

WORLD

NATION



● Reformist Pezeshkian wins Iran's presidential runoff election

● New UK PM Starmer assembles Cabinet for the first meeting



● 'By trouncing BJP in Ayodhya, INDIA bloc defeated Ram temple movement'

● VP Dhankar slams P Chidambaram over 'part-timer' remark



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THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU Voice of the hills people

Vol .No. XXV

Issue No. 177

RNI-ASSEN/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, SUNDAY, JULY 7, 2024

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8

Ready to conclude FTA that worked for both sides, Keir Starmer tells Modi

LONDON, July 6: Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday morning and said he stood ready to conclude a Free Trade Agreement that worked for both sides, Downing Street said.

India and the UK have been negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) for over two years with a Conservative Party-led government but the talks were stalled in the 14th round amidst the general election cycles in both countries. It is now expected to be picked up by the new Starmer-led Labour government, which was voted in with a landslide this week. "The Prime Minister [Starmer] said he looked forward to further deepening the strong and respectful relationship between both countries, and welcomed Prime Minister



Modi's leadership on key global challenges, such as climate change and economic growth," the spokesperson noted.

The leaders are then said to have discussed the importance of the "living bridge" between both countries, and the 2030 Roadmap and are said to have agreed that there was a wide range of areas across defence and security, critical and emerging technology, and climate change, for the two countries to deepen cooperation on.

"Discussing the Free Trade Agreement, the Prime Minister said he stood ready to conclude a deal that worked for both sides. The leaders hoped to meet at the earliest opportunity," the spokesperson added. Both sides have been working towards clinching a pact to enhance the GBP 38.1 billion (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Over 24.5 lakh people affected in 30 districts ● Flood toll touches 52

No let-up in state flood scene, Amit Shah assures all help

HT Bureau

NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI July 6:

In the wake of ongoing devastation in the state due to floods, Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday spoke to Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to take stock of the current situation. Shah said that both the NDRF and the SDRF are working on war footing to rescue and provide relief to affected people.

He further informed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi stands firmly with the people of Assam and is committed to provide all possible assistance to the state in these challenging times.

"On account of the heavy rains, a flood-like situation has occurred in Assam. Spoke with Assam CM Shri @himantabiswa Ji about the ongoing situation. The NDRF and the SDRF are working on a war footing, providing relief and rescuing the victims. PM Shri Naren-



dramoji Ji stands firmly with the people of Assam and is committed to providing all possible assistance to the state in these challenging times," he wrote on micro-blogging site X.

Notably, Assam has been reeling from floods, with over 24.5 lakh

people affected in 30 districts and major rivers flowing above the danger level at several places.

So far, 52 people have lost their lives in this year's flood in Assam, while 12 others were killed in landslides and storms.

Sarma held a meeting with offi-

cials late on Friday after returning from the severely affected Dibrugarh district and reviewed the flood situation in the state. "After visiting flood-affected areas of Dibrugarh, we reviewed several matters, including Assam Arogya Nidhi-a health financial assistance scheme," the chief minister said.

Sarma said he has specifically asked the officials to 'prioritise rarest of rare cases and applications from those who are not covered under any existing scheme'.

The chief minister further said that after interacting with the flood-hit people, he had sent messages to officials to address their problems.

"For us, proactive governance is the key to effective public service," he added. On the supply of clean drinking water, he said while the flood has caused considerable damage across the state, the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NMC recognises Tinsukia Medical College: Himanta

GUWAHATI, July 6: Assam's Tinsukia Medical College has received official recognition from the National Medical Commission, making it the 13th institute for medical studies in this northeastern state, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday.

A total of 100 undergraduate seats have been approved per year, he said. "Great news for the people of Assam. The National Medical Commission has officially recognized Tinsukia Medical College, approving 100 undergraduate admissions per year. With this, the number of medical colleges in Assam has now risen to 13," Sarma posted on X. He expressed his gratitude to the medical fraternity of the state for the achievement and also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for inaugurating the Tinsukia Medical (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Minor student stabs teacher to death

GUWAHATI, July 6: A teacher of a coaching centre was knifed to death allegedly by one of his students inside a classroom in Assam's Sivsagar district on Saturday, a police officer said.

The student, who is a minor, has been taken to the local police station in Sivsagar town, he added.

It is claimed that the teacher had scolded the class 11 student earlier in the day over some issue.

"We reached the coaching centre on receiving information of a stabbing incident. According to preliminary information, a student stabbed his teacher. There is a lot of blood in the classroom. The knife was also found there," the officer said. He said the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Man continues search for son in Guwahati drains for third day

GUWAHATI, July 6: A desperate man continued to search for his eight-year-old son in drains in the hilly Jyotinagar area in Guwahati for the third day on Saturday, even as parts of Assam's largest city reeled under floods.

Abhinash had fallen into an open stormwater drain after slipping from his father's scooter on Thursday evening, and since then Hiralal Sarkar has been searching for his boy. The state machinery has also launched a search operation since the incident, with various machines and sniffer dogs.

A relentless search by Hiralal has led him to find the sandals he claimed his son was wearing on Thursday evening.

"I have been searching with an iron rod and have managed to find my son's sandals. I possibly cannot find him with the rod. The government has the machinery, they must find my boy," Hiralal told reporters, showing one of the pairs of sandals he retrieved from the drain, some distance away from the spot where he had found the other. He handed the sandals over to the police for verification. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Workshop held on Sixth Schedule of Constitution in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau

DIPHU, July 6: A two-day workshop on the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India was conducted for BJP party workers at various levels, leaders of different Morchas under the BJP, elected members of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) here on Saturday at Sarsing Teron (Langkung Habe) memorial town hall.

Executive Members (EMs) and members of the Autonomous Council (MACs), alongside social media handlers and intellectuals, were also present.

The workshop aimed to educate participants about the history of the Sixth Schedule, its powers and functions within the jurisdiction of KAAC, its limitations, and the exercise of Karbi customary laws.

The workshop, titled Level I, also featured participation from the chairman and deputy chairman of KAAC, MLAs, former EMs, and MACs. Level II workshops will subsequently be conducted at the Mandal levels of the party, with Level I and II participants acting as resource persons to disseminate knowledge at the grassroots. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



কৃষি আৰু কৃষক কল্যাণ মন্ত্ৰণালয়
ভাৰত চৰকাৰ

“প্রধানমন্ত্রী ফচল বীমা যোজনাৰ বতৰৰ অনিশ্চয়তাৰ সৈতে জড়িত ক্ষতিশংকা কম কৰি
পৰিশ্ৰমী কৃষক ভাই-ভনীৰ আৰ্থিক হিত ৰক্ষা কৰাত একেৰাহে গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা পালন
কৰি আহিছে। এই কৃষক হিঁতৈষী বীমাৰ লাভ কোটি কোটি কৃষকে পাব ধৰিছে।”

- নৰেন্দ্ৰ মোদী, প্ৰধানমন্ত্ৰী



ফচল বীমা কৰাওক সুৰক্ষা কৰাওক পাওক

8 বছৰৰ মুখ্য সাফল্যসমূহ

62 কোটিৰো বেছি কৃষকৰ
আৱেদন গ্ৰাণ্ড কৰা হ'ল

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পোতিলত পঞ্জীকৰণৰ বাবে
QR ক'ড স্কেন কৰক।



শস্য বীমা
সপ্তাহ 1-7 জুলাই, 2024
পিএমএফবিআই



প্ৰধানমন্ত্ৰী ফচল
বীমা যোজনা

বীমা অঙ্গীদৰীত্ব AIC Chola MS FUTURE GENERAL ICICI Lombard Karmaveer Oriental RELIANCE GENERAL INSURANCE SBI General Universal Sompo

আপোনাৰ ফচলৰ বীমা কৰোৱাৰ বাবে আজিয়েই যোগাযোগ কৰক

জনসেৱা কেন্দ্ৰ

শস্য বীমা এপ <https://play.google.com>

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QR ক'ড স্কেন কৰক

iVP Semiconductor eyes revenue of USD 70-100 million in 3-4 yrs

CHENNAI, July 6: Fabless semiconductor startup iVP Semiconductor Pvt Ltd has plans to set up a production test facility as part of its drive to produce semiconductor chips in the domestic market, a top official said.

The company has also secured USD 5 million in a pre-series A funding for its expansion plans, Co-founder and CEO Raja Manickam said.

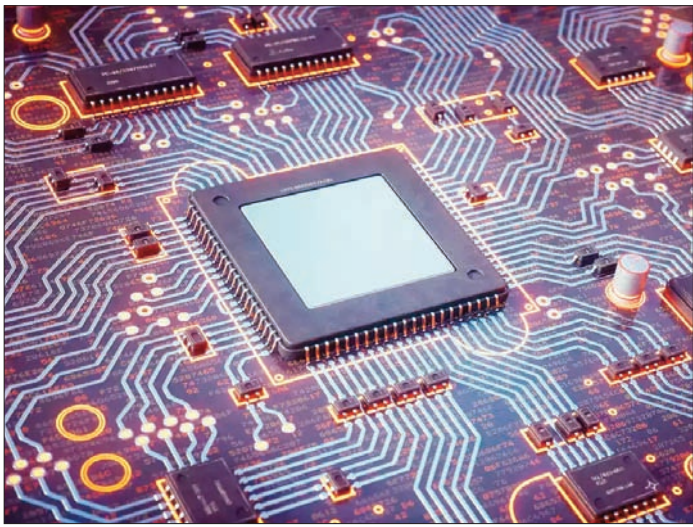
An industry veteran, Manickam said his aspiration was to first serve the clients in the domestic market and later expand the company to become a 'global brand.'

"Today domestic semiconductor industry is being served by several global companies. I want to serve the industry as an Indian company. IVP Semiconductor is an Indian company and it would become a global brand," he said.

The company would focus on power sector including renewable energy, solar industry, wind energy.

"We are going to be competitors to existing players with most of them being global companies," he said.

To a query, he said the company would set up a production test facility in Chennai and similar facility in southern parts of the country.



To another query, he said, "We aim for a revenue of USD 70-100 million in the next 3-4 years," he said.

The USD 5 million raised through pre-Series A funding would be used to build its presence, scale operations, set up testing facilities and for marketing purposes.

IVP Semiconductor Pvt Ltd was engaged in talks with the Tamil Nadu government to set up a production facility on a 20,000 sq ft land in Chennai. It is expected to

be operational by October 2024 and would be equipped with design to testing (of chips), ensuring high quality products along with delivery support.

"Testing centre will be set up by us and we will buy the (semiconductor) wafers from Taiwan," he said.

Besides power sector, Manickam said his company would also focus on other segments like electric -2-wheelers, electric vehicle charging facilities, Internet of Things. (PTI)

Ratan Kumar Kesh as interim MD & CEO of Bandhan Bank

KOLKATA, July 6: Ratan Kumar Kesh, executive director and chief operating officer of Bandhan Bank, has been appointed as interim MD & CEO of the private lender with effect from July 10.

The present MD&CEO and founder of the bank will retire on July 9.

In a regulatory filing with the stock exchange on Saturday, the lender said Kesh will be the interim MD & CEO for a period of three months or till the new incumbent takes charge, whichever is earlier.

The appointment of Kesh is pursuant to the approval of the Reserve Bank of India and on the basis of the recommendation of the nomination and remuneration committee and the board of directors of the bank at its meeting held during the day.

Kesh is not debarred or disqualified from holding office of director by virtue of any order of the SEBI or any other such authority, the filing stated.

The appointment of Kesh is also subject to approval of shareholders of the bank.

Kesh has been the executive director and chief operating officer of Bandhan Bank since March 2023. He was formerly with the ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Yes Bank and Axis Bank. (PTI)

US employers added a solid 206,000 jobs in June

Sign of continued economic strength

WASHINGTON, July 6: America's employers delivered another healthy month of hiring in June, adding 206,000 jobs and once again displaying the U.S. economy's ability to withstand high interest rates. Last month's job growth did mark a pullback from 218,000 in May. But it was still a solid gain, reflecting the resilience of America's consumer-driven economy, which is slowing but still growing steadily.

Still, Friday's report from the Labor Department contained several signs of a slowing job market. The unemployment rate ticked up from 4% to 4.1%, a still-low number but the highest rate since November 2021. The rate rose in large part because 277,000 people began looking for work in June, and not all of them found jobs right away.

The government also sharply revised down its estimate of job growth for April and May by a combined 111,000. And it said average hourly pay rose just 0.3% from May and 3.9% from June 2023. The year-over-year figure was the smallest such rise since June 2021 and will likely be well-

comed by the Federal Reserve in its drive to fully conquer inflation. Most economists think the Fed will begin cutting its benchmark rate in September, and the details in Friday's jobs report did nothing to counter that expectation.

Just two sectors — government and a category that includes healthcare and social assistance, neither of which captures the economy's underlying strength — accounted for roughly three-quarters of June's job growth. Economists also noted that job growth from April through June averaged 177,000, a decent figure but still the lowest three-month average since January 2021.

Other economists, while agreeing that the job market is slowing, suggested that it remains resilient.

"Both May and June hiring was above 200,000 even after revisions, and the trajectory looks stable," said Eric Winograd, U.S. economist at AllianceBernstein. "The best available evidence is that the labor market remains strong and that any deceleration remains modest."

The state of the economy is weighing heavily on voters' minds

as the presidential campaign intensifies. Despite consistent hiring, relatively few layoffs and gradually cooling inflation, many Americans have been exasperated by still-high prices and assign blame to President Joe Biden.

Economists have been repeatedly predicting that the job market would lose momentum in the face of the high rates engineered by the Fed, only to see the hiring gains show continued strength. Still, signs of an economic slowdown have emerged in the aftermath of the Fed's series of rate hikes. The U.S. gross domestic product — the total output of goods and services — grew at a lethargic annual pace of 1.4% from January through March, the slowest quarterly pace in nearly two years. Consumer spending, which accounts for about 70% of all U.S. economic activity and which has powered the expansion the past three years, rose at just a 1.5% pace last quarter after growing more than 3% in each of the previous two quarters. In addition, the number of advertised job openings has declined steadily since peaking at a record 12.2 million in March 2022. (AP)

Contd. from Page 1...

Ready to conclude FTA

bilateral trading partnership since January 2022, when Boris Johnson was the British prime minister. The talks have since had to contend with political turmoil in the UK that first led to a short-lived Liz Truss premiership followed by Rishi Sunak as Britain's first prime minister of Indian heritage.

The Labour Party's election manifesto for Thursday's polls committed to clinching the deal, stating: "We will seek a new strategic partnership with India, including an FTA, as well as deepening cooperation in areas like security, education, technology and climate change."

The new Starmer-led government's new foreign secretary, David Lammy, is also on the record saying that he wants to "finish the job" on the FTA and said he plans to visit India within the first month of being elected.

"My message to [Finance] Minister Sitharaman and [Trade] Minister Goyal is that Labour is ready to go. Let's finally get our free trade deal done and move on," he said at the India Global Forum in London last week. (PTI)

No let-up in state flood

scheme has come out as a 'silver lining in these tough times'. "The transformative water supply project is supplying clean drinking water in these tough times", he stated.

Cachar, Kamrup, Hailakandi, Hojai, Dhubri, Nagaon, Morigaon, Goalpara, Barpeta, Dibrugarh, Nalbari, Dhemajhi, Bongaigaon, Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Sonitpur, Kokrajhar, Karimganj, South Salmara, Darrang and Tinsukia are among the districts affected by the flood. The toll in this year's flood, landslides and storms was 64, according to the bulletin of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

Dhubri with a population of 7,75,721, Darrang with 1,86,108, Cachar with 1,75,231, Barpeta with 1,39,399 and Morigaon with 1,46,045 are among the worst-hit districts, it said.

Altogether 47,103 affected people have taken shelter in 612 camps, while 4,18,614 inmates in non-relief camps have been provided with relief materials.

Floods in urban areas of three districts of Kamrup (Metropolitan), Kamrup and Dibrugarh were also reported. Sarma said he and his entire team are on the ground to "assess the damage caused by the floods".

"We are working tirelessly to hear people's grievances and solve their issues," the chief minister said.

The Brahmaputra river is flowing above the danger mark at Nimatighat, Guwahati, Goalpara and Dhubri. Its tributaries Burhi Dihing at Chenimari, Dikhou at Sivasagar, Disang at Nanglamuraghat, Dhanisri at Numaligarh, Jia Bharali at NT Road crossing, and Kopili at Kamrup and Dharamtul are also flowing above the danger levels.

The Barak river is flowing above the danger mark at AP Ghat, BP Ghat, Chota Bakra and Fuletral, and its tributaries Dhaleswari at Garmura, Katakhal at Matizuri and Kushiara at Karimganj town. Infrastructure damaged by the floods includes 225 roads and 10 bridges among others, the bulletin added. (With inputs from PTI)

NMC recognises Tinsukia

College and Hospital. "This milestone marks a significant step forward in enhancing healthcare education and services in our state," the CM added. Modi had inaugurated the facility on March nine during a two-day visit to the state. (PTI)

Minor student stabs

teacher was taken to the hospital in a critical condition, where he was declared dead. The officer said the incident happened in the last period of the day, when other teachers had already left. "We have picked up the student. We don't know yet what led to the incident. We are in the process of collecting the CCTV footage," the officer added.

A classmate of the accused claimed that the teacher had scolded him over some matter earlier in the day. The accused had left school and returned later, and when he entered the classroom, the teacher accosted him again. The student then attacked the teacher with a knife, the classmate claimed. (PTI)

Workshop held on Sixth Schedule

On the first day, three sessions were held where Elwin Teron, a former EM of KAAC and noted writer, elaborated on the history, powers, and functions of the Sixth Schedule, the role of the Governor in Sixth Schedule districts, limitations, land rights, and the relationship between the Governor and the Autonomous Council.

The second day saw Dr Dharamsing Teron, former chairman of KAAC and MLA, discuss Karbi customary laws and practices. The concluding session was led by chief executive member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang, highlighting KAAC's achievements over the past eight years.

Roland Killing, president of BJP East Karbi Anglong, emphasised the workshop's importance for district-level workers, Mocha leaders, elected KAAC members, intellectuals, and advocates. He announced plans for Level I and II workshops at Mandal levels, aiming to empower participants as Resource Persons for village-level outreach.

"The workshop has been organised for party workers of district level, leaders of various morchas, elected members of KAAC, intellectuals and advocates. This is level - I and level - II workshop will be conducted at Mandal level. The participants in level - I and level - II workshops will act as resource persons so that can explain to the masses when they go to the villages," he added. Ronghang further informed the media that the workshop aimed to deepen understanding of the Sixth Schedule, its powers, functions, and limitations, particularly post the state reorganisation in 1969 when Meghalaya gained statehood.

Discussions also covered the transfer of legislative and executive powers to KAAC following MoUs signed with armed organisations in 1995, 2011, and 2021. The CEM clarified that workshops are open to all and announced upcoming sessions at Legislative Assembly levels in Diphu, Bokajan, Howraghat, Rongkhang, and Amri after August 15.

EM D Uphing Maslai moderated the workshop, which concluded with a valedictory function attended by Ronghang, chairman Raju Tisso, MP Amarsing Tisso, MLA Bidyasing Engleng, and Darsing Ronghang.

Man continues search for

Hiralal, who spent the night under a mosquito net on the veranda of a shop, said, "How can I go home when my son is here? I know my son is here, and I won't rest till I find him." Abhinash was returning home with his father from the latter's shop on Thursday late evening amid a heavy shower when their scooter skidded and the boy who was pillion riding slipped and fell into the open drain. Hiralal had said he could spot his son's hand in the drain a couple of times and dived in, but could not get a hold of him.

Clad in a saffron-coloured T-shirt and black half-pants, the father has been wading through the water, slush and garbage of the drain with a stick and an iron rod in hand looking for Abhinash for the last two days. Officials said multiple agencies are coordinating in the search operation, including the SDRF, fire and emergency services department and the municipal corporation.

"Search operations continued till late on Friday night and resumed in the morning. We have used sniffer dogs, excavators and super suckers at different locations," an official said. The official added that the various points towards which the drain water could have possibly flown have been mapped and a search is on. The parts of the drain which are covered with concrete slabs in the downstream areas are being lifted and a search was conducted for the missing boy, he said.

Meanwhile, several parts of Guwahati, including Anil Nagar, Nabin Nagar and Rukminigaon, continued to be inundated since heavy rainfall lashed the city since Thursday evening. SDRF and the local Kamrup Metropolitan administration have been providing relief to the stranded people at different locations, while pumps have also been used to clear the water.

An Assam State Disaster Management Authority bulletin on Friday said that over 7,000 people in two revenue circles of the district were affected by the urban flood. The entire state has been reeling under floods, with over 24.50 lakh people affected in 30 districts and major rivers flowing above the danger level at several places.

The toll in this year's flood has been 52 so far, while 12 others have lost their lives due to landslides and storms. (PTI)

NAME CORRECTION

My actual and correct name is ROFIQUE AHMED S/O- EYASIN ALI ,DOB-15-08-1989. Vill- Modertoli, P.O.-Modertoli P.S.- Doboka, Dist- Hojai (Assam)

That wrongly my father name has been written in my AHSEC Certificate ROLL-0735, No-10295 as Moulana Eyasin Ali which is not correct. My Name & father actual and correct name is ROFIQUE AHMED, S/O-EYASIN ALI.

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Mohammed Mamun Rashid to Mamun Rashid by swearing a notarial affidavit at Sankardevnagar Hojai (Assam)

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Mohammed Kutub Uddin to Kutub Uddin by swearing a notarial affidavit at Sankardevnagar Hojai (Assam)

ADVERTISEMENT

Applications are invited for the post of 2 No's of Out Reach Worker (ORW) in FSW & IDU TI Project at Diphu (Diwan Basti), Karbi Anglong under the Assam State AIDS Control Society. Qua: B.A. & Computer Skill. Salary: Rs. 10500.00 per month. All the salary and TA will be provided as per ASACS financial norms. Interested candidates may mail their resume along with testimonials in PDF to Email ID: kapili2006project@gmail.com before 11 th July, 2024. Specify FSW or IDU post in the application. Short listed candidate will be informed individually for interview.

Contact- 8638008558/ 9957136078/ 9365434109/ 8638730968/ 9366094125.

Sd/-

Date: 06/07/2024 Secretary/Project Director
Place: Diphu Kapili Dev. Welfare Society
Diphu, Karbi Anglong

No. DHTE.243/2012/47

CANCELLATION NOTICE

Pursuant to the Govt. Letter No. E-257948/270, dated 18/06/2024, the process for filling up of 38 vacant posts of Demonstrator, Handloom & Textile, under the Directorate of Handloom & Textiles, Assam published vide this Office Letter no. DHTE.161/2020/Pt-I/111, dated 19/01/2021 and the recruitment examination conducted on 21/02/2021 in this regard are hereby cancelled.

