honour.

The court order came following several petitions, including one filed by a 40-year-old woman and a 44-year-old man, demanding protection due to a "threat" from their families.

Both of them are living together despite the fact that the man is married and both of them have children. The woman has taken divorce from her husband.

The court said it is of the view that the petitioners were fully aware that they were married earlier and that they could not have entered into a live-in relationship.

"Further, the petitioner no. 2 (the man) has not taken divorce from his earlier wife. All live-in relationships are not relationships in the nature of marriage," the court observed.

If the court holds that the relationship between the petitioners is in the nature of a marriage, it will be injustice to the wife and children of the man, it said.

The court said marriage is entering into a relationship that has public significance as well.

"The institutions of marriage and family are important social institutions that provide for the security and bear an important role in the rearing of children. The celebration of a marriage gives rise to moral and legal obligations, particularly the reciprocal duty of support placed upon spouses and their joint responsibility for supporting and raising children born out of the wedlock," it observed.

"Under Article 21 of the Constitution, each and every individual has a right to live with peace, dignity and honour, therefore by allowing such type of petitions, we are encouraging the wrongdoers and somewhere, promoting the practice of bigamy, which is otherwise an offence under section 494, IPC, further violating the right of the other spouse and children under Article 21 to live with dignity.

"The concept of right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India includes the right to live with dignity and the petitioners, by running away from their parental homes, are not only bringing a bad name to the families but also violating the right of the parents to live with dignity and honour," the court said.

The court further said, "Merely because two persons are living together for a few days, their claim of live-in relationship based upon a bald averment may not be enough to hold that they are truly in a live-in-relationship, and directing the police to grant protection to them may indirectly give our assent to such illicit relationship." (PTI)

Haryana govt accepts demands, striking doctors return to duty

CHANDIGARH, July 27: Government doctors ended their indefinite strike on Saturday following assurances from the Haryana government that their demands would be accepted, the chief of the association leading the shutdown said. The doctors resumed their duties after the strike was called off.

The shutdown was lifted

Delhi's Finger Print Bureau helps solve 61 burglaries, identify 60 unclaimed bodies

NEW DELHI, July 27: With the help of the Finger Print Bureau, the Delhi Police has solved 150 cases, with maximum number of 61 burglaries among the various crimes in the national capital this year till July 15, official sources said on Saturday. The Delhi Police's tally shows the Finger Print Bureau helped identify 60 unidentified or unclaimed bodies and solved 18 theft cases so far this year, the sources said. In the tally, the bureau helped in solving six murders, two

cheating and one case of each of rape, dacoity and robbery.

Apart from this, the bureau helped the Delhi Police in solving 27 cases related to property dispute and impersonation.

In 2023, the police solved 173 cases with the help of the Finger Print Bureau, while it solved 89 cases in 2022.

The official sources said the bureau is the most important component in the forensic examination of any crime scene. (PTI)

KYS protests at DU VC's office against fee hike, poor study material

NEW DELHI, July 27: The Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS), a students body, on Saturday staged a demonstration outside Delhi University vice-chancellor's office against a fee hike imposed in various courses.

The students' body representing working class and marginalised sections also accused the university of providing substandard study material to students of School of Open Learning (SOL).

Members of the students body gathered outside vice-chancellor Yogesh Singh's office while an DU Executive Council meeting was being held. They demanded that the fee hike be immediately withdrawn and the proposed study material be sent for re-evaluation. The Executive Council (EC), comprising of faculty members and officials of the university, met to deliberate and pass policy proposals concerning students.

A report on fee hike in many undergraduate, postgraduate, and Phd programmes, approved by the vice-chancellor using his emergency powers, was tabled before the EC members. (PTI)

WHO calls for accelerated action against hepatitis

NEW DELHI, July 27: The World Health Organization on Saturday called on countries in Southeast Asia to urgently scale up efforts for providing universal access to prevention, vaccination, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis B and C.

Despite being preventable and treatable, these chronic infections are increasingly causing serious illnesses and deaths from liver cancer, cirrhosis, and liver failure, it said. Liver cancer today is the fourth-biggest cause of cancer deaths in the region and the second-most common cause of cancer deaths among men, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in a statement.

Almost 75 per cent of liver cirrhosis is due to hepatitis B and C infection. In 2022, the region accounted for 70.5 million people living with viral hepatitis B and C.

Early testing and treatment can cure hepatitis C and prevent hepatitis B from causing liver cirrhosis and cancer and help reverse the predictions that liver cancer rates in Southeast Asia were set to double by 2050 to more than two lakh deaths annually.

"We have the knowledge and tools to prevent, diagnose and treat viral hepatitis, yet people with chronic hepatitis B and C are still waiting to access the services they need. We need to accelerate efforts to deliver equitable services closer to communities, at the primary healthcare level," said Saima Wazed, the WHO's regional director for Southeast Asia, ahead of World Hepatitis Day.

The theme for this year's World Hepatitis Day, which will be observed on Sunday,



is "It's time for action".

Globally, hepatitis B and C combined cause 3,500 daily deaths, with 6,000 people newly infected with viral hepatitis each day. An estimated 254 million people are living with hepatitis B and 50 million with hepatitis C worldwide. Many people remain undiagnosed and, even when diagnosed, the number of people getting services and receiving treatment remains extremely low, Wazed said.

In 2022, about 1.3 million people died of viral hepatitis, the same as deaths caused by tuberculosis. Viral hepatitis and tuberculosis were the second leading causes of death among communicable diseases in 2022, after COVID-19.

In the WHO's Southeast Asia region, the coverage of hepatitis B and C testing and treatment remains low, Wazed said.

Only 2.8 per cent people with hepatitis B were diagnosed and 3.5 per cent of those diagnosed received treatment in 2022.

A mere 26 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively, of people with hepatitis C were diagnosed and treated, she said.

"We have safe and effective vaccines

that can prevent hepatitis B infection. Antiviral drugs are highly effective in controlling and preventing disease progression, managing chronic hepatitis B and curing most cases of hepatitis C. More needs to be done for these life-saving interventions to benefit each person, irrespective of who they are and where they live," Wazed said.

Hepatitis B and C affect the general population and specific populations such as those at higher risk of or with a history of exposure through unsafe blood supplies, unsafe medical injections and other health procedures; newborns and children at risk through mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B and C, especially in settings with high viral hepatitis prevalence; indigenous populations and mobile and migrant populations from countries with higher prevalence; and key populations, including people who inject drugs, people in prisons and other closed settings, sex workers and men who have sex with men, who may be disproportionately affected in different contexts, the WHO official said.

As most people are unaware that they are infected with hepatitis B or C, access to testing and treatment needs to be expanded beyond larger hospitals or referral centres, she added.

Testing and treatment must be made accessible within the community, close to where people live and work, and included as part of universal health coverage, Wazed said. Accelerated coverage of testing and treatment will reduce development of liver cirrhosis and cancer, and ultimately, death, she added. (PTI)

RUNNING OF STAFF CANTEEN AT DRM OFFICE LUMDING
No. E/58/15/LM (W) Pt-1 Dated: 25-07-2024. Sealed quotation is hereby invited for the following work as per terms and conditions below: **Name of work:** One room offered for running of Staff canteen at DRM's Office N.F. Railway, Lumding. **Security Deposit:** ₹60,000/-. **Date & Time of receiving quotation:** 01-08-2024 to 16-08-2024 upto 13.00 hrs. **Date & Time of opening of quotation:** 17.00 hrs. of 16-08-2024. For details please visit www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in DRM (P), Lumding **NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY** Serving Customers With A Smile

NOTICE.

This is to inform the public that the names of Arindam Singh Kuthari, Bhupendra Singh Kuthari, Subudh Singh Kuthari, Suprabhat Singh Kuthari, Ujjal Singh Kuthari and Uttam Singh Kuthari have been dropped from the land records concerning DAG --1804,40, PATTA 23,64 Village Sahar Guwahati part II, M- Guwahati.

If any person or party has any objection or claim regarding this change, please contact the circle office Ulubari within 7 days from this notice's publication date.

Contact details:

Circle Office
Dr B K Kakati Rd, Apro colony, Ulubari,
Guwahati, Assam- 781007.



Aditya Roy Kapur walks for Kunal Rawal at India Couture Week 2024

NEW DELHI, July 27: Bollywood star Aditya Roy Kapur turned showstopper for designer Kunal Rawal on day three of the Hyundai FDCI India Couture Week (ICW) here.

Rawal on Friday evening presented his collection "Sehra" at the fashion gala, being held at the Taj Palace here.

The festive collection paid homage to the heritage of craftsmanship, with every intricate detail reflecting this tradition. The designs featured exquisite applique work, royal fabrics embellished with crystals, and more.

Kapur, 38, took over the stage in a royal blue sherwani and black dhoti pants as the crowd cheered for the actor.

The colours palette ranged from the lightest shades of beige to vibrant red and pink.