Director,
Handloom & Textiles, Assam
Guwahati-1

Janasanyog /D/2231/247-Jul-24

OFFICE OF THE HEAD MASTER
SAMAGURI ANCHALIK HIGH SCHOOL
VILL & P.O.- SAMAGURI BAZAR
P.S.- HOWRAGHAT, KARBI ANGLONG
PIN - 782482

DECLARATION

Candidate have acquired the following marks of LDA interview was held on Date-30-06-2024

Sl. No.	Name of Candidate	G.K. Personality Attitude computer	G.K. Personality Attitude computer	G.K. Personality Attitude computer	Total	Remarks
1.	Sri Rajkumar Das	18	17	23	58	
2.	Bittu Nath	16	22	27	65	
3.	Raju Goswami	22	19	29	70	
4.	Tumpi Nath	14	12	17	43	
5.	Rahul Deb	19	14	19	52	
6.	Dhananjay Das	15	15	18	48	
7.	Kishar Kumar Nath	18	16	21	55	
8.	Ajay Deb	23	20	23	66	
9.	Prahar Nath	14	13	18	45	
10.	Payal Sharma	15	15	23	53	
11.	Supriya Goswami	22	21	25	68	
12.	Bittu Dhar	28	25	27	80	

- Signature of Examiner
- Signature of Examiner
- Signature of Examiner

Govt to conduct survey with IIT experts for permanent solution to Dibrugarh's flood problem

State minister Ranjeet Dass holds review meeting on floods with DMC



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, July 6: State minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass held a review meeting on the flood situation with councillors of the Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation (DMC) here on Saturday.

The meeting held at the Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation office,

was attended by Union minister of state for external affairs, Pabitra Margherita, MLA Prashanta Phukan, Dibrugarh district commissioner Bikram Kairi and mayor Saikat Patra. Deputy director of town and country planning depart-

ment and representatives of the public works department (PWD) were also present on the occasion. During the meeting, measures to prevent the artificial flood situation in Dibrugarh in the future were discussed. It focused on both short-term and long-term plans for flood

prevention. The short-term plan involves taking steps within the next six months to ensure that water drains out from the city's drains. On the other hand, the long-term plan involves conducting a survey with experts from the Indian Institute of Technology to find a permanent solution to the city's artificial flood problem.

Dass, who is also the guardian minister of the district, mentioned that the city lacks the capacity to carry water from the zero point. He also expressed surprise that the city does not have any master drain.

The minister reiterated the lack of coordination between urban planning and the municipal corporation. He directed that any future work should be carried out through discussions between urban planning, the municipal corporation and PWD.

He also said that the government has taken the matter seriously and the copies of the minutes of the meeting would be forwarded to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and state urban affairs minister Ashok Singhal for further course of action.

Union minister Pabitra Margherita takes stock of flood situation

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, July 6: Union minister of state for external affairs Pabitra Margherita on Saturday led a comprehensive assessment of the flood situation and visited relief camps across Margherita.

Accompanied by Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma, Margherita sub-divisional officer (civil), Margherita circle officer and executive magistrate, the Union minister meticulously evaluated the distribution of essential relief items and the availability of basic amenities for flood-affected individuals.

His visit commenced with inspection at relief camps in the Makumilla area and Margherita town, where he closely monitored the distribution process of gratuitous relief and vital supplies such as water bottles, candles and mosquito coils.

Emphasis was placed on ensuring the adequacy and efficiency of relief efforts to meet the immediate needs of those sheltered in these camps.

According to reports, while the situation upstream has shown a decline in water levels on July 4, allowing some families to return to their homes, the mid-stream and downstream areas continue to experience high water levels as both Buridehing and Tirap rivers were flowing above the danger mark by 2.55 meters by night of July 5. However, the waters of the rivers showed a steady decline by Saturday morning.

Authorities have conducted necessary evacuations in these regions to ensure the safety of residents.



Rescue operations led by the fire and emergency service squads of Margherita, Tinsukia and Ledo have been actively underway over the past 24 hours.

The operations have focused on evacuating residents from flood-affected areas across Margherita and Jagun regions. 50 individuals were rescued from Alubari, 29 from Rampur Sonowal Gaon, 8 from Bihari Basti in Jagun and another 50 from Ledo, Maulang, Ketetong and Margherita.

Margherita sub-divisional administration (civil) also assessed the flood situation at various other locations including Lama Gaon LP School, No.6 Dirok LP School, Khagori Pather LP School, Sati Joymati LP School, Namdang Bashbari LP School, Borfakial LP School and Manmowmukh LP School.

Their inspections focused on verifying the provision of distribution of essential amenities crucial for the well-being of flood-dis-

placed residents.

Collaborative efforts extended beyond relief supplies, with the veterinary department coordinating with local officials and village leaders to distribute animal fodder, ensuring livestock welfare amidst the crisis.

Health camps were strategically established in coordination with the health department at multiple relief camp sites. These camps provided essential medical assistance to flood victims, addressing their health needs effectively.

Currently, 30 relief camps are operational with additional camps established as per the evolving requirements, demonstrating a sustained commitment to supporting those affected by the floods.

The collective efforts of various governmental departments and agencies underscore a united approach towards disaster relief and recovery, aiming to alleviate the hardships faced by the flood-affected communities in Margherita.

Poet Bipul Regon passes away

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, July 6: Bipul Regon, a lecturer of Hindi at the Asom Satriya Mahavidyalaya in Jorhat and a poet and columnist breathed his last at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) on Friday night due to multiple ailments. Regon, who was 42, was originally from Majuli and was residing beside the Jorhat Bypass here. He is survived by his mother, two brothers and a large number of relatives. Regon, who was associated with several literary and cultural organisations, had learned Malayalam and written several articles in Malayali magazines. He was also associated with a number of socio-cultural organisations. His demise has been widely mourned by a number of organisations and individuals.

Student kills teacher at Sai Vikash Senior Secondary School

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, July 6: A teacher of the Sai Vikash Kendra Senior Secondary School in Sivasagar was killed on Saturday after he was attacked by one of his students in the classroom.

The victim was identified as Suresh Babu Bijuwar. He hailed from Andhra Pradesh and had been residing in Sivasagar town in a rented house with his family.

According to sources, the class XI student had an altercation with the teacher regarding homework and indiscipline in the classroom during the morning hours on Saturday. The student returned home, changed his dress and returned to the school after some time.

NFR attends to Rail Madad service requests for enhanced customer satisfaction

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 6: The North-east Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved 100 per cent request compliance rate through Rail Madad during the last financial year 2023-24. The average disposal time during the last financial year was 105 minutes.

Monitoring of passenger requests is considered as one of the key performance indicators within the zone. To put in place an effective monitoring system towards a one-stop solution to requests, grievances and enquiries, RAIL MADAD was launched in 2019. Passengers can lodge complain and seek assistance through 'https://railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in' website and helpline number 139 of Rail Madad App. Complaints and requests lodged through different modes were brought into a single platform and channelized through this portal for time bound redressal.

Comparatively during 2024-25, NFR has managed to hold the 100

per cent compliance rate for the period starting from April 1 till present with 73 minutes as disposal time of requests. It has also maintained 12 minutes as the first response time (FRT) during the current financial year as compared to 16 minutes in the last financial year. FRT is an indicator of efficiency in handling emergency assistance requests.

Railways at all levels have taken concerted efforts in creating awareness about Rail Madad amongst passengers. Faster and satisfactory resolution of grievances has resulted in restoring the faith of the passengers in the grievance redressal system, which serves as a harbinger of hope during any inconvenience experienced by passengers during their train journey or while at railway premises.

As a result, lots of passengers have now started using the Rail Madad complaint mechanism. A total of 151887 complaints have been resolved during 2023-24 and 53541 complaints during the current financial year so far.

Irrigation minister inaugurates Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant, sanitation park

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, July 6: State irrigation minister, Ashok Singhal on Friday inaugurated the 5 KLD Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) and a sanitation park at Mariani town in Jorhat district.

The plant, the fourth one in the state, has been set up at a cost of ₹ 76 lakh under a project of the Mariani Municipal Board to collect excess sludge of septic tanks of households within Mariani municipality areas through cesspool vacuum vehicle and carry it to the FSTP for treatment. The capacity of the plant will treat 5000 litres sludge daily.

A function was organised on the occasion at the Mariani public auditorium, which was attended by Mariani MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi, Mariani Municipal Board authorities, senior Jorhat district administration and police officials and noted citizens.

Workshop to promote self-employment held at Assam Don Bosco University

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 6: The Assam Don Bosco University (ADBU) has conducted a transformative workshop titled 'Swabalamban: Empowering Employment through Solar Energy,' at its Azara campus on the outskirts of the city.

This initiative, organised by the university's School of Technology from July 3 to 5, was part of their commitment to social empowerment and was sponsored by the All India Council for Technical Education under its Vibrant Advocacy for Advancement and Nurturing of Indian Languages (VAANI)

scheme.

The three-day programme aimed to enhance the employability of young individuals by equipping them with essential skills in solar energy technology and electrical house wiring. A total of 54 participants successfully designed solar powered chargeable LED lamps. These innovative lamps can be charged using solar energy or mobile chargers and can also serve as emergency mobile chargers. Participants also gained valuable knowledge on house wiring, including basic concepts, tools, and safety measures with hands on experience.



level. Representatives from the Gauhati Commerce College and other leading institutions from Kerala, Delhi, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra will vie for the title of National champion.

ECHO teams from the Gauhati Commerce College, Handique Girls' College, zoology department of the Cotton College, zoology department of USTM, SB Deorah College, TISS Guwahati and NLU Guwahati participated in the programme and presented their varied pilot projects.

Project 'Anubhusan' by students of the winning team aims to uplift the people residing the slum areas near the Guwahati Railway Station by empowering them, especially women, with sustainable livelihoods. They collect cloth waste from local businesses, provide eco-friendly workshops on making traditional Assamese jewellery and offer business training. The project promotes upcycling and reduces

waste while creating income opportunities. It emphasises community empowerment and sustainable urban development through partnerships with local stakeholders and educational outreach.

This initiative supports Sustainable Urbanization (SDG 11.3), by integrating slum residents into the local economy and improving their living standards. It also supports the Protection of Cultural Heritage (SDG 11.4) by preserving traditional Assamese crafts through jewellery-making workshops.

Archita Baruah Bhattacharyya, WWF-India, State Coordinator - Assam State Office said, "Assam ECHO State Summit had enthusiastic participants from seven Finalists ECHO Teams from prestigious educational institutions. After a tough competition, the team from the Gauhati Commerce College were adjudged the state-level champion."

KVK hosts synthesis meet to boost FPO efficiency in Nagaon

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, July 6: A three-day synthesis meet organised by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Nagaon to enhance the performance of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) concluded here on Saturday.

Niranjan Deka, principal scientist and head of KVK, Nagaon delivered the welcome address and also spoke about its aims and objectives at the meet, which began at the KVK premises on July 4.

During the sessions, a slew of discussions took place aiming to assess the current status, challenges, and achievements of three key FPOs like Swarnil Cooperative FPO Ltd, Kapili Cooperative FPO Ltd supported by NCDC and Naba Phuloguri FPO Ltd facilitated by NABARD.

The key objectives included developing strategies to strengthen these FPOs through improved fund management and utilisation, providing trade-related information, securing government schemes for members, addressing financials as well as accounting concerns and planning for future improvements.

The initiative underscores KVK, Nagaon's commitment to promoting sustainable rural development by empowering local agriculture.

Pramod Ch Deka, principal CEO of the PIU-CBBO unit, Jagadish Patar Rao, deputy director from NCDC, Guwahati, Gitashri Dutta Baruah, DRCS, Nagaon and Khurshid Alom Ansari, LDM, Nagaon attended the sessions of the event.

Domestic help killed at Hanhchora

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, July 6: In a bizarre incident one man killed his aged domestic help, severed his body parts and threw them into the Dikhow river at Hanhchora in Sivasagar district.

According to sources, the accused Gauranga Gogoi (32) killed the victim Hari Munda (60), who had been working as a domestic help in the residence of the former on Friday. Gauranga, who is the son of Nolin Gogoi, did this ghastly act when no one was present at home. Police soon arrested him and took him into custody. The accused told the investigating officer that he had killed the old servant as he was suspicious that he had been harming the family through black arts. Meanwhile, State Disaster Response Force personnel have been pressed into service to recover the severed body parts of the victim from the river.

Conference heralds new era in healthcare through AI and IoT innovations

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 6: The deputy commissioner's office in Udalguri recently hosted a pivotal conference that could significantly transform healthcare in the district through the adoption of cutting-edge AI and IoT technologies.

The conference, attended by officials and experts, focused on deploying innovative health solutions to enhance local medical care and create employment opportunities for the youths of Udalguri.

Key participants included the additional deputy commissioner, project director of the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), joint director of district health services, sub-divisional officer, block development officer, district social welfare officer, general manager of the District Industries & Commerce Centre (DI&CC), lead bank manager, district project manager from the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission Society (ASRLMS) and Amtron Team along with AI-IoT partners from Delhi and Kolkata.

Amtron, spearheading the initiative, introduced a suite of AI-IoT devices designed to revolutionise the healthcare delivery system in Udalguri. Many innovations were proposed including the Diagnostic Kiosk device, which is capable of performing comprehensive blood and urine tests, providing immediate and accurate results. It represents a crucial tool for early detection and timely intervention, streamlining the diagnostic process and making routine check-ups more efficient.

There was also the Automated Diabetic Retinopathy Test Device, which utilises advanced imaging to detect early signs of diabetic retinopathy, a diabetes complication that can lead to blindness if untreated. By identifying retinopathy at an early stage, this device allows for prompt medical attention, potentially preventing severe vision loss. Meanwhile, the ECG solution was designed for detailed heart monitoring. This portable device can detect cardiac abnormalities such as arrhythmias, which might not be evident through conventional methods.

These technologies aim to provide



reliable diagnostics and continuous health monitoring locally, bridging the gap in healthcare accessibility for Udalguri's residents, particularly in rural and underserved areas. The implementation of these devices promises to elevate the district's healthcare services to a world-class standard.

The conference emphasised the practical aspects of deploying these innovations and discussed their integration into the existing healthcare infrastructure. Participants focused on how these technologies could be effectively incorporated to ensure they deliver maximum benefit to the community. The dialogue also covered potential challenges and strategies for overcoming them, reflecting a shared commitment to enhancing Udalguri's healthcare.

Beyond the immediate health benefits, the project also promises to generate local employment, providing job opportunities for technicians, operators, and support staff from within the community. This focus on local hiring will contribute to economic growth and skill development in Udalguri, making the project beneficial on multiple fronts.

"The introduction of AI-IoT solutions in Udalguri represents a forward-thinking approach to modernising healthcare. These devices are set to improve diagnostic accuracy, accelerate response times, and enhance patient out-

comes, aligning with global best practices in preventive and proactive healthcare management. By facilitating early detection and continuous monitoring, the technologies promise to improve the overall quality of healthcare, making it more responsive and efficient," said a senior official of the Udalguri district administration.

The enthusiasm and collaborative spirit displayed by the conference participants underscore a collective vision for advancing healthcare in the district. The discussions were marked by a strong sense of optimism and a commitment to leveraging technology to address public health challenges. The presence of diverse stakeholders, from government officials to technical experts, highlighted the broad support for this initiative and the potential for it to bring about substantial improvements in healthcare delivery.

"As citizens of Udalguri, we wholeheartedly welcome this initiative. The proposed AI-IoT devices are not just technological advancements, but represent a comprehensive approach to healthcare that includes continuous support, education, and awareness for patients. The project's emphasis on creating local employment opportunities adds a vital dimension, offering tangible benefits for the community beyond health improvements," the official added.

Gauhati Commerce College adjudged state-level winner of ECHO programme

Project 'Abhushan' by Gauhati Commerce College to empower slum communities with sustainable livelihood

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, July 6: The Gauhati Commerce College emerged as the state-level champion at the Environment Conservation Heroes (ECHO) programme of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), India and will represent the state in the National Summit to be held on July 8.

ECHO has gained popularity among college students in the state over the past five years. The programme provides an opportunity to college students to showcase their talents by participating in a national programme through their local specific projects based on different themes. This paves the way towards leadership, communication, innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

The theme for the ECHO programme is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and focuses on prevailing and pressing environmental issues. WWF-India announces a new theme on a yearly basis. WWF-India bolsters the entrepreneurship skills and mindset among young people by mentoring them to develop a business canvas, test, validate pitch and eventually transform their innovative ideas into business action plans. Project impacts are evaluated on the parameters of innovation, sustainability, cost-effectiveness, impact, and scalability by a panel of jury.

After qualifying the state-level elimination, six potential projects aligned with SDG Goal 11- sustainable cities and communities will compete at the national

Editor's pick

Pandemonium in Parliament

By: Kalyani Shankar

The 18th Lok Sabha has the potential for positive functioning. The Modi government said they wanted consensus. Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought agreement and criticised the Opposition for causing problems. Modi stated that in his third term, his Government would aim to build consensus. The Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, also emphasised the importance of the Opposition's role in representing the 'voice of the people' in the House. But at the start of the session, they couldn't agree on important issues. Congress leader Sonia Gandhi wrote in an editorial recently in an English daily that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "Preaching consensus, provoking confrontation."

Sonia Gandhi criticised Prime Minister Modi for not acknowledging the electoral outcome and for promoting confrontation over consensus. She expressed disappointment with the first few days of the 18th Lok Sabha, pointing out that there's no sign of a changed attitude from the Prime Minister. The 18th Lok Sabha is a significant shift in Indian politics, marking the first time in a decade that Modi is leading a Parliament from a less dominant position. This shift in power dynamics requires him to navigate a coalition and contend with a more assertive opposition. The Modi government now relies on crucial support from two key allies - JD(U) and TDP.

This means the NDA allies could significantly influence the Government's plans and actions, a departure from the substantial majority the BJP enjoyed in 2019 and 2014. The increased presence of the Opposition in various parliamentary panels is likely to generate greater engagement. The first session of the current Lok Sabha began with a strong Opposition asserting its rights. Before the session started, there was a dispute over the appointment of BJD M.P. Bhartruhari Mahtab as the pro-tem Speaker to administer. The Congress and the INDIA bloc members felt that Congress MP Kodukkunil Suresh, elected eight times, should have been given the position. However, the BJP argued that they followed the rules. Mahtab was elected to the House seven times in succession, while Suresh lost two elections. This appointment is significant as the Speaker plays a crucial role in the Indian parliamentary system as the head of the Lok Sabha, responsible for maintaining order, conducting debates, and ensuring the House's smooth functioning.

Secondly, Rahul Gandhi said he would back Om Birla, the NDA candidate, but only if the Deputy Speaker position, usually given to the Opposition, was assured. While Thambi Durai of the AIADMK, a BJP ally at the time, served as the Deputy Speaker from 2014 to 2019, the position remained vacant from 2019 to 2024.

Article 93 states two Lok Sabha members will be selected as the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. Om Birla has been re-elected as the Speaker of the 17th Lok Sabha, bringing continuity and stability to the House. After being congratulated, the newly elected Speaker took out a paper and read a resolution against the 1975 Emergency imposed by late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This surprising move caught many off guard and caused tension with Congress, as the Emergency was declared on the same date in 1975. This led the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, to lead a group to the Speaker to express their objection to a political statement from the chair.

Fourthly, some opposition parties thought the president's inaugural speech to a joint session of Parliament ignored the country's most serious problems. Also, the Opposition called for removing the Sengol, which the Prime Minister had installed with much fanfare before the Election. Fifthly, Rahul and other Opposition MPs proposed discussing the leakage of the NEET question paper first. The Speaker, however, insisted that a discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, a significant issue, should be held first. The first week's confrontation shows despite the decrease in numbers, the BJP is unlikely to change its working methods.

An energised opposition will also be belligerent. The proceedings in Rajya Sabha also saw disruptions and adjournments as Opposition members raised slogans demanding a discussion on the NEET question paper leak issue. There was also a heated argument between the Chairman and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. The functioning of the House lies with the Speaker, a position of utmost importance in maintaining order and ensuring fair debates.

The Rajya Sabha Chairman presides over the Upper House. A functioning House is necessary and a prerequisite for a healthy democracy. The need for constructive cooperation between the Government and the Opposition cannot be overstated.

The House functions effectively in addressing the pressing issues facing the nation. Both sides must recognise the truth and collaborate to make Parliament more organised. After all, the Government is accountable to Parliament. The parliamentary system emphasises collective responsibility, accountability, and flexibility. As former President Pranab Mukherjee said, its functioning is based on Debate, Dissension, and Decision. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

Attacks against the minorities in the country have increased after Lok Sabha polls

The non-Hindu people in Hindustan "must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, [...] must entertain no idea but those of the glorification of Hindu race and culture, [...] or (they) may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privilege, far less any preferential treatment - not even citizen's right".

These were the words from "We and Our Nationhood Defined", the book written by M S Golwalkar, chief architect of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. A true follower of Hitler and Nazism, he considered even after Independence that India was yet to attain freedom. The country would be liberated only when a Hindu state is formed.

Hitler and Golwalkar are both today part of history and yet get back a new life whenever the reactionary vested interests get the upper hand in the society. They never take up economic issues; never go against the monopolies or the landlords. Balasaheb Deoras, who succeeded Golwalkar as the RSS chief in 1973, did everything to achieve the objectives laid out by his predecessor. Their machinations continued and got accelerated after 2014, when the BJP won an absolute majority in the Lok

Sabha.

The ten years of the BJP rule witnessed frequent attacks on minorities with the government pursuing an overt Hindu communal agenda.

The process has continued even in the aftermath of the recent Lok Sabha elections when there has been a sudden spurt in the attacks on minorities in different parts of the country. Major incidents have been reported from Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi.

In Raipur, capital of Chhattisgarh, three Muslim men transporting bullocks were branded as cow-smugglers and killed by so-called cow-vigilantes. In Aligarh, a Muslim man was beaten to death on allegations of theft. In Mandla, Madhya Pradesh, eleven houses of Muslims were demolished within 24 hours after alleged reports of "beef" being recovered from their refrigerators.

In Lucknow's Akbarnagar, a predominantly Muslim area, homes of over a thousand families were bulldozed for the construction of the river front. Similarly, people belonging to the Hindu community in the neighbourhood have come out in open protest against the allotment of a flat to a Muslim woman in



a low-income group housing complex under the Chief Minister's Housing Scheme in Gujarat's Vadodra.

In Himachal Pradesh's Nahan, the shop of a Muslim was looted and vandalized after allegations that he had

sacrificed a cow during Eid-ul-Adha. A case has also been registered against him for the alleged cow slaughter. All the other 16 Muslim shop-owners in the town have been forced to flee following the incident.

In Delhi's Sangam Vihar there are reports of residents fleeing the area after provocative speeches made by members of Hindutva outfits, following the recovery of a cow carcass near a place of worship.

Such sharpening of communal assaults following the setbacks suffered by the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections highlight the fact that the BJP and the Hindutva communal forces

will intensify their attempts at polarization with a renewed vengeance.

This year, the International Religious Freedom Report, released on June 26, observed that communal atmosphere in the country has been worsening.

The report highlighted that violence occurring at the societal level, sometimes at worship places, contributed to the repression of religious communities. The US ambassador for international religious freedom, Rashad Hussain, mentioned that in India, local police were reported to have aided mobs that disrupted worship services or stood by while mobs attacked members of Christian communities and then arrested the victims on conversion charges.

Vengeance itself is an attack on the freedom of the other. The Religious Freedom Report comes out annually and is published by the US Department of State. It highlights the state of religious freedom in

every country around the world. The Report provides information on the state of religious freedom, government policies that violate religious beliefs and practices of groups, religious denominations, and individuals, as well as US policies promoting religious freedom across almost every country and territory globally. The report covers the period from January 1 to December 31 of the previous calendar year.

The United States Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, stated that there has been a "concerning increase" in hate speech, anti-conversion laws, and demolitions of homes and places of worship for members of religious minorities in India. Blinken made these remarks while unveiling the US State Department's 2023 International Religious Freedom Report.

In 2022, there were 272 instances of communal violence, including attacks on religious minority groups, including killings, assaults, and intimidation. The United Christian Forum reported 731 attacks on Christians in the year, with the highest number in Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

The Supreme Court criticized the central government and the Manipur state government for failing to halt the violence, leading to offi-

cial being appointed to investigate incidents, ensure humanitarian assistance, and rebuild homes and places of worship. Public celebrations of Hindu festivals sometimes led to communal violence, especially when they involved processions through areas where Muslims were in the majority.

In December, Parliament approved new criminal laws that included provisions to criminalize making false promises and concealing one's identity to sexually exploit a woman, including for marriage. Media commentators said the new laws could be used to punish Muslim men seeking to marry non-Muslim women.

Opponents said the new laws were unnecessary, and the strict penalties were out of line with lighter penalties given for more serious offenses.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also called for enacting a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) at the national level in place of the present system of separate personal laws for religious communities. Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and tribal leaders, and some state government officials have opposed the initiative on the grounds it is part of a project to turn the country into a "Hindu Rashtra" (a Hindu Nation). (IPA Service)

First session of 18th Lok Sabha has been a letdown for Narendra Modi

By: Sushil Kuttty

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi addresses the Prime Minister of India 'Narendra Modi' says 'Prime Minister' and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has started referring to Rahul Gandhi as 'Balak Budhi'. The mutual respect shown is extraordinary. If 'Sansad TV' was popular TV, children would be learning "show respect to each other" in the most extraordinary setting, India's Parliament! Even otherwise India's children are living in extraordinary times.

Prime Minister Modi's contempt for LoP Rahul Gandhi is extraordinary. Modi had sworn to make India "Congress Mukti" in his first term itself. And with the battle-cry "Abki baar 400 paar", there was every chance for a "Congress Mukti Bharat". However, Modi's slogan perished in electoral dust and Rahul Gandhi made sure 'Congress Mukti Bharat' died its own death. Rahul Gandhi is now the 'Leader of Opposition' and Rahul Gandhi as LoP is a different ball game altogether as the BJP's Lok Sabha backbenchers are coming to realize.

When Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury was LoP he made no impression even when he was on his feet to make a telling intervention. BJP backbenchers made fun of

him, mostly. Not that Congress front-benchers went on their knees to show respect. Today, after his loss to erstwhile cricketer Yusuf Pathan, the memory of LoP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is fast fading and nobody in the Congress is mourning.

That being said, comparing LoP Rahul Gandhi with LoP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury is like comparing apples and oranges. This, when Rahul Gandhi happens to be the apple of the Congress eye. Sonia Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi were in the Visitor's Gallery when LoP Rahul Gandhi stood up to deliver his first LoP speech. People shouldn't forget that Rahul Gandhi was born to step into Rajiv Gandhi's shoes, it doesn't matter how many Modi-terms are in between!

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has many reasons to feel let down. Among them is the realization that he cannot remember 'Congress Mukti Bharat'. All his cronies too have forgotten. That 'Congress Mukti Bharat' has slipped out of the BJP IT Cell's vocabulary is a testament to the resilience of the Grand Old Party, which has withstood more debacles than Modi has in his life so far. Modi's dream of 'Congress Mukti Bharat' is dead in the water.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi cannot ever again use 'Congress Mukti Bharat' to

embarrass the Congress and its 'first family'. The Prime Minister in his 'Motion of Thanks' speech talked of the 'ecosystem' and what was in store for the 'ecosystem' in his third and final term as Prime Minister. For somebody who couldn't do zilch to the 'ecosystem' in his first and second terms, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was talking big and mighty.

The 'ecosystem' Modi spoke of has a number of elements, which includes the entrenched bureaucracy. The rules and regulations and the legal system as it stands, also. The Supreme Court of India is also part of the 'ecosystem' that PM Modi wants to 'Ukhaad' in Sanjay Raut's language. This when Prime Minister Narendra Modi isn't on sure foot, himself!

What can a lame-luck third term Prime Minister do to the ecosystem? Former US President Donald Trump spoke of 'draining the swamp'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had two chances to rid India of its version of the Washington Swamp, but Modi never once mentioned 'ecosystem' in his first and second terms. Modi broke several promises but this one he never even spoke about.

It is only when somebody is down and out that he talks big. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is such a person. He

knows he is vulnerable from head to toe and his toehold on power could slip off the brink at any moment on any day of the next five years. Fact is, Prime Minister Narendra Modi cannot touch the 'ecosystem'. The current Prime Minister of India is on a very weak footing and the hoi polloi, the ordinary citizen living in extraordinary times, is aware.

Somebody in Parliament should ask Modi how he intends to dismantle the ecosystem, pray tell? Surely, his hold on India's abused institutions has slipped. The brute majority of 303 seats is no longer there. Then, he was basking in the glow of international limelight, wooing world leaders kowtowing to him because India was a "huge market" to tap. Some of those world leaders went down on their knees and one of them called Modi "Boss".

The global adulation went to his head and he never spoke of an ecosystem to mend or dismantle. Today, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi warns of dealing with the 'ecosystem', he sounds intellectually dishonest and he can only be "Trusted Like A fox", which happens to be the title of a James Hadley Chase novel. Hadley Chase, if he was alive today, would have written a book on Narendra Modi with all the 'masala' available on Modi's life. (IPA Service)

Seed and organic certification in Assam: Nurturing sustainable agriculture

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Agriculture is the backbone of Assam's economy, with a majority of the population engaged in farming. In recent years, there has been a significant shift towards sustainable agricultural practices, including the use of certified seeds and organic farming. Seed and organic certification play a crucial role in ensuring the quality, safety, and sustainability of agricultural products. This article delves into the importance of these certifications in Assam, the processes involved, and the benefits they bring to farmers and consumers alike.

Importance of seed certification

Seed certification is a quality assurance system where seeds are tested and verified for their genetic purity, physical quality, and disease resistance. This process is vital for ensuring that farmers receive high-quality seeds that can lead to higher yields and better crop resilience.

1. Enhancing crop yields:

Certified seeds are developed to be high-yielding and resistant to various pests and diseases. This ensures better productivity and reduces the risk of crop failure.

2. Ensuring genetic purity:

Certification ensures that the seeds are true to their type, maintaining the genetic integrity of the crop varieties. This is crucial for preserving traditional and local varieties that are well-adapted to Assam's unique climatic conditions.

3. Improving farmer income:

Higher yields and better-quality produce result in improved income for farmers. Additionally, certified seeds often come with guidelines and support from agricultural extension services, further aiding farmers in achieving optimal results.

Seed certification process in Assam

The seed certification process in Assam involves several steps, managed primarily by the Assam Seed and Organic Certification Agency (ASOCA).

A. Application and registration:

Farmers or seed producers must apply to ASOCA for certification, providing details about

the seed variety and the production field.

B. Field inspection:

Multiple inspections are conducted during the crop growth stages to ensure compliance with certification standards. Inspectors check for genetic purity, isolation distance, and overall crop health.

C. Seed sampling and testing:

Post-harvest, samples of the seeds are taken for laboratory testing. These tests assess the seeds for physical purity, moisture content, and germination rates.

4. Certification and labeling:

Once the seeds pass all tests, they are certified and labeled accordingly. This label acts as a guarantee of quality and authenticity.

Organic certification in Assam

Organic certification is a process that ensures that agricultural products are produced in accordance with organic farming standards. This includes the use of natural inputs, crop rotation, and other sustainable practices that promote ecological balance and biodiversity.

1. Health and environmental benefits:

Organic farming avoids the use of synthetic chemicals, leading to healthier produce and reduced environmental pollution. This is particularly important in regions like Assam, where agriculture is closely linked to the ecosystem.

2. Market demand:

There is a growing demand for organic products both locally and globally. Certification helps farmers tap into these lucrative markets, potentially increasing their income.

3. Sustainable practices:

Organic certification encourages practices that improve soil health, conserve water, and enhance biodiversity. This leads to more sustainable agricultural systems.

Organic certification process in Assam

The organic certification process in Assam is managed by bodies such as the Assam Seed and Organic Certification Agency (ASOCA). The process typically involves:

1. Application and Inspection:

Farmers apply for certification and undergo a

thorough inspection of their farming practices. This includes checking for the use of organic inputs, crop diversity, and soil management practices.

2. Transition Period:

Farmers must undergo a transition period, usually lasting two to three years, during which they convert their conventional farming practices to organic ones.

3. Certification and Monitoring:

After successfully transitioning and meeting all organic standards, farmers receive their certification. Continuous monitoring ensures compliance with organic standards.

Challenges and Opportunities

While seed and organic certification offer numerous benefits, they also present certain challenges:

1. Awareness and Training:

Many farmers are still unaware of the certification processes and the benefits they offer. There is a need for extensive training and awareness programs.

2. Initial Costs:

The certification process can be costly, especially for small-scale farmers. Financial support and subsidies from the government can help mitigate these costs.

3. Market Linkages:

Establishing strong market linkages for certified organic products is crucial. This requires the development of efficient supply chains and marketing strategies.

Conclusion

Seed and organic certification are pivotal in advancing sustainable agriculture in Assam. They ensure the availability of high-quality seeds, promote environmentally friendly farming practices, and open up new market opportunities for farmers. By addressing the challenges and leveraging the benefits, Assam can lead the way in sustainable agriculture, ensuring food security and environmental conservation for future generations. (The author is a Former Director, Assam Seed and Organic Certification Agency. He can be reached at mowsam2000@yahoo.co.in)

UK Labour's massive win is a positive development for Europe

By: Satyaki Chakraborty

As expected, the Labour Party won a resounding victory in the general elections in Britain held on July 4 by capturing more than 410 seats out of the total of 650 seats, thereby ousting the Conservative Party from power after its fourteen years rule. The Tories got only 119 seats. Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour Party is taking over as the new Prime Minister replacing Rishi Sunak who has already resigned.

The Labour Party under Starmer has been taking a centrist position on a number of issues affecting the working class in Britain since the earlier leader leftwing Jeremy Corbyn was ousted by Starmer from the leadership.

The inner party tussle within the Labour Party between the Corbynites and Starmer group intensified in the last two years leading to the denial of candidacy to many left wingers including Jeremy Corbyn in the July 4 polls. However, Corbyn fought as an independent and won from his constituency despite all the efforts of Starmer group to defeat him.

The margin of Labour victory is broadly in line with Tony Blair's 1997 win, and not as bad for the Tories as some opinion polls had predicted in the last ten days. Labour will have a highly comfortable Commons majority in the new term. The Labour got the full advantage of the continuous factional wars in the Conservative Party and the emergence of Reform Party by Nigel Farage which took away around 15 per cent vote base of the Tories.

The polling details show that the Liberal Democrats with 91 seats also eroded the traditional electoral base of the Tories in a few constituencies. The outgoing PM Rishi Sunak was reconciled to his party's defeat but he has retained his own seat. Now the issue is whether he retains his status as the leader of the Conservative Party in the new House

Keir Starmer has inherited a broken Britain, with millions struggling to pay the bills. To fix it, the new Labour government must turn its back on austerity and anti-democratic attitude to the genuine demands of the workers. British people are angry as the standard of common services for a decent livelihood has gone down.

Despite Sunak's latest efforts to add new jobs in the economy, the unemployment problem is acute. The new Labour Government has to do a lot for the improvement of the health facilities focusing on giving more funds to the National Health Service.

Keir Starmer can take credit for bringing Labour to the office in 2024 elections just as Tony Blair did it in 1997. He has good opportunity to start with taking the corrective measures to plug the loopholes in some areas of the economy. With Jeremy Corbyn and the left wingers out of the Labour Party, the British businessmen as also the other multinationals remain well disposed towards the Starmer Government.

Nobody expects the new Labour Government to bring out fundamental changes, neither in broad economic policy nor in foreign policy, but still the Labour victory is a positive development in the fight of the European people against far right ascendancy after their big victory in European Parliament.

France is going to its crucial second round elections on July 7. The anti far right forces are showing signs of uniting against the dominant far right party RN of Marine Le Pen. Even the French football star Kylien Mbappe has declared that 'We cannot allow our country to fall into the hands of Li Pen'.

There is a growing awareness that fascism is knocking at the door and it should be disallowed by joint efforts. Labour victory just two days before French elections gives the message that the right and far right can be defeated if the citizens join hands. (IPA Service)

Conservation – What we need is a cultural shift

By: M.R. Lahu

There have been alarming repercussions that people across the world are made to face. This is mainly due to their madness of being threatening to the globe that once we considered our mother, that helped the human race survive and flourish and other species exist for millions of years. As we grow into a single clan of modernized minds all over the world with communication, transportation and tendency to come closer through innovative and scientific inventions, irrespective of geography causing hurdles, there seems a feeling of betrayal being sensed in the form of climatic disorders and environmental chaos.

Man brought science and got him everything as he swung his magic wand of innovation and inventions. But there was something that was unpardonably forgotten, his compassionate communication with nature that genuinely nurtured his aspirations and ensured his existence. There was this deafening disconnect that began to bring disruption as he, for a long period, had forgotten to fine-tune his cultural alignment with Mother Nature. All he wanted was comfort and what he did was restructuring his approach. And what we lost was its compassionate embrace, a gesture that ensured our congenial existence throughout human civilization.

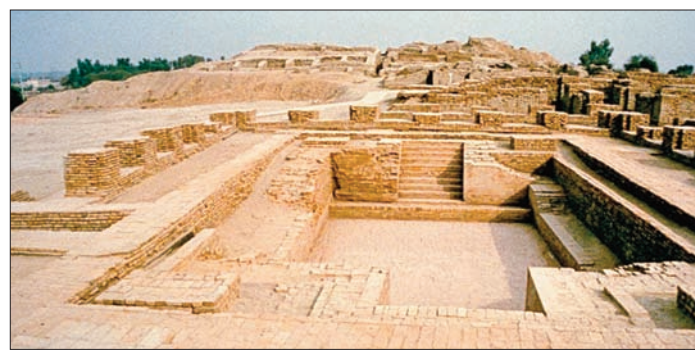
More than exploration there has been insistent exploitation that humans frequently justified as an integral authority of his intellect. We have often made reasons to justify damages that our interventions caused on nature. Natural calamities, adverse climatic impacts and nature's depleting resources have been warning signs. But human greed has been the driving force that frequently

damages our planet and the species on it. Our understanding was that they are totally inferior and our minds seem to have been occupied with dominant thoughts of disruption that we keep executing without even the slightest regret.

For instance let us take an example. Religious events and moments of community jubiliations ensure the slaughtering of millions of innocent animals. All that we want is to find reasons to display our might that otherwise, are excuses to establish our right to conveniently disturb their ambience of existence or declare our displeasure to coexist with less privileged species.

The common belief that has dominated the discourse is that man holds a divine right for disruption. Though he doesn't recognize the depth of rot he is creating, an existential crisis for him and other species is looming. But the usual fable deliberately declares his right to explore and if needed exploit the resources. This view terribly contradicts the very traditional belief in India which propagated the conservation of nature and the preservation of its essential values of coexistence. This includes the survival of a blade of grass to the macro elements of life. But what we need to keep in mind is an existence bereft of preserving life's variety of forms is totally dangerous.

Advancing with meticulous scientific inventions, man's interventions have always been deliberate and one-sided. To consider him as an apex species and forcefully disrupt other species with his intentional survival tactics, especially focusing on ways to reap benefits, has definitely become a catastrophic move. An emotional shift in the minds of people towards conservation of nature and strengthening cultural values in tune with its natural impulses,



which is suitable for the modern period, is a requirement.

More alarming is the influx of different sophisticated gadgets into our sphere which manages to dangerously alter even the purest micro-management of life called family. As the dominance of gadgets of disruptive sophistication has brought more silence and discord in their life, a small community of people under one roof is usually in mental disarray. So, basically, the human environment in modern days has partially been thrown into utter disorder.

Ancient texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana show profound respect for Mother Nature and there are numerous ways to conserve it and practice our traditionalist approach. There are multiple traditions through which the ancient Rishi attributed his respect to nature. The first one was his understanding of nature as a divine entity and therefore to be worshipped. Every element of nature was worshipped in different forms and names. They were considered the most venerable and the Rishi, for that matter, remained meditative on practices that he could invent and propagate for its conservation.

Of course, India had maintained a spiritual stance on everything that

was part of nature. That's the reason why we named rivers, mountains, trees and celestial beings individually and revered them, considering their power and share in making the resources available for the wellbeing of all. We respected life in all forms and did not hesitate to worship them. Our essential understanding revealed the truth of the divine being manifest in everything. Ensuring their existence was our means of establishing dharma. Protecting life in its various forms was an ideal doctrine. Sacred groves attached to temples in Kerala even today attract people for the elevation of their spiritual impulses. Groves were considered places of worship for snakes and spaces of existence for other animals.

And the emotion was to literally protect them in every village from human atrocity. Sacred groves naturally existed as healing centers and places of spiritual well-being. The universe being composed of five elements, the Hindu way of life embarks on a serious understanding of life. It declares the five basic elements as earth, water, fire, air and space with which the entire creation is designed. The concoction of these five elements is instrumental in life manifesting in various forms, declared the Vedic aphorisms.

India's recent diplomatic outreach also reflected this congeniality tak-

ing solid shape. Its G20 presidency with the declaration of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" which means 'the world is one family' was an attempt to make an ideal outreach to the global humanity. This was a declaration that sensed urgency for humans to go back to our cultural roots well before we destroyed nature's survivability. India's G20 presidency could bring back its traditional approach of interconnectedness of life onto the discourse table. This is because we, as a nation, have long ago realized the importance of coexistence, recognizing that humans, animals, plants and the environment are all part of a unified whole and therefore interconnected.

Our fundamental belief system maintained reverence for nature and nurtured its resources. We believed in a natural order and balance in the universe and learnt to live without disrupting its harmony. Again, the reason that a large number of people in India still practice vegetarianism is this understanding. Our rituals and practices were fundamentally meant to promote environmental health. Sustainable agricultural practices without disrupting soil health were part of our collective responsibility.

Time has come to plan for the future generations before we destroy their rightful share of resources. Earth is not only for humans. Our fellow inhabitants, right from an ant to the most gigantic mammal have a right to amicably survive here. Humanity in real terms needs to become humane. We can't end up as the last link of our civilization. We need to be known as the best part of its flow that kept plentiful for the generations to come, the flow that did not allow Mother Nature to dry and disappear. (The author is a freelance journalist based in Kerala who can be reached at mrilahu30@gmail.com)

The precarious balance: Humanity, nature, and divinity in the struggle for survival



By: Dipak Kurmi

The current struggle for survival extends beyond humanity alone; it encompasses nature and divinity. Emerging as the antagonist in this narrative is the techno-human, posing a grave threat to the very existence of nature, divinity, and ultimately to its own survival. Could this battle for existence take such a sinister turn that humanity turns its weapons upon itself, becoming mere fuel for the relentless techno-machine, devoid of all compassion? Like a bullet obediently fulfilling its purpose, humanity, in its new guise as a monstrous amalgamation, risks becoming its own greatest adversary, aiming its destructive potential inward.

Survival hinges on strength and prowess; those wielding power ultimately prevail. Humanity has demonstrated its dominance over other life forms. We have harnessed the power of water, converting it into electricity that fuels countless tasks. The boundary between life and death isn't measured in decades but in the flick of a switch; a careless push can propel us into the boundless realms of the unknown.

Technology has elevated humanity to its current pinnacle of power, yet it also holds the potential to transform this techno-dominance into a vast graveyard, halting everything in its tracks. While individuals expand their mental horizons like towering mountains, physical resilience seems to wane. A future looms where the will and ability to move might diminish, as everything becomes accessible with a mere click on a laptop, guided by a simple app.

Survival presents a curious paradox, testing our ability to withstand life's inherent destructive forces. The elements that nurture life can also bring about its downfall. Enraged waters claim countless lives, while turbulent winds unleash widespread devastation when their calm dissipates. Animals have endured mankind's relentless onslaught, while trees continue to face the brunt of our assault. Millions of birds and animals are slaughtered and consumed voraciously. International bodies advocate for animal rights, yet the question remains: how many creatures can truly be spared from suffering?

Survival poses complex challenges devoid of easy solutions. In our hubris, we wield power without regard for the dignity, grace, or space of lesser beings. When did humanity decide that all of nature exists solely for our service? Who authorized us to establish an empire where we could freely enslave others? It seems improbable that gods ordained such mandates; perhaps they presented them only as temptations for humanity upon expulsion from Eden.

Taking the offer seriously, humanity proceeded to secure everything for itself, relegating all other life forms to mere fuel for its unchecked pride. Those who have triumphed in the survival struggle against other beings must introspect: do they live with dignity? Is mere survival sufficient, or is there room for meaningful enhancement? How can we transform mere existence into a lifelong source of joy for humanity?

Undoubtedly, following the prime mover (God), man stands as the secondary force shaping this world. While he did not create it, he has uncovered God's magnificent creation in all its breathtaking splendor. Captivated by the thrill of innovation, he couldn't resist forging a parallel universe of technology.

If this pursuit continues unabated, man may well threaten the celestial hierarchy, currently besieged. The focus of survival now turns to the gods, as humanity, having subdued nature, sets its sights on the heart of creation.

With command over the mysterious and sacred mechanisms of nature's thought and operation, man's ongoing exploration poses a dire prospect for the gods, potentially unraveling the very secrets of creation. Yet, this may spell a bleak day not just for God but also for humanity, who could feel all mysteries have been laid bare. Should further exploration cease? The gods, surely, will not abide such defiance, as man openly challenges them and seeks to wrest control over the operations of life and death.

Taking a balanced perspective on the struggle for survival, it becomes clear that man, nature, and God must maintain a harmonious equilibrium. Too much knowledge can lead to self-destruction for humanity. The key to a happier existence lies in respecting the space of each facet of creation.

Technology, driven by human ambition, emerges as the antagonist in this narrative. To safeguard against potential extinction, humanity must relinquish pride and refrain from further cosmic exploration. The three pillars of the world—nature, humanity, and divinity—should align harmoniously. There should be no encroachment into the domains of nature or God; rather, each should live with dignity and grace.

Embracing a philosophy of love and let live, rooted in love and compassion, is paramount. Survival should not be seen as a battle strategy but as a collective journey toward coexistence and mutual respect.

Humanity must strive to foster respectful relationships with both Nature and divine forces, even if it requires imposing self-restraints to refrain from crossing boundaries that lie before us. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Woes of flooding

By: Kamal Baruah

It was another evening of 15 August, 1950, while Assam was jolted by the massive earthquake of 8.7 magnitudes in the Richter scale. Residents got frightened that lasted 8 long minutes. Our parents said - the Brahmaputra River was swollen in the next day morning with floating fallen trees all over that claimed a thousand lives. The aftermath of the earthquake was devastating. The riverbed rose and what had been a stable course of Brahmaputra became a constantly shifting one eroding the banks.