The collection also included formal velvet coats and bottoms, accompanied with jewellery that added a festive touch to them. To make the evening even more special, Rawal added an original soundtrack which was played during the show.

The 2024 edition of the India Couture Week will conclude on July 31. (PTI)

RANVEER SINGH TO HEADLINE 'URI' DIRECTOR ADITYA DHAR'S NEXT FILM

MUMBAI, July 27: Bollywood star Ranveer Singh is teaming up with filmmaker Aditya Dhar for his next feature film, the makers announced on Saturday.

The untitled film will feature an ensemble cast that also includes Sanjay Dutt, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal and R Madhavan.

Dhar, best known for his 2019 directorial debut "Uri: The Surgical Strike", will also produce the movie along with brother Lokesh Dhar through their banner B62 Studios, and Jyoti Deshpande of Jio Studios. Jio Studios announced the movie and the star cast of the movie on their official Instagram account.

"This is what movie dreams are made of! Helmed by #RanveerSingh, directed by #AdityaDhar, this much-anticipated collaboration between #JioStudios and #B62Studios is all set to dazzle you with a stellar cast like never before," the post read.

According to the



makers, the film has started shooting.

"This one is for my fans, who have been so patient with me and been clamouring for a turn like this. I love you all, and I promise you, this time, a cinematic experience like never before.

"With your blessings, we embark on this great, big motion picture adventure with spirited energy and pure intent. This time, it's personal," Singh posted on Instagram.

The actor will also feature in Rohit Shetty's "Singham Again" and headline the third instalment of Farhan Akhtar's "Don" franchise. (PTI)

Netflix India announces new series 'Rakt Bramhand - The Bloody Kingdom' from Raj & DK

MUMBAI, July 27: Streaming platform Netflix on Saturday announced "Rakt Bramhand - The Bloody Kingdom", a fantasy action series from filmmaker duo Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK.

The upcoming series will be produced by Raj & DK through their production company D2R Films. It will be directed by Rahi Anil Barve of "Tumbbad" fame.

The show is written by Raj & DK, Barve and Sita R Menon, who worked with the filmmaker duo on films "Shor in the City", "Go Goa Gone" as well as series "Farzi", and "Guns & Gulaabs".

"Guns & Gulaabs", which marked Raj & DK's maiden collaboration with Netflix, was released in August 2023.

"Rakt Bramhand - The Bloody Kingdom" promises to be a "gripping, edgy narrative set against the backdrop of a fantastical kingdom with bloody action and spectacular visuals, the streamer said in a statement.

Raj & DK said they aim to narrate unique stories that are rooted in fantasy.



"This is uncharted territory which makes it all the more thrilling for us! Our goal is to develop a fictional world that is both original and reminiscent of the fantastical

tales we have heard in our childhood. "We are having an amazing time working with the very talented Rahi and our uber-versatile partner Sita to bring this unique vision to life. Working with Netflix has been excellent and we have their enthusiastic support to back the unconventional vision for "Rakt Bramhand," the filmmaker duo said in a statement.

Monika Shergill, Vice-President Content Netflix India, said she is thrilled to team up with Raj & DK after "Guns & Gulaabs". "Rakt Bramhand - The Bloody Kingdom" will be Netflix India's first-ever mega action-fantasy series and is set to redefine the genre by combining grand-scale action with a thrilling storyline.

With creative geniuses like Raj & DK, and the highly talented Rahi Anil Barve leading the project, we are eager to bring this epic adventure to life and entertain audiences everywhere," Shergill said. The makers will be soon making an official announcement about the show's cast. (PTI)

No technicians at first-day shoot of director debarred from making films for 3 months

KOLKATA, July 27: A day after the Directors' Guild allowed film maker Rahool Mukherjee to work as a creative producer in an upcoming film, no technician turned up at a city studio on the first day of shooting of the film produced by a big production house.

The development comes despite the Federation of Cine Technicians and Workers of Eastern India (FCTWEI) on Friday clarifying that Mukherjee is free to work as creative producer of the film but not as a director for three months.

Federation president Swarup Biswas had said earlier that Mukherjee was being debarred from directing films for three months for violating norms by visiting Bangladesh for shooting patch shots of another film without intimation to the federation and taking the help of the technicians in Dhaka.

"Neither the federation nor the Directors' Guild was informed by Mukherjee about his visit to Bangladesh for shooting a film, which is against the rule. But there is nothing personal against Rahul.