As a result, the erstwhile town of Palasbari was eroded by the ferocious river-Brahmaputra in 1954. The construction of a long DTP (Dibrugarh Town Planning) Dyke in the early 50's was somehow protected Dibrugarh town from the flood and erosion. Interestingly, the water level of the river often crosses the danger level with 105 meters during monsoon against the minimum topographic elevation of 94 meters of the town. Subsequently, the maintenance works of rising and strengthening of dyke is being carried out time to time to save the town as well as the Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh.

Once the largest river island Majuli is now fast-disappearing. The mighty Brahmaputra flows from melting glaciers, accumulating sediment of sands and silts naturally by erosion on its upstream riverbanks and finally depositon into the downstream. Thus create Chars - island-like silt depositions in the lower parts of river basins. Chars have demographic issues with geographical barriers and regular flooding and erosion. The people of Assam have lived with floods for cen-

turies and their fights for rehabilitation are still on.

A severe weather is an unfortunate fact of life during the monsoon. We remember many occasions from our childhood, when we caught up by floodwater at our village in the midnight hours. We placed concrete blocks under sofas and other furniture to raise them up off the floor away from rising floodwaters and stayed on the bed until the flood level subsides in a couple of days. Our ancestors believed, flood comes and goes. We were accustomed with flood and there was no embankment then.

When it comes to water activities on flood days, we set out by banana tree boat for day long fishing. Fishes are available in abundance on those days. While villagers learned to live with nature. Low-lying neighbourhoods had to evacuate their home for safety on the road side. Flood affects their agricultural crops and muddy water from flash floods has made farmland unusable. Farmers faced grim battle for livelihood.

SM Huq, a former Director of Central Water Commission, New Delhi quoted once while visiting Assam after Palasbari erosion. The Brahmaputra isn't just a river, it's a huge sea. It has vastness of water landscape amazingly 15 km wide. Assam flood is singularly different in terms of duration and magnitude of erosion. It cannot be controlled merely by strengthening embankment and anti-erosion measures. Let Brahmaputra flows, and people have to live with water and explore new avenues. Besides sorrows they can raise the economic potential by growing crops in water.

The years rolled by, and there is no

respite. With the monsoon arrives, there is incessant rain in the hills and the valleys flooded, when the river burst its banks.

Geographically Assam lies beneath the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas and is bounded on the north by Bhutan and the east by Arunachal Pradesh. We can't get away from the plight of flood as flood enters upper Assam from Arunachal, where it receives huge quantity water from China. Besides, lower Assam got affected with the release of water from Bhutan's Kurichhu dam.

Assam kept suffering, making it impossible for its people to stay safe, let alone plan ahead. The low-lying Bangladesh is hardest hit due to floods in Brahmaputra and its Sylhet is most vulnerable to the impacts of the human-caused climate crisis and millions of people in Bangladesh become climate migrants to Assam and Bengal. And north-east India especially Assam is facing an influx of several lakhs of refugees/illegal immigrants through its porous maritime boundary.

While China's plan to build a hydropower dam on Brahmaputra has raised concern among downstream countries India and Bangladesh. The annual discharge of Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river system is the third largest river system in the world after the Amazon and Congo. China has attempted to control the Huang-He River by building overflow channels and increasingly taller dikes. Also constructed a series of dams to control the river's flow, produce electricity and supply water for irrigation.

Extreme flooding and droughts may be the new norm for the Brahmaputra valley, challenging its people and ecosystem.

Dams and hydroelectric projects on rivers damage the riverine ecology and exacerbate damage due to floods. The approach of the government policies to mitigate the impact of floods has been mainly focused on building embankments. These are largely ineffective with the increasing intensity of floods. Ongoing project at Subansiri dam has been criticized by environmentalists.

Then British had abandoned the idea of embankments to control the flooding of Indian rivers. Unfortunately, large populations continue to stay inside the embankment at the mercy of the imminent flood. The build-up of silt, sand, gravel land stone in the riverbeds increased the height of the mean water level of the rivers and scouring of embankments leading to catastrophic breaches.

Environmentalists have argued that an approach that integrates water management with land use planning, agriculture, and ecology is needed to manage floods. For a long-term sustainable solution, a "basin-wide approach" has been advocated to address the problem at the source and for that all the basin-sharing countries China, Bhutan, India and Bangladesh must join together.

Throughout most of its history, India has attempted to control Brahmaputra by embankment while the main river receives huge amount of water from many tributaries. An ambitious long term construction plan and flood control program is needed to stop the Brahmaputra bursting its banks. Is it really possible that the mere presence of few embankments at tributaries can stop flooding across Assam? The Assam's tale of woe continues.

Magical Mandarmani: A perfect beach holiday

By: Dimple Sarma

Under the gentle morning sun of April last year, we embarked on our much-anticipated journey to Mandarmani. It was a long due plan from the past few years, but could not make it for different reasons. The calm beauty of the beach called out to us, offering a unique adventure. Through meticulous planning, we had diligently secured our hotel accommodations a month prior, guaranteeing a comfortable stay for our expedition in Kolkata's coastal treasure.

Undoubtedly, this excursion stood as one of the most exhilarating prospects for our esteemed group of women, offering the opportunity to embrace novelty and adventure.

In Mandarmani, the accommodation is more than just a place to sleep - it's part of the whole experience. Imagine waking up with the sound of sea waves and when you open the window it's just a breathtaking sea view.

Mandarmani has a bunch of places to stay, so you'll find something that fits your style and budget. Whether you're into fancy beach resorts or cozy cottages by the shore, there's something for everyone.

As we drove away from Kolkata's busy streets, something magical happened. The scenery changed into a



beautiful countryside, painted by nature. Along the road, we saw small coconut stalls, each one covered by colourful umbrellas. These umbrellas not only shielded the vendors from the sun but also added bright colours to the green landscape.

A light rain started to fall, making the air feel fresh and clean. It was a peaceful scene, very different from the noisy city we had just left. Mandarmani Beach near Kolkata is a peaceful coastal retreat only a quick drive from the lively city. Originally a village, local residents have transformed it into a stunning tourist destination.

With its calm shores, clean sandy beaches, and various exciting water sports, Mandarmani is a hidden treasure, providing the ideal mix of tran-

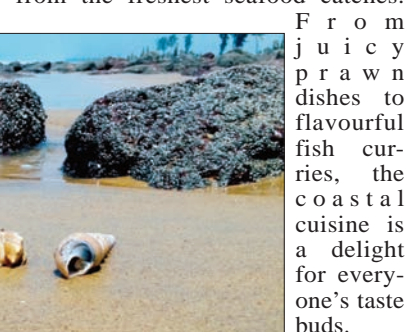
quillity and excitement.

The natural beauty of Mandarmani is really beautiful. It has big sandy beaches where you can walk, sit in the sun, or make sandcastles. When the day ends, the sky looks amazing with lots of colours during sunset. The sound of the waves is calm and nice, making it an ideal place to relax and reflect.

For adventure lovers Mandarmani

offers a variety of water sports and activities. These thrilling experiences ensure an unforgettable beach getaway filled with excitement and adventure.

Mandarmani is a paradise for seafood lovers. It offers culinary experience like no other. Indulge in a variety of mouthwatering dishes made from the freshest seafood catches.



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At the beach market, you'll find a lively scene full of interesting things to check out. There are stalls selling

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all sorts of stuff like handmade crafts, souvenirs, and clothes perfect for a day by the sea. You can wander around, chat with the sellers, and maybe even score a good deal. There are so many things to purchase at low price. The colourful stalls everywhere keep attracting tourists with their beautiful goods.

Don't forget to try some yummy snacks from the food stalls nearby. Food stalls mainly runs on varieties of fried fishes. It's undoubtedly a heaven for fish lovers. It's a fun part of visiting the beach that adds extra excitement to your day! Two days at Mandarmani is enough for a visitor. Although we went for this trip in

April and of course enjoyed it, but ideal time to visit this place is between October to February to enjoy pleasant weather. Add Sunscreen, sunglasses and hat to your list while visiting beach. It is good to wear comfy clothes while enjoying sea waves.

For a hassle-free enjoyment, it is advisable to book hotels prior to visit the place especially during peak seasons. Mandarmani is 4 hours' drive from Kolkata. But the beauty of road won't make you exhausted. So, pack your bags, unwind on the sandy shores, and create cherished memories that will linger long after your visit to Mandarmani. (The author can be reached at sarmadimple@gmail.com)

Pezeshkian secured over 17 million votes, while Jalili obtained more than 13 million

Reformist Pezeshkian wins Iran's presidential runoff election, besting hard-liner Jalili

DUBAI, July 6: Reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian won Iran's runoff presidential election on Saturday, besting hard-liner Saeed Jalili by promising to reach out to the West and ease enforcement of the country's mandatory headscarf law after years of sanctions and protests squeezing the Islamic Republic.

Pezeshkian promised no radical changes to Iran's Shiite theocracy in his campaign and long has held Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as the final arbiter of all matters of state in the country. But even Pezeshkian's modest aims will be challenged by an Iranian government still largely held by hard-liners, the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, and Western fears over Tehran enriching uranium to near-weapons-grade levels.

A vote count offered by authorities put Pezeshkian as the winner with 16.3 million votes to Jalili's 13.5 million in Friday's election. Overall, Iran's Interior Ministry said 30 million people voted in an election held without internationally recognized monitors.

Supporters of Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon and longtime lawmaker, entered the streets of Tehran and other cities before dawn to celebrate as his lead grew over Jalili, a hard-line for-

mer nuclear negotiator.

"Dear people of Iran, the elections are over and this is just the beginning of our cooperation," Pezeshkian wrote on the social platform X, still banned in Iran. "The difficult path ahead will not be smooth except with your companionship, empathy and trust. I extend my hand to you and I swear on my honor that I will not leave you alone on this path. Do not leave me alone."

Pezeshkian's win still sees Iran at a delicate moment, with tensions high in the Mideast over the Israel-Hamas war, Iran's advancing nuclear program, and a looming election in the United States that could put any chance of a detente between Tehran and Washington at risk.

Pezeshkian's victory also wasn't a rout of Jalili, meaning he'll have to carefully navigate Iran's internal politics as the doctor has never held a sensitive, high-level security post.

The first round of voting June 28 saw the lowest turnout in the history of the Islamic Republic since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iranian officials have long pointed to turnout as a sign of support for the country's Shiite theocracy, which has been under strain after years of sanctions crushing Iran's economy, mass



demonstrations and intense crackdowns on all dissent.

Government officials up to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei predicted a higher participation rate as voting got underway, with state television airing images of modest lines at some polling centers across the country.

However, online videos purported to show some polls empty while a survey of several dozen sites in the capital, Tehran, saw light traffic amid a heavy security presence on the streets.

Authorities put the turnout in Friday's election at 49.6%, still historically low for an Iranian presidential election. They counted 607,575 voided votes in the contest — which often are a sign of protest by those who feel obligated to cast a ballot but reject both candidates.

"I don't expect anything from

him — I am happy that the vote put the brake on hard-liners," said bank employee Fatemeh Babaei, who voted for Pezeshkian. "I hope Pezeshkian can return administration to a way in which all people can feel there is a tomorrow."

Taher Khalili, a Kurdish-origin Iranian who runs a small tailor shop in Tehran, offered another reason to be hopeful while handing out candy to passersby.

"In the end, someone from my hometown and the west of Iran came to power," Khalili said. "I hope he will make economy better for small businesses."

Pezeshkian, who speaks Azeri, Farsi and Kurdish, campaigned on outreach to Iran's many ethnicities. He represents the first Iranian president from western Iran in decades — something people hope will aid the country as those in the West are consid-

ered more tolerant because of the ethnic and religious diversity in their area.

The election came amid heightened regional tensions. In April, Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Israel over the war in Gaza, while militia groups that Tehran arms in the region — such as the Lebanese Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels — are engaged in the fighting and have escalated their attacks.

Iran is also enriching uranium at near weapons-grade levels and maintains a stockpile large enough to build several nuclear weapons, should it choose to do so. And while Khamenei remains the final decision-maker on matters of state, whichever man ends up winning the presidency could bend the country's foreign policy toward either confrontation or collaboration with the West.

The campaign also repeatedly touched on what would happen if former President Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew America from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, won the November election. Iran has held indirect talks with President Joe Biden's administration, though there's been no clear movement back toward constraining Tehran's nuclear program for the lifting of economic sanctions. (AP)

New UK PM Starmer assembles Cabinet for the first meeting: 'Now we get to work'

LONDON, July 6: Prime Minister Keir Starmer held his first Cabinet meeting Saturday as his new government takes on the massive challenge of fixing a heap of domestic woes and winning over a public weary from years of austerity, political chaos and a battered economy.

Starmer welcomed the new ministers around the table at 10 Downing St., saying it had been the honour of his life to be asked by King Charles III to form a government in a ceremony that officially elevated him to prime minister.

"We have a huge amount of work to do, so now we get on with our work," he said.

Starmer's Labour Party delivered the biggest blow to the Conservatives in their two-century history Friday in a landslide victory on a platform of change.

Among a raft of problems they face are boosting a sluggish economy, fixing a broken health care system, and restoring trust in government.

"Just because Labour won a big landslide doesn't mean all the problems that the Conservative government has faced has gone away," said Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London.

In his first remarks as prime minister Friday after the meeting "kissing of hands" ceremony with Charles at Buckingham Palace, Starmer said he would get to work immediately, though he cautioned it would take some time to show results.

"Changing a country is not like flicking a switch," he said as enthusiastic supporters cheered him outside his new official residence at 10 Downing. "This will take a while. But have no doubt that the work of change begins — immediately."

Starmer singled out several of the big items, such as fixing the revered but hobbling National Health Service and securing its borders, a reference to a larger global problem across Europe and the US of absorbing an influx of migrants fleeing war, poverty as well as drought, heat waves and floods attributed to climate change.

Conservatives struggled to contain the flow of migrants arriving across the English Channel, failing to live up to ex-Prime Minister's Rishi Sunak's pledge to "stop the boats."

Starmer has said he will scrap the Conservatives controversial plan to deport asylum-seekers to Rwanda. The plan had cost hundreds of millions of pounds (dollars) without a single flight taking off.

"Labour is going to need to find a solution to the small boats coming across the channel," Bale said. "It's going to ditch the Rwanda scheme, but it's going to have to come up with other solutions to deal with that particular problem."

Suella Braverman, a Conservative hard liner on immigration who is a possible contender to replace Sunak as party leader, criticised Starmer's plan to end the Rwanda pact. (AP)

Voters in France's overseas territories kick off a pivotal parliamentary election

PARIS, July 6: Voters in France's overseas territories and living abroad started casting ballots on Saturday in parliamentary runoff elections that could hand an unprecedented victory to the nationalist far right.

Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration party National Rally came out on top of first-round voting last Sunday, followed by a coalition of centre-left, hard-left and Greens parties — and President Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance in a distant third.

The second-round voting began on Saturday off the Canadian coast in the North Atlantic territory of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, and follows in French territories in the Caribbean, South Pacific and the Indian Ocean, along with French voters living abroad.

The elections wrap up Sunday in mainland France. Initial polling projections are expected when the final voting stations close at 8 p.m. Paris time (1800 GMT), with early official results expected late Sunday and early Monday. Macron called the snap legislative vote after the National Rally won the most votes in France in European Parliament elections last month. The party, which blames immigration for many of France's problems, has seen its support climb steadily over the past decade and is hoping to obtain an absolute majority in the second round. That would allow National Rally leader Jordan Bardella to become prime minister and form a government that would be at odds with Macron's policies on Ukraine, police powers and other issues.

Preelection polls suggest that the party may win the most seats in the National Assembly but fall short

Hamas clears the way for a possible cease-fire after dropping key demand, officials say

DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA), July 6: Hamas has given initial approval for a US-backed proposal for a phased cease-fire deal in Gaza, dropping a key demand that Israel give an up-front commitment for a complete end to the war, a Hamas and an Egyptian official said Saturday.

The apparent compromise by the militant group — which controlled Gaza before triggering the war with an October 7 attack on Israel — could help deliver the first pause in fighting since last November and set the stage for further talks on ending a devastating nine-month war.

But all sides cautioned that a deal is still not guaranteed. The two officials, who spoke on conditions of anonymity to discuss the ongoing negotiations, said Washington's phased deal will first include a "full and complete" six-week cease-fire that would see the release of a number of hostages, including women, the elderly and the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

During these 42 days, Israeli forces would also withdraw from densely populated areas of Gaza and allow the return of displaced people to their homes in northern Gaza, the pair said.

Over that period, Hamas, Israel and the mediators would also negotiate the terms of the second phase that could see the release of the remaining male hostages, both civilians and soldiers, the officials said.

In return, Israel would free additional Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

The third phase would see the return of any remaining hostages, including bodies of dead cap-

tives, and the start of a yearslong reconstruction project. Hamas still wants "written guarantees" from mediators that Israel will continue to negotiate a permanent cease-fire deal once the first phase goes into effect, the two officials said.

The Hamas representative told The Associated Press the group's approval came after it received "verbal commitments and guarantees" from the mediators that the war won't be resumed and that negotiations will continue until a permanent cease-fire is reached.

"Now we want these guarantees on paper," he said. Months of on-again off-again cease-fire talks have stumbled over Hamas' demand that any deal include a complete end to the war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has offered to pause the fighting, but not end it altogether until Israel reaches its goals of destroying Hamas' military and governing capabilities and returning all hostages held by the militant group.

Hamas has previously expressed concern Israel will restart the war after the hostages are released. Likewise, Israeli officials have said they are worried Hamas will draw out the talks and the initial cease-fire indefinitely, without releasing all the hostages.

Netanyahu's office did not respond to requests for comment, and there was no immediate comment from Washington.

On Friday, the Israeli prime minister confirmed that the Mossad spy agency's chief had paid a lightning visit to Qatar, one of the key mediators. But his office said "gaps between the parties" remained. (AP)

NATO leaders will vow to pour weapons into Ukraine for another year, but membership is off the table

BRUSSELS, July 6: NATO leaders plan to pledge next week to keep pouring arms and ammunition into Ukraine at current levels for at least another year, hoping to reassure the war-ravaged country of their ongoing support and show Russian President Vladimir Putin that they will not walk away.

US President Joe Biden and his counterparts meet in Washington for a three-day summit beginning Tuesday to mark the military alliance's 75th anniversary as Russian troops press their advantage along Ukraine's eastern front in the third year of the war.

Speaking to reporters on Friday, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said NATO's 32 member countries have been spending around 40 billion euros (USD 43 billion) each year on military equipment for Ukraine since the war began in February 2022 and that this should be "a minimum baseline" going forward.

"I expect allies will decide at the summit to sustain this level within the next year," Stoltenberg said. He said the amount would be shared among nations based on their economic growth and that the leaders will review the figure

when they meet again in 2025.

NATO is desperate to do more for Ukraine but is struggling to find new ways. Already, NATO allies provide 99 per cent of the military support it gets. Soon, the alliance will manage equipment deliveries. But two red lines remain: no NATO membership until the war is over, and no NATO boots on the ground there.

At their last summit, NATO

leaders agreed to fast-track Ukraine's membership process — although the country is unlikely to join for many years — and set up a high-level body for emergency consultations. Several countries promised more military equipment.

A year on, they want to put on a fresh display of unity and resolve, even as uncertainty over elections roils many of the organization's biggest members. The possible return of Donald Trump, who undermined trust among the allies while

he was the US president, is a particular concern.

But governments in France and Germany also were weakened in elections this year. Italy is led by a prime minister whose party has neo-fascist roots, while an anti-immigrant party heads a shaky coalition in the Netherlands and Spain's Cabinet relies on small parties to rule. The UK will have a new leader.

Whoever might be in power though, it's become clear that there's not a lot more that NATO can do.

Lately, Stoltenberg has insisted on a long-term commitment to emergency consultations. Several countries promised more military equipment.

A year on, they want to put on a fresh display of unity and resolve, even as uncertainty over elections roils many of the organization's biggest members. The possible return of Donald Trump, who undermined trust among the allies while



Jailed former premier Imran Khan's party postpones Islamabad rally after cancellation of NOC

ISLAMABAD, July 6: Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Saturday postponed its rally in the suburbs of Islamabad after revocation of its permission by the authorities, citing security concerns.

The party was set to organise its power show at Tamol at 6 pm for which it had secured a no-object certificate (NOC) from the Islamabad deputy commissioner.

However, the city administration on Friday cancelled the permission saying that the NOC issued by the deputy commissioner was reviewed afresh in the wake of security concerns.

An official press release said the chief commissioner decided to cancel the certificate issued for the political gathering in view of the current security situation, the advent of Muharram, security concerns and reports of law enforcement agencies.

Initially, the PTI leadership had threatened to go ahead with the rally despite the cancellation of permission. PTI

leader Omar Ayub Khan told reporters late last night that his party would go ahead with the planned meeting "come what may".

However, there was a change of stance and today Omar accompanied by PTI chief Gohar Khan said at a press conference that the planned rally had been postponed until after the Muharram.

"God willing [...] we will hold it after Ashura through a legal process," Omar said, adding that the PTI would not sit after one rally but it would hold several other rallies in Lahore, Karachi and other cities.

Gohar Khan claimed that several PTI workers had been picked up in recent days, vowing to take the matter before the court. "We strongly condemn this state brutality," he said.

Earlier in the day, the party filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking contempt proceedings against the Islamabad district administration and police for cancelling the NOC. (PTI)

Biden says he was sick during debate, asserts only 'Lord Almighty' can drive him out of presidential race

WASHINGTON, July 6: US President Joe Biden has dismissed concerns about his health and doubts about his re-election bid in November, brushing off a poor performance in the presidential debate as a "bad episode" and insisting that only "the Lord Almighty" could persuade him to exit the race.

Biden, 81, said this on Friday in a television interview, a week after his disastrous debate performance in Atlanta against his Republican rival Donald Trump, following which some of his own Democratic Party leaders started urging him to step down and his approval rating plummeted.

In the 22-minute high-stakes interview on ABC News aimed at quelling a burgeoning rebellion in the Democratic party, Biden, who is seeking a second term, said he had "a bad night" and he was "exhausted" and "sick" during his first presidential debate with Trump.

He asserted that only the "Lord Almighty" could make him drop out of the race to win the November 5 election.

He claimed that he is "running the world" and no one is "more qualified" to be president. Asked whether he would be willing to have an independent cognitive evaluation and release the results to the American people, Biden said: "Look, I have a cognitive test every single day. Every day I've had tests. Everything I do. You know, not only am I campaigning, I'm running the world."

The president said in the interview that he was "sick" before the debate. Asked whether it was a bad episode or a sign of a more serious condition, Biden dismissed those concerns.

"It was a bad episode. No indication of any serious condition. I was exhausted. I didn't listen to my instincts in terms of preparing and — and a bad night," Biden said during his first interview after the debate, adding that his top party leadership are asking him to stay in the race.

"Because I was sick. I was feeling terrible. Matter of fact the docs (doctors) are with me. I asked if they did a COVID test because they were trying to figure out what was wrong. They did a test to see whether or not I had some infection, a virus. I didn't. I just had a really bad cold," he said and reiterated multiple times that he was running for the presidency.

Blaming himself for the bad debate night in Atlanta, Biden said, "Yeah, look. The whole way I prepared, nobody's fault but mine. I prepared what I usually



would do sitting down as I did come back with foreign leaders or the National Security Council for explicit detail," adding that Trump "lied 28 times" during the debate.