He is a good friend of us. The de-

cision was taken connectively in the interest of industry and its stakeholders, of which technicians are an important part," Biswas had told PTI earlier. The untitled film starred Prosenjit Chatterjee, Anirban Bhattacharya and Priyanka Sarkar for which shooting was slated to begin on July 27. The Dhaka shoot which landed Mukherjee in trouble was related to another project financed by a different producer.

Production house SVF which was behind the project had stated Soumik Halder would not direct the film while Mukherjee would be the creative producer. However, as Mukherjee and Halder were present at Technicians Studio, Tollygunje no technician turned up. Bengali film superstar Prosenjit Chatterjee, part of the cast in the film, also turned up and waited in vain.

Director and TMC MLA Raj Chakraborty, filmmaker Kaushik Ganguly and actor Parambrata Chatterjee were among those present at the studio to voice solidarity with Mukherjee.

"This is an insult to every director. We are giving two days' to the feder-

ation. If no technician turns up at the shooting even on Sunday, I personally think we (directors) will also stop shooting from Monday. I am making the suggestion to other filmmakers," Chakraborty, an important member of the cultural cell of the ruling dispensation, said.

Ganguly said "the federation cannot dictate how many technicians should be taken for a shoot. We cannot accept any humiliation of a director. Chatterjee said a day's cancellation of shooting without any proper reason will incur heavy losses for the producer and this is unfortunate.

"There can be grievances, there can be issues. But these can be sorted out through dialogues, without disrupting shoots," he said and expressed hope that better sense will prevail.

Directors' Guild spokesperson Sudeshna Roy said Mukherjee has explained that he had taken some patch shots of a project in Bangladesh for only four days and expressed regret for any misunderstanding.

"After all these developments,



the ceasework (of technicians) without any intimation is insulting for a director who gets one-two project in a year after years of planning. The production house which

comes forward to back the project also incurs heavy losses and will think twice before going ahead with any project," Roy said.

Mukherjee said "I only want to

do the film I have been planning for months. Let all disputes be solved and we can start work."

Biswas said he will speak on the issue at an appropriate time. (PTI)

World is a small place: Rain fails to dampen spirits at novel Paris Olympic opening ceremony

PARIS, July 27: As is the case with any Olympic Games host, Paris has become a melting pot right now and those who have made the effort to travel are liking the experience so far. Last night, even a heavy downpour did little to diminish the spirit of the spectators, thousands of them from other countries, as they gathered along the Seine River to witness the first-ever Olympic Opening Ceremony held outside a stadium.

From Argentina to Brazil, Trinidad to Hong Kong, and Sri Lanka, people from all corners of the globe flocked the city, embracing the unifying theme that "the world is a

small place, and we are all equal". The entire Parisian region along the river, from Austerlitz Bridge to Trocadero, was cordoned off for this unique parade, transforming the heart of the city into a vibrant celebration of sport and culture.

With steady rain pouring before the start of the opening ceremony in the afternoon, some people also chose the next best place to enjoy -- the pubs which did a brisk business, playing loud music and serving them from the world-famous cuisine.

Among the spectators was Andre Burgers, a bricklayer from Amsterdam, who trav-

elled with his five-member family to celebrate his birthday and witness the opening ceremony.

"It's excellent. It's raining outside, so we're inside. It's beautiful," Burgers told PTI. "It's my birthday present. We have a weekend in Paris, and there is the opening ceremony. Nice atmosphere, all nationalities are here, and we are having a great time. It's really a fun experience," he added.

Robert Lewis, a construction industry professional from London, has travelled with his wife to see the rowing events.

He has vivid memories of watching the 2012 Olympics

at his hometown and he found the one in Paris to be an enjoyable experience too.

"We remember 2012 very well, and the whole Olympic spirit is just a wonderful experience when you get all the nations together. Everybody is happy and enjoying the sport for what it is. It's just amazing," he said.

"It's an amazing honour to have a home Olympics, and for us, it will stay in our memories forever. We talk about it so much; it was a wonderful time. It's great to come here and see the whole world again."

"Everybody is enjoying themselves and relaxed. It makes you realise that the

world is really a small place. We are all equal, and we can dream about being Olympians when we grow up. It's incredible," he said.

The athletes' parade route, stretching six kilometers along the Seine, offered a visual delight through Parisian history and architecture.

Starting at Austerlitz Bridge near the Jardin des Plantes, the boat 'parade' moved westward, passing under historic bridges and by iconic landmarks such as Notre-Dame and the Louvre. The route also highlighted several Olympic venues, including the Esplanade des Invalides and the Grand Palais, before culminating at the Tro-

cadéro Esplanade in front of the Eiffel Tower.

The opening ceremony featured five categories of tickets along the river, ranging from 90 euros (Category E from starting point) to 3000 euros (the premium Category A, which was the culmination point). Two lakh of these tickets were given free to ensure that as many as possible could experience the grandeur.

Many also chose to gather in fan zones and pubs to catch every moment of the action live on TV with their drinks, contributing to the lively atmosphere throughout the city.

There was a Trinidadian family who followed the route

using the Citymapper, the 'most reliable guide' here to get minute-by-minute transport updates to take one to their destination.

"It's new, it's original, and more people get to participate in it rather than being in the stadium, which is great. The energy is still good, even with the rain. I'm going to follow football and gymnastics for my daughter," said a member of the family.

"It's been amazing. The energy is great. Despite the rain, it's wonderful energy. The only downside is that everything is closed. The food is amazing. It's a great city. I love it," he added. (PTI)

Women's Asia Cup final: Dominant India face SL; eye eighth title

DAMBULLA (SRI LANKA), July 27: Defending champions India will look to translate their overwhelming dominance in the Women's Asia Cup to a record-extending eighth title while facing a feisty Sri Lanka in the final here on Sunday.

India have lorded over their opponents in this continental showpiece -- hammering Pakistan by seven wickets and followed it up with facile wins over UAE (78 runs), Nepal (82 runs), and Bangladesh (10 wickets).

India's top-order batters and bowlers fired in tandem, not giving their rivals even an iota of chance to mount a fight.

Openers Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma have scored well in excess of 100 runs and at a healthy strike-rate of over 140, giving India solidity and quick starts alike at the top. But the management could be even more pleased with the way bowlers responded to the challenge, particularly Deepthi Sharma and Renuka Singh.

Deepthi is the leading wicket-taker of this event with nine wickets and Renuka is third on the chart with seven scalps.

But their economy rate across four matches has been brilliant -- 4.37 and 4.31 respectively. It ensured that the opposition batters have no breathing space at the top or in the middle-overs, phases when Renuka and Deepthi often open-



erate. It has also aided other bowlers, as batters often look for relief shots against them, and left-arm spinner Radha Yadav offers a prime example. She has taken six wickets at an economy of 5.5, while feeding on the success of her senior colleagues' success. While there is no palpable worry in the Indian camp, they may just be a tad concerned about

the lack of batting time for skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues. Harmanpreet has batted just twice in three matches, even though she made a riveting 66 in one of them, while Rodrigues is yet to hit the top gear here in three innings.

The think tank will hope that these experienced campaigners can find their range, if the situation comes to that. "They might not

have got that much time in the middle, but everyone is working hard at nets, and I am sure they will fire when the time comes," wicketkeeper batter Richa Ghosh had said. On the other hand, Sri Lanka too are undefeated in this event and they also have scored the biggest victory in terms of runs -- a 144-run touting of Malaysia in the group stage.

The primary reason behind their

supremacy is the fine form of skipper Chamari Athapaththu, the leading run-scorer here with 243 runs. But it also has a bleaker side to it. Apart from Athapaththu none of their batters have scored over 100 runs with Rushmi Gunarathne a distant second for them with 91 runs. Their bowling too offers a similar story. Except off-spinner Kavisha Dilhari (7 wickets, economy 5.35), others Lankan bowlers have failed to make an impact as yet.

In that context, the Islanders will require a quick all-round improvement against a settled India to have a smidgeon of chance even to stretch them.

Teams (from): India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Shafali Verma, Deepthi Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh Thakur, Dayalan Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil, Sajana Sajeevan.

Sri Lanka: Chamari Athapaththu (c), Anushka Sanjeevani, Harshitha Samarawickrama, Hasini Perera, Ama Kanchana, Udeshika Prabodani, Vishmi Gunarathne, Kawya Kavindi, Inoshi Priyadarshani, Sugandika Kumari, Achini Kulasooriya, Kaveesha Dilhari, Nilakshi De Silva, Sachini Nisansala, Shashini Gimhani. Match starts at: 3 pm. (PTI)

Surya shows the way as India score 213 for 7 against Sri Lanka in first T20I

PALLEKELE (SRI LANKA), July 27: Skipper Suryakumar Yadav was swift and brutal in equal measure on his first day in office as the Indian top-order plundered Sri Lanka bowling to post a commanding 213 for 7 in the opening T20I of the three-match series here on Saturday.

In his first match as permanent skipper of India's T20 team, Surya made a firm statement with a sparkling 58 off 26 balls, maintaining his aggressive approach that made him world's premier batter.