Biden said none of the major Democratic party leaders have asked him to drop out and asserted that he would withdraw only if the "Lord Almighty" asked him to.

"If the Lord Almighty came down and said 'Joe, get out of the race,' I'd get out of the race. The Lord Almighty's not coming down," he added.

The president tried to avoid questions on both his mental fitness and cognitive tests.

"Do you dispute that there have been more lapses, especially in the last seven months?" Biden was asked. "Can I run the 100 in 10 flat? No. But I'm still in good shape," he responded.

"Are you more frail?" he was asked. "No. Come keep my schedule," he said.

Biden alleged that Trump is a pathological liar. Asked by the interviewer whether he was being honest with himself about his ability to beat Trump, Biden said, "Yes, Yes, yes, yes."

He pointed to previous polls that showed he couldn't win in 2020 as proof and subsequent down-ballot elections, denying extensive polling that reflects a race where he is trailing.

In a reaction to Biden's interview, Indian American Congressman Ro Khanna, according to The New York Times, said he expected "complete transparency" from the White House and a willingness to answer "many legitimate questions" from the news media and voters about the president's abilities.

"He has to earn that trust, and that requires more than one interview," Khanna was quoted as saying by the daily. (PTI)

2 killed, 10 injured as heavy rain lashes Kathmandu, other parts of Nepal

KATHMANDU, July 6: At least two workers building a tunnel at a hydropower project in Nepal were killed and ten injured as heavy rain lashed Kathmandu and other parts of the country on Friday and Saturday, officials said.

Two labourers died on Friday after they were buried in the tunnel of the under-construction Bhotekoshi Hydropower Project in Sindhupalchowk district, 125 km East of Kathmandu.

Their bodies have been recovered. As many as 12 workers were buried when the dam side tunnel of Jhirpu Electro Power Company Limited, which is under construction in Bhotekoshi Rural Municipality, collapsed following heavy rainfall.

The police said 10 workers were injured in the incident. The injured were rescued and admitted to a local hospital for treatment.

Separately, an 18-year-old boy went missing after the Rapti river in the Dang district of Western Nepal swept him away. However, two other men who were stranded on a tree near the swollen river were rescued by security personnel, according to the police.

A woman has also gone missing in Dolakha district, about 180 kilometres East of Kathmandu, after being swept away by the flooding river.

The police have started a river-bank patrolling after the water level of rivers in the Kathmandu Valley increased alarmingly in the wake of incessant rainfall.

Most places in Bagmati, Gandaki and Lumbini provinces received light to moderate rain while heavy rainfall occurred in a few places of Bagmati, Koshi, Gandaki and Karnali. (PTI)



KYIV, July 6: Russian strikes overnight left over 100,000 households without power in northern Ukraine and cut off the water supply to a regional capital, Ukrainian authorities reported on Saturday, while civilian casualties rose sharply in the country's embattled east.

The northern Sumy region, which borders Russia, was plunged into darkness after Russian strikes late Friday damaged energy infrastructure, the Ukrainian Energy Ministry said. Hours later, the Ukrainian public broadcaster reported that Russian drones hit the provincial capital, also called Sumy, cutting off water by hitting power lines that feed its system of pumps.

Russian state agency RIA cited a local pro-Kremlin "underground" leader as saying that Moscow's forces overnight hit a plant producing rocket ammunition in the city, which had a pre-war population of over 256,000. The report didn't specify what weapon was used, and the claim could not be independ-

ently verified. Explosions rocked the city during an air raid warning early Saturday, according to Ukrainian media reports.

In the Donetsk region in the east, Russian shelling on Friday and overnight killed 11 civilians and wounded 43, local Gov. Vadym Filashkin reported on Saturday. Five people died in the town of Selydove southeast of Pokrovsk, the eastern city that has emerged as a front-line hotspot.

The Ukrainian General Staff on Saturday morning said that Ukrainian and Russian forces clashed 45 times near Pokrovsk over the previ-

ous day. According to Filashkin, three more people died in Chasiv Yar, the strategically located town in Donetsk that has been reduced to rubble under a monthlong Russian assault.

A Ukrainian military spokesperson on Thursday told the AP that Ukrainian forces had retreated from a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Chasiv Yar. The town's elevated location gives it strategic importance, and military analysts say its fall would put nearby cities in jeopardy. It could also compromise critical Ukrainian supply routes and bring Russia closer to its stated aim of seizing the entire Donetsk region.

According to the Ukrainian General Staff, Russian forces on Friday and overnight launched six rocket strikes and 55 airstrikes across Ukraine, and used more than 70 "glide bombs" — retrofitted Soviet-era weapons that have wrought devastation in the country in recent weeks. (AP)

'Government has already introduced e-Bidhansabha (Assembly), and e-cabinet'

One nation one election is essential: Tripura CM

AGARTALA, July 6: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha on Saturday asserted that 'one nation one election' is the need of the hour as the model code of conduct imposed for various polls has been affecting the pace of development activities.

After the Lok Sabha elections, the Northeastern state is set to witness polls for three-tier panchayat, autonomous council and civic bodies, he said.

"Development works get stalled for several months as elections are held in a cycle. The 'one nation one election' model is the need of the hour," Saha said at a government programme here.

A high-level panel headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind had, in March, submitted its report on 'one nation, one election' to President Droupadi Murmu.

It recommended simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and state assemblies as the first step followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 days.

During the programme, the chief



minister urged government officials to complete their assigned work in the stipulated time.

Saha said his government has already introduced e-Bidhansabha (Assembly), and e-cabinet as part of the digitisation of administrative work.

"Now, the officials don't need to carry files as work is being done by

using the e-cabinet facilities. It ensures transparency and effectiveness," he added.

In another programme, the chief minister claimed that several INDIA bloc leaders were either in jail or were released from jails. They made attempts so that Narendra Modi could not become the prime minister for the third

consecutive term but failed, he said.

"Narendra Modi's return as the prime minister for a third term was necessary for the country. We all know what had happened before 2014. Terrorists had reached Parliament House killing security personnel (in 2001). The Northeast was boiling due to insurgency," he said.

He was addressing an event to commemorate the birth anniversary of Syama Prasad Mookerjee, one of the founders of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the forerunner to the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Referring to Rahul Gandhi's first speech as the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha in which he accused BJP leaders of dividing people on communal lines, the chief minister claimed that the Congress leader is "unpredictable while making statements". A portion of Gandhi's speech has been expunged.

Saha also expressed happiness with the party's victory in Odisha in the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. (PTI)

UNC petition to PM on Manipur crisis

IMPHAL, July 6: The United Naga Council (UNC) has petitioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi that, "while formulating any plans for resolution of the ongoing conflict in Manipur, extreme caution must be taken to avoid further conflicts".

The UNC team is camping in New Delhi.

In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister on Friday in New Delhi, the UNC said, "In our earlier representations, we have stated our disagreement in no uncertain terms that our land will not be allowed to be alienated to appeasement policy in favour of a particular community(s). The government of India must note that the following districts and areas belonging to the Nagas must not be allowed to be bifurcated or alienated at any cost". The "districts and areas belonging to the Nagas" as mentioned in the memorandum are "undivided Senapati District, Ukhrul district, Chandel district, Tamenglong district and Churachandpur district that includes areas of the so called newly created districts of Kamjong, Kangpokpi, Tegnoupal and Noney".

The subject of the UNC memorandum is "reaffirmation of the established position of the Nagas in Manipur in the backdrop of the ongoing conflict between Meetei and Kuki Z0 and request for Early Settlement of Indo-Naga political issue upholding the ethos of the Framework Agreement signed on August 3, 2015".

The memorandum to the Prime Minister which was made available to Newsmat News Network said, "Congratulations to you on becoming the Prime Minister of India for the consecutive third tenures. We appreciate the immense contributions made by your esteemed team of NDA under your able leadership". It continued, "As you are aware, the United Naga Council (UNC) representing the Naga people comprising 20 tribes in the present state of Manipur has been expressing our positions since the Indo-Naga peace process began with the signing of Indo-Naga Ceasefire in 1997. Our desire for peace and justice in our land remain ever stronger and hence this submission to your good office once again".

While reiterating the Naga position, the UNC said the ongoing conflict between Meetei and Kuki-Zo in Manipur is very unfortunate and it has also adversely im-

pacted the Nagas living in the state of Manipur. "We have reached out to both the communities to defuse the situation by instituting a 'Peace Committee' as soon as the conflict began in May 3, 2023", it stated. The mentioned committee is pursuing its peace building works earnestly. "We have extended our helping hand to ease the humanitarian crisis by hosting displaced victims in our land from both the communities and have their basic needs taken care of many times. The situation in Manipur would have been averted had the GOI framed people's friendly policies for the well-being of all prior to the conflict. Now, we would like to reiterate our position that while formulating any plans for resolution of the conflict in Manipur, extreme caution must be taken to avoid further conflicts," it added.

Urging the Prime Minister to expedite the peace process for logical conclusion of "the longest Indo-Naga political conflict based on August 3, 2015, Framework Agreement, the UNC said that the signing of the Framework Agreement by the two entities i.e. the Government of India and NSCN on the principle of shared sovereignty still lingers with a positive note in the hearts of the Nagas but devastated on seeing that no tangible solution has been reached after a lapse of almost nine years. Recognising the sanctity of Naga national flag and constitution by the Government of India is a prerequisite for a significant progression in the peace negotiation, the UNC memorandum stressed. The flag signifies the most sacred symbol of the Naga peoplehood and the constitution remains as "our guiding principles that outline our way forward with mutual respect not only within but amongst nations. Hence, both our flag and constitution must be given its rightful place of honour with high regards by all concerns," it added. The spirit of the Framework Agreement succinctly emphasizes the position of the Nagas in relation to Government of India and as such a solution must be formulated accordingly, the UNC memorandum further added.

It then concluded by saying, "Having stated the above, we urge you to sincerely intervene and settle the Indo-Naga political issue once and for all. Resolving the Indo-Naga issue will go a long way for peace and progress in the North East." (NNN)

Four bodies found in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills

SHILLONG, July 6: Four bodies were found in a remote village in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district on Saturday, police said.

The four bodies with hands and feet tied and cut marks in the neck were found in a forest on the outskirts of Umpleng village, they said. "The bodies were found by workers on Saturday morning. We are investigating the incident," said superintendent of police, Giri Prasad.

"We suspect that the victims were from outside the state but are not sure unless verification is completed," the SP said. The police are analysing whether the crime was committed on the spot or it was committed somewhere else and then the bodies dumped at Umpleng, the SP added. (PTI)

Khandu joins Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations

ITANAGAR, July 6: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Saturday joined the 89th birthday celebration of Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, organised at the famous Galden Namgye Lhatse Monastery in the state's Tawang district.

The 400-year-old monastery popularly known as the Tawang monastery, is the largest Buddhist monastery in India and the second-largest in Asia.

On the occasion, the chief minister also took part in a cake-cutting event and joined a prayer ceremony organ-



ised by the monks there.

"Offered prayers at the sacred Tawang Monastery on the auspicious occasion of His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama's 89th birthday. I prayed for His Holiness's good health, long life, and continued guidance for humanity through his invaluable teach-

ings," Khandu posted on X.

He said, "May His Holiness continue to bless our world with his compassion, wisdom, and peace. Long Live His Holiness".

The monks of Tawang Monastery offered Den-Tsik Monlam, a prayer ceremony.

"May this special day inspire us to embrace compassion, empathy, and kindness, and strive towards creating a more harmonious world," Khandu added. To mark the occasion, Khandu along with others also planted tree saplings at Urgelling, the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. (PTI)

NDPP to steadfastly stand for secularism

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, July 6: In the aftermath of the Lok Sabha and urban local body (ULB) elections in Nagaland, the ruling Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP), an ally of BJP, asserted that it would steadfastly stand up for the constitutional guarantee of secularism.

In a statement on Saturday, the NDPP said it took the overwhelming mandate of the people in the ULB polls for the party and People's Democratic Alliance coalition with humility and gratefulness and also accepted the verdict of the Lok Sabha elections which the Congress won in the state as it respects the voice and mandate of the masses.

The NDPP assured that it would continue to uphold the voice of the Naga people and always make every possible effort towards protection of "our

rights, culture, history and heritage".

The party added that it would stand for justice to minorities and never compromise on "our religion". "The NDPP is deeply rooted in the ideology of regionalism, and it is our utmost responsibility to ensure that we constantly uphold, protect the aspirations of the people and carry the voice of the masses," the statement said.

Clarifying on the actual position of the party with regard to the ULB elections, the statement said the BJP proposed to field its candidates only in the assembly constituencies where the sitting members are BJP MLAs and likewise for the constituencies where NDPP MLAs are sitting members.

Nagaland has 60 assembly seats.

Though the NDPP had suggested for friendly contests, the statement said, after discussion between

leaders of both parties in Nagaland and in Delhi, it was decided that the spirit of the alliance will be adhered to. In the remaining 23 constituencies there would be friendly contests if necessary.

It was also agreed that in selected areas there would be local arrangements for friendly contests between the two parties, the statement said.

However, in contravention to the agreed principle, NDPP party leaders were poached and offered BJP tickets under the Chumoukedima Town Council, it stated. The statement added that in the aftermath of the elections and the declaration of the results, the NDPP leadership had taken the mature and big hearted decision to maintain the spirit of the alliance throughout the state and work in close cooperation in a collective manner with its alliance partner in the greater interest of the citizens of the state.

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Applications are invited for the post of 2 No's of **Out Reach Worker (ORW)** in FSW & IDU TI Project at Diphu (Diwan Basti), Karbi Anglong under the Assam State AIDS Control Society. Qua: B.A. & Computer Skill. Salary: Rs. 10500.00 per month. All the salary and TA will be provided as per ASACS financial norms. Interested candidates may mail their resume along with testimonials in PDF to Email ID: **kapili2006project@gmail.com** before 11th July, 2024. Specify FSW or IDU post in the application. Short listed candidate will be informed individually for interview.

Contact-8638008558/9957136078/9365434109/8638730968/9366094125.

Date: 06/07/2024

Place: Diphu

Secretary/Project Director

Kapili Dev. Welfare Society

Diphu, Karbi Anglong

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL KAAC :: SECRETARIAT DIPHU – 782460

No.

Dated Diphu, the 6th of July, 2024

NOTICE INVITING APPLICATION

Coaching for UPSC and APSC Civil Service Examination, July 2024

- # Starting date for submission of hard copy of application in KAAC: 8th July, 2024
- # Last date for submission of application: 15th July, 2024
- # Date of commencement of classes of New Batch: 22nd July, 2024
- # Venue for Coaching: Poultry Farm, Lumding Road, Diphu, Karbi Anglong
- # Minimum qualification: Graduate in any stream
- # Duration of coaching: 10 months

Candidate will have to furnish ST certificate in support of their caste.

Aspiring candidates may drop their application in the below noted location and address:-

1. Secretary cum Nodal Officer
UPSC & APSC Free Coaching
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu
2. Coaching Centre of UPSC/APSC, KAAC
Poultry Farm, Lumding Road

**Sd/-
Secretary
Cum
Nodal Officer
UPSC & APSC Free Coaching
Karbi Anglong Autonomous
Council, Diphu**

No. FD.W.114/FOREST/MMDRRF/2024/803 Dated, Kokrajhar the 05th July 2024.

Tender No. BTC/Forest/Kokrajhar/03/2024

PRESS NOTICE

The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests cum CHD, BTC, Kokrajhar, invites bids for the following works under MMDRRF Fund for the year 2024-25 from the eligible contractors of Class-I (A, B, C) & Class-II category of PWD /WR, Assam and BTC, Kokrajhar to be executed under Parbatjhora Forest Division, Suparighat, BTC, Assam.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Completion Period	EMD (in Rs.)	Cost of Bid Document (in Rs.)
1.	Site Proposal for earth filling and sand gravelling road along with 2 (Two) nos. culverts at RL. No. 3 for the length of 1 km.	19,50,000.00	6 Month	2 % for General & 1 % for Reserved category	0.03% of Estimate Cost
2.	Sand gravelling road at Aintola (RL. No.2 RL.No.3 as per calculation of GPS and GPS Co-Ordinators Map.	15,00,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-

The details may be seen in the Office of the undersigned during Office hours.

Sd/- Suman Mohapatra (IFS)

Addl. PCCF cum CHD, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/110

No. FD.W.114/FOREST/MMDRRF/2024/806 Dated, Kokrajhar the 05th July, 2024

Tender No. BTC/Forest/Kokrajhar/06/2024

PRESS NOTICE

The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests cum CHD, BTC, Kokrajhar, invites bids for the following works under MMDRRF Fund for the year 2024-25 from the eligible contractors of Class-I (A, B, C) & Class-II category of PWD /WR, Assam and BTC, Kokrajhar to be executed under Haltugaon Forest Division, Kokrajhar, BTC, Assam.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Completion Period	EMD (in Rs.)	Cost of Bid Document (in Rs.)
1	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Batabari Range under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	6 Month	2% for General & 1% for Reserved category	0.03% of Estimate Cost
2	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Bongaon Camp under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
3	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Uttarkuchi Camp under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
4	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Bhutanakuti Camp under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
5	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Sufanguri Village for Village Camp under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
6	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Daodhara Camp under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
7	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Kurmarkhata Range under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
8	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at Tamulpur Range under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
9	Const. of solar operated drinking water facility at DFO Office under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur	19,87,655.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
10	Improvement of road with earth filling and sand gravelling from Diring SS Mahal to NH-127 E under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur.	12,52,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
11	Improvement of road with earth filling and sand gravelling from Nayabasti/Bankadonga main road to Bankadonga SS Mahal under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur.	8,79,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
12	Improvement of road with earth filling and sand gravelling from Nayabasti/Bellol Chowk to Pagladia SS Mahal under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur.	4,98,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-
13	Improvement of road with earth filling and sand gravelling from Serfanguri/Chariali to Nandeswar/Ramchiar's House under Baksa Forest Division, Mughalpur.	16,58,000.00	-do-	-do-	-do-

The details may be seen in the Office of the undersigned during Office hours.

Sd/- Suman Mohapatra (IFS),

Addl. PCCF cum CHD, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/113

By trouncing BJP in Ayodhya, INDIA bloc defeated Ram temple movement: Rahul

'Congress will win Gujarat, and from this state it will make a new start'

AHMEDABAD, July 6: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said by trouncing the BJP in Ayodhya, the INDIA bloc has defeated the Ram temple movement once led by L. K. Advani, and expressed confidence that the saffron party will meet the same fate in Gujarat in the next election.

He said the Congress has been challenged and threatened by the BJP, but it will defeat the saffron party and Narendra Modi in Gujarat just the way it was defeated in Ayodhya.

Gandhi was addressing party workers here days after the Congress and BJP clashed outside the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee (GPCC) office when saffron party workers went there to protest against his (Gandhi's) remarks on Hindus.

"They (BJP) have challenged us by threatening us and damaging our office. Let me tell you that we are together going to break their government like they damaged our office. Take it in writing that Congress will contest in Gujarat and defeat



Narendra Modi and BJP in Gujarat like we did in Ayodhya," he said.

Congress will win Gujarat, and from this state it will make a new start, he said.

Gandhi targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the BJP's defeat from the Faizabad Lok Sabha seat in Uttar Pradesh, where Ayodhya is located.

"By defeating BJP in Ayodhya, INDIA bloc has defeated the Ram Mandir movement that was launched by the BJP veteran Lal Krishna Advani. What I am saying is something very big... Congress party and INDIA bloc defeated them

in Ayodhya," the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

Congress will defeat BJP in Gujarat because the "balloon of Modi's vision has burst", he said.

"In Parliament, I asked the prime minister as to whether he was a human being as he himself said he was non-biological and has a direct connection with god. If you are directly connected to god, then how were you defeated in Ayodhya?" he asked.

"The PM believes that everyone else is biological - people of Gujarat, Gandhiji, farmers and labourers of India are biological while

Narendra Modi is non-biological...How can a person who thinks he is non-biological and the people of the country are biological offer vision to the people of Gujarat when he cannot understand the pain of labourers and those who work in diamond industry?" he asked.

"You could not have imagined that BJP will get defeated in Ayodhya or that Modi will win Varanasi by a small margin. They are going to be defeated here in Gujarat like they were in Ayodhya. All you have to do is to ask the people of Gujarat to not be scared," he said.

If the people of Gujarat fight without getting scared, the BJP will not be able to stand in front of them, he said.

"Modi wanted to contest from Ayodhya, but his surveyors advised him against this saying he will be defeated and his political career will end," he said, quoting the newly-elected MP from Faizabad Awadh Prasad.

"That is why, he (Modi) did not contest from Ayodhya but opted for Varanasi.

In Varanasi, we made a few mistakes or else we should have defeated him there as well," he said.

Gandhi said that people of Ayodhya were angry with Modi because he did not pay them compensation for their land, shops and houses.

"The Ayodhya MP told me that farmers whose land was taken for the international airport at Ayodhya have not received right compensation till date. People there felt angry when they found not a single person from Ayodhya was present in Ram Mandir inauguration," he said.

While Adani and Ambani were seen at the Ram temple consecration ceremony, no poor person was invited there, he said.

Gandhi said Congress's 'hand' symbol is found in every religion.

"Look at the photos of Guru Nanak, Mahavir, Buddha. Even in Islam they use it as a gesture to seek blessings. Look at the photo of Lord Shiva and you will find it there. It means 'Daro mat, darao mat' (Don't be scared, don't scare anyone)," Gandhi said. (PTI)

VP Jagdeep Dhankar slams P Chidambaram over 'part-timer' remark



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, July 6: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar on Saturday lashed out at Congress leader P Chidambaram over his comment that the three new criminal laws were "drafted by part-timers", terming it as "inexcusable" and urging him to withdraw his "derogatory, defamatory and insulting" observation.

Dhankar said he was "shocked beyond words" when in the morning he read Chidambaram's interview to a leading national daily wherein he had said that "the new laws were drafted by part-timers".

"Are we part-timers in the Parliament? It is an inexcusable insult to the wisdom of the Parliament... I do not have words strong enough to condemn such a narrative being set afloat and a MP being labelled as a part-timer."

"I appeal to him (Chidambaram) from this platform, please withdraw this derogatory, defamatory and highly insulting observations about the Members of Parliament (MPs). I hope he does it," the Vice President said while addressing the 12th convocation of the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST) here.

Dhankar further said that "when informed minds knowingly lead you astray, we need to be on guard".

"This morning, when I read a paper, an informed mind, who had been the Finance Minister of this country, a Parliamentarian for long and currently a member of the Rajya Sabha, stunned me," the VP said.

Dhankar said that he took pride in the fact that the Parliament did "a great thing" by "unshackling us from the colonial legacy" and giving three laws that

were of "epochal dimension".

"From Dand Vidhan (penal law) we have come to Nyay Vidhan (law of justice)," he said.

The VP, who is also the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, said that every MP had the opportunity to contribute when the three laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Saksha Adhinyam -- were being debated in the House.

"With a heavy heart, I am sharing with you, that this honourable gentleman, a distinguished member of Parliament who has a great background as finance minister, did not use his lung power. He gave total rest to his vocal chords while debate was going on," he said.

Dhankar said that Chidambaram must hold himself accountable for the "failure of duty on your part, an act of omission/commission, dereliction of duty, which can never be explained".