While Surya was at his dominant best while hitting eight fours and two sixes en route his 20th half-century, the foundation for a big score was laid by young stars Yashasvi Jaiswal (41 off 20 balls) and Shubman Gill (34 off 15 balls) in a 74-run opening stand in the powerplay.

Rishabh Pant (49 off 33 balls) struggled initially but did well to end just one short of half-century with some audacious shots both in-front and behind the square.

If Jaiswal's approach was a bit on muscular side, Gill showed his artistry bleeding the Lankans with thousand cuts.

The refreshing part was Gill's approach in the very first game under new coach where he didn't exactly employ the safety first approach.

Jaiswal whipped the very first delivery of the match by Dilshan Madushanka while Gill fol-

lowed the suit with back-to-back cuts to start in earnest with a 13-run over.

With a flurry of boundaries coming in first two overs, Charith Asalanka was forced to bring in Maheesh Theekshana in the third over and Jaiswal welcomed him with a six over long-off and then a whip behind square for a boundary with fifty coming in just four overs.

If Gill waited for Asitha Fernando's delivery taking that split second to back cut it for boundary behind point and then roll his wrists to put a slow short ball towards backward square leg, Jaiswal just thumped the same bowler wide of long on for a maximum.

While Gill (34 off 15 balls) was out playing one shot too many off the final ball in the powerplay but by then India had scored 74, their highest total in first six overs this season.

Jaiswal failed to read Wanindu Hasaranga's well disguised googly as the southpaw played for the conventional leg-break bringing in skipper Surya and Pant together.

Surya played his customary inside the line shot over fine leg for six and four. He was lucky to survive as he was also dropped once trying to repeat the shot and also got a four in the process.

The team century came in 8.4 overs as the Indian skipper didn't let the momentum drop even as Pant was struggling to middle the ball. (PTI)



Athletes have every right to ask for personal coaches: Vijender

NEW DELHI, July 27: Joining the never-ending debate on whether personal coaches are required in addition to the federation-appointed national coaches at global events, Olympic medal-winning boxer-turned-politician Vijender Singh sided with the athletes, saying that they have every right to ask for support staff of their choice.

Several Indian athletes have opted to take their personal coaches to the Paris Olympics, which began on Friday, despite the presence of national coaches across disciplines in the contingent, leading to a debate on whether such an arrangement is required.

"Definitely, it is necessary. When I used to box (in amateur circuit) we were given full freedom in this aspect. So we got the coaches, and the sparring partners we wanted," Vijender, who is a member of the ruling BJP, told PTI editors at its headquarters in an exclusive interaction here.

The 38-year-old Haryana boxer won a bagful of medals between 2006 and 2014, including a bronze at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2009 World Championships, before turning professional.

He also has to his credit, two silvers and a bronze at the Commonwealth Games, a gold and a bronze at the Asian Games and a silver and bronze at the Asian Champi-

onships.

"They (authorities) said 'we'll give you what you want but we need the performance'. And we delivered. Between 2006 and 2012, I performed and won almost everywhere. So I feel the demands of the players in the training camp needs to be fulfilled."

The Olympic contingent that has travelled to Paris features 140 support staff, of which 72 are being fully financed by the Indian government. This number mostly features the personal coaches that the athletes have demanded.

Vijender spoke about the rise of social media which has changed the sporting

landscape in the past decade. He feels it has made it easier for athletes to voice their concerns and anguish.

"The facilities have improved from my time. These days we have the power of the internet on our phones, so things get viral very easily. People or athletes can share their pain on social media and expect to be heard if they tag the right people," he said.

"We didn't have that power...there was no social media then. Social media is a huge power in the hands of the common man today. You can write about your problems on Instagram, Facebook, and people who are good they end up helping you." (PTI)

In most heated of times, exhale, take a step back: Dravid's message to Gambhir

NEW DELHI, July 27: Former India coach Rahul Dravid passed a lead to his successor Gautam Gambhir in taming the tough situations he is bound to encounter -- "exhale, take a step back", a message that left the latter "emotional."

Dravid vacated the hot seat after India's triumph in the T20 World Cup in the Americas last month, and Gambhir took over the reins of the team from the on-going whiteball tour to Sri Lanka. "From one Indian cricket coach to another, one last thing. In the most heated of times, exhale, take a step back. I wish you the very best Gautam. I am sure you will take the Indian team to even greater heights," Dravid said in a video posted by BCCI on its 'X' handle.

Dravid's dry wit came to the fore even amidst that touching message.

"Even if it's difficult for you,

crack a smile. Whatever else happens, that will shock people," he said, eliciting a wide smile from Gambhir.