The VP further claimed that not only Chidambaram, but other distinguished colleagues from the legal fraternity, including senior advocates, "did not come forward to help the nation".

"They had an opportunity to make this point in the Parliament. It was a failure on his (Chidambaram) part to perform his constitutional duty and obligation. How can we countenance such a man, speaking in high decibel, trying to seek resonance from the people only to unsettle the mechanism."

"I am shocked beyond words and therefore, please beware of the minds who deliberately, as a strategy, by way of a narrative, try to run down our nation, demean our institutions and taint our progress."

"They do not see the writing on the wall and engage in criticism just for the sake of it," Dhankar said.

The Vice President is on a two-day visit to Kerala.

He arrived at the Thiruvananthapuram international airport here in the morning and was welcomed by Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Subsequently, he attended the convocation at the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST). (PTI)

Take pledge to ensure J&K gets first BJP CM after assembly polls: Raina to workers

Meeting started with the participants paying rich tributes to BJP ideologue Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his 123rd birth anniversary



JAMMU, July 6: Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina on Saturday urged workers and leaders to work together to ensure that the Union Territory gets its first chief minister from the saffron party by winning the next assembly elections on its own.

Addressing hundreds of party delegates attending the two-day 'Vistari Karyasamiti Baithak' that began at Mishriwala near here on Friday, Raina slammed the Congress and the National Conference for allegedly exploiting different sections of people for vote bank politics.

Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy and Jitendra Singh, National General Secretary, in charge J&K, Tarun Chugh and other prominent leaders of the BJP including former deputy chief ministers Nirmal Singh and Kavinder Gupta attended the meeting which commenced at BJP headquarters here.

BJP national president and Union Minister J P Nadda is also attending the meeting in the second half to discuss the party's roadmap for upcoming elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We have to take a pledge before leaving this meeting that we will work with a goal to achieve a majority in the next assembly elections. Our pledge is to form the next government on our own and have a BJP chief minister and we have to work together to achieve this goal," Raina said.

The meeting started with the participants paying rich tributes to BJP ideologue Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his 123rd birth anniversary. Mookerjee was one of the founders of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the forerunner to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Mookerjee, who strongly opposed to now scrapped Article 370 providing special status to Jammu and Kashmir, died under mysterious circumstances in 1953 shortly after his arrest in Jammu and Kashmir following his agitation for "Ek desh mein do Vidhan, do Pradhan aur Do Nishan nahi challenge" (A single country cannot have two constitutions, two prime ministers, and two national em-

blems).

"On May 17, 2023, we took a pledge with the focus on the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and we are thankful to 15 lakh workers of the party who worked hard and ensured the win of both the candidates from the two Lok Sabha seats from J&K. We have to rededicate ourselves and outperform Congress and National Conference," Raina said.

He said the Congress and NC have exploited different sections of the people for vote bank and "it was Prime Minister Modi-led government which provided justice to different deprived sections of the society, including West Pakistani and PoJK refugees, Gujjars, Bakewals and Paharis."

"BJP under the leadership of Modi healed the wounds of the people and ensured restoration of peace, prosperity and development. It was the BJP which strengthened gross-root level democracy by implementing the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments and bridged 'Dil and Dilli ki Doori'. If there is any pending issue that is getting back Pakistan-occupied Kashmir," he said.

Union Minister Reddy, who is BJP's election in charge for Jammu and Kashmir, said the meet is part of the party's nationwide programme to prepare a roadmap for the next three to four months after the formation of the NDA-led government at the centre for the third term.

"Such meetings are planned everywhere in the country and we are conducting a detailed review of Lok Sabha results, getting feedback from the workers and preparing a roadmap for the next three to four months," he told reporters.

He said the next assembly elections will definitely come up for discussion during the meeting. "After abrogation of Article 370, a positive atmosphere is prevailing in J&K and you will see the party's support base further strengthening across Jammu and Kashmir," he said, adding that BJP will highlight all its achievements made in the Union Territory over the last 10 years. (PTI)

Railways says Rahul Gandhi met drivers from outside; 'We have similar issues,' counter Unions

NEW DELHI, July 6: The train drivers' unions have countered Railways' claim that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi met loco pilots who were not from the Delhi Division and were brought from outside.

On Friday, after Gandhi visited the loco pilots' crew lobby at the New Delhi Railway Station, the Chief Public Relation Officer (CPRO) of Northern Railway (NR) under which the Delhi Division falls, said that it looked like Gandhi met loco pilots who were not from crew lobby of the New Delhi Railway Station.

"It looks like they were brought from outside," Deepak Kumar, CPRO, NR, said.

Gandhi visited the crew lobby at the station and spoke to some loco-pilots to know their problems and challenges.

Various loco pilots' associations whose members were present in the lobby during Gandhi's visit countered the CPRO's statement and said that it was immaterial to focus on loco pilots' divisions and zones of work as long as they have similar grievances.

"I want to submit humbly that Mr Gandhi interacted with loco pilots from various rail divisions and not only with those who were from Delhi," R Kumaresan, President of the South Zone of the All India



Loco Running Staff Association, who played a crucial role in organising this interaction between Gandhi and loco pilots, said.

He added, "Mr Gandhi visited the crew lobby and in the same building there is a running room also for pilots who come from outside to take rest. He spoke to everyone irrespective of which divisions they come from."

Kamlesh Singh, Central Treasurer of the Indian Railway Loco Runningmen Organisation (IRLRO), who was present during Gandhi's visit, said that loco pilots across all rail networks face similar

challenges and have similar grievances.

"Whether it is about long duty hours, denial of weekly rest or lack of washroom and lunch break, these are common issues that all train drivers face across the divisions and zones. So this doesn't merit an issue whether he met a loco pilot of Delhi Division or some other divisions," Singh said. IRLRO's Working President Sanjay Pandhi said that at all Running rooms of Indian Railways, only loco running staff from other stations rest.

"An MP, who is also a leader of the opposition can meet anyone

anywhere including all railway employees," Pandhi said.

Kumaresan clarified that Gandhi didn't enter the running room as this would have disturbed loco-pilots who were taking rest before their next shift.

Loco pilots also said that the Railway Ministry sent its officials to meet and attend to the grievances of train drivers after the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi met them.

"After Mr Gandhi left, officials of the Railway ministry visited us at the New Delhi Railway Station to attend to our grievances," Singh said.

Singh added that it was the first time that any official from the Railway Board showed such a prompt response to their problems.

"We shared the same issues with the official which we shared with Mr Gandhi. Long duty hours leading to work stress and no washroom and lunch break while being on train driving duty are some of our problems which we shared with Mr Gandhi and Railway Ministry's officials," Singh said.

According to Kumaresan, the issues they shared with Mr Gandhi were already known to the Ministry as the loco associations have regularly written to it. (PTI)

Delhi CM victim of political conspiracy: Sunita Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, July 6: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal alleged on Saturday that he was made the victim of a "deep political conspiracy" and arrested by the ED in the excise policy case based on a false statement by a witness. In a video message, she said the ED arrested Arvind Kejriwal based on the statement of TDP MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy (MSR). The Telugu Desam Party is a constituent of the ruling NDA. Sunita Kejriwal also asked people to support the Delhi chief minister, saying he is an honest, educated and patriotic man, and if the public does not support him, no educated person would want to join politics given the treatment meted out to the AAP leader.

She claimed that MSR changed his statement to the ED about his meeting with the Delhi chief minister after his son Raghava Magunta Reddy was arrested and denied bail. According to Sunita Kejriwal, MSR earlier said that he had met with the Delhi chief minister on March 16, 2021, regarding land for a charitable trust he wanted to open in Delhi but changed his statement on July 17, 2023, following his son's arrest. "In his statement to the ED, MSR said Kejriwal asked him in the presence of nearly 10 people to enter the liquor business in Delhi and pay ₹ 100 crore to AAP. Would anybody ask for money before so many people," she asked. (PTI)

Chances of a political motive is very low, though previous enmity could not be ruled out,' commissioner said

BSP leader's murder not political, eight suspects held over killing: Police

CHENNAI, July 6: The city Police on Saturday said the killing of Tamil Nadu BSP chief K Armstrong by a group of assailants was not political in nature and that all angles were being probed.

Eight suspects in the case were nabbed within three hours of the crime on Friday, City Police Commissioner Sandeep Rai Rathore told reporters here and denied that the BSP leader faced any threat to his life.

"The chances of a political motive is very low, though previous enmity could not be ruled out," the Commissioner said.

Divulging details on the slaying, he said Armstrong was hacked at 7.15 pm on Friday when he was proceeding towards his under-construction house in Perambur here.

Four persons accompanying him were also injured. Armstrong was rushed to a local hospital by his supporters and later succumbed, Rathore said.

"Initial investigation, CCTV footages, cell phone tower location and eyewitness account led to the police arresting eight persons whom we strongly suspect are involved in commissioning the offence," he said.

On the allegation by certain political parties that those arrested were not the real culprits, he replied only further investigation would prove. "But right now we have suf-



ficient evidence to prove that they would have committed the offence," he said.

It also seemed "a little premature" to claim the murder was a retaliatory killing. Nevertheless, this angle too was being probed into, he said and added Armstrong did not figure in the threat category. So police watched him only as a political leader, in so far as this incident was concerned.

As many as 10 special teams had been formed under Additional Commissioner of Police (North), Asra Garg, and the officials were carrying out investigations from various angles and looking for the possible involvement of more people in the killing, he said.

Asked about the motive behind the murder, he said the special team was probing it. "It doesn't point towards that. There is no political angle at all," he reiterated. Most of the arrested persons have some pending cases against them, he added.

To a question, he said they were arrested by the police and did not surrender, as claimed in some quarters.

He indicated Armstrong's burial could be held on Sunday.

All efforts would be made to ensure punishment for the accused, the official added.

Several political leaders and supporters of the slain leader have questioned if the arrested were the

real culprits. His supporters, who staged a protest outside the hospital, claimed the killing was "planned" and demanded a CBI probe into the death of the 52-year-old former Chennai Corporation Councillor.

A BSP functionary said it was a "planned murder" and claimed there was an "intelligence failure." Therefore, the central agency should probe the case.

The continued protest by Armstrong's supporters outside the hospital, located opposite the Chennai Central railway station, affected traffic movement on the busy Poonamallee High Road and they were later removed from there by the police.

Chief Minister M K Stalin expressed shock over Armstrong's death and expressed his condolences and said the culprits were caught in an overnight operation.

Stalin said he was shocked and anguished over Armstrong's death. "The police have arrested those involved in his murder in an overnight operation," he said in a post on 'X'.

He said he had ordered the police to conduct the investigation expeditiously and ensure that the culprits were punished according to law.

"I would like to convey my deepest condolences and sympathies to the bereaved family and friends," he said.

A post-mortem on Armstrong's

body was conducted at a government hospital here on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) founder and Lok Sabha member Thol Thirumavalavan claimed those who are now in police custody in connection with the case had "surrendered" before them and that they were not the real culprits.

Praising Armstrong for his public work, he said the deceased leader was a "trusted" colleague of BSP supreme and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati.

"His body will be kept for public homage at a private school in Perambur," he told reporters after visiting the government hospital.

Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president K Selvaparanthai also said the "real culprits" behind the murder should be brought to book. Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was trying to speak to the family of the victim, he added.

AIADMK general secretary and Leader of the Opposition, Edappadi K Palaniswami, condoled Armstrong's death and also slammed the ruling DMK over law and order.

In a post on 'X,' he expressed concern over the killing of a "national party's state chief" and alleged there was no fear of police, government and law and this had emboldened individuals to resort to such crimes and slammed the Chief Minister. (PTI)

SC to hear plea on free sanitary pads for class 6-12 girl students tomorrow

NEW DELHI, July 6: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on July 8 a plea seeking directions to the Centre and states to provide free sanitary pads to girl students of class 6-12 and ensure separate female toilet facilities in all government-aided and residential schools.

A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J P Pardiwala and Manoj Misra is scheduled to hear the plea of Congress leader and social worker Jaya Thakur in which she has highlighted the difficulties faced by adolescent females from poor backgrounds in the schools.

During the last hearing of the matter on February 5, Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati informed that the Centre is in the process of collating all necessary material to form a national policy on the distribution of menstrual hygiene products to school-going girls in terms of the orders dated April 10, 2023, and November 6, 2023.

On June 13, the Union education ministry, in an advisory to schools, said girl students should be allowed to take necessary restroom breaks during board exams for classes 10 and 12 and free sanitary napkins must be made available at all examination centres.

The Supreme Court is set to reopen on July 8 after summer vacation.

On November 6, the top court directed the Centre to lay down a national model for building toilets commensurate with the number of girl students in all government-aided and residential schools across the country.



While emphasising uniform procedure, it also asked the Union government about the policy it has formulated for the distribution of sanitary napkins to female school students nationally.

During the hearing, the Centre informed the apex court that a draft national policy for the distribution of sanitary napkins free of cost to school-going girls has been formulated and sent to stakeholders to elicit their comments.

The top court earlier warned the states,

which had not submitted their response to the Centre on formulating a uniform national policy on menstrual hygiene for girls studying in schools, that it would take recourse to the "coercive arm of the law" if they failed to do so.

On April 10, the apex court appointed the secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) as the nodal officer to coordinate with states and UTs and collect relevant data for formulating a national policy.

It noted that MoHFW, the Ministry of Edu-

cation and the Ministry of Jal Shakti have schemes on menstrual hygiene management.

The court also ordered all states and UTs to submit their menstrual hygiene management strategies and plans that are being executed with the help of funds provided by the Centre or through their own resources to the Mission Steering Group of the National Health Mission within four weeks.

The apex court said the states and UTs shall also indicate to the Mission Steering Group of the National Health Mission the appropriate ratio of female toilets for residential and non-residential schools in their respective territories. It asked all states and UTs to also indicate the steps which have been taken to provide low-cost sanitary pads and vending machines in schools and their appropriate disposal.

The plea filed by Congress leader Thakur has said adolescent females from poor backgrounds between the ages of 11 and 18 years face serious difficulties in receiving education, a constitutional right under Article 21A of the Constitution.

"These are adolescent females who are not equipped with and are also not educated by their parents about menstruation and menstrual hygiene."

"The deprived economic status and illiteracy lead to a prevalence of unhygienic and unhealthy practices which have serious health consequences, increase obstinacy and lead to eventual dropping out from schools," the petition said. (PTI)

AIKS demands law against mob lynching, hate crime



NEW DELHI, July 6: The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) on Saturday demanded a stringent law against lynching and hate crime, following a meeting with families of three cattle transporters who were killed after allegedly being chased by a mob in Chhattisgarh last month.

It was a "planned killing", the AIKS said in a statement issued after a delegation comprising its and the All India Agricultural Workers Union (AIAWU) members met the victims' families on Friday.

The delegation met the families of Tehsil Qureshi in Banat town, and Chand Mian and Saddam Qureshi in Lakhnauti village of Uttar Pradesh and handed over cheques of Rs 1 lakh each, it said.

The cattle transporters were

killed on June 7 near the Mahanadi bridge along the Mahasund-Raipur border of Chhattisgarh.

"The planned murders took place just three days after the declaration of the results of the Lok Sabha elections on June 4 in which Narendra Modi and the BJP-NDA (National Democratic Alliance) came to power for the third time, although with a much-reduced majority. This has been followed by similar attacks on Muslims by Sangh Parivar criminals in several states," the AIKS said.

The delegation included Rajya

Sabha MP and AIAWU treasurer V Sivadasan, AIKS president Ashok Dhawale and general secretary Vijoo Krishnan, among others.

They were accompanied by

AIKS leaders from Uttar Pradesh.

"So far, no government officials

have visited the family of Tehsil

Qureshi while the subdivisional

magistrate had visited the two

families in Lakhnauti village. No

compensation or treatment expen-

diture was provided to these families by either the state government of Chhattisgarh or Uttar Pradesh, both led by the BJP," the statement said.

The AIKS demanded a compensation of Rs 1 crore for each family and a permanent job to one kin of each victim by the Chhattisgarh government.

Alleging that it was a planned attack, the AIKS said, "The Chhattisgarh incident happened between at 2-3 am on June 7 when a gang of 11-12 people followed the truck loaded with cattle -- all buffaloes, not a single cow -- and stopped the truck at the Mahanadi bridge and attacked the workers. It is a case of premeditated murder and hate crime and not mob lynching."

It said the state police registered an FIR under sections 304 and 307 of the Indian Penal Code for attempt to murder and culpable homicide attracting punishment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with a fine or with both. (PTI)

LOST

I have lost my Matric SEBA original Board certificate bearing Roll: B08-441 NO: 3149. Name : Rashmi Teronpi Father's Name : Kamsing Teron Lost Date : 29/03/2024 Address : Dengaon, Karbi Anglong PS : Dokmoka PIN : 782441

लाम्पडिंग - तिनसुकिया जं. - डिब्रुगढ़ दोहरकरण परिवोजना से संबंधित ईपीसी अनुबंध

निविदा सूचना सं. निमो./2024/अनु./04; दिनांक: 27-06-2024। अनुबंधी और ख्यातिप्राप्त डेकेदार (रो) फर्म (बी) से निम्नलिखित कार्य के लिए ई-निविदा पद्धति के जरिये खुली निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है: निविदा सं.: सीई/निमो./लुमदिग/ईपीसी/2024/05। कार्य का नाम: ईपीसी मोड पर असम राज्य में प्लांट सीमा तल को लाम्पडिंग - तिनसुकिया जं. - डिब्रुगढ़ दोहरकरण परिवोजना से संबंधित यावजवा (केएम 285.860) (सहित) से फर्कटिंग स्टेशन (केएम 330.043) (सहित) केएम 331.138 तक (45.278 केएम) के बीच ट्रैक के दोहरकरण के लिए ईपीसी/अनुबंध, खरीद और निर्माण (ईपीसी) अनुबंध समझौता तथा विद्युतीकरण और सिग्नलिंग कार्य।

अनुमानित मूल्य: ₹4,76,45,00,000.00; ई-निविदा 14-08-2024 को 14:30 बजे बंद होगी और 22-08-2024 को 15:30 बजे खुलेगी। निविदा के विवरणों और सुविधा सं. 1 के लिए कृपया www.ireps.gov.in पर पधारें।

मुख्य अभियंता/निमो./1 पूर्वोत्तर सीमा रेलवे (निमोण संकटन) (भारत का को संघ में सरकार के साथ)

TRACK MAINTENANCE WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/110 of 2024, Dated: 02-07-2024. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Brief Description of Item: Track maintenance work including SEJ renewal works, casual renewal of rail, Distressing operation of LWR, pulling back of rail, Assistance to Track Machine pre & post working during machine working in section and other ancillary works under the jurisdiction of SSE/P Way/New Harangajao. Tender Value: ₹2,79,92,835/-; Earnest Money: ₹2,90,000/-; Date & time of closing of above tender at 15:00 hrs. on 26-07-2024 and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 26-07-2024. For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 25-07-2024 in website www.ireps.gov.in.

DRM (W), Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Serving Customers With A Smile

ELECTRICAL WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: Sr. DEE/LMG/14 of 2024-25, dtd. 03-07-2024. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Tender No.: EL/LM/24-25/08; Name of work: At Lumding - Replacement of Type-II quarter 4 block, Type-III quarter 4 block & Type-IV quarter 2 block under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/IV/Lumding (Electrical Portion). Tender Value: ₹7,18,750.36; Earnest Money: ₹14,400.00; Date & time of closing of tender at 11:00 hrs. and opening at 11:30 hrs. on 25-07-2024. For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 11:00 hrs. on 25-07-2024 in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.

Sr. DEE, Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Serving Customers With A Smile

NEET-UG counselling likely to begin at month end

NEW DELHI, July 6: Counselling for NEET-UG, 2024, is expected to start by the end of this month, official sources said.

The counselling session was likely to begin in the first week of July. However, the counselling authorities had not notified any date or schedule. The sources said the process of issuing permission letters to some medical colleges was still underway and additional seats were likely to be added.

"The date of counselling will be announced once the exercise gets over to ensure seats of the new colleges can be taken up in the first round itself," an official source said. They said the counselling process might begin later this month. Amid growing clamour for cancellation of the controversially-ridden National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG), 2024, over alleged malpractice, the Centre and the National Testing Agency (NTA) told the Supreme Court on Friday that scrapping it without any proof of large-scale breach of confidentiality would be counterproductive as it could "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates. The apex court last month refused to defer the counselling process. It was hearing a petition seeking a direction to pause the process for two days.

The NTA, which conducts NEET-UG for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses, and the Union education ministry have been at the centre of media debates and protests by students and political parties over alleged large-scale malpractice -- ranging from question paper leaks to impersonation -- in the test held on May 5. In the line of fire over the alleged irregularities in NEET-UG and PhD entrance NET, the Centre removed Subodh Singh as the NTA director general and notified a high-level panel headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief R Radhakrishnan to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations through the agency. (PTI)

Adversary across border using foreign mercenaries to create fear in J&K: DGP

DODA/JAMMU, July 6: The adversary across the border is using foreign mercenaries to create a fear psychosis among the people to sustain terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, police chief R R Swain said on Saturday.

Swain, the Jammu and Kashmir director general of police, asserted that his force along with other security agencies is committed and determined to eliminate terrorism in the Union Territory. Talking to reporters in Doda after promoting seven special police officers (SPOs) as constables for their exemplary bravery during a recent anti-terrorist operation in the Gandoh area of the district, the police chief said people are fully cooperating with the security agencies and it is a matter of time when the terrorists start getting eliminated.

Three foreign terrorists were killed in a gunfight in the Gandoh area of the Doda district on June 26. This was the first encounter in Gandoh in more than a decade.

Without naming Pakistan, Swain said, "Our adversary and enemy has posed a challenge, thinking that this is a border area and they can take advantage of it by pushing foreign terrorists to revive militancy by creating fear (among the people).

"They (foreign terrorists) are not in big numbers and we are fully determined to defeat them, like we have done in the past, with the help of other forces and cooperation of the public," he said.

The DGP, who was accompanied by Additional Director General of Police (law and order) Vijay Kumar and ADGP (Jammu zone) Anand Jain, said the foreign mercenaries do not belong to anyone and they also do not fall in the ambit of law.

"They are involved in mass killings, taking sheep without paying money and their aim is to create fear and force the public into submission and create disturbance. But it cannot be achieved because the people are with us and we will fight them out," the DGP said.

"Police and its security partners are fully determined and committed to defeating the terrorists with the active support of village defence guards, SPOs and commoners. It is only a question of time when they will start getting killed, and they will start getting eliminated," he added.

The DGP said, "The policy to fight the terrorists is already there and is old but we want to take it to a different level, like when there

is an act of bravery on the part of police personnel to safeguard the public against terrorists, they will be honoured which will work as a morale booster for them."

He said the motive behind Saturday's function was to make the family, community and citizens feel proud of those who are working for the security of the nation and to felicitate the brave people.

On the deployment of newly trained border battalion jawans, he said their duty is to gather intelligence, react swiftly on getting any information about terrorists and coordinate with people to create an atmosphere where anyone trying to sneak into this side is apprehended or if he manages to get inside Indian territory cannot think of returning back safely.

"They will not be deployed on the front lines but they will work in villages and coordinate with VDGs and SPOs (for better working of the anti-infiltration grid)," he said.