Gambhir sounded moved while thanking his predecessor for the wise words

"I don't get too emotional but I think this message actually made me a lot emotional which normally I shouldn't. But it's a great message."

"It's massive shoes that I can hopefully fill. Hopefully, I can do that with absolute honesty, transparency and hopefully, I can make the entire nation and more importantly, the person I have always looked up to -- Rahul Bhai -- proud," he said.

Dravid was certain that Gambhir, who carried a never-say-die attitude in his playing days, will bring his fighting qualities to the coaching job as well. "As your teammate, I saw you giving it your all on the



field. As your batting partner and fellow fielder, I saw your resilience and refusal to surrender. Across many IPL seasons, I noted your desire to win, your assistance to younger players and your drive to extract the best out of your team on the field.

"I know how dedicated and

passionate you are about Indian cricket and I am sure you will bring all these qualities into the new job," he said.

The 51-year-old, however, offered a word of caution to his one-time teammate about living under constant scrutiny.

"As you know, the expecta-

tions will be high and the scrutiny will be intense," he said, also reminding that there will be overwhelming support for him from all quarters.

"But even in the worst of times you will never be alone. You will have the support of the players, your support staff, the leaders of the past, the management and never forget for whom you play -- for fans who are very demanding but will always be behind the team."

Dravid hoped that Gambhir will have a fully-fit squad to work with, and will have the assistance of fortune in crunch moments. "I also hope that you will also have the availability of fully fit players in every squad. Good luck with that. I also wish you a little bit of luck, as you know that all of us coaches need to make us look that little bit wiser and smarter than we actually are," he noted. (PTI)

CHATEAUROUX (FRANCE), July 27: Sarabjot Singh and Arjun Singh Cheema sparkled in patches but could not make the men's 10m air pistol final after both the air rifle mixed teams also fell by the wayside during qualification in a disappointing start for Indian shooters in the Olympic Games here on Saturday.

Sarabjot finished ninth with a total score of 577 in the qualifications while Arjun ended way behind at 18th with 574.

Germany's Robin Walter, who also shot 577, grabbed the last (eighth) qualifying spot after managing to shoot one inner 10 (X) more than Sarabjot's 16.

A perfect 100 in the fourth series propelled the 22-year-old Sarabjot into the top-three after a poor start but he failed to sustain the momentum and fizzled out.

Cheema shot 10 perfect 10s off his last 10 shots, which lifted him to the fourth position but he too lost the plot after promising much.

The 23-year-old Cheema collected 97 points from Series 2 (8, 10, 10, 9, 10, 10, 10, 10) and was placed 10th in the list. He collected 96 points from Se-

ries 1. However, a poor 7 followed by a 9 from Cheema saw him slip outside the top eight.

Both Cheema and Sarabjot were part of the Indian side that won the 10m air pistol team gold at the Asian Games in Hangzhou last year.

Earlier in the day, the Indian shooters were eliminated in the 10m air rifle mixed team qualifications stage.

Ramita Jindal and Arjun Babuta finished sixth with a total score of 628.7, while Elavenil Valarivan and Sandeep Singh ended 12th with an aggregate score of 626.3.

The duo of Ramita and Babuta came close and was placed fifth with three shots remaining but fell 1.0 point short of the medal round cut-off.

Babuta enjoyed a fine start in the second relay and had a sequence that read 10.5, 10.6, 10.5, 10.9, while Ramita managed 10.2, 10.7, 10.3, 10.1 in the second series.

But, to get into the bronze medal round, they needed to do more than what they eventually achieved. Shooters from China, Korea and Kazakhstan dominated the qualifications. (PTI)

France dazzles world with colourful, vibrant Olympics opening ceremony

PARIS, July 27: The city of Paris turned into a colossal amphitheatre, and the iconic river Seine served as a track for the athletes' parade as France showcased its cultural diversity, spirit of revolution, impeccable craftsmanship and architectural heritage in a riveting opening ceremony for the 33rd Olympic Games here on Friday.



without doubt the athletes' march on the Seine river.