Earlier, the DGP honoured a total of 32 police personnel, including two officers, for their crucial role in the recent encounter.

He also handed over promotion letters to the SPOs who have now become constables in the police department. (PTI)

Mangaluru Airport commences international cargo operations

MANGALURU (KARNATAKA), July 6: Mangaluru International Airport has commenced international cargo operations from its integrated cargo terminal with flight IX 815 ferrying 2,522 kgs of fruits and vegetables to Abu Dhabi, officials said on Saturday.

The formal launch was done on Friday, in the presence of the AAHL Cargo team, the leadership team of the Mangaluru International Airport as well as representatives from Customs, Airlines - IndiGo and Air India Express - and Airport Security Group of CISF, they said.

This much anticipated development comes a little over a year after the airport started domestic cargo operations on May 1, 2023, officials said. According to officials, the Commissioner of Customs on May 10 this year had appointed the airport as Custodian as well as a Customs Cargo Service Provider, green signaling the start of international cargo operations.

Working with regulatory authorities and airline partners, the airport, in the interim, vigorously pursued its status as Customs Cargo

Service.

The start of international cargo operations will enable exporters from coastal Karnataka and Kerala and the hinterland to export perishables such as fresh fruits and vegetables, food, machine parts, textiles, shoes, tropical fish, frozen and dry fish, plastic coloring material and ship parts (propeller) in the form of belly cargo. IndiGo and Air India Express with their connectivity will enable exporters to send cargo to Dubai, Doha, Dammam, Kuwait, Muscat, Abu Dhabi, and Bahrain.

On the domestic cargo front, the airport has done well in handling 3706.02 tonne of cargo in the first 11 months of its operation from May 1, 2023, during the financial year 2024-25.

The total domestic cargo handled included 279.21 tonne of inbound and 3426.8 tonne of outbound cargo. Interestingly, 95 per cent of the outbound domestic cargo was post-office mail, consisting of bank and UIDAI related documents such as credit/debit and Aadhaar cards, officials said. (PTI)

Delhi HC allows woman to medically terminate 30-week pregnancy

NEW DELHI, July 6: The Delhi High Court has allowed a 31-year-old woman to undergo medical termination of her pregnancy of around 30 weeks after the foetus was found to have a neuro-developmental disorder.

The court, in an order passed on Friday, said the law ensures that women are not compelled to carry such pregnancies to term where the child would be born with severe abnormalities.

In view of a report given by a board of doctors from AIIMS, the court observed that the diagnosis indicated that the child, if born, would likely face severe neurological impairments and extensive health challenges on account of 'Joubert Syndrome'.

The court further noted that the first child of the petitioner woman also suffered from neurological handicaps and if the medical termination of pregnancy is not allowed in this case, "She and her family would be compelled to care for two children with significant neuro-developmental issues, requiring extensive, continuous, and advanced medical care potentially for their entire lives".

The burden of raising two children with severe disabilities in a household with limited financial resources is a daunting prospect that would likely lead to grave injury to the petitioner's mental health, it added.

"Considering the substantial risk of serious neurological difficulties and the adherence to the established medical guidelines, the court finds the recommendation of the AIIMS Medical Board to be well-founded in evidence and in the best interest of the Petitioner's health and the potential quality of life for the child. Petitioner is permitted to undergo medical termination of pregnancy at a medical facility of her choice," Justice Sanjeev Narula said in the order.

"The provisions of the (Medical Termination of Pregnancy) Act, read in harmony with the principles of personal liberty enshrined in the Constitution, affirm the right of a pregnant woman to seek a termination of pregnancy under medically justified circumstances.

"This ensures that women are not compelled to carry pregnancies to term, in situations where doing so would compromise their health or result in the birth of a child with severe abnormalities," the court stated.

It appreciated the AIIMS medical board for their assistance and said the doctors who contributed their opinions in

this case shall have immunity in the event of any litigation arising out of this petition.

The petitioner, represented by lawyer Amit Mishra, approached the high court after the doctors at Lok Nayak Hospital, where she was being treated, denied her request to undergo medical termination of pregnancy (MTP) on June 13. On June 24, the court first constituted a medical board comprising two doctors from Lok Nayak Hospital but on July 1, it constituted another board of doctors from AIIMS after the former's report was found to be "inconclusive".

Justice Narula, in the order, emphasised that the opinion of the medical board in cases of termination of pregnancy is of considerable importance for assisting the courts in arriving at a just order and medical professionals must offer their expert opinions without fear of legal repercussions.

The medical board at Lok Nayak Hospital, however, did not meet the court's expectations in the present case, Justice Narula observed, adding that in spite of the serious nature of the matter, it failed to conduct necessary tests and did not approach the issue with the required level of seriousness.

"When the court directed them to form a board, the subsequent report remained inadequate and lacked thorough testing and evaluation. The medical professionals play a crucial role in the society and it is not the intention of this Court to demoralize them, yet, it is imperative to highlight the significance of their responsibility in such sensitive matters," the court said. Stating that the delay and inadequate counselling of the petitioner resulted in an advanced stage of pregnancy, the court advised the medical board of Lok Nayak Hospital "on the importance of their role and the critical impact their opinions have on the lives of the Petitioners and their families".

The court said the negative recommendation against termination of pregnancy by Lok Nayak Hospital was because of "inconclusive diagnosis" as they "relied upon old medical reports and scans without conducting further detailed tests".

"They have failed to provide a definitive diagnosis or fully assess the Petitioner's current condition. Conversely, the AIIMS Medical Board conducted comprehensive testing, including up-to-date ultrasound and fetal MRI scans, and arrived at a clear diagnosis of Joubert Syndrome," it said. (PTI)

High-level committee to meet tomorrow to fix date for reopening of Jagannath temple 'Ratna Bhandar'

BHUBANESWAR, July 6: The high-level committee set up by the Odisha government to supervise the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee in carrying out inventory of valuables including jewellery in the 'Ratna Bhandar' will meet on July 9 to fix the date for reopening of the temple's treasury.

Justice Biswanath Rath, who is the chairman of the high-level committee said this after the committee held its first meeting in Puri on Saturday.

Speaking to media persons after the meeting, Justice Rath said, "After examining the available documents and record, it was found that a duplicate key of the Ratna Bhandar is there in the Puri government treasury. So, we have decided to hold another meeting of the panel on July 9 to fix the date for the reopening of the Ratna Bhandar."

The chief administrator of Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA), who is the member convenor of the panel,



has been asked to produce the duplicate key of the Ratna Bhandar before the committee in the next meeting, he said.

As the inner chamber of the treasury has not been opened for several decades, the lock of the door might not be working. So, keeping it in mind, a SOP will be prepared with the approval of the government to break the lock in such a situation, Rath said.

The committee has observed that the repair work cannot be taken up without shifting the jewellery and other valuable materials stored in the treasury. It was decided in the meeting to ask the temple managing committee to take a decision on proper storage of the jewellery and ornaments during the repair work, he said.

Rath said the SOP will also

mention the inventory of valuables including jewellery immediately after its shifting to a safe place.

During the last time, experts from Hyderabad and Chennai were brought for the inventory of the ornaments. So, this time also, the managing committee will decide who will be engaged for proper inventory of the ornaments of the Jagannath temple, he said.

"We hope that the repair work will be started and shifting of the ornaments will be completed during the annual Rath Yatra, before the return of Lord Jagannath and his siblings to the temple," he asserted.

The reopening of the Ratna Bhandar was a major political issue in the state during the recently concluded elections. The BJP had promised to reopen the treasury for necessary repair work and inventory after it came to power in Odisha. The Ratna Bhandar was last opened 46 years ago in 1978. (PTI)

JUSTIN BIEBER, SALMAN, ALIA-RANBIR PUT UP A GRAND SHOW AT ANANT-RADHIKA'S PRE-WEDDING FESTIVITIES

MUMBAI, July 6: Pop star Justin Bieber brought the house down at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's pre-wedding festivities, which also saw film stars Salman Khan, Ranveer Singh, Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor light up the stage with back-to-back memorable performances.

Bieber arrived in Mumbai on Friday morning before setting the stage at the Jio Convention Centre on fire at night with his chartbusters such as "Baby", "Peaches", "Love Yourself", and "Sorry". The crowd sang and grooved along with the Canadian singer, who attained the status of a teen idol following the success of his debut extended play album "My World" in 2009.

In attendance were the who's who of the entertainment industry and sports arena, including Deepika Padukone, Arjun Kapoor, and Janhvi Kapoor as well as cricket stars MS Dhoni and members of the T20 Cricket World Cup winning team Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya and Surya Kumar Yadav.

The vibe was easy and the mood was light, according to several videos from the much-talked about event trending on social media. In one of the clips, Bieber, 30, can be seen dancing with internet sensation Orry. In another, Alaviaa Jaffrey, daughter of Jaaved Jaferi, is spotted hugging the two-time Grammy winner who continues with his performance with his admirer in embrace. Bieber, who flew out to Miami after his special performance at the sangeet, was paid USD 10 million to perform at the event. This wasn't his first time performing in India.

The singer last came to the country in 2017 for his maiden concert. Bieber was supposed to return in 2022 for the India show of his Justice World Tour but cancelled due to health reasons. Another highlight of the star-studded gala was Salman and Anant's performance on the superstar's hit song "Aisa Pehli Baar Hua Hai" from "Har Dil Jo Pyar Karega." (2000). The duo entered the stage on a ATV bike and what followed was an



entertaining act by Salman on the track with the to-be-groom trying to match the star's steps.

Ranveer gave an energising performance on the foot-tapping number "Ishq Di Gali Vich No Entry" from the 2005 multi-starrer "No Entry".

Real-life couple and "Brahmastra" co-stars Alia and Ranbir shook a leg with Akash Ambani on the latter's song "Show Me The Thumka" from the 2023 movie "Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar".

Arjun Kapoor, Janhvi Kapoor, Shanaya Kapoor, and Shikhar Pahariya and Veer Pahariya can be seen dancing to the song "Maria Maria" from "Partner" (2007), starring Salman and Govinda in the lead.

In another video from the event, celebrity couples Madhuri Dixit Nene-Sriram Nene and Vidya Balan-Siddharth Roy Kapur were seen chatting away animatedly with Mukesh Ambani, father of the groom.

Dressed in traditional finery, the entire Ambani family danced to "Deewangi Deewangi", the party anthem from 2007's "Om Shanti Om", starring Shah Rukh Khan.

The performance opened with Akash and entrepreneur Anand Piramal, Isha Ambani's husband, on the stage. They were soon joined by their wives Shloka Mehta and Isha. (PTI)

NETFLIX ANNOUNCES DOCUMENTARY ON FILMMAKER SS RAJAMOULI

MUMBAI, July 6: Streaming platform Netflix on Saturday announced a documentary film, titled "Modern Masters: SS Rajamouli", on the celebrated filmmaker best known for pan-India blockbusters "Baahubali" and "RRR".

The announcement comes days after Rajamouli was inducted in the Director's branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The upcoming biographical documentary is produced by Applause Entertainment and Film Companion Studios. It is directed by Raghav Khanna.

According to the makers, "Modern Masters: SS Rajamouli" will encapsulate the filmmaker's creative universe, showcasing his profound influence on Indian and international cinema, his enduring legacy, and his innovative contributions to filmmaking.

In addition to this, it will feature an interview with Rajamouli, also known for action movies such as "Eega" and "Magadheera" and the man behind the best original song Oscar winning film "RRR". The documentary film will shed light on untold stories and perspectives from the director's family, close friends, celebrated filmmakers such as James Cameron, Joe Russo, and Karan Johar, as well as actors Prabhas, Rana Daggubati, Jr NTR, and Ram Charan. Monika Shergill, Vice-President Content, Netflix India, said the au-

dience will be enthralled by the journey of the "RRR" filmmaker in "Modern Masters: S.S. Rajamouli."

"S.S. Rajamouli is an icon whose visionary storytelling and cinematic brilliance has built deep fandom and put Indian cinema on the

global map. His adventurous spirit and mastery of fantasy and

epic genres have left an indelible mark on entertainment-loving audiences globally, breathing life into iconic tales from Indian history and culture," Shergill said in a statement. (PTI)



'Kill' earns ₹ 1.35 crore on day one

MUMBAI, July 6: Action thriller Kill has raised ₹1.35 crore on its first day, the makers said on Saturday.

Produced by Dharma Productions and Sikhya Entertainment, the film is directed by Nikhil Nagesh Bhat. It stars Lakshya, Tanya Maniktala and Raghav Juyal.

Billed as "the most violent film made out of India", Kill released in theatres on Friday. Dharma Productions shared the first day net domestic box office collection on its official X page. "Experience the unforgettable ride 1.35 crore," according to the poster shared by the banner. "#Kill is here to take you on a bloody good experience! Book your tickets. 'Kill' in cinemas now! Warning: This film contains violent content which may be intense and disturbing for some viewers. Viewer discretion is advised," read the caption of the post.

The film follows the story of Indian Army army commando Amrit (Lakshya) who finds his love in Tulika (Maniktala). However, things change when both find themselves trapped in the train taken over by Fani (Juyal) and his gang, who begin to mercilessly kill the passengers. (PTI)



'KALKI 2898 AD' DIRECTOR NAG ASHWIN

'OUR STORIES HAVE HEROISM LIKE MARVEL FILMS, WE NEED TO TELL THEM CORRECTLY'

MUMBAI, July 6: "Kalki 2898 AD" has been praised for weaving together elements from the Mahabharata with sci-fi and director Nag Ashwin, who already has a sequel in the works, is confident that Indian mythological stories, if told correctly, can match the complexity of the western superhero genre. The film, starring Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas and Deepika Padukone in key roles, has turned out to be a money-spinner at the box office at a time when the big budget titles have failed to yield results.

Is "Kalki 2898 AD" India's answer to superhero movies from the stables of Marvel and DC Studios in Hollywood?

"I don't know if it is an answer or not but we definitely have the kind of stories and the depth, complexity and heroism that any other Marvel or DC movie (has). We just have to delve into it and tell it in the correct way. If we tell it in a way that the generation now is used to, maybe mix it with sci-fi, I feel that would be the correct way. And that's actually worked out because people are now feeling that it is our story," Ashwin told PTI in an interview. Set in the future dystopian city of Kashi (Varanasi), the story revolves around Bachchan's immortal warrior Ashwatthama who is trying to protect the next avatar of Lord Vishnu, carried by Padukone's

Sumathi. Prabhas' Bhairava, a bounty hunter, is sent to find her by Haasan's antagonist Supreme Yaskin.

The sequel of "Kashi 2898 AD" is already in the works, he said, adding that it will be a continuation of the story, which looks familiar and yet fresh.

"They have seen these familiar tropes in 'Star Wars' and 'Marvel' films but it is still in Kashi. It still has an auto on the streets. It feels like all the worlds have come together... You don't want to feel derivative, you don't

want to feel like it's Blade Runner. It should look like Kashi, not Tokyo."

Some of the visuals of the film have been compared to recent Hollywood futuristic spectacles be it the "Mad Max" movies or "Dune".

The director, however, said there is nothing common between his film and the two Hollywood movies other than visuals of the desert. "I love 'Star Wars'..."

There must be something subconscious there. Other movies not so much except for the fact that we have desert in our film and there is also desert in Dune and 'Mad Max'. "Apart from that, it has nothing to do with the story, technology or design. Having

the funny robot sidekick (Bhairava's AI car Bujji) is probably a 'Star Wars' thing. Maybe aging the vehicles to make them look rusty was also an aesthetic from there," he said.

The film's box office success -- it has crossed the ₹ 700 crore mark globally -- has come with "relief and gratitude" as the team gave a lot to it for many years, said Ashwin, who has lived with the story for more than five years. Like any other child growing up in the country, the director said he too was familiar with the characters of Mahabharata through books and the famous 1988 serial but he read the book in its entirety when he started working on the movie. Ashwin said the epic is better than "our best stories" as even the weakest characters have a strong back story and depth.

"I always wanted to reimagine it for our generation and also keep the simplicity intact. For example, these guys are not wearing any crowns. It is a small thing but I found it would be impractical to wear a crown when you go to war. The armour is also designed differently," he said. The idea behind making the story was to evoke "a sense of wonder" that he felt as a child when he was first introduced to the stories, said the director, who has previously directed the National-award-winner "Mahanati". (PTI)



Ronaldo heading home as France beat Portugal 5-3 in Euro 2024 quarterfinals



HAMBURG, July 6: France's heartache in penalty shootouts is over. So is Cristiano Ronaldo's last-ever European Championship. In a clash of the soccer superstars, it was Kylian Mbappé — and not Ronaldo, his idol — advancing to a semifinal match against Spain as France beat Portugal 5-3 in a shootout following a 0-0 draw on Friday.

Portugal substitute Joao Felix hit a post with the only miss in the shootout and Theo Hernandez showed no sign of pressure by

converting the clinching kick into the top corner. It was a record sixth and final European Championship for the 39-year-old Ronaldo, who scored Portugal's first penalty in the shootout and ended up consoling fellow veteran Pepe afterward as the 41-year-old defender cried on his captain's shoulder.

"We need to go through this moment of our loss, which is very painful," Pepe said. Ronaldo's 20-year career in the Euros included the title in 2016

— when Portugal beat France in the final — and it remains to be seen if the five-time world player of the year will continue playing for his country through to the 2026 World Cup, when he will be aged 41. "Everything is too raw," said Portugal coach Roberto Martinez, when asked if that was Ronaldo's last game for his country. "We are suffering a defeat as a team — there are no individual decisions at this point."

The victory ended the recent heartbreak of Mbappé and France in shootouts, having lost in them at their last two major tournaments — in the last 16 at the Euros in 2021 and in the 2022 World Cup final. Before that, the French were also defeated on spot kicks by Italy in the 2006 World Cup final so it had been 26 years — since beating the Italians in the quarterfinals of the World Cup in 1998 — that Les Bleus had been victorious in a shootout.

Mbappé didn't even take a penalty this time, having been

substituted during halftime of extra time following a couple of knocks to his broken nose that was covered by a protective mask. France coach Didier Deschamps said his captain was tired, too.

Les Bleus didn't need their star player, as Ousmane Dembele, Youssouf Fofana, Jules Kounde and Bradley Barcola all found the net in the shootout — held at the end housing Portugal's vocal fans — before Hernandez's coup de grace set off jubilant scenes for the French inside the stadium in Hamburg.

"It wasn't easy," France goalkeeper Mike Maignan said. "We didn't always play that great, it was a complicated game."

"We got to the penalty shootout and didn't waver. We can be proud of ourselves."

France will play Spain in the semifinals after its extra-time win over Germany in Stuttgart earlier Friday, with Les Bleus staying on course for a third European Championship title after 1984 and 2000.

Deschamps' team has reached the last four despite no France player having scored from open play so far in the tournament. Fortunately for Les Bleus, they have been excellent at the other end, conceding just one goal — a retaken penalty by Poland's Robert Lewandowski in the group stage.

"We are solid and exemplary in defense and that is essential at a major tournament," Deschamps said. "When you don't score a lot of goals, it's best not to concede a lot of goals, either. (AP)

Olympic medal transforms athlete's life and society: Sakshi Malik

MUMBAI, July 6: Rio Games bronze medalist wrestler Sakshi Malik feels winning an Olympic medal not only transforms an athlete's life but also impacts society, creating numerous opportunities for children.

Sakshi became the first woman wrestler to secure an Olympic medal, winning a bronze at the Rio Games in 2016. "An Olympic dream is not just an athlete's dream; it's the dream of an entire family. Winning an Olympic medal transforms not only the life of the athlete but also the lives of their family, society, and village," Sakshi said at a media event in Mumbai organised by JSW Sports on Friday.

The 31-year-old claimed that her home city of Rohtak has undergone several changes in terms of sporting infrastructure since her medal-winning run eight years ago.

"After my medal, significant changes occurred. The Chhotu Ram Stadium in Rohtak, where I trained, went from having a tin roof to becoming an AC hall. A stadium was even built in my village and named after me."

"An Olympic medal creates numerous opportunities, especially for children, allowing them to train in better facilities."

"The craze for wrestling in Haryana has surged. Everywhere you go, there's a stadium every ten minutes, and you'll find girls training in each one. The old mindset that girls couldn't wrestle has changed dramatically."

With women wrestlers doing well on the world stage more and more girls are taking up the sport with an aim to attain Olympic glory.

"The misconceptions that girls are impure and shouldn't participate in wrestling have been debunked. Now, girls are proving that they too can excel in wrestling."

Out of the six Indian wrestlers who have qualified for this month's Paris Olympics, five are

female grapplers -- Vinesh Phogat (50kg), Antim Panghal (53kg), Anshu Malik (57kg), Nisha Dahiya (68kg) and Reetika Hooda (76kg).

There was a time when people believed that girls couldn't wrestle, but today, this has changed. For the first time, five girls are going to the Olympics for wrestling while only one boy is going. Girls, who were once suppressed, are now boldly stepping forward and excelling in wrestling.

"After my medal win, no one enters wrestling merely thinking about securing a job or a benefit. They now start with the goal of winning an Olympic medal. This shift in mindset is incredibly inspiring."

Indian gymnast Dipa Karmakar, who missed out on a medal by a whisker at the Rio Games, reiterated Sakshi's views.

"After the 2016 Rio Olympics, a lot of things have changed in Tripura. People had a mindset that they can't go into gymnastics. And in Tripura, there were a lot of changes."

"For example, the infrastructure, the vault that you see, you need a lot of foam pits, which are very important. They weren't there before."

Karmakar's hometown, like Sakshi's witnessed a surge in gymnastics and several training centres came up.

"After the 2016 Olympics, they built the foam pit there, and a lot of equipment came. And the children's interest level increased a lot. Earlier, there were very few centres, but now everywhere, whether it's government or private, the centres have increased a lot."

"And everyone's mindset is that we also want to go to the Olympics, which wasn't there before. So according to me, after the 2016 Rio Olympics, a lot of people's mindsets changed, which was very important," she added. (PTI)

Inter-district basketball tournament kicks off

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, July 6: The All Assam Inter-District U-17 Boys and U-19 Girls Basketball Tournament kicked off on Saturday with a three-day program scheduled at the Reality Public School premises, Chandamari in Kokrajhar.

A total of 24 boys' teams and 13 girls' teams are participating in the event, organized by the All Assam Basketball Association in collaboration with the Kokrajhar District Basketball Association and Reality Public

School, Kokrajhar. The Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro graced the opening day as the chief guest and inaugurated the event amidst the presence of association officials, participants, and sports enthusiasts. CEM Boro expressed his gratitude and delight while attending the opening ceremony of the Basketball Tournament.

"It was a glad moment to attend the opening ceremony of the All Assam Inter-District Boys (U-17) and Girls

(U-19) Basketball Tournament held in Kokrajhar today. Organized by the Kokrajhar District Basketball Association in association with the Assam Basketball Association, this tournament promises to be a great showcase for the athletic talent and sportsmanship of Assam's budding young basketball players," he said.

"My heartiest greetings and best wishes to the participating teams and the organizers for a fantastic tournament ahead. May the best team win the tournament," Boro added.