The show began with camera panning to French President Emmanuel Macron and International Olympic Committee head Thomas Bach after World Cup-winning football legend Zinedine Zidane was shown sprinting down the streets of Paris with the Olympic flame in a pre-recorded video. The six kilometre parade began from Austerlitz

bridge and 85 boats carried more than 6800 athletes amid loud cheers from the gathered crowd. A good number of athletes also skipped the incredible show due to their competitions on Saturday. The sequence of arrivals followed the French alphabetical order. The first to arrive was the Greek contingent, for being the spiritual home of the Games, followed by the Refugee team. France, as host country, came last to a boisterous

cheer from the home crowd. The 2028 Olympics host USA preceded France. Australia, which is hosting the 2032 Games came just before USA. The Indian contingent was led by two flag-bearers -- two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu and table tennis legend A Sharath Kamal and was 84th on the call sheet. The women in the contingent were draped in saarees, while the men sported the traditional 'kurta-pajama' in the colours of the national flag.

A total of 78 Indian athletes and officials participated in the ceremony. The boats passed through the iconic landmarks of the city such as the restored Cathedral of Notre Dame, which was gutted in a fire five years ago, the iconic Louvre Museum and also a few of the Games venues.

In April 2019, the images of the Cathedral on fire and the fall of its spire had shocked the world. American Pop superstar Lady Gaga was among the first international artists to enthral the assembled crowd. The ceremony was helmed by artistic director Thomas Jolly. (PTI)

Menacing Manu sensational Sen off to solid starts on day one

CHATEAUROUX/PARIS, July 27: Manu Bhaker made a statement of intent by storming into the 10m air pistol finals on a day when most of her compatriots endured a forgettable outing at the shooting range before shuttler Lakshya Sen and paddler Harmeet Desai dazzled on debut in India's sedate start at the Olympic Games on Saturday.

stretched to an extent in his opening Group L match.

Sen prevailed 21-8 22-20 after saving four match points in a tenacious performance.

At the South Paris Arena, Sen stretched to an extent in his opening Group L match.

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Sangwan, ended 15th with an underwhelming 573.

Bhaker, who was in control for the major part of the one hour 15 minute session, will have to maintain the same composure in the all-important final. India has not won an Olympic medal in shooting since 2012 and Bhaker is well placed to end that lean run.

Standing at a distance, Bhaker's personal coach Jaspal Rana could not stop his tears before saying that the job was only half done.

"What happened today doesn't matter anymore. Tomorrow is when it counts. We start afresh," he told PTI before pointing out the heat factor at the range with the air conditioning not being the most effective.

"She needed to take time and drink a lot of water as it was hot," he added.

At the other end of the spectrum was Sarabjot Singh, who felt the pressure on his Games

debut to narrowly miss out on a final berth in the men's 10m air pistol. Both he and Arjuna Singh Cheema showed promise before finishing ninth and 18th with scores of 577 and 544 respectively.

Germany's Robin Walter, who also shot 577, grabbed the last qualifying spot after managing to shoot one inner 10 (X) more than Sarabjot's 16, leaving the Indian heartbroken. Coach Samresh Jung tried to console him but Sarabjot knew he had missed the opportunity of a lifetime.

As many as 17 out of the 21 Indian shooters here are competing in the Olympics for the first time and are bound to feel pressure despite the best possible preparation.

"There are only two types of people who don't feel pressure. One are the dead and others are fools. He is neither dead nor a fool," said Jung who expects Sarabjot to bounce back in the mixed team event. (PTI)

INDIA AT PARIS OLYMPICS

World Hepatitis Day
28TH JULY 2024
'It's time for action'

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. It is usually caused by a viral infection. There are five main hepatitis viruses, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E. These five types result in the burden of illness and even death in some cases.

Prevent Hepatitis-B transfer from mother to child

- All pregnant women should get tested for Hepatitis-B
- All pregnant women who tests positive for Hepatitis-B should deliver at a healthcare facility

Take precautions to save newborns from Hepatitis-B

- Birth dose Hepatitis-B vaccine, preferably within 24 hours.
- Hepatitis-B immune globulin (HBIG) to be given if born to mothers tested positive with Hepatitis-B along with birth dose vaccine.

Common modes of transmission

- Unsafe injections:** Reuse of needles and syringes
- Sharing of needles:** Used to inject drugs
- Use of injected needles and inks:** For tattoos and nose, ear and body piercing
- Sharing of personal use items:** Razors, blades, nail clippers, toothbrushes etc.
- Unsafe blood and blood products:** Transfusion, dialysis etc.

Hepatitis has the potential for outbreaks and become an epidemic spread. Early diagnosis and timely treatment can prevent liver cirrhosis, liver cancer and even death.

At present Hepatitis treatment is available free of cost in all Civil Hospitals and Medical Colleges.

Know about Hepatitis, Get Tested Today.
Please visit your nearest health facility for additional Information on Hepatitis diagnosis and treatment

Call 104 for health related queries | Call 108 for ambulance service

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