11 Gorkha Regiment in Lucknow, announced his retirement from the Army on social media. "I am Hon'y Capt. Jitu Rai, SM,VSM, Olympian shooter, Padma Shree Awardee Dhayan Chan Khel Ratna Awardee and Arjun awardee. Would like to inform all that my journey of 17 years 6 months in Indian Army was completed on 1st July, 2024. "The Army has given me more than what I deserved. I took this opportunity to thank all my senior officers, coaches, officials, colleagues and juniors who have helped me in every walk of life," Rai wrote on Facebook.

"I have always played for the nation and Army and I will continue to do the same through my experience sharing and coaching to the upcoming shooters. I will always carry discipline, dedication and faithfulness towards my nation taught by the Army throughout my career," Rai added.



Sable, Jena up against world-class field in Paris Diamond League in tune-up to Olympics

PARIS, July 6: Top Indian 3000m steeplechaser Avinash Sable and javelin thrower Kishore Jena will hope to fine tune their Olympics preparations in the Paris leg of the prestigious Diamond League one-day meeting series on Sunday.

Reigning Olympic and world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra has opted out of the Paris DL apparently due to adductor niggle that has been troubling him for the past couple of months.

Both Sable and Jena have not been in the best of forms and have not competed in too many events ahead of the Paris Games but they would be looking to get acclimatised to the conditions of the city which will host the Olympics.

Athletics competitions in the Olympics begin on August 1. The 29-year-old Sable has competed in just two 3000m steeplechase events, one at the Portland Track Festival in the USA, where he has been training, and the other at the National Inter-State Championships in Panchkula, Haryana last week.

He had clocked 8:21.85 at Portland and 8:31.75 in Panchkula, while he has a personal best of 8:11.20.

After winning gold at the National Inter-State Championships, Sable had vowed to make amends for mistakes he committed in the last few years and deliver a memorable show at the Paris Olympics with a different approach.

"I committed mistakes in the last two years. I had gone with good fitness in the two world championships (2022 and 2023) but could not do well at both. I want to make amends, hope that this Olympics will be my best,"

said the reigning Asian Games gold medalist.

On Sunday, he will be up against Kenyan Abraham Kibiwot, the 2023 World Championships bronze medalist and gold winner at the 2022 Commonwealth Games where Sable had won a silver.

Another Kenyan, Simon Kiprop Koech, the 2023 Diamond League champion, will also be a top-three contender on Sunday in the absence of reigning Olympic champion Soufiane El Bakkali of Morocco and Lamecha Girma of Ethiopia.

In five Diamond League appearances so far in his career, Sable's best show has been a fifth-place finish.

Jena has also had a forgettable season so far with efforts of 76.31m in Doha Diamond League and 75.49m in the Federation Cup before an 80.84m throw to win a bronze at the National Inter-State Championships.

He has a personal best of 87.54m which he did while winning a silver in the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023.

Jena, who will be competing in his second Diamond League on Sunday after Doha, had revealed that he was coping with a minor left ankle pain, which he felt after the Federation Cup (May 15-19) in Bhubaneswar.

"The pain has reduced and it's almost all right now," he had said in Panchkula last week.

He will be up against the likes of Tokyo Olympics silver medalist and 2023 Diamond League champion Jakub Vadlejch of Czech Republic, former world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada and reigning Commonwealth Games medalist and 2023 World Championships silver winner Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan. (PTI)

Shooter Jitu Rai retires from Army to focus on grooming youngsters

NEW DELHI, July 6: Asian Games gold-medallist marksman Jitu Rai, who debunked the myth that a humble background can hinder success at the highest level, has decided to retire from the Indian Army to train young athletes to become world-beaters.

Born in the Sankhuwa Sabha district of Nepal, the 36-year-old Khel Ratna and Padma Shri awardee, was the only Indian shooter to win a gold at the 2014 Incheon Asian Games, an achievement which helped him rise up the ranks to become Honorary Captain in the Army.

Rai, who served most of his 17-and-a-half-year tenure with

11 Gorkha Regiment in Lucknow, announced his retirement from the Army on social media.

"I am Hon'y Capt. Jitu Rai, SM,VSM, Olympian shooter, Padma Shree Awardee Dhayan Chan Khel Ratna Awardee and Arjun awardee. Would like to inform all that my journey of 17 years 6 months in Indian Army was completed on 1st July, 2024. "The Army has given me more than what I deserved. I took this opportunity to thank all my senior officers, coaches, officials, colleagues and juniors who have helped me in every walk of life," Rai wrote on Facebook.

"I have always played for the nation and Army and I will continue to do the same through my experience sharing and coaching to the upcoming shooters. I will always carry discipline, dedication and faithfulness towards my nation taught by the Army throughout my career," Rai added.



Rai, who competed at the Rio Olympics 2016 and finished last in the 10m air pistol final, further said he plans to open an academy in near future.

"I have taken retirement from the Army to make a foray into coaching. I will try to compete as much as I can but will also like to share my experiences with younger generation," Rai told PTI from Bagdogra in West Bengal.

"I plan to open a shooting academy though I have not decided the location. It would be wrong on my part if I don't share my shooting experiences. If I get the opportunity to be a part of the national coaching staff that

would be great.

"I have also heard that the national shooting federation (NRAI) has also advertised for the post of high-performance coach, so I will apply. If they (federation) gives me the opportunity then I will be really happy," he said.

Besides the Asian Games gold in 50m pistol and bronze in 10m air pistol at Incheon, Rai also won gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow (2014) and Gold Coast (2018).

The World Championships silver-medallist in 2014 Granada also has two World Cup gold medals in Maribor and New Delhi. (PTI)

Play the game, not the occasion: hockey coach Fulton's mantra for Olympics-bound men's team

BENGALURU, July 6: Head coach Craig Fulton is well aware of the expectations from the Indian men's hockey team in the upcoming Paris Olympics and his mantra to his players is to play the game and not bother the occasion.

"I agree that the expectations are higher after Tokyo bronze but the bottom line is that the team has been progressing well. They are in the top eight and from 12th in London (2012) to 8th in Rio (2016) to bronze in Tokyo (2020). It was a big jump and now we are preparing for Paris," the South African coach told PTI Bhasha in an interview. "My mantra to players is play the game, not the occasion. It's still a hockey match and rules have not changed," said the former Olympian who has represented his country in 1996 and 2004 Olympics.

He said he's a "process driven" coach and all focus now is on the first game of the Paris Olympics against New Zealand.

"We are training for that and we take one game at a time which is the most realistic way to do it," said the 50-year-old who was assistant coach of the Belgium team that won the 2018 Men's Hockey World Cup in India.

He did not get a full four-year cycle for the preparation of the team but has no complaints.

"Yeah, you normally have a four year cycle from one Olympics to another to prepare. It's not an excuse but that's how it is. I think we did well in three months to qualify for the Olympics through Asian Games gold. The team is confident and playing well," said Fulton, a former winner of FIH coach of the year award.

He believes in players who are ready to take a bullet for his teammates and his team bonding methods have yielded good results too. He took the team to South Africa where the players did mountain hiking, surfing, barbeque at the beach, etc.



"I believe that if someone is not playing well, you have to cover him up. At the end, if you want to do something special at the big stage, it's all about the chemistry between the players and how much they care for each other."

"The bond and the trust needs to be there so that you can give 100 per cent for each other," said the coach who had guided

Ireland to Olympic and World Cup qualification in 2016 and 2018.

Fulton is not bothered by India's seventh finish at FIH Pro League or the current drop in the world ranking. India is placed at seventh position in the latest rankings.

"We struggled a little bit in the Pro League but the main purpose there was the selection

so there were lots of rotations and changes and that's all right. Our main goal was to get the right team for Paris," he said.

"Not bothered by the rankings as we were trying to improve the depth of our squad, so we gave new players opportunities. We try to win every game with whatever team we play and that's not an excuse. We had six draws and five wins and 10 points was the difference between 7th team and the winner, so it was really close," said Fulton. He feels mental conditioning coach Paddy Upton, who has the experience of working with top cricketers, has an important role to play.

"Paddy has worked with high profile cricketers like Rahul Dravid, Virat Kohli which also encouraged our players to open up to him. Mental skills are one of the things we needed to improve but the real challenge is to do it back to back and that is what we are focusing on," he added. (PTI)

Didn't like chopping and changing, tried to help captain deliver his vision: Dravid

MUMBAI, July 6: As Rahul Dravid bids farewell to Team India, the legend said that during his tenure as head coach, he abhorred chopping and changing the side too much and always tried to be a foil for skipper Rohit Sharma so that he could devise his own winning strategies.

Dravid's coaching stint came to an end with India winning the T20 World Cup in Barbados last week, defeating South Africa and bringing home the trophy for the second time after 2007.

"I'm someone who actually likes continuity and don't like to chop and change too many things because I believe that creates a lot of instability and doesn't create very good environment," said Dravid in a video posted by BCCI on Saturday.

"I feel that I am a part of the team whose responsibility is to create the right professional, safe, secure environment that doesn't really have a fear of failure as such but is challenging enough to push people. That has always been my endeavour."

Dravid said that the period when the players were coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic was a tough one for him as he had just taken over as coach and "never envisaged" that he would have to work with half a dozen captains.

"One of the things that we really had to manage, especially in the early part of my coaching tenure here with India. We were at the back-end of the Covid restrictions. We really had to manage their workloads through all the three different formats. There were a few injuries and it led to me working with something like 5-6 captains in the first 8-10 months of me being here."

"It was definitely something that I hadn't envisaged, or not something that I thought about, but it just sort of organically happened."

Under Dravid's tutelage, India thrashed England in the five-match Test series at home and the



team also reached the 2023 ODI World Cup final.

While Covid put a lot of restrictions on players and they virtually lived out of a 'bubble case' at all times, the pandemic also had its upside as a lot of youngsters got a chance to be a part of the India team environment.

"The other thing that happened, which was very nice to see is, because we played so much of cricket after Covid and we had to cram in a lot of series, it meant that we had to almost, at times, have two teams playing at the same time in different parts of the world."

"Over the last 2-1/2 years, especially in white-ball cricket and lately towards the back-end (of my career) even in red-ball cricket, we were able to give a lot of youngsters a lot of opportunities, bring a lot of people into the side."

"Some of them developed and stayed on in the side a little bit longer, but some of them, they were there because at that point of time maybe some of the seniors were resting."

Dravid's relationship with Indian stalwarts like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli dates back to the time when he was at the fag end of his cricketing career while the two were finding their feet in international cricket.

"I've really enjoyed working with Rohit, someone I knew as a young boy. Just to see him grow as a person and grow as a leader in Indian cricket, what someone like him has been able to contribute to the team over the last 10-12 years, both as a player and now as a leader, has been a real tribute to him and the effort that he's put in."

"I've really enjoyed getting to him know as a person as well and

enjoyed seeing his commitment and his care for the team; to just try and get the environment right where everyone feels safe and secure and enjoys themselves. It's something that I'll miss."

"Even with someone like Virat. In the initial days, just a couple of series with him as a captain, just a couple of matches. Getting to know him as well and to see how he goes about his business, the professionalism that he continues to display...his desired to improve, to get better. It's been fascinating for me to watch."

Dravid said he always believed in the process because of which, at times, he was misunderstood as not being result-oriented.

"For me that's (results), of course it's important. I keep saying and people think, 'Oh, I think result are not important'. Of course, results are important."

"I'm in the business to produce results. But it's always like, as a coach, to think about what is it that I can control to help the results and at the end of the day our responsibility should be to try and help the captain deliver his vision and his philosophy of how he wants the team to play."

"Of course, to win cricket games is a given. You try to win as much as you can. You start with that. But I always look back on what is it that leads to the winning? How do you win more games and what is the process required to win more games?"

"For me, the vision was to try and get that process right. Ticking all of those boxes. 'Are we challenging the players enough? Are we practicing well enough? Are we supporting the players as best as we possibly can. Are we creating the right environment?'"

"These are the things I think that are important to tick before you get to the winning. The winning, hopefully, if you do a lot of these things, most of the time the winning will take care of itself." (PTI)

India Women look to bounce back in do-or-die 2nd T20I against South Africa



CHENNAI, July 6: A 12-run defeat in the first game putting them on the backfoot, India Women would look to dish out an improved batting and fielding performance in the second T20 International and bounce back in the three-match series against South Africa here on Sunday.

Dropped catches and batters' lack of intent in the middle overs had cost India dear in the opening match on Friday, as they could only score 177 for 4 in 20 overs after South Africa had posted 189 for 4, thanks to Tazmin Brits (81) and Marizanne Kapp (57).

It was South Africa's first win in the ongoing tour. They had earlier suffered a 0-3 whitewash in the ODI series followed by a 10-wicket loss in the one-off Test in the tour spanning close to a month now.

Both the camps have concerns to deal with following Friday's match. India's Richa Ghosh and South Africa's Brits had gone off the field with concussion and cramps respectively.

As per the BCCI's statement, Richa had "neck pain and dizziness" following a failed catch attempt, with the ball hitting her face. Her face too seemingly hit the ground.

"She has been sent for further scans & the BCCI Medical Team

is monitoring her progress," read the BCCI's statement.

As for Brits, she had to be stretchered out of the field with a severe contusion on her right lower leg. However, she did come for the post-match press conference and affirmed that she would be good to go in the upcoming games.

For the hosts, while their bowling performance was decent, the poor fielding caught everyone off-guard, with three dropped catches and a few mis-fields.

The fielding flop show will definitely be one aspect that will be playing at the back of the home players' minds on Sunday, especially given that head coach Amol Muzumdar is extremely strict about it.

As for batting, the Indian top order needs to add a bit more flair, barring Smriti Mandhana, who has been in fine touch lately.

However, the Indian middle order has been efficient, thanks to captain Harmanpreet Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues, who made 35 and 53 not out respectively on Friday.

The South Africans clicked with the bat, especially the top order. The likes of Brits and Kapp, along with skipper Laura Wolvaardt and Chloe Tryon, are expected to come in handy yet again on Sunday.

Also, it was an all-round bowling performance, with four different wicket-takers.

However, Eliz-Mari Marx might be under the scanner, having given away 36 runs in her three overs in the first match.

The Chepauk pitch on Friday was above par and is expected to be more or less the same on Sunday.

Although there was low bounce and mild dew on Friday, playing the sweep shots effectively will be a good choice, given how the Proteas executed them perfectly.

Teams:

India Women: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Uma Chetry (wk), Richa Ghosh (wk), Dayalan Hemalatha, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Amanjot Kaur, Shreyanka Patil, Sajeevan Sajana, Deepti Sharma, Asha Sobhana, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, Shabnam Shakil, Pooja Vastrakar and Radha Yadav.

South Africa Women: Laura Wolvaardt (c), Tazmin Brits, Mieke de Ridder (wk), Sinalo Jaftha (wk), Anneke Bosch, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Marizanne Kapp, Sune Luus, Chloe Tryon, Ayabonga Khaka, Masabata Klaas, Eliz-Mari Marx, Nonkululeko Mlaba and Tumi Sekhukhune.

Match starts: 7.00 pm IST. (PTI)

Praggnanandhaa and Gukesh lose in tiebreaker; Caruana wins title

BUCHAREST (ROMANIA), July 6: World number two Fabiano Caruana defended his Superbet Classic title by winning all three rapid games in a thrilling four-way tiebreaker, featuring Indian Grandmasters D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa, after a rather dull tournament.

Caruana lost to Anish Giri of Holland in the Classical format to split the competition wide open as Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and France's Alireza Firouzja all finished the classical section tied for first.

Praggnanandhaa survived by the skin of the teeth against Alireza, who held a completely winning position for a long time. If the Frenchman had won the final classical round there would have been no need of tiebreak games as he would have overtaken Caruana on points.

But Caruana lost, Gukesh and Praggnanandhaa drew and that set up a four-way tiebreaker to decide the winner.

Caruana, not known as a tiebreaker master, proved that he can get the better of the younger generation as he defeated all three — Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Alireza to come up trumps and win the first prize hamper of USD 68500.

The tiebreaker saw the two Indians on the backfoot. Gukesh could have done better but Caruana was spot on while Praggnanandhaa could have complicated things.

Earlier, Praggnanandhaa was staring at his first defeat in the tournament as Alireza was clearly on top.

The Indian struggled in the middle game and had to part with a rook for a minor piece but fought till the last to salvage a lost position.

Gukesh played out a draw with Wesley So in a mere 22 moves, the Nimzo Indian defense did not give any confidence to the American and the draw was through repetition of moves.

Results final round: Anish Giri (Ned, 4.5) beat Fabiano Caruana (5); Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 5); Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rom, 3.5) drew with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 4.5); Wesley So (USa, 4) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 5); Ian Nepomniachtchi (Fid, 4.5) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 4.5). (PTI)

Made some errors as a bowling unit: Radha Yadav on 1st T20I loss

CHENNAI, July 6: India spinner Radha Yadav admitted that the bowling unit made some errors during their 12-run loss to South Africa in the opening women's T20I here, adding that the pacers should have relied more on yorkers.

Indian bowlers were at the receiving end of some formidable batting by Tazmin Brits (81) and Marizanne Kapp (57), who helped South Africa set an imposing 190-run target for the hosts.

"It was important to know which length and pace to bowl at on this wicket. We did make some errors as a bowling unit; maybe gave away 10-15 extra runs," said Radha during the post-match media interaction on Friday.

The South Africans used the sweep shot effectively with the pitch offering low bounce. "We needed to hit them (at yorker length) since the ball was skidding," she added.

Asked about the animated discussion that happened on the field when the Proteas were batting, Radha said that it was about setting up an attacking field.

"We were discussing about making them play where the fielders were stationed and also look to attack and take wickets. But, they did bat well."

"We need to back our plans and quickly judge how the wicket is playing out. It will make things a lot easier for us."



India will play the second T20I here on Sunday and they will have to improve their catching skills to level the three-match series.

India dropped three catches, which cost them dear on Friday but Radha said it was just a bad day in office.

"I think it was just a bad day. All are brilliant fielders in our group, and everyone has been putting in hard work and training. We'll look to bounce back," she said.

South African star batter Tazmin Brits was thrilled to have drawn first blood in the WT20Is after the massive Test loss and feels that winning the series will give them confidence for the upcoming T20 World Cup in Bangladesh.

"We need these wins and the confidence in our locker room. With this confidence, we cannot just reach the semis but actually win the World Cup. Winning this game was good, but winning the next two would be even better," she said.

She admitted that it was hard for her to play Pooja Vastrakar, India's most economical bowler in the match.

She also lauded the excellent communication with her skipper Laura Wolvaardt and Kapp while batting.

"She (Pooja) is a great bowler. But the other spinners made it easy. Also, good communication from the other end helped."

"It's difficult to see what you are doing wrong due to your head position. So, it was nice to get that information and advice from the other end," she said.

South Africa's batting has been in focus, having managed a 300-plus score during the second ODI and also scoring heavily in the second innings of the one-off Test, which they lost by 10 wickets.

She credited batting coach Baakier Abrahams for the improvement.

"You need to be fearless against all T20I teams. But, to use that in the actual game is always difficult. It's nice to have a batting coach who's helping in not just swinging but also to know your game better," she said. (PTI)

Rajawat stuns world No 4 Anders Antonsen

CALGARY (CANADA), July 6: Continuing his dream run, rising Indian shuttler Priyanshu Rajawat stunned top seed and world number four Anders Antonsen of Denmark to cruise into the semifinals of the Canada Open here.

World number 39 Rajawat defeated Antonsen 21-11, 17-21, 21-19 in a gruelling one hour 19 minutes quarterfinal on Friday night.

However, the women's doubles pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand made a quarterfinal exit.

The third-seeded Indians were handed a 18-21 21-19 16-21 defeat by Chinese Taipei's Pei Shan Hsieh and En-Tzu Hung.

The win against Antonsen is the 22-year-old Rajawat's first-ever victory over a top-10 player. He will take on Alex Lanier of France in what will be his second World Tour Super 500 semifinal.

Rajawat was off to a bright start, taking a 7-4 lead in the opening game before Antonsen levelled it at 9-9.

The Indian then picked up five points on the trot to gain the upper hand and while the Dane tried to fashion a comeback, Rajawat claimed seven successive points to take the first game.

Trailing 0-1, Antonsen made a strong comeback in the second game and although Rajawat matched him, even levelling the game at 17, he lost four straight points as the world No. 4 forced a decider. (PTI)

All Olympics-bound Indian athletes, including Neeraj Chopra, are fit: IOA CMO Pardiwala

NEW DELHI, July 6: Renowned sports medicine expert Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala on Sunday said that all the Indian athletes participating in the Paris Olympics, including ace javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra, were "fit enough" to perform on the big stage when the quadrennial showpiece gets underway on July 26.

Pardiwala, the chief medical officer (CMO) of the nearly 120-strong Indian contingent for the Paris Games, added that his 13-member team will render the best possible medical assistance to the contingent in the areas of injury management, sports nutrition, mental conditioning, sports massage, recovery and sleep.

"All the athletes that are going for the Olympics are fit right now. Some athletes will have minor niggles here and there. I am not going to be discussing any specific injuries to any athlete that they've had in the past, but all of them who are there are there because they are going to be capable and they're gonna be fit enough to perform," he said.

Pardiwala has treated some of the top athletes, including India wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant, who suffered serious injuries during a car crash, and Tokyo Games silver medalist weightlifter Mirabai Chanu.

The Indian Olympic Association, Sports Ministry and the Sports Authority of India have brought together a team of top medical experts, headed by Pardiwala, to give the best rest and recovery facilities to the athletes as they bid to better the seven-medal haul at the Tokyo Olympics.

"This is the first time the Indian athletes will have a recovery room and a preparational rehabilitation room to make them game ready," said Pardiwala.

In the past, athletes had to visit a common polyclinic for approximately 10,000 competitors to avail physiotherapy and recovery services, and getting slots was time consuming. But this time around, the 13-member medical team will take care of those aspects as well so that the athletes only focus on their events and "not waste time" thinking about rest and recovery.

"It will be open 24x7. We've also got a sleep therapist on board because, over the years, one of the concerns has been inadequate sleep for rest and recovery. Time zones are different, the pressures and anxiety is there. So, to ensure athletes don't land up with inadequate sleep, we've got a sleep therapist on board who will address all these concerns," he said.



"We've already started sleep therapy sessions and we are also going to have some sleep pods for helping our athletes on the sleep aspect," he said.

Several athletes have personal physios, mental trainers and nutritionists, and Pardiwala said for those who cannot take their support staff to Paris, his team had

already coordinated with them and will help them in every possible way.

"Ever since the sports science team was announced, the first thing we have

done is start knowing our athletes in three different aspects — sports medicine, sports nutrition and mental conditioning. We have visited national camps, competitions etc to know their needs better."

With warm weather expected during the Games and the Paris Olympics not promoting air-conditioning in the Athletes' Village, there is a genuine concern about rest and recovery of the athletes.

Pardiwala said, "Yes, there is not going to be air-conditioning per se supplied by the organisers in the Village. Their main issue is they want it to be a green Olympics, and if we want it to be green Olympics, then we don't want air-conditioning to be there because that is not environmentally friendly."

"Several contingents have said 'our athletes are used to temperature-controlled environments'. They (Paris organisers) have a sort of geo-thermal system where there will be a temperature within the Village of at least 5-7 degrees less than the ambient temperature. And the expected temperature in Paris is supposed to be between 18 and 26 degrees C. If ambient temperature is 5-6 degrees less, I think it's going to be quite OK," he reasoned. (PTI